The importance of father involvement

Many dads have an idea of what a ‘good father’ is and of the experiences and relationships they would like to have with their children. Like any new role, fathers may want to be ‘good dads’ and have a strong and connected relationship with their child, but might feel unsure of how to begin this process. Being a parent or carer involves constant learning. All parents and carers will make mistakes, face challenges, and learn from their experiences. This is all part of the parenting process. Some ways that fathers might get involved with their children are through:

- Engagement (direct contact with their children)
- Accessibility (being available to their children even when they are not in physical contact)
- Responsibility (taking a role in looking out for their children’s care and welfare).

By being involved in any of these ways, fathers become engaged in the lives and wellbeing of their children. There is no right or wrong amount of time that fathers should spend with their child. Children benefit from quality interactions, where fathers engage and bond with them. Dads being involved really can make a difference to their child’s mental health and wellbeing. For starters, fathers can give children a person to trust, to bond with and feel secure around. Fathers also have the opportunity to parent their child in different ways from other family members (e.g., dads can provide special experiences through play, which helps develops children’s physical abilities and helps them to manage new and exciting experiences). Further, boys who are connected with their dads often have more self-control, while girls connected with their dads often have strong feelings of being confident and capable and have a positive sense of identity. Good father-child relationships in early childhood are also associated with good father-child relationships in adolescence.

When dads are affectionate and helpful to their child, children are more likely to get on well with their siblings. When children have fathers who are emotionally involved (e.g., acknowledging their children’s feelings and helping them deal with difficult times), children have better social skills which means they are more able to have positive relationships with other children and are likely to behave less aggressively. When dads are involved in their young children’s care it means that they can help their children build strong relationships during childhood and later in life and the father-child bond is more likely to last into the child’s adulthood.
Father involvement benefits children

The following areas outline some positive effects of father involvement in the early years.

**Children's mental health**

Father involvement is positively linked with children's overall life satisfaction and wellbeing. Babies whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to feel connected to them, are better able to handle new and unfamiliar situations, can manage stressful situations, and are more curious and eager to explore the environment. Children with connected fathers are also more likely to experience:

- higher levels of self-reported happiness
- higher levels of confidence
- fewer feelings of fear and guilt
- less emotional distress and upset.

**Children's thinking and problem-solving skills**

Children who are involved in conversations that include the ‘wh’ questions (e.g., ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘why’) have opportunities to practise using and hearing more complex words and sentences. These skills help children to think about ways to solve problems and develop their word and language skills. These are often the sort of conversations children have with their fathers (but not just fathers) and helps children develop better problem-solving skills.

**Children's social and emotional development**

From birth, children who have an involved father are more likely to feel emotionally connected, confident to explore their surroundings, and have better social connections with their peers. When fathers are more involved in experiences with their children, such as eating meals together and going on outings, this has a positive influence on children’s social development. Children with connected fathers are likely to:

- have positive peer relationships
- have stronger and closer friendships with less conflict
- experience give-and-take relationships
- develop turn-taking skills with other children.

**Getting involved is good for dads too!**

Spending time being involved and taking care of children provides fathers with opportunities to display affection and to nurture their children. Involved fathers are more likely to see their interactions with their children positively, be more attentive to their children’s development, better understand and be more accepting of their children and enjoy closer, richer father-child relationships. Fathers who are involved in their children’s lives are more likely to be more satisfied with their lives, feel less psychological distress, and be more able to understand themselves, empathically understand others, and integrate their feelings in an ongoing way. Feeling involved is also good for dads because they have a greater sense of self, greater general wellbeing, marital stability and relationship happiness. This is because being involved increases a sense of connectedness and inclusion. Involved fathers also have a strong sense of how important they are to their children.
Getting involved with early childhood services

Dan had been invited to a father’s breakfast at his three-year-old daughter Mila’s preschool. Mila was excited that she and her dad were leaving home a bit earlier than usual and was rushing towards the front door grabbing Dan’s hand and saying ‘Come on dad!’ But Dan was feeling a bit nervous. He had only been to the preschool a few times when he picked Mila up at the end of the day and this was a rushed and busy time. He also didn’t know many of the staff well and hadn’t met any of the other dads before. Dan was happy that Mila was so excited to bring him to the breakfast, but he couldn’t help feeling a bit worried.

