

Section 1

Proud Parent: Basic Parenting Information and A Guide to Available Resources and Supports

The Proud Parent workshop is designed to not only introduce fathers to interventions offered through Fathers for Life but to also deliver basic parenting information. During this session, fathers will learn about the importance of bonding with children, the legal rights and responsibilities associated with fatherhood, and the benefit of cooperative relationships with the mothers of their children.

The Proud Parent curriculum was developed as one session that typically lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. The session uses a lecture format but does allow opportunity for small and large group discussion. The Proud Parent workshop is specifically for fathers who are interested in learning more about Fathers for Life. It includes opportunities throughout the session to discuss resources and supports that are being offered through Fathers for Life. The Proud Parent curriculum has been implemented with audiences of various sizes, typically in the range of 15 to 30 participants, but is best suited for an audience of up to 25 fathers.

Choosing a Facilitator

Proud Parent facilitators should be familiar with the Fathers for Life interventions. They should demonstrate knowledge of child development, relationship skills, and the importance of fathers in the lives of children. The Proud Parent curriculum can be effectively delivered by one facilitator.

Implementation Tips

Look for opportunities to:

- Deliver this curriculum at activities hosted by other agencies. For instance, host a Proud Parent session after a Workforce Development Orientation.
- Host a Proud Parent session for fathers during a Head Start Family Fun Night.
- Use stories and experiences from your own life to make this session come alive.

Resources/Tools

The tools listed below are shown on the following pages and included on the CD attached to the inside front cover of the Fathers for Life Technical Assistance Manual.

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Ways to Stay in Touch with Your Child handout
- Post Session Evaluation

FATHERS FOR LIFE
Proud Parent Workshop
Script for One Hour Introductory Session

(Material in regular type is narrative.
Materials in italicized print are directions.)

Begin the session with introductions, welcoming remarks & instructions.

1. Opening - CHILDREN AND FATHERS

Have you ever watched kids pretending to be grown up? They may be playing doctor or space explorer, dreaming they are professional athletes, even cowboys and Indians! But who do kids really look up to, to see what the future holds for them? Adults, of course – and in particular, parents. Being a role model is heavy-duty stuff.

What thoughts fly around in a man's head when he becomes a dad? 'Here is a new person that is part of me' ... "How am I going to help my child learn to get on in this world?" ... "Gee, this can cost a lot of money!" ... "Hey, playing with my child is fun!" ... and many more. The miracle of birth is more than the beginning of a new human being. It is the birth of a mother, the birth of a father, the birth of a parenting relationship.

Ask if anyone would like to describe what it was like when they first saw their child. Allow dads time to process before asking for volunteers.

Today/Tonight we are here to talk about being a dad! We would like to share some information with you about parenting and tell you about some opportunities that are available to you if you want to continue to build your parenting skills.

How do we learn to be parents? So much of what we learn about parenting we learn from the people that raised us. Think back to when you were a child. What men were your role models? Can you think of a man you enjoyed spending time with? What did you like about that man? Were there some things that a man did that made you want to grow up to be like him?

Activity 1: Ask participants to discuss the above questions with a person sitting next to them. When you call the group back together, see if anyone wants to report on their discussion.

Note: Allow dads time to process before asking for volunteers. Fathers like to "report" rather than "share" experiences, as they associate the word "share" with feelings. If dads are reluctant to report, have a "sample report" ready and read it aloud.

Being a parent is the most demanding job you never got training for! A father has an important role to play in the life of his child. Sometimes parents want their

child to have the kind of childhood they had and sometimes parents want to raise their child differently. Parents need the know-how to accomplish the job.

2. FATHER'S ROLE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

We all want what's best for our children. Most of us would do anything we could to become better parents. A smart father will find out how his child learns and grows and will be thinking of ways to support and encourage it.

For instance, did you know that a child must gain a sense of personal safety and security before he is willing to check out the rest of the world? Scientists have learned that 90% of brain growth happens in the first three years of a child's life. From birth the brain uses experiences from the outside world to make itself work. If the brain doesn't get the right experience at the right time, the brain will not get properly "wired" to do certain jobs. If the opportunity is missed, this wiring can still happen later on, but it will be harder.

