



## W18. When a Man Becomes a Dad: Discovering a Dad's Journey

Wednesday, June 5, 2019  
4:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

### Moderator:

- John Allen, Family Assistance Program Specialist/Contracting Officer Representative, Office of Family Assistance, Washington, D.C.

### Presenter:

- Dr. Warren Farrell, Author, *The Boy Crisis*, Mill Valley, California

**John Allen:** I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Farrell, so he can have plenty of time to present his information. Dr. Farrell, the time is yours.

**Dr. Farrell:** I'm going to spend about 15 minutes answering any questions that came up during the past presentation, or anything you want me to elaborate on. My way of doing that is to ask you to say your name, and then if somebody else in the room has an idea that they feel they can contribute to that, I'll ask them to share that idea and then I'll contribute my perspective on that, as well. In there I was a lecturer and you were the audience, but here I want it to be more of a conversation.

**Participant:** My name is Mark Fisher, I'm the emergency manager at ACF. I want to compliment you on the presentation that you just gave. I noticed there were some points in the room, seemed to go cold or cool, and I think that's a decent thing. If you want to solve a problem, problems are uncomfortable, and sometimes to get to the heart of the matter, you have to face uncomfortable truths. If you're an alcoholic and your friends have an intervention, that's kind of an uncomfortable feeling. I just want to say that it'd be really great if we can just stand up and talk about some of these things, because working in social services for 18 years, I've seen some of these things from beginning to end and I think it's very important to do. Fathers are the future. Mothers are the future.

**Dr. Farrell:** What did you feel was most important for me to continue saying, even though it may have ruffled some feathers?

**Participant:** I think acknowledging the importance of women and the roles of women, and coming together as part of the team, because from what I've seen, in the family dynamic, moms still hold the high ground and we can't get there until we get there together.





**Participant:** Everything you said was great. Please keep saying that we need to have as many male teachers as possible. You have 30 teachers in the school and two of them are males. It's a no brainer. With that poor diversity, it's not going to work

**Dr. Farrell:** Male teachers cannot just be an imitation of female teachers.

**Participant:** They don't need to be an imitation of female teachers.

**Participant:** Ron from Spokane. I said to my partner sitting next to me, "This man is not wasting any sentiments." You did not waste our time with your presentation. I'd like you to expand a little on the feminization of our culture, not just in education, but in our culture, in general. Including paternity fraud.

**Participant:** My name is Ted Joar from Head Start. Everything is mom and female. Head Start is taking action to hire males. Having men in the center changes the behavior of the children. You can see it. We need moms but we also need dads. For dads, there's a message to go away, pay child support, and be quiet. Men say they need baby diaper changes in the men's bathrooms. We'd love to see the male figure get in a position that they get respect as a dad. The child will then know what to do.

**Participant:** Jarred Marshall, Family Services, North Carolina. I work in a preschool and I constantly find myself having to remind boys to not be so close to other boys, even just touching them, and keeping their space. Where does this learned behavior come from? I'm definitely seeing it in the schools as early as preschool.

**Participant:** My name is Violet. We are here because we want to continue to deliver programs with a male perspective.

**Participant:** I appreciate the toxic masculinity comments. Boys may see that they can't fit the stereotype. It's okay to fix a car, but it's also okay to cry or shed a tear for your child.

**Participant:** Mark Fisher. I'm a single dad raising two boys. I'm in the military and I get deployed. I'm a guys'guy and I'm trying to raise my sons equal to women. I also have a daughter that I teach men aren't bad people. When I said that out loud, I'm like, "What am I going against?" Then I saw you on T.V., got your books, and it's right. It's an uphill battle but one that we can win.

**Dr. Farrell:** Let me deal with that feminization question. In schools, one of the biggest things is recess. Now the CDC has found that any given moment spent in recess prepares a child to study





for a test better than any given moment studying; and yet, recess has been dropped out of the system because of fears of lawsuits. This is a feminization issue because you're working from fear, rather than working from risk taking or trying things out and adventuring.