Mila’s story

Some dads do not have the time or availability to get involved with their child’s early childhood service. This is often because they work long hours, or work a long distance away. For other dads, the early childhood service is simply a new environment they are not familiar with. However, there are many ways that fathers’ involvement with their child and their early childhood service can benefit children’s mental health and wellbeing. The early childhood service is an environment where a child may spend a significant amount of time, so it is important for dads to connect with this community if they wish to. The early childhood service might seem like a ‘foreign place’. Some dads may feel uncomfortable at times or that they cannot contribute to conversations because they may not be sure of what to say. When fathers are made to feel welcome at early childhood services it becomes an inclusive family environment and fathers are able to become involved in another part of their child’s world. This is beneficial for children’s mental health because they look forward to seeing their dad and greeting them at the end of the day and can spend time together sharing stories on the way home. By taking the first step of connecting, fathers become closer to their child and are able to bond with them at a place that is a big part of the child’s world.

Meeting the staff

When fathers get involved with their child’s early childhood service, they have the opportunity to meet staff and other children. When fathers get to know the early childhood staff, it makes it easier to approach them when they have a concern or question about their child. Fathers can also be more comfortable with sharing exciting news or developmental milestones with staff when they are familiar with them. It is important for fathers to try and become familiar with this part of their child’s world and to see the physical space (e.g., different rooms, and the playground) that their child enjoys.

Meeting other dads

When Dan went with his daughter Mila to the fathers’ breakfast, he met some fathers of Mila’s friends. Now when Mila goes to play at her friends’ houses, Dan feels comfortable to go and pick her up and to even stay for a chat and a coffee. When the preschool holds father-child nights, Dan knows there will be a familiar face when he gets there, and this makes for an enjoyable night. Mila also loves having her dad pick her up from preschool and friends’ houses. On the way home, she tells him about her day, and this special time contributes to their connection.

Getting involved can be tricky!

It is not always easy for dads to get involved with their child and the early childhood service their child attends. Often dads are familiar with the identities of a man, a partner, husband, friend, and colleague. Being a first-time dad can be new and unfamiliar and some dads can be unsure of their role as a father. Other dads might face challenges because they work long hours, do not live with their children, or simply do not feel included in their child’s life. If dads are feeling disengaged or struggling to connect with their child or the early childhood service, it might help to identify what is getting in the way of feeling included. There will not always be easy fixes to overcoming some of these barriers. It can be helpful to take small steps (e.g., a father might ring their child’s early childhood service to introduce himself, or have a go at nappy changing or feeding their child). Becoming involved can also be easier when fathers feel they are connected and have healthy relationships with other family members. This connection means people are more likely to talk about difficult feelings and try to work on them together.
Family relationships: Building a parenting team

After having children, many couples notice that their relationship changes. While children grow and develop, this can be an exciting, and also a tiring time. It is common for parents and carers to find they feel more tired, stressed and overwhelmed. It might also be a time when parents and carers discover they have different ideas about family life or parenting. These factors can impact on relationships and couples may not spend as much time together as they used to. Sometimes, families believe that if they ignore problems, things will get better in time and fix themselves. This is not usually the case, as solving relationship difficulties involves working together towards common goals.

The relationships fathers have with the mother of their children, whether in a couple relationship or not, and their extended family, influences children’s psychological and emotional wellbeing. The quality of a parent or carer relationship affects the parenting behaviour of both parents and carers. A high-quality relationship means people feel safe and connected to one another, share responsibility and make decisions together. Parents and carers who have high-quality relationships tend to be more responsive, affectionate and confident with their infants and more able to deal with challenging toddler behaviour.

Communication is the key to working through family difficulties. It is not always easy to start a conversation and raise sensitive topics. However, talking with partners or family is the best way to look after your relationships. A parenting team means both people work towards common outcomes, have shared family values and make decisions together. Some steps towards building a parenting team are:

- Listen to your partner’s interests and concerns without necessarily trying to fix them straight away.
- Be honest with your partner about your own needs and concerns. It is okay to ask for help or to let them know you might be having trouble coping.
- Share ideas with each other for dealing with problems, ideally a time when you are both rested and not stressed.
- Take a break or alternate the time when each of you cares for your baby. Being tired can sometimes lead to a conflict.
- Making time to communicate and share when parenting arrangements are shared across more than one home.