By age three a child should understand about 1,000 words – that is about 65% of the words he will use in everyday life as an adult.

By age four a child's brain has reached 75% of it's adult size.

A child needs to accomplish a lot by age 5! Growing up... it's a big job! But it's a job that we can help our children with and one of the best ways we can do that is to learn more about how children grow and develop so that we can support them along the way.

Several programs are now available or will be available in the future that you might find useful to gain more information and build skills that will help you as a parent.

If Parents as Teachers Group and/or Individual Sessions are offered in your community, read this portion of the script.

Parents as Teachers is a wonderful program that can support you as parents to help your children reach their full potential. Parents as Teachers educators are available to meet with you whether or not you live with the mother of your children or not. This program provides you the opportunity to attend group sessions on a variety of topics ranging from co-parenting to helping your child to read. In addition, you can choose to meet with a Parent Educator individually to discuss your own child's development. This program is available here to any parents with children 5 and under, even during pregnancy free of charge. If you would like to receive more information about this program please sign the Parents as Teachers sign up sheet at the end of this program.

If the 24/7 Dad Program is being offered in your community read this portion of the script.

One of the first things we learn as new moms and dads is that our children need our love and support 24/7. Truly, the rewarding work of being a dad is never done. That is what makes the **24/7 Dad™ Program** so exciting. This 12 week program focuses on the characteristics that ever dad needs. You will fine tune your fathering skills as you learn about yourself and the important role you play in the lives of your children. This truly is a comprehensive program that you will absolutely love. If you'd like to learn more about this program please sign up at the end of this session.

What else does your child need to grow and thrive? Does your child need support from you emotionally? Certainly a lot of men are uncomfortable talking about the warm fuzzy mushy stuff. Scientific research makes it very clear though that emotional 'bonding' between a child and parents is crucial for a child to become a healthy adult. A baby's world is very small and very dependent on adult caregivers. As children grow they need to take risks to gain life skills. Kids are more likely to take risks to learn new skills if they believe their parents and caregivers will support their efforts and be there to rescue them if things don't turn out. Kids who have not "bonded" well in childhood are likely to have trouble dealing with life situations and relating to other people as they grow up.

"Bonding" happens at different times for mothers and fathers. A mother gets to know her child throughout the pregnancy. The birth and care of the baby starts their final stage of bonding.

Fathers may also begin bonding with their children before birth but usually their bonding increases after birth. Something happens when they first see their newborn child and say "this is mine." Time together with their child increases the connection. But, due to circumstances we can't always be with our children as much as we might like. Parents who cannot be with their children in person may be tempted to shrug it off and say "I can't do anything." That doesn't have to be the case! Your child has a right to know that you are thinking of them, that you love them, and respect them enough to play some role in their life. A child who doesn't know where he stands with his father will normally wonder what's wrong with him that his dad doesn't want to have anything to do with him. That child is likely to feel worthless and respect himself less.

What are some things a parent can do when they don't see their children often that will encourage a child's development?

Activity 2: Talk about ideas for maintaining "contact" and pass out "Ways to Stay in Touch" handout

It is the efforts of the father to care for, play with, and get to know the child that creates a “bond” between parent and child. When a child gets to know the father and the father bonds with the child, this “attachment” helps their relationship become more comfortable. This may seem like a big job, but it’s not hard to do. A child naturally wants to bond with parents. The trick for fathers is to have opportunity to form the bond and then to expend the energy to maintain it by regular contact with the child. A child’s frame of reference is short when it comes to time. If months go by with no contact, the child’s recollection may become weaker. Also, since a child wants to be in relationship with parents, unpredictable periods of contact, then no contact, confuse and upset the child. Being there for your child emotionally is as important as your financial and legal obligations to your child.

3. FATHERS & LEGAL RIGHTS

Both parents play important roles in a child’s life. For some parents, “legalities” are not really on their mind as they work together on deciding how to raise their child. For others, establishing a legally recognized parent relationship plays an important role in making plans for and caring for their child.

