

# Fanning the Fatherhood **FIRE**:

A National Fatherhood Summit  
June 4-6, 2019 | Nashville, Tennessee



Family-focused  Interconnected  
Resilient  Essential

# **W2** Promoting Positive Father-Child Interaction

**Presenter:**

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# Background

This session will cover material from the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) webinar:

- Tips for Practitioners: Talking with Fathers about Early Child Development and Parenting Skills.
- My co-presenter, Gardner Wiseheart, cannot join us today, so I will share some of his key points.

We will explore how practitioners can support a father's active engagement with his children to foster healthy, positive outcomes.



# MGH Fatherhood Project at MGH Prenatal Care Obstetrics Survey

## The Study

- Over 900 fathers participated over 2 periods of two-weeks, one of the largest antenatal fatherhood studies in the U.S. to date.
- Fathers of all Socio-economic Statuses want to be involved: 85% of men approached were willing to take the 15 minute, two-part survey in the OB waiting room.

## Significant Findings

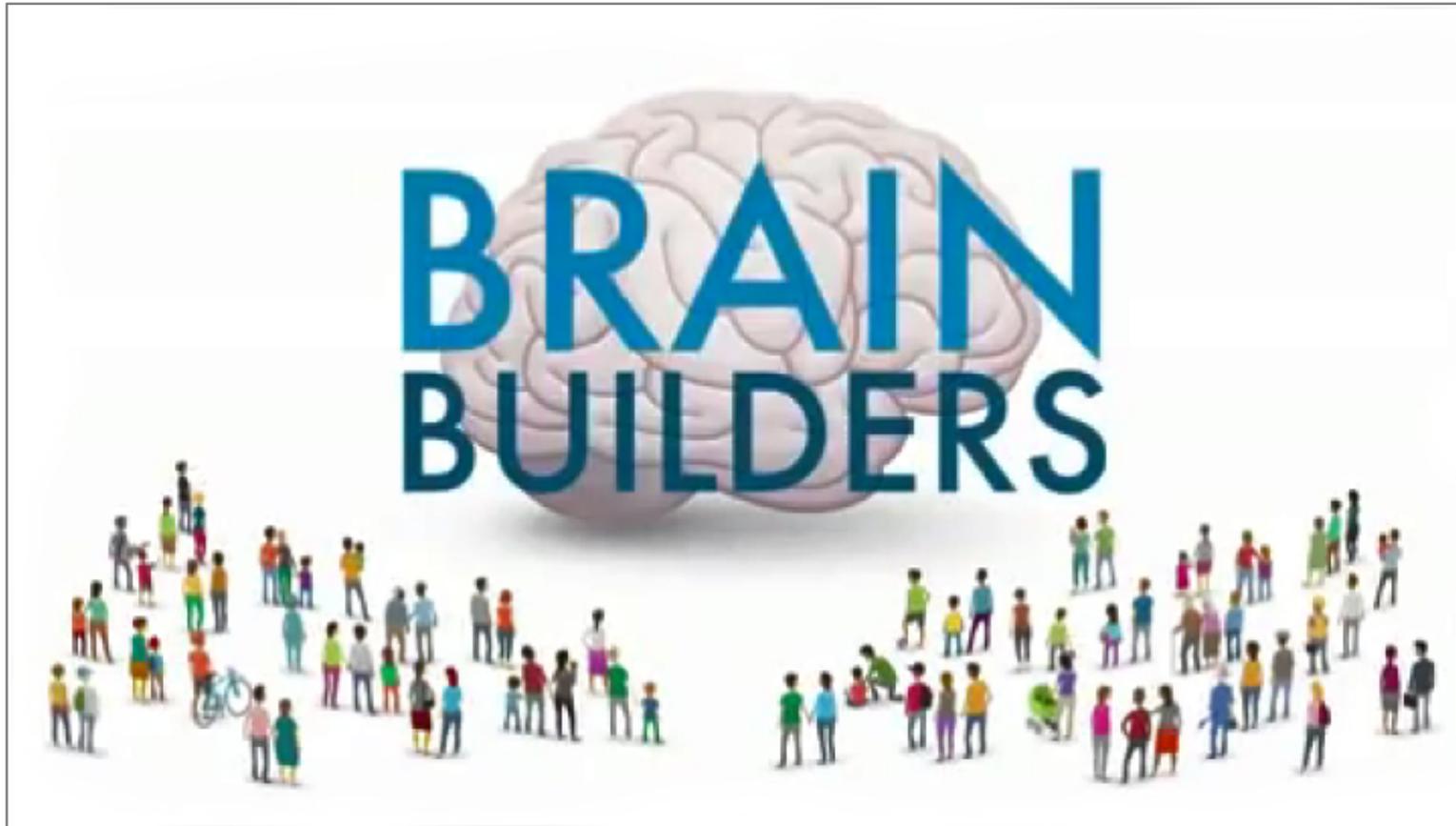
- High SES fathers: Higher anxiety, Higher stress related to becoming fathers, Higher rate of binge drinking
- Low SES fathers: Higher depression, Higher rates of obesity, Higher rates of smoking



# **Father/child connection has a fundamental impact on a child's:**

- Ability to trust
- Feelings of self
- Perceptions of the world
- Social relationships
- Brain development





This video is no longer available on this platform.