Children learn how to behave from watching the way their parents, carers and families interact with each other. Children’s sense of safety and wellbeing can depend on how their parents and carers behave towards each other. When dads overcome challenges, solve problems, and handle conflicts in positive ways, they are modelling behaviour to their children. When parents and carers handle the challenges and rewards of parenting together, they can become stronger and better equipped to make decisions about their children. When children see or sense their parents and carers communicating and working well together, even if they are not living together, they feel safe and secure.
Dads looking after themselves

Most parents and carers feel stressed from time to time. Tiredness, a crying baby and increased responsibility can make parents and carers feel overwhelmed. Stress can often be managed by having friends and family help out and by finding out about caring for a baby.

It is important for parents and carers to take time to care for themselves. One way of doing this is for fathers to take time out from their family, and spend time alone or with friends. Having a child is a big change and some dads may find they feel more stressed than usual because of this change. Sometimes after a baby is born, men can find themselves with low mood, lack of motivation, and can feel disconnected from their family. Men can experience these feelings even when their partner does not. It is important that these feelings are recognised early, and that fathers seek help by talking to someone about what is going on. This will help avoid long-term effects on a dad’s mental health, and his relationship with his family. Dads who feel disconnected are less likely to spend time with their child (e.g., reading or playing) which can affect the development of their child’s social and emotional skills. When fathers look after themselves it can improve their own mental health and wellbeing as well as that of their child and family. It is important for men and their families to remember that it is okay for men to get support. Having support might mean talking it out with a partner, friend, family member, or a professional. When they are supported, fathers are caring for themselves and their family.

For more information on how families can look after themselves and their relationships, refer to Component 3: Working with parents and carers ‘Positive mental health in parents and carers’.

Dads connecting with their children

One of the best ways fathers can bond with their child is through play. Fathers spend a lot of their one-on-one interaction with infants and preschoolers providing stimulating, playful activity. Fathers can promote their child’s intellectual development and social competence through all kinds of play, including physical. From these interactions, children learn how to regulate their feelings and behaviour. Fathers also tend to be more lively and energetic in their play. Most children enjoy this play because it is a special and meaningful experience they have with their dad. It is a positive experience for older children—aged four and five—because they like games that test their physical abilities (e.g., running, climbing, jumping and exploring). These help children feel a sense of achievement which is valuable for building confidence and children can use this to face life’s challenges. Play helps children develop physically, intellectually and emotionally.
Dads connecting with their baby (birth to around 18 months)

To babies, everything is new. They are becoming familiar with their surroundings and the people around them. They interact and get adults’ attention by smiling, cooing, babbling and crying. Babies are very curious and like to explore everything. This can be seen in their movements such as wiggling their body, throwing their arms out and trying to grasp objects. While babies are fascinated by the world around them, they also need a sense of security and predictability, so that they know the world is a safe place. As babies get to know both their mum and dad, they begin to prefer them over other adults and look to them for comfort and support when they are feeling distressed. This sense of safety helps them feel confident to explore the world and develop relationships with other people.

These are some of the reasons it is important for dads to interact with their baby. The following suggestions can help fathers when interacting with their child to help create a sense of security.

▶ Talk or sing to your baby in a soft voice and chat to them about what you are doing. Babies love to hear the sound of familiar voices; it does not matter that they cannot understand you. Babies do not have to understand words to benefit from people’s voices. Listening to voices helps babies build language and communication skills from an early age. For example, tell your baby a story, changing your voice can make the story more interesting and keep your baby engaged.

▶ Try things related to looking after your baby, including dressing them, playing with them, bathing them, and changing their nappy. This will help to build the bond between you and your baby.

▶ Let your baby touch and explore your face. This helps them to get to know you, and that you are different to mum and other adults.

▶ Imitate your baby’s voice, sounds and facial expressions such as frowning, poking out your tongue and smiling. This is the start of dad-and-baby conversations.

▶ Play a game of peek-a-boo, this builds your baby’s communication and emotional expression skills.

▶ Place your baby flat on their stomach while you play with them. This ‘tummy time’ helps develop both their muscles and brain.