Being a father has personal, emotional, business and legal concerns all tied up together. Not only do you have to think about your role as a father, but a lot of time and attention will be devoted to thinking about what is best for your child. Now we are going to be talking about some of the legal issues that affect both you and your child. Some men think of this in terms of “father’s rights,” but let’s also keep in mind that your child has rights that you as a father will have an interest in protecting as well.

Legal Status

The type of relationship you have had with the other parent of your child: married, divorced or never married ... can significantly affect your legal parental rights. When the child is born, the mother automatically becomes a legal parent. It is somewhat different for the father. If the biological parents are married at the time the child is born, the father also automatically becomes a legal parent. This is also true if the parents marry after the birth of the child. For dads who are still married to their child’s mother, there are generally few legal concerns. Most of what we are going to talk about now does not apply to you.

If the parents are not married, a father’s status is more complicated. It is possible for the parents to list both their names on the child’s birth certificate. This gives the father some standing. For example, that is sufficient to set up a child support order for the child. But a support order alone generally does not cover parenting time or decision-making privileges.

A father’s status as the legal parent may be established in a number of ways:

1. We already mentioned that marriage before or after the birth of the child gives the father full legal status.

2. A legal proceeding called “paternity establishment” may be filed when the father has not been married to the mother. Either paternity testing or the father’s testimony that he is the parent of the child will result in creation the legal status as a parent.
3. The mother and father of the child can sign and file a written affidavit with the Bureau of Vital Records. A court order for parenting time may be desirable if the parents do not live together.

Parenting Plans

If you are not living with the mother of your child there are many decisions that will need to be made. In addition to deciding where the child lives and how much time each parent spends with the child, there are other details you will need to work out. All of these details should be included in what is called a parenting plan.

Communication is a very important subject to cover. Unless parents can get in touch with each other and receive and share information in a timely manner, it will be hard to take care of the child’s needs in the best way possible. Each parent has the right to receive information about their child’s school activities, report cards, progress reports and other information unless denied visitation rights. These are the types of details that will need to be included as you decide how to cooperate to raise your children.

Financial support of your child is another important matter. Each parent is expected to support the child financially. The parent who does not have physical custody will usually be ordered to contribute support by paying child support to the parent with physical custody. Child support is based on the income both parents would contribute to provide the child with a standard of living the child would enjoy if the parents were living together. A court is required to consult Supreme Court Form 14 to arrive at the appropriate amount of child support. Form 14 is also used by the Child Support agency to calculate the appropriate amount of child support. Hopefully, every parent will do their best to pay child support in a timely manner. When circumstances like injury, job termination, or confinement prevent parents from paying on time, arrangements need to be made to address these hardships as soon as possible. The amount of child support can also be changed or “modified” if there is a substantial change in circumstances for either parent. If you think your order needs to be modified you can contact your local Child Support Office and request a “Request for Modification”. Changes can also be mediated through the local mediation programs. A custodial parent is not entitled to withhold access to the child because child support is not paid on time. And a parent is not entitled to withhold payment of child support because the parent is denied access to the child. Either way the child loses. Your local Child Support Office can provide you with a variety of resources to assist you in taking care of your child.

As you have probably already realized, mom and dad will need to consult each other in order to make decisions about the health, education and well-being of their child. Although the courts can set up the framework, once outside the courthouse, the parents are in charge of making things work.

*If **mediation** is available in your community please read this part of the script.*

If you do not live with the mother of your children you may have issues that you need to resolve related to the care of your children such as when the children will spend time with each parent. Mediation may be an option for you. Mediation is a confidential, down to earth way to resolve problems with the help of an impartial third party. Mediation allows parents to find practical solutions to fit their circumstances. It also helps parents learn new positive ways to work with one another to parent their children. Mediation gives parents more control of the decisions that are made regarding their children. If this sounds like something you would like to learn more about, please sign up at the end of the session.

Most of us want to care for our children the best that we can. If you are having difficulty finding a job that allows you to support your children in the way that you want to, Workforce Development (*insert name of your state agency responsible for employment services*) is offering **Enhanced Employment Services** that might help you. This program can assist you in identifying the programs and services you are eligible for ranging from transportation assistance to training. If you would like to learn more, please sign up after this session.