**Serve and Return**



# Key Themes for This Presentation

- Micro-moments are the foundation of father/child relationships.
  - Practitioners can help dads understand this and equip them to act on their new understanding.
- Babies come wired for connection.
  - They seek connection with the people in their world.
- An engaged and understanding father sends a powerful message to his child:
  - **“In this relationship, you matter.”**



**HE TREASURES  
BEING A DAD**

**Antonio's Story**

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# Being Intentional As A Parent: Dad's Vision Statement

Imagine 20 years from now: Your child is interviewed for a documentary film about their relationship with you:

- What do you hope they would say?
- What do you hope they wouldn't say?
- Write down a Parenting Goal that you can work towards over the next few weeks or months.
- What are three Action Steps you can take to accomplish this goal?



# Understanding Your Legacy: Gifts and Liabilities From Your Father

Below is a list of gifts your father may have given you and liabilities he may have left you. Circle as many as apply to your relationship with your Biological Father growing up:

## Gifts:

- Modeled a good work ethic
- Was empathic
- Handled conflict responsibly
- Was a loving, active and involved parent
- Valued equality and treated your mother well
- Was a good listener

## Liabilities:

- Was often or completely absent
- Didn't control his anger
- Did not express his feelings
- Often or always critical
- Worked all the time
- Addicted to alcohol/drugs





## Exploring Your Legacy

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# Developing Emotionally-Connected Relationships: Know and Be Known

## Parental Knowledge –

(how much fathers know about their children's daily experiences, whereabouts, and companions)

- Is a key protective factor against many risks and poor outcomes, including drug use, depression, and low academic performance.

As children get older, it's about:

- Maintaining relationship, trust, and two-way communication.
- Developing a sense of closeness and connection between father and child early on is critical.



# Modern Dads Quiz: Sample Questions

1. Name one accomplishment or milestone your child reached recently.
2. What are your child's favorite sounds or words?
3. Describe one challenge your child overcame recently.
4. What foods does your child like/dislike?
5. Describe something your child did at daycare or school recently.



# The Relationship Check-up (ages 5-8)

## Sample Questions

### Questions about me

1. A really important friend to me is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_
2. I think my friends like me because \_\_\_\_\_
3. Two things I like about school (CHILD) or work (PARENT) are \_\_\_\_\_
4. If I could change one thing about school (CHILD) or work (PARENT), I would \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions about us

1. Two things I like about myself are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
2. Two things I like about you are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
3. Something I'm very good at is \_\_\_\_\_
4. Something I think you're very good at is \_\_\_\_\_
5. Something I wish we could do together is \_\_\_\_\_



# Ritual Dad-Child Time: Building Time

## Tips for Creating Ritual Dad-Child Time

- Introduce the idea of spending special time together once per month.
- Be consistent (even if it's only one hour each month).
- Having a regular day and time is ideal.
- Follow the child's interest in choosing what you do.
- Emphasize what's most important is being together, not what you do.
- Try to minimize distractions, such as devices/screens.
- Reflect on what's working, alone or with your child, and what may need to change.



# Promoting Father/Child Interaction

## Examples of Activities and Tools

The following resources are available for free download via the NRFC's Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit - <https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/home>

From the **Maps for Dads** curriculum:

- Just the Facts Jack
- Bonding with Your Baby
- Crying
- CHEEERS

From **The Modern Dad's Dilemma**:

- The Modern Dads Quiz: How well do you know your child?



# More resources from The Modern Dad's Dilemma

- The Modern Dads Quiz: How well do you know your child?
- The Relationship Check-up (ages 5 - 8)
- Four Key Ways to Build a Secure Attachment with your Child
- Understanding Your Legacy: Identify The Gifts and Liabilities from Your Father



# Summary of Key Points

- Father involvement includes not only his presence and the amount of time he spends, but also the quality of his interactions with his child.
- Practitioners can create environments that affirm fathers and build on their strengths for the well-being of their children.
- We should all be aware of how our own experiences (including how we were fathered) impact our beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.



# Questions and Answers



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## Stay in touch with us!

### Contact Information:

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