▶ Play together by talking, singing, laughing and looking at colourful and fun objects. This will help with baby’s brain development and increase their curiosity to explore new things. Talk about these objects and let your baby touch things that have different textures (e.g., toys and rattles) to help babies build their understanding and develop motor skills such as hand–eye coordination.

▶ Read to your baby and point to pictures. Words, rhymes and written material build language and memory skills.

▶ Understand that your baby will cry for lots of reasons that might include being tired, hungry or uncomfortable. Holding and comforting them when they cry will help them feel soothed, safe and cared for.

▶ Remember that play takes effort and is tiring for babies. Babies can manage only short bursts of play and also need time to rest and be quiet together.
Dads connecting with their toddler (around 18 months to three years)

As toddlers explore their environment and learn to walk they start to become independent and develop skills to achieve their goals. This can be an exciting but scary time for toddlers, as they want to become independent but lack understanding about the world to be able to feel safe in it. Toddlers with involved fathers go on to start school more ready to start learning, are more patient and can handle the frustrations and stresses of schooling more readily.

Giving toddlers opportunities to complete tasks on their own encourages their motivation and helps them to feel in control, increasing their feelings of safety and security.

Some suggestions for dads when interacting with their toddlers are:

- At this age, children are beginning to play outside more often, such as in sandpits and with mud and water. Have fun together digging, splashing and making a mess. When spending time indoors you can draw, colour and read together, play make-believe games or dress up together.
- Show your child animals and insects outside and talk to them about what you see.
- Talk to your toddler about what you are doing and how they could help (e.g., in the garden, cooking, tidying up).
- Get involved in what your toddler likes to do and ask questions about what they are doing.
- Play games such as the ‘Posting game’—cut slits in the front of a tissue box, and children can post pegs, blocks, or letters. This will help children with their thinking and memory skills.
- Spend time with your toddler at the park or a playground, where they can run, play chasing and hiding games with you, interact with other children, and practise their physical skills.

Dads connecting with their preschool aged child (around three to five years)

The preschool years are a time when children begin to take control over their experiences and become capable of solving problems and working through activities on their own. Preschoolers who spend more time playing with their dads are often more sociable when entering primary school.

Encouraging children to talk with others about what they are doing and how they are doing it promotes their learning and development. By being shown how to work through problems with the help of supportive adults, preschoolers are able to be in control of their learning. With this comes a greater sense of control over what they are doing, leading to greater confidence and self-esteem.

Some suggestions for dads when interacting with their preschool children are:

- Ask your child lots of questions about the world, the environment, and other people.
- Listen to your child and ask them how they feel—children need adults to hear them and understand the emotions they are feeling.
- It is also helpful for children to see their father express his feelings. Talk to your children about how you feel, with the aim of modelling effective communication skills.
- Teach your child a skill, such as catching a ball, tying a knot, or riding a bike. These things help you to connect to your child and give them a sense of achievement.
- Read with your child. To make it fun you can change the name of the character in the story to your child’s name.
- Play pretend games where a toy or a child can be many things. Make a cubby in the house or outdoors using blankets, chairs or cardboard.
- Give your child encouragement when they are trying new things. This helps them to understand that people do not become good at things straight away and it often takes practise.
- Take your child on a train, bus or car trip to somewhere new. This can give your child new experiences you can remember together later and can teach them social skills (e.g., interacting with others, being in public, walking in crowds).

When children play with their dad it helps them to feel good about themselves.
Rough-and-tumble play

Fathers and children often enjoy rough-and-tumble play together. Some dads like to wrestle, while other families have fun pretending dad is a monster or a dragon that needs to be trapped. Other dads and children might have fun tickling and making faces at each other. Play helps develop the emotional regulation of both children and their fathers. It helps fathers identify their own emotions, acknowledge the emotional experiences of others and understand the causes of emotions. Rough-and-tumble play between fathers and their children can also teach children how to deal with aggressive behaviour (e.g., pushing, grabbing, hitting and biting) and physical contact without losing control of their emotions.

Rough-and-tumble play with fathers can be fun for children, however sometimes children become more and more excited. Remember that children may have difficulty stopping the game even if they are no longer enjoying it. Dads can help by giving children a hug, helping them to take deep breaths and then change to doing something calmer, such as reading a book together.