In conclusion, the legal rights of fatherhood go hand in hand with the emotional and business responsibilities of being a father. Rights are best protected by taking care of your business as a father

4. COMMUNICIATION BETWEEN FATHERS AND MOTHERS

The birth of a child brings new challenges to two people to come together to raise a child. If we took a poll right now asking how good the relationship is with your child's mother, I imagine we would have a range of answers from good to not-so-good. That's normal, but if the situation is frustrating to you, it doesn't have to stay that way. Based on what you have heard today and what you know about parenting, how important do you think it is for fathers and mothers to be able to talk to each other in positive ways whether they live together or not? You're right! It's very important! We know that children benefit when their parents cooperate and work as a team to promote their development.

Believe it or not: you can have a successful co-parenting relationship with the other parent even if you don't want to be friends! You can have a successful co-parenting relationship whether you live together or not. You can have a successful co-parenting relationship with the other parent even if you don't trust them! You can have a successful co-parenting relationship with the other parent if the other parent doesn't want to change! The kicker is you have to be willing to

be friendly. You have to be willing to be trustworthy. You have to be willing to make changes.

What the other parent thinks and does is beyond your control. What is in your control? To be successful, you need the right communication skills. This is true whether you live with your child's mother or not. Until you can get the other parent to listen, you can't get them to think about what you say. Until you can get the other parent to think about what you say, you can't get them to act on it. Communication can be tricky but luckily it is also a skill we can practice and improve. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you communicate and cooperate to parent your child.

Tip 1: Listen Twice as Much as You Talk

Communicating means talking and listening. It is almost impossible to listen while you are talking. It is almost impossible to listen when you are thinking about what you are going to say next. It is necessary to know what is being discussed before you can discuss it. Listening more than you talk is a good rule of thumb to hear the message from the other parent.

Tip 2: Try to understand the intended message.

As you listen it is important to listen for a person's intended message. Often we interpret what we hear differently than the person intended it. When we are dealing with something emotional like our children, it is easy to jump to a conclusion about what the message is before we fully understand what the other person is trying to tell us. Listening for the underlying meaning, then asking questions to understand the message can help.

Tip 3: Be Courteous and Respectful

Being courteous and respectful is not always easy but it is always important. It has been said that the greatest gift you can give your child is to be respectful to your child's mother. The key to resolving a conflict is to remove the anger so you can discuss a solution. A good way to do that is to show the other parent respect and refuse to return anger with anger.

Communication can be complicated regardless of your situation and the tips above are only a portion of what we can do to build a cooperative parenting relationship. There are several programs available that can support you if you are interested in improving your relationship with your child's mother. One that we have already discussed is mediation.

If the Relationship Enrichment Skills Program is being offered in your community read this portion of the script.

As we mentioned earlier in the session, becoming a parent introduces new challenges to two people as they learn to cooperate to raise a child. If you currently live with the mother of your children and would like to continue to work together to improve your relationship and communication skills, the **Relationship Enrichment Skills Session** is perfect for you. During this one-time session you

and your partner will work with a leader couple to practice communication strategies that will make you more cooperative and effective parents. If this sounds interesting to you please sign up for more information at the end of this session.

If the Parenting Apart Program is being offered in your community read this portion of the script.

If you are not currently living with the mother of your children, you may also be looking for ways to build a more cooperative parenting relationship. **The Parenting Apart class** is a 3 session workshop designed to help you do just that. This program will assist you and the mother of your children in practicing positive communication and problem solving skills. You will learn to address issues in a way that targets the best outcomes for your children. If you are interested in getting additional information about this program, please sign up at the end of this session.

5. CONCLUSION

Being the kind of father you'd like your child to have does require discipline and effort. The benefits for your child are great. You've got some good raw material to work with because you are your child's father. You are the only one who can decide how much effort that is worth.