The touching issue is the same thing. In Canada there was a survey done of men asking if they had an interest in becoming an elementary school teacher. A fairly significant percent said yes. When asked if anything would prevent them from becoming an elementary school teacher, the single biggest answer was fear of being accused of sexual harassment. If you're a child and you sit on my lap, it could mean we made a connection. If someone takes a photo of that, it may get me fired. Feminization goes very deep; it also goes to the issue of vocational education. There's been a whole movement. I'm comfortable in academia. The 25 or 30 percent of boys who are in school at any given time who are not comfortable with academia, the abstractions are not nearly as easy to motivate them as doing things. Vocational education programs have been cut back so significantly that these are the boys that end up dropping out of school ... you have to channel boys' energy. Boys have to constantly be doing things.

When I was teaching, I would always get my classes involved in physical activities and have them role play, then reverse role play, and at the end of the time, my student was student teaching, a teacher said to me, this is kind of interesting. The girls are doing just as well as they were before, but there's this group of boys that always were troublesome boys that are suddenly doing really well. I didn't know why, it was just the way I liked teaching, but what I was doing was getting everybody involved in the process. We need to stand up and say these things. We need to take risks.

I was on the Board of Directors of The National Organization for Women in New York City. When I started to say these types of things, the cost of saying them has been somewhere between \$30 and \$50M. I was up there for a MacArthur Genius grant. People started saying, "He's no longer the world's leading male feminist, he's beginning to question some of the things we feminists are talking about." So, there will be a price you will pay for being a pioneer of anything in the world, but particularly in this area. We're really looking for new courageous men and women who can speak up. If you are a female and this rings true to you, you are really needed, because women are given more credibility than men are when men are asking for more father involvement and more masculinity to be brought into the culture when the framework of masculinity and the culture is toxic. I hope you got from my presentation that there is a lot of masculinity, but it came from men sacrificing themselves and learning that being a man was being disposable. If you're going to be with toxic masculinity, know where that toxic masculinity came from. It was from the male obligation to sacrifice, so others would live and survive. So, praise the men, not for male privilege, but for male sacrifice. Making laws to require that men die in war is not male privilege. We need to make that clear and stand up and not worry about



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office of Family Assistance



National  
Responsible  
Fatherhood Clearinghouse  
[fatherhood.gov](http://fatherhood.gov)



being accused of being negative, non-feminist, non-egalitarian, because this will encourage adult feminism as opposed to adolescent feminism. Women are seeing themselves in a victim model, which needs to change. Anything I would tell you can be read in *The Boy Crisis*.

What you're going to experience now is not something you can read, per se. I'm going to ask you to close your eyes for a moment. Find a time in your dad's life when you noticed a glint in your dad's eye. A time when he was completely joyful and relaxed, not focused on correcting you or lecturing you. You might visualize a time when maybe he told jokes because he knew that every time...and you heard that joke 150 times, but he told it 150 times because he honed the art of telling that particular joke so well, that he could always get laughter from it. Or the same thing with a story that he would tell repeatedly. Maybe it was when you dad was skiing or fly fishing or golfing or gardening or hiking, or singing in the chorus, or acting, or painting, or playing in a band, or playing with your children, or mentoring, or making something useful or creative in the garage, or flying in a small plane, maybe at sunset, or cooking turkey for his family at Thanksgiving. Maybe you don't remember a glint in your father's eye, but you once looked at some pictures from when your dad and mom were younger, before they had you and your sisters and brothers. You saw that glint in your father's eye in the photograph where he seems so happy, so relaxed. I'm going to ask you to search for your father's glint, maybe you barely knew your father. Maybe you didn't know your father at all, so, I ask you to imagine what your dad's glint would be. Whatever you imagine, that is the foundation of your relationship with your father, even if you haven't had a physical relationship with your dad. Find out how you imagine him, even if you've never seen him.