Suggestions for how children and fathers can get the most out of rough-and-tumble play with their child:

▶ Children playing with their dad can get so excited they need some quiet time before they can go to bed, eat a meal, or get dressed. Time your play appropriately and make time for winding down.

▶ Set ground rules, (e.g., when someone says they have had enough or gets hurt, it is time to take a break). Remember to keep your own voice calm when you are trying to calm children.

▶ When the occasional bump or collision happens, calm things down, make sure your child understands it was an accident, model saying sorry if you need to and play again when your child shows they are ready.

▶ As the strongest and biggest player, you might have to let yourself be overpowered or caught so another player can ‘win’ at least some of the time. At other times, encourage your children to keep trying when they ‘lose’.
Aram was going to be working interstate for three weeks and was feeling worried about being away from his four-year-old son, Hamid. Hamid also seemed to be worried, asking lots of questions about where Aram was going, and having trouble settling to sleep. Although Aram and his partner Kira had explained to Hamid what would be happening, Aram was still concerned about missing time with his son, and how both he and Hamid would cope. Together, Aram, Kira and Hamid decided to make a pack for Aram to take away with him. In the pack there were some photos of Hamid, his favourite book and a drawing of the family Hamid had done at kindergarten. There was also a little diary with some important dates on it, such as the day that Hamid was going to do a ‘show and tell’ presentation at preschool, and the date he was going to a friend’s birthday party. Aram also decided he would send a postcard home, as Hamid loved collecting letters from the mailbox. As a family, they decided to make Hamid his own pack of things, such as his dad’s scarf, and a photo of them together. Aram and Hamid began to feel less worried about spending time away from each other.

**Hamid’s story**

**Fathering from a distance**

Some fathers are not able to see their children as much as they would like to. This might be because they work away from home, work long hours, or are separated from their family. Sometimes, this can cause difficult feelings for dads such as homesickness, heartache, jealousy, sadness or isolation. However, parenting from a distance does not mean that a father’s parenting role is less significant than it used to be. If a father is not able to have frequent physical contact with his child yet provides warm, stimulating, and positive contact when possible, children still benefit. Dads can stay connected with their children, even if they are not living with them, or if there is a big geographical distance between them. Some dads might worry that fathering from a distance means that they will miss out on quality time and developmental milestones. However, children benefit from knowing what their dads are doing and where they are, and dads benefit from knowing what is happening in their children’s lives.

**Working long hours or working away from home**

For many families with young children, parents have different roles. Fathers often spend time in paid employment and provide family income. Fathers may often be relied on by their families to provide money for food, living, education and holidays. Spending more time at work means that some fathers worry they might miss out on the new things their child is learning (e.g., walking, first words, first day at school), family experiences and community events. However, if fathers build a strong and connected relationship with their children when they are physically together, this bond is maintained and felt by both father and child, even when away from each other. A father’s emotional involvement with his child also acts as a buffer against work-related stresses, meaning that dads are more likely to feel better overall.

Suggestions for how dads can connect with their children when they work away from home or work long hours:

- Before leaving on a work trip, openly discuss as a family how long you will be going away for and what you will be doing while away. Answer your child’s questions honestly and talk about the good things that your trip will bring. It is important that your child understands that you will be coming home and that you love them.

- While away, stay in contact by phone, email, text message or Skype, to let your family know that you are thinking of them.

- Take a list with you that includes significant events happening for your child and family while you are away. Try to make contact with your child before events, as seemingly small events to adults are often a big deal for children.

- Collect postcards or small souvenirs such as drink coasters, hotel cards, nametags or pictures. When you get home, use these letters and souvenirs to tell your child stories about your time away.

- Before leaving, look at a calendar with your children so that they can mark off and countdown to when you are home.

- If you will be gone when your child wakes up, leave them a note or give them a call.

- Give your child something that belongs to you that they can hold, sleep with or smell.
Separated dads

Some fathers may not have ever lived full time with their child, others may be recently separated due to a family or relationship separation. When separated fathers are involved with their children, children’s mental health and wellbeing is enhanced. Some suggestions for dads to stay connected with children who are separated from them are:

Stay involved with your child as much as possible. Spend time at your child’s early childhood service, attend their sporting events, write to them, and ring them.

Make the most of the time you do spend with your children (e.g., cooking, reading, singing and telling stories together).