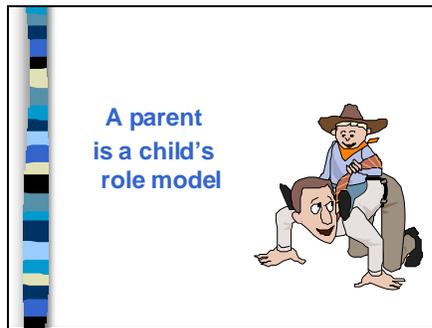
Thanks for participating in Proud Parent. We sincerely hope that some of the ideas presented here will be helpful to you and your child. I encourage you to speak to me before you leave if you would like to follow up with some of the programs and services we mentioned. Also, please complete the workshop evaluation.

PROUD PARENT POWERPOINT SLIDES (with facilitator notes)

Slide 1

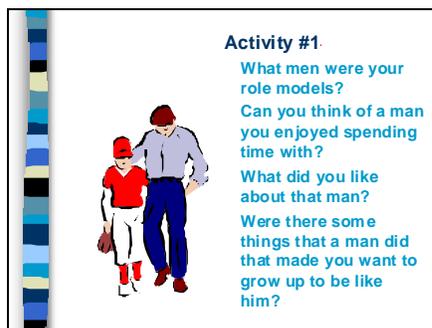


Slide 2



Have you ever watched kids pretending to be grown up? They may be playing doctor or space explorer, dreaming they are professional athletes, even cowboys and Indians! But who do kids really look up to, to see what the future holds for them? Adults, of course – and in particular, parents. Being a role model is heavy-duty stuff.

Slide 3



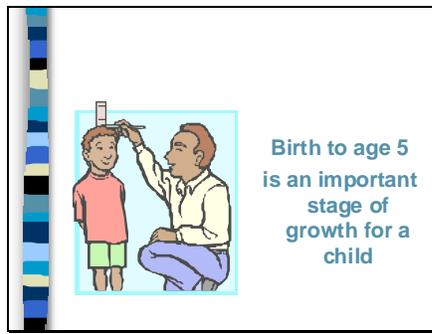
Think back to when you were a child. What men were your role models? Can you think of a man you enjoyed spending time with? What did you like about that man? Were there some things that man did that made you want to grow up to be like him?

Discuss men in participants lives

“Being a parent is the most demanding job you never got training for! A father has an

important role to play in the life of his child. Sometimes parents want their child to have the kind of childhood they had and sometimes parents want to raise their child differently. Parents need the know-how to accomplish the job.”

Slide 4



A smart father will find out how his child learns and grows and will be thinking of ways to support and encourage it.

Did you know that a child must gain a sense of personal safety and security before he is willing to check out the rest of the world? Scientists have learned that 90% of brain growth happens in the first three years of a child's life. From birth the brain uses experiences from the outside world to make itself work. If the brain doesn't get the right experience at the right time, the brain will not get properly "wired" to do certain jobs. If the opportunity is missed, this wiring can still happen later on, but it will be harder.

By age three a child should understand about 1,000 words – that about 65% of the words he will use in everyday life as an adult.

By age four a child's brain has reached 75% of it's adult size.

A child needs to accomplish a lot by age 5!

Slide 5

Parents as Teachers



Supports parents to help children reach their full potential

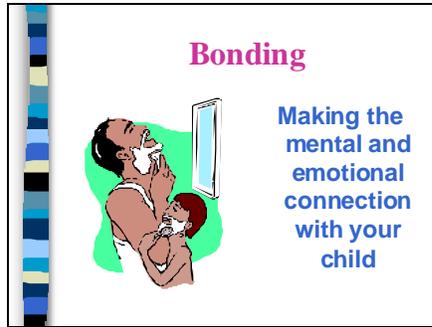
Slide 6

24/7 Dad™ Program



Focuses on the characteristics that every dad needs

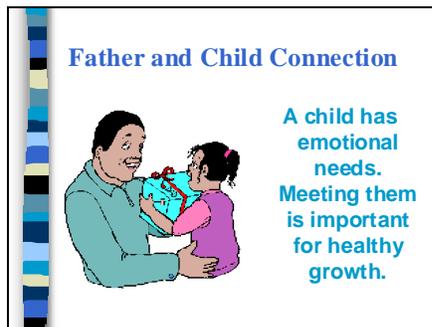
Slide 7



“Bonding” happens at different times for mothers and fathers. A mother gets to know her child throughout the pregnancy. The birth and care of the baby starts their final stage of bonding.