If you feel you don't know what created the glint in your father's eye, I'm going to ask you to do a best guess. You can open your eyes now. I was in California, in La Jolla, one day walking in the streets and somebody stopped me and said, "Are you, Walter...isn't it?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I attended a workshop that you did a number of months ago and I want to tell you a little something about that." He had a little edge in his voice and he said, "You know, after I went to that workshop, I waited until Fathers' Day, and at Fathers' Day I thought I'd give my father a present and ask him what created the glint in his eye. My dad's response was, "You know, Jimmy, you're still attending these airy-fairy type workshops, aren't you?" "What is the glint in your eye?" My father looked at me with that condescension, maybe contempt. Then I stopped, and I felt really ashamed. I saw my father begin to tear, and I was shocked because the only time I had seen him ever cry was when my mother passed away. Other than that, he didn't cry, didn't touch me, didn't hug me. He then put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Do you really want to know what my glint was?" I said, "yeah, definitely," and I realized I'd been so self-centered and only thinking about me.

He said, "Don't worry, I'm crying because I didn't think anyone would ever care enough to ask."





So, no matter what you feel, if you don't have a glint that's coming to your mind immediately, do a best guess, because that's all the father cared about is that someone cared enough to ask. In a moment, I'm going to be asking you to sit in a group and share what your dad did for a living, what was the glint in your father's eye, and the difference between the two. However, often times, people say something like, "Oh, well, the glint in my father's eye was cooking turkey at Thanksgiving for the family, and he became a chef, so therefore, he did what created the glint in his father's eye." Without recognizing that, whenever you do a profession, almost always a profession has a lot of responsibilities and requirements that the glint does not have.

The glint in your father's eye was cooking turkey at Thanksgiving, being a chef was being away from the family at Thanksgiving to cook turkey for strangers. So, always catch the gap. If your father said, "I love flying a plane because I watch the sunset, the clouds turn colors, and I wrote poems based on that." So, he became a pilot, he did what created the glint in his eye. A pilot is obligated to fly when needed and to follow hundreds of FAA regulations and to do a lot of things repeatedly that he's done a thousand times before, it is not poetry. A profession is rarely poetry.

I'll ask you, as you get into groups, to think of that difference between the glint versus the actual profession. I'll ask you to get in a group of three with somebody in that group you don't already know.

**Participant:** What about the men in the room who may not have had an experience with a father?

**Dr. Farrell:** I'm going to ask you to imagine what your image is of your father. I'm going to give you 90 seconds to do three things. One is to say what your dad did for a living. Number two, what you feel was the glint in your father's eye, and then share what led you to make that guess. And then yes, the gap between the glint in your father's eye versus what he actually did for a living

I'll ask one person in the group to be a facilitator. The facilitator should have a watch with a second hand or a stopwatch.

**Dr. Farrell:** I'm going to ask you to point to somebody in your group whose story touched you.

If you had a finger pointed toward you, I'll ask you to raise your hand and share that with the group.

**Participant:** Mike Fisher. My dad was a cop. The glint in his eye was me going into the military. The only time he spoke proudly of me was when I came back from flight training. That was





the only time he was decent. When we talked about the military, he changed his personality. I knew we were holding him prisoner because he wanted to be a pilot.

**Participant:** Charles Dillon. The glint that I remember was him showing up with a puppy. He delivered and repaired furniture for a living. He could find a broken piece of furniture sitting on the side of the road, take it to the shop, and when you saw it again, it was in mint condition. He'd sell it, and that was his hustle.

**Participant:** My name is Molly Nortis. My dad was the bread man in a bakery. He has always been there for us. He said he was proud of me when I became a coordinator. He never knows that he's doing well as a father. The glint came when he was affirmed by me that he was a good dad.