Children love getting mail. If you have time, send a postcard, letter or card to let them know you are thinking of them.

If you are living away, try to have a space for your child when they come to visit. Put their favourite things there and make it as comfortable as possible, so that they feel at home when they come to stay with you.

When you need to speak to your child’s other parent or carer, do it directly, rather than sending messages through your child.

Avoid asking your child questions about their other parent or carer, or asking them to withhold information as this can make children feel uncomfortable or guilty.

Keep the focus of your communication (with your child’s other parent or carer) on your child’s accomplishments and needs. Your child will feel reassured knowing that both their parents or carers are interested in their wellbeing.

Keep a confidential diary to send between yourself and your child’s other parent or carer, this can be a way of sharing important information.
Fathering worries and how to tackle them

Most parents and carers have worries now and then about whether they are doing the right things for their children and their family. This is not always a negative and can be a common sign of love and care. There is no ‘one’ right way to be a father. It can be helpful for fathers who do have worries to learn more about being a dad and ways they can manage their worries (e.g., talking to other dads, getting involved with a men’s group). Early childhood services are among several helpful places for fathers to talk about their fears and collect information on how to overcome these. For staff to be able to help fathers, it is important they are aware of common fathering fears and keep them in mind when interacting with fathers. Below are some worries that fathers may experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common worries</th>
<th>Helpful information</th>
<th>How to tackle the worry</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know how to interact with my baby. What do I say and do?</td>
<td>This fear can happen because babies cannot talk to communicate what they want. Trying to work out what a baby’s cry means can be stressful for dads. However, babies do not need to understand words to benefit from hearing their father’s voice or being held and comforted by them.</td>
<td>Chat to your baby about what you are doing or what you can both see. Your baby likes the sound of your voice, because it is familiar and soothing. Babies also benefit from gentle touch, being held, rocked and cradled because it helps them to feel secure. Babies cry for a range of reasons. They might need a nappy change, a sleep, to be fed, or they might be uncomfortable because they are too hot or cold. Trying different things and observing their body language will help you understand what they need.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I a good dad?</td>
<td>There is no one right way to be a good parent or carer. It will take time to become familiar with the new role of being a dad.</td>
<td>Try to focus on the positive things you provide for your child, and listen when they tell you the things they have enjoyed doing with you. Notice and remind yourself of positive efforts you make and try not to compare yourself to other parents or carers because everyone is different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m worried I don’t spend enough time with my child. How can I balance my job and time with my family?</td>
<td>With life’s demands, it can sometimes feel like there is not enough time for family, and balancing work and home life can be hard. There is no right or wrong amount of time you should spend with your child. Children benefit from quality interactions, where you engage and bond with them.</td>
<td>Make the most of the time you spend with your child and let them know that even though you may be away from them, you are still thinking of them. Make an effort to get to know the day-to-day life of your child and their world. This will help your child feel you are interested in their world even if you cannot be around as much as you would like. Try to monitor your own stress levels, looking after yourself is looking after your family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I doing enough to look after my child and help them to be happy and healthy?</td>
<td>It can seem like children have endless needs and parents or carers can feel overwhelmed with having to support their children in so many different areas.</td>
<td>Try to have realistic goals and ideas about how you can help your child. Talk to your family and friends about how your child is going and share any concerns with staff at your child’s early childhood service or with a health professional.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
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<td>My relationship with my partner has changed now that we have a child.</td>
<td>Having children means things will change between couples and in families. Your relationship may or may not go back to how it was, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Either way, a new child in the family can mean there will be new opportunities for growth and development as both a family and a couple.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will things ever go back to how they were?</td>
<td>Make time to spend with your partner or your family. Communicate regularly and effectively. Think about the positive changes in your life and your relationship since you became a dad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can I meet other dads and get involved at my child’s early childhood service?</td>
<td>It can be hard to go to an unfamiliar place and meet new people. You may not always feel comfortable in an early childhood service. However, once you take some steps to being connected, things will become easier. Your child will also love having you involved with them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learn about how the early childhood service works, and get to know the staff. Keep an eye out for any invitations to dads’ nights or events; this will be the first step to meeting other dads. Getting to know other children, particularly your child’s friends, can help you feel more involved.</td>
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This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.

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Fathers connecting with their children