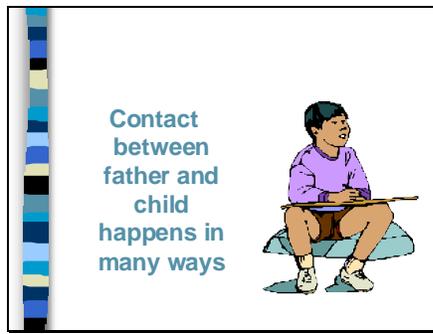
Fathers “bond” to their children after birth. It starts when they first see their newborn child and say “this is mine.” But often, it takes time being with and enjoying your child to connect. What you know in your head takes time and contact with your child to become lodged in your heart. The fathers in this video will tell us about some of the moments that made them proud to be a dad.

Slide 8



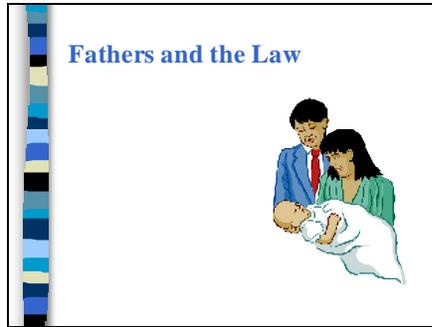
Does your child need support from you emotionally? Certainly a lot of men are uncomfortable talking about the warm fuzzy mushy stuff. Scientific research makes it very clear though that emotional ‘bonding’ between a child and parents is crucial for a child to become a healthy adult. A baby’s world is very small and very dependent on adult caregivers. As children grow they need to take risks to gain life skills. Kids are more likely to take risks to learn new skills if they believe their parents and caregivers will support their efforts and be there to rescue them if things don’t turn out. Kids who have not “bonded” well in childhood are likely to have trouble dealing with life situations and relating to other people as they grow up.

Slide 9



Parents who cannot be with their children in person may be tempted to shrug it off and say “I can’t do anything.” That doesn’t have to be the case! Your child has a right to know that you are thinking of them, that you love them, and respect them enough to play some role in their life. A child who doesn’t know where he stands with his father will normally wonder what’s wrong with him that his dad doesn’t want to have anything to do with him. That child is likely to feel worthless and respect himself less.

What are some things a parent can do from a distance that encourages a child’s development?



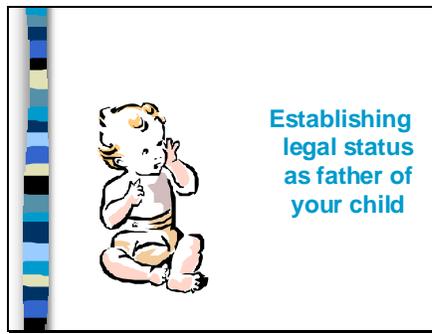
Both parents play important roles in a child's life. For some parents, "legalities" are not really on their mind as they work together on deciding how to raise their child. For others, establishing a legally recognized parent relationship plays an important role in making plans for and caring for their child.

Being a father has personal, emotional, business and legal concerns all tied up together. Not only do you have to think about your role as a father, but a lot of time and attention will be devoted to thinking about what is best for your child. During this session we are going to be talking some of the legal issues that affect both you and your child. Some men think of this in terms of "father's rights," but let's also keep in mind that your child has rights that you as a father will have an interest in protecting as well.

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there are generally few legal concerns. Most of what we are going to talk about now does not apply to you.

Slide 11



If the parents are not married, a father's status is more complicated. It is possible for the parents to list both their names of the child's birth certificate. This gives the father some standing. For example, that is sufficient to set up a child support order for the child. But a support order alone generally does not cover parenting time or decision-making privileges.

A father's status as the legal parent may be established in a number of ways:

1. We already mentioned that marriage before or after the birth of the child gives the father full legal status.
2. A legal proceeding called "paternity establishment" may be filed when the father has not been married to the mother. Either paternity testing or the father's testimony that he is the parent of the child will result in creation the legal status as a parent.

