

For Immediate Release

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School Breaks and Weekends - More Time with Family Is Dad in the Picture?

Whether it's winter or spring break and the kids are home from school or it's a weekend, it's a great time to be together as a family! Or, is it? Too often the picture of the family around the warm fire is marred by the dad behind a newspaper or in front of a computer or television. Or worse, he's nowhere in sight. Why is that? What can be done to make sure that children see their fathers more often? Moms have the key to open this door. But first, here are some statistics.

Ninety-nine percent of fathers in the United States believe that being a dad is a very important part of who they are. This is great news and means that just about every dad in this country values being a father to his kids.

Most men like to feel good about the work that they do. And, let's face it, being a dad is work and sometimes, hard work. Unfortunately, according to a recent survey, only half of U.S. dads feel prepared for fatherhood.

"And, here's a little secret about men: if they don't feel a sense of confidence about the work they do, they often feel ashamed," says Will Courtenay, Ph.D., a San Francisco Bay Area psychotherapist for more than 15 years and an internationally recognized expert in helping men. "And, if a man feels ashamed or embarrassed about how he's performing at work, he'll stop doing whatever he's doing."

According to Courtenay, we need to give fathers the tools they need to be good dads - the tools they're telling us they don't have. And, we need to teach them how to use these tools. Because, if dads feel like they don't know what they're doing, they're less likely to be involved.

Further, Courtenay points out that dads look to their wives or partners to learn how to be a better father. In fact, according to Courtenay, 9 out of 10 fathers say their wife or partner is their number one source of help for being a better dad. So, what this means is that women have a tremendous influence over how involved dads are with their kids.

That can be good or bad news. If women use the power that men give them in positive ways, they can have a tremendous influence in getting dads more involved with their kids.

“If a mom tends to think that her home is her hive, and she’s the queen bee, then she’s got to realize that – whether she likes it or not – she’ll be pushing the worker drone back to the office,” Courtenay says. “And, if she does that, we know that that father will definitely become less involved with the kids over time.”

Studies show that women who have more traditional ideas about the roles of moms and dads, have partners who are less involved with their kids.

So, if a mother wants a man who’s more involved with the kids, here are three simple things she needs to do:

- She needs to actually WANT him to be involved.
- She needs to express confidence in his ability to be a good dad.
- And, perhaps most importantly, she needs to demonstrate both her desire and her confidence by giving up some responsibility for taking care of the kids.

If a mom’s able to do these things, she’ll see a dad who finally comes out from behind the newspaper – or gets up from his computer or television – and is playing on the floor with the kids.

Dr. Will Courtenay, “The Men’s Doc,” whose psychotherapy practice is in Berkeley, CA, has been in the forefront of research examining men’s well-being. Raising awareness about men’s physical and mental health concerns continues to be Courtenay’s passion. Now, he is turning the spotlight on men who are dads. One of his specialty areas is postpartum depression in men, an under-diagnosed and little-discussed mental health issue.

For the last several decades, Courtenay has helped hundreds of men as a counselor and psychotherapist. After becoming a father himself, he grew increasingly interested in the experiences of new dads. For more information, visit: www.MensDoc.com

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