**Participant:** I'm Ron Howenstene, Spokane, Washington. My dad was self-employed. We lived on a farm and he was a chicken farmer. We had 40,000 chickens on the land. When we caught a 100-pound halibut, there was definitely a glint in his eyes. When he was standing around with all the neighbors making me cook his halibut so he could show pictures of it, there was a glint in his eye. He was a doer, an inventor. He loved to do things with his hands, and he got forced out of the chicken farming business as the town grew too close and it became overwhelming for them. He then became a cement contractor, he made his own cement mixer. He was a very solitary man. He loved being alone with himself and the wood, and him and the metal. He was a lousy teacher. He tried to teach us things, but it never worked out.

**Participant:** I'm Bill. My father just passed away this past September. I'm 40 years old, this is new territory for me. I'm the ninth of ten children. We moved up to North Idaho when I was pretty young. He was going to take the Fire Chief position and they ended up giving it to somebody else. In fear of retribution, they gave him a different job with the city water treatment plant. I never really saw the glint in my dad's eye when he stopped being a firefighter. But there are times, as I look back, I played baseball, and I could hear him in the stands, and see it in his eyes. There's one time in particular at a fair he was on a ride with us. I remember hearing him giggling like a schoolboy. I looked up at him and saw that glint in his eye. He could fix just about anything. I never realized it until later on, what he was doing. He was teaching me to be a man. He was teaching me how to fix a washer and dryer. He was taking that time to show me. He wasn't like, "Hey, I'm going to teach you how to do this." He'd say, "Hey, let's go do this," and we did it. That's when I saw that glint in his eye. I didn't realize what it was until this exercise.

**Participant:** My name is John Walton. My father, as a profession, did many different things. Most of them were manual such as loading docks, foundries, different places that were just incredibly hard work, until he got a little older and drove a truck. He works security now.





Initially I thought maybe his physical strength was his glint, but as I thought about it, often times he got unfair portions of the work, he got the garbage jobs. He liked to talk in different accents. Irish accents, and let me tell you, to see him show every tooth in his mouth, that was really his glint. I think he would have been some sort of performer. You could see his whole face light up. He could probably laugh harder than anyone else could. You would see him, "Top of the morning, my friend."

**Participant:** My name's Mike. My pops was an angry dude, but he was a responsible man. He went from a machinist to an engineer with high security clearance at Westinghouse. When he was playing golf, he was responsible, taking care of his job, taking care of his own. He was just tight, not expressive or anything. Weekend breakfast he'd be doing that Bill Cosby dance. I was like, "Whoa, who drugged my dad."

**Dr. Farrell:** I'd like to share with you some takeaways. One is, we hear men earn a dollar for every 76 cents or 90 cents that women earn for the same work. Is there anyone who has not heard that? It's actually not true that men earn more than women. What is true is that dads earn more than moms. So, never married women, who have never had children, earn 117% of what never married men who have never had children earn. But when a man and a woman become a dad and a mom, the most frequent pattern is that the dad will give up doing something like being a musician or even being a teacher, and maybe become an administrator instead. He may start selling insurance or if he sells insurance already, instead of selling locally, will sell nationally, just so he can make more money.

He gives up his passion, the glint in his eye, if he had it in his first job. He does something that he feels, and that the mom feels together, will be more responsible in caring for the children. The fact that the man will earn more money when he's a dad, we've turned that around and instead of saying thank you for being willing to give up the glint in your eye, to give up your passion, and be willing instead to do what you needed to do, to provide enough money for the family. We've turned that on its head and instead of saying thank you, men, we've said, "Ah-ha. You earn more money than women do. You're the oppressors, you've got male privilege."

