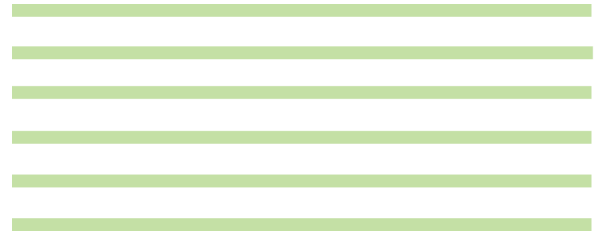


FATHERHOOD NEWSLETTER



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August brings us to the end of summer, and school is starting up again for most children in Oklahoma. As we get closer to having kids back in school, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the continued use of a well-fitting face mask for children and teens who are age 2 years and older and not yet fully vaccinated. Without vaccine approval in place for children under 12, masking is the best tool we have to keep kids safe as they go back to school.

Please connect with us!

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Why do humans have fathers?

Among all mammals, humans stand out in how males care for their children. Rebecca Sear, an anthropologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine reports, "If you look at other mammals, fathers tend to do nothing but provide sperm," When looking at the early ancestors of humans mothers got help from their community and their kin, including fathers. This freed them up enough to have more babies, closer together – about every three years, on average, in today's nonindustrial societies. Lee Gettler, an anthropologist at the University of Notre Dame, studied men in the Philippines for five years first in their early twenties and gathered biological data on them throughout this time. He and his colleagues found that men with higher testosterone in their early 20s were more likely to have partners and children later on. However, the high testosterone dropped dramatically at the end of the study, especially if there was a newborn at home. It seems that suppressing testosterone prepares fathers to cooperate with their partners and care for their children. Our ability to adapt and cooperate with our partners makes fathers invaluable to help our children thrive.

Masculinity can be nurturing

There are some messages we receive as men that we now recognize as harmful (boys don't cry, you throw like a girl, boys will be boys, etc.), but new research shows that there are some very beneficial "traditionally masculine" traits that make for great fathers. Professor Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan and her colleagues identified that competitiveness and adventurousness were traits that were linked to fathers that were more engaged and invested in their children's lives. This was apart from negative traits (such as hostile sexism) that were not linked to positive parenting.



Rush Springs Watermelon Festival

Rush Springs is hosting its annual Watermelon Festival August 12th through the 14th at Jeff Davis Park, E Main Street, Rush Springs, OK.

The Watermelon Festival time includes a rodeo on Thursday August 12th, 5k run, seed spitting contest, live music, a car show, a carnival starting Thursday night, crowning of Mr. and Miss Rush Springs, and of course watermelon! This is the 76th iteration of the Rush Springs Watermelon Festival, which began in 1948. This festival is a great way to end your summer before the start of the school year. Come join one of Oklahoma's longest-running and fun events with your family!



New dad tool for your toolbox for August: 3 Ways to bond with your new baby

1. Think about a part of the baby's routine that you can consistently make just you the two of you. It could be reading each night before bedtime, daily tummy-time play, walking (or pushing in a stroller) around the local park, any of these or another activity can be a part of bonding with your child early in life.

2. Wear your baby. There are many ways to wear your new baby, from cloth wraps, to more structured baby carriers, and even baby carriers with built-in backpacks for hiking. Wearing your baby is a great way to comfort them and keep them close to you while keeping your hands free. Baby wearing is a great way to calm your baby, and releases oxytocin (a bonding hormone) connecting you to your baby

3. Practice soothing your new baby—Skin-to-skin contact (holding your baby to your bare chest), shushing softly, singing, and swinging (gentle rocking) are some of the best ways to soothe and bond with your new baby. Holding eye contact while soothing your baby can also assist with bonding.

4. Take the early shift. Often (although not always) babies are in a better mood in the morning. Take advantage of this time to get more smiles as the sun comes up. As a bonus this may be a good time to give your partner a break if she has been up longer with night feedings.

5. Take advantage of peers who have recently had babies as opportunities to make new connections and friendships with other new dads for support. Make time to meet up with other new dads so you can build these relationships and your children can begin becoming familiar with other babies.

6. Play! One of the unique ways fathers parent is through rough and tumble play. Flying your baby through your home like an airplane, bouncing the baby up and down and lots of tickling. This type of play ramps up the release of oxytocin, dopamine and beta-endorphin. This means babies and their dads get a head rush of bonding chemicals.

Changing the course

⁴Many men will agree that fatherhood has changed them and the course of their lives. Researcher Rob Palkovitz and his colleagues set out to explore that notion through interviews with 40 men who began fatherhood at different stages in their lives. These men ranged in ages from 20 to age 45 when they became fathers. **One group of these men that saw it as a “jolt” to the course of their life, while another saw it as something that “gently evoked” latent parts of their personality.** The majority of the men interviewed saw fatherhood as the event that shaped their lives the most and a core part of their identities. **Being a father was critically important to all of them regardless to the stage of life**



Need Resources?

Throughout the state you can call 211 or go to <https://www.211oklahoma.org> for help with housing, food, utilities, mental health, transportation, COVID-19 information, or other needs.



REFERENCES

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- ²Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Shafer, K., Olofson, E. L., & Kamp Dush, C. M. (2021). Fathers' parenting and coparenting behavior in dual-earner families: Contributions of traditional masculinity, father nurturing role beliefs, and maternal gate closing. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 22(3), 538–550.
- ³Thomas, L. (2017, May 11). *7 Ways for a New Dad to Bond With Baby* <https://www.thebump.com/a/7-ways-for-a-new-dad-to-bond-with-baby>
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