3. The mother and father of the child can sign and file a written affidavit with the Bureau of Vital Records. A court order for parenting time may be desirable if the parents do not live together.

Slide 12



There is a law in Missouri that sets out the matters that should be covered by a court-ordered parenting plan. As you would suspect, deciding where the child lives and how much time each parent cares for the child are important details.

Communication is a very important subject to cover. Unless parents can get in touch with each other and share information in a timely manner, it will be hard to take care of the child's needs in the best way possible. Each parent has the right to receive information about their child's school activities, report cards, progress reports and other information.

Slide 13

Enhanced Employment Services

Help is available when financial support is a problem

Slide 14

Communication

Tip #1

Listen
Twice
as Much as
you Talk



“If we took a poll right now asking how good the relationship is with your child’s mother, I imagine we would have a range of answers from good to not-so-good. That’s normal, but if the situation is frustrating to you, it doesn’t have to stay that way.

“It may be really hard to see yourself as a good father in your current situation. Your child’s mother may be putting you down, or at least thinking you’re a loser. It’s normal to want to defend yourself when it looks like someone is taking a shot at you. In fact, the other parent may be expecting you to fight with her and is prepared for it. Most likely she will respond in kind and an argument will erupt. No effective communication can take place when you are just shooting each other down. A real danger is that as things heat up one or both of you will say something in anger that will make the situation worse than when you started. If you are already in a hole, you need to ask yourself if you want to dig it deeper.”

When another person tries to

pin the blame for something on us it's natural to react by trying to deflect the disappointment or anger, whether it really was our fault or not. Trying to shift responsibility elsewhere will only cause the other person to become argumentative. If we are not at fault we need to ask ourselves "is this battle worth fighting right now?" Often the subject you really want to discuss is more important. If we really are at fault it helps a lot to acknowledge it. Otherwise it lowers trust. Instead, we need to find out what we can do to make things right to increase trust.

Here's some comments from fathers that decided to start climbing out of the hole they were in.

Slide 15



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What the other parent thinks and does is beyond your control. What is in your control? To be

successful, you need the right communication skills. Until you can get the other parent to listen, you can't get them to think about what you say. Until you can get the other parent to think about what you say, you can't get them to act on it."

"It's not so much what you say, as how the listener hears it that matters. The Long Distance Dads program will study good communication rules. If you apply the rules, your ability of deal with the other parent should improve.

Slide 16



Fathers who are in a close relationship with their child's mother now or who are considering a closer relationship may be interested in the Relationship Enrichment Skills program. (*description*)

Slide 17

Relationship Enrichment Skills



Helps parents who live together to continue to improve their relationship and communication skills

Slide 18

Parenting Apart



Assists parents living apart to practice positive communication and problem solving skills

Ways to Stay in Touch with Your Child

1. Lessons to Share. Think about your life. What has been important to you? What positive lessons have you learned? Write them down or tape record your list to share with your child.
2. Write a story together. As you send each other letters, take turns adding to the story – don't forget the pictures!
3. Tape yourself telling a story or reading a book, and then send it to your child.
4. Each day, think of a different thing you like about your child and write it down. Send the list to your child at the end of the week.
5. Share stories about your childhood. Each week, record childhood memories to share with your child the next time you write or see them.
6. Make something for your child and send it to them. For example, you might draw a picture, write a poem or short story, or create a piece of artwork.
7. Ask your child to make something for you. For example, you might ask, "Would you draw me a picture of your new puppy? He sure sounds cute." Or, "Blue is my favorite color, too. Will you color me a picture with a lot of blue in it?"
8. Set kindness goals together. Make an agreement to be nicer to those around you. For example, you and your child can agree to say something kind to someone each day (even if it's yourself!). Then, next time you and your child meet, talk about your kindness goal. How did it work out?

Words to Grow on

It can be hard to know what to talk about with your kids. "How are you?" is a good question, but sometimes it is easier for children to answer a more specific question (How do you like riding your bike? Are you enjoying the summer? What do you do during the day? Etc.).