This has left men feeling ashamed and not being able to see through this. If you really want the hard data on this, I spent seven years researching and writing a book called *Why Men Earn More: The Truth Behind the Pay Gap and What Women Can Do About It*. There are 25 differences between what men and women do in the workplace. Each of those 25 differences would lead to women earning more money, but each of those 25 differences that women currently do, lead to women having more balanced lives. More balanced lives tend to be happier lives. Each of those things lead to men earning more money. More money very frequently leads to giving up the glint in your eye. If your dad and mom were asked when the first child in your





family was born, what would your dad love to do? The chances are it would be some version of the glint in the eye, but if they asked a second question, which would earn more dependable income over the course of our children's lives, would it be the glint in the eye or would it be what he had to do for a living or what he did do for a living. Raise your hand if you think that your family would have come to the conclusion what he actually did for a living would have created more income than the glint in the eye. We have really undermined a compassion for men by believing that the challenge with this is when somebody says men earn a dollar for each 76 cents or 90 cents that women earn, it takes them one sentence to say that in a room of 300 people, about 300 people agree with that. When I say that's not accurate, it takes me a whole book to respond to that.

The second issue is that we often say that men have the power and women don't. What really is more accurate is that neither sex, historically, had power. Both sexes had responsibilities and obligations. Women learned, historically, that if you're going to be a woman, you have to have children, so she risked her life in childbirth and spent her life raising those children.

Men went to war to protect the children that women bore, and then they went to work to raise the children responsibly. Both mother and father had the exact same goal in mind, and that goal was to make their children's lives better than their lives. From their perspective, it wasn't sacrifice. It was something that they could do that almost everyone here who stood up and testified could do. That one of the glints in my father's eye was when he saw that I felt I did well by him. That I cared, that I was there for you, that I had your backs, and that was the way that both fathers and mothers had their backs.

Men have learned to define power as feeling obligated to earn money that someone else spends, while they die sooner. If I gave a workshop saying "I'm going to talk about female empowerment. I'm going to talk about all of you having an obligation to earn money that somebody spends while you die sooner." There'd be not a woman in the room who would be dumb enough to accept that as a definition of empowerment.

**Participant:** Yeah, it's funny that I come to these things. When I was in the military, I lived in Europe. That was my goal to live in Europe and then I unexpectedly became a dad and had to buckle down. Once I had these babies, I had to forget about me and I had to work to get money to get a house, go to a combat zone to earn more money. But it takes me away from my children. Just last week, my ex was like, "You need to be around here more. You're always deploying to these places." My ex wants me to be home, but I have to deploy to provide. Where are these pressures coming from?





**Participant:** My name's John. Gender is socially constructed. How does that interact with these definitions? Boys are in crisis because society grounds them, just because they're boys.

**Dr. Farrell:** Is it nature or is it nurture? The answer is yes. What percentage nature, what percentage nurture? It's about 70 to 80 percent nature and about 70 to 80 percent nurture. The reason I can make sense of that is because part of nature is the ability to adapt. There's a part of your brain called the RCZ, the Rostral Cingulate Zone, that increases the dopamine in your brain and makes you feel good when you realize that I approve of you. That makes you very responsive to anything that's socially told to you at any given point in time.

The Vikings were the fiercest warriors we've ever known. They killed people left and right, but after they won their war, they then settled down with many of the women in the villages that they were previously massacring and became nurturing. They were then called back to war again, so they had to adapt. Your personality adapts significantly, based on what is called upon you, but the nature part is deeply embedded. In almost every insect, bird, and animal, the females will reproduce with what males? The alpha males or the whining males? The alpha males. This is true in almost every species. Elks, buck elks, 85 percent of the female reproduction is with the alpha male. The alpha male is proven to be the alpha male by having the biggest rack. In order to get the biggest rack, it sucks out 32 to 33 percent of the nutrients, minerals, and calcium from the buck's body. If the buck doesn't get rid of the rack immediately after he reproduces, he dies before the winter season comes. The message behind that is, here is the strongest male who is the weakest male. Men's weakness is our façade of strength. Yet, the biology of all of that is consistent among insects, animals, and humans. So, it's a lot of biology, but in our biology, it is the ability to adapt.

