



Fastbreak For Fathers

a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.

by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

You are receiving this e-mail because you sent a request to fatherwork@douglas.co.us. You may unsubscribe at anytime by sending an unsubscribe request to the same address.

In this issue: Marital and coparenting relationship and fathering.

Observations

I have never claimed to be a good singer, but I do sing, around the house that is. One of my favorite songs to sing to my children, when they were much younger, begins like this - "I love you and I love your mother. She loves you just as much as me. We both think that you're somethin' special . . ." Don't try to guess the song; it's home grown. Do your kids know how much you love them? Do they know how much you love their mom? How frequently do you tell them, and in how many ways? I still sing that little ditty to my kids, but now instead of a giggle in a smile, I get a he's weird look and a smile.

Whether you're married, a single dad, or remarried, your relationship with the mother of your children is important to your children. You may no longer be in a love relationship, but you can do what you can to communicate respect, appreciation, cooperation and support.

Research

Research on young children and adolescents consistently shows that relationships between fathers and children are more sensitive to parents' marital quality than are relationships between mothers and children.

Harris, K.M., F.F. Furstenberg, and J.K. Marmer, *Paternal Involvement with Adolescents in Intact Families: The Influence of Fathers over the Life Course*. *Demography* 35 (1998): 201-216; see also Booth, A., and P. Amato. *Parental Marital Quality, Parental Divorce, and Relations with Parents*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (1994): 21-34; and Cooney, T.M. *Young Adults' Relations with Parents: The Influence of Parental Divorce*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (1994): 45-56.

When parents report greater intimacy and better communication in their relationship, they tend to be more attuned to and affectionate toward their children. Inside married couple families, the quality of the marital relationship itself is the best-documented influence on coparenting (the process by which spouses support each other in the parenting role and share the responsibilities and tasks of childrearing). In the presence of serious marital conflict, fathers tend to withdraw from their children and from coparenting, whereas mothers do not show the same level of withdrawal (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997; Doherty et al., 1998). When nonresidential fathers exercise authoritative parenting (the combination of a high level of support with a moderately high level of noncoercive control) and cooperate with the mother, child well-being is positively affected (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999).

Amato, P.R., & Gilbreth, J.G. (1999) Nonresident fathers and children's well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 557-573. Cummings, E.M., & O'Reilly, A.W. (1997) Fathers in family context: Effects of marital quality on child adjustment. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.) *The role of the father in child development* (pp.49-65). New York: Wiley. Doherty, W.J. Kouneski, E.F., & Erickson, M.F. (1998) Responsible Fathering: An overview and conceptual framework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 277-292.

Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Ideas

John Gottman, co-founder of the Gottman Institute, has coined the term *Love Map* to describe how intimately familiar one is with their partner's or child's world. The more you know and understand about each other, the easier it is to keep connected and communicate your love. To that end, Dr. Gottman has developed a questionnaire that helps you assess how well you know another. Try some of these true or false statements to test your insights.

- I can name my partner's (child's) best friends.
- I can tell you what stresses my partner (child) is currently facing.
- I know the three times that have been most special in my partner's (child's) life.
- I know my partner's (child's) major current worries.
- I can list my partner's (child's) major aspirations and hopes in life.
- I can list my partner's (child's) three favorite movies, toys, songs, activities.
- I can tell you the most stressful thing that has happened to my partner (child).

You get the idea. Make up additional questions of your own that help you become more acquainted with the world of those most important to you . . . and then enter their world.

For an online quiz for you and your mate go to: www.gottman.com/marriage/relationship_quiz/quiz1/

Connections (specific to Douglas County Colorado)

Spirited Kids Need Confident Parents – Thursday February 26. 6:30 – 8:30 PM at Northridge Elementary School – Highlands Ranch Call 303.387.0128 to register.

Beside Every Great Dad: Insights to help your husband (or grown son) succeed as a father – This 45 minute workshop for women is a part of the Douglas County Women's Health and Wellness Day. 8 AM – 1 PM Saturday March 6 Call 720.733.6926 to register.

Father Fraternity – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Tuesday, February 17 (dads and infants), Tuesday, March 2 (dads and infants), Tuesday, March 16 (Dads, moms and infants) All classes are from 7:00 – 8:30 PM. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

Internet Safety: Seminar, Workshop and Asset Resource Fair – Tuesday, March 9 from 4:30 – 9:00 PM held at ThunderRidge High School, Highlands Ranch. Information available at www.cfyouth.org

Be a Fan of Your Kid Essay Contest – Write a story or draw a picture about how your dad is your biggest fan, or maybe it is your uncle, step-dad, or grandfather. Prizes will be awarded in two age groups: 9 & under and 10 & older. First place prize – eight luxury suite tickets to the Denver Nuggets/Houston Rockets game Friday, April 2! Entries must be received by March 17, 2004. Go to www.BeAFanOfYourKid.org for your entry form today.

"You can't be the kind of dad that you want to be. You can't be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You've got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be."
- Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative

If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know. Subscribe to **Fastbreak for Fathers** by sending an e-mail to fatherwork@douglas.co.us with "subscribe" in the subject line. Non-electronic versions of this newsletter are available upon request by calling 720.733.6926.

Fastbreak for Fathers is a publication of the Douglas County FatherWork Connection, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by
Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent - Douglas County
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
720.733.6926 rbatten@douglas.co.us**

Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.