Some other conversation starters during visits or in letters:

- What is your favorite... (book, movie, thing to do on a rainy day, game, food, etc.)?
- What do you think about... ?
- What do you play at recess?
- What is the most interesting thing you do in school?
- What do you want to do when you get older?
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? What would you do there?
- What are some things that make you happy?
- Do you want to ask me questions about when I was your age?
- Have you ever done anything you were sorry about? What happened?
- Do you ever get scared?
- What is your normal day like?
- How do you get to school? Do you take the bus or ride in a car?
- Have you ever been to... (the Arch, the zoo, a play, a museum, a library, a farm, etc.)?
- What do you like the most about who you are?

Listening to your child

It is important for children to know we listen to what they say. This shows we care about them. The next time you see or write back to your child, try one or more of the following tips:

- Rephrase what your child told you.
- Ask questions to make sure you understood what they said.
- Make a comment to help show you understand.

Some examples:

Child: "We have a cat at home now."

Father: "You have a new cat – how did that happen?"

Child: "Our neighbor's cat had kittens. Mom let me keep one!"

Father: "It can be exciting to have a kitten. Does it have a name yet?..."

Or:

Child: "I wish I could see you more often."

Father: "I would like to be with you, too. It's hard to be away from people you love so much. Let's talk about what we can do to stay in touch."

Meaningful Praise

It is important to praise your child frequently. Praise your child for trying, regardless of what happens. For example, when your child tries out for the soccer team but doesn't make it, your conversation might go like this:

Child: "I didn't make the team."

Father: "Did you give it your best shot?"

Child: "I did. I practiced so hard, but I still wasn't good enough."

Father: "I'm sorry. I know you are disappointed. I am so proud of you for trying and working so hard. Good for you!"

Or

Child: "Look, Daddy. I colored you a picture!"

Father: "Wow! Look at all the different colors. You must have worked hard making this for me. I hope you're proud of yourself – I sure am! Thanks!"

We all feel good when someone says nice things about us!

Some more ideas for things to say or write to your child:

- I love spending time with you.
- You have such interesting things to say.
- I really like who you are.
- You add so much to my life.
- I'm so lucky to have you in my life.
- I believe in you.
- You're a great kid.
- I like it when you try so hard.
- I respect you.
- That is such a great idea!
- You are very special to me.

I love you. No matter what happens, I will always love you!

It is important for fathers to stay involved with their children.
Know who they are. Know what they do. Fathers are for life!

For more information on these and other ideas:

Dads at a Distance: An Activities Handbook for Strengthening Long Distance Relationships. Published in 2001 by the National Institute for Building Long Distance Relationships (Provo, Utah).

Live-Away Dads: Staying a Part of your children's Lives when they Aren't a Part of your Home, by William C. Klatte. Published in 1999 by Penguin Books (New York, New York).

Proud Parents Workshop Evaluation

Date: _____

Location: _____

Please check the box that states how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. The length of the program was about right.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

2. The materials in this session were helpful.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

3. The program allowed enough chances for me to participate and ask questions.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

4. The presenter for the program was well organized and easy to understand.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

5. The presenter understood the needs and problems of families going through custody and/or support negotiations.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

6. The presenter held my interest throughout the program.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

7. The program helped me understand how children are affected by not living with both parents.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

8. The information presented will influence the decisions I make regarding my children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

9. As a result of this program, I plan to try harder to work with my children's other parent for the sake of the children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

10. The program increased my understanding of the importance of developing a plan that provides opportunities for both parents to have a relationship with their children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

11. The program helped me to better understand the benefits to my children if their other parent and I can cooperate with each other.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

12. The program helped me to better understand the needs and reactions of children of various ages who are not living with both parents.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

13. The program helped me think of new ways to resolve issues about the children with the children's mother.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

14. The program offered helpful suggestions to support my children's relationships with me and with their mother.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

15. The program provided useful ideas about reducing stress for children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

16. I plan to avoid arguing/fighting with my children's mother in front of the children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

17. I plan to avoid questioning my children about their mother's relationships.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

18. I plan to avoid saying negative things about my children's mother in front of them.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

19. Overall, the program was worthwhile.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

Thank you for completing this evaluation.