

# 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](mailto:fatherwork@douglas.co.us). You may unsubscribe at anytime by sending an unsubscribe request to the same address. If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know. **Back issues of *Fastbreak* are available online at [www.douglascountyextension.org](http://www.douglascountyextension.org) and [www.beafanofyourkid.org](http://www.beafanofyourkid.org).**

In this issue: It's only housework! Or is it?

## OBSERVATIONS

**If you could do something as a husband and a dad that had great odds of increasing your spouse's personal happiness, marital satisfaction and interest in your sexual relationship, would you do it?**

How about if that same activity might influence your child's ability to get along with others, decrease the likelihood that he (or she) would disobey teachers, and less likely to be socially withdrawn or suffer depression?<sup>1</sup>

Seems like a no-brainer to me, but in reality many dads don't do enough of this activity. What is it? The title and images in this issue gave it away and I'm proud of you if you have read this far!

Housework. For most of us it's a dirty word. Few people enjoy the routine of shopping, cooking, washing dishes, laundry, cleaning the house, family paperwork and maintenance. The question of moms' "second shift" and dads' laziness is far more complex than most magazine articles report, yet the good news is; in general, dads are doing an increasingly larger share of household chores. The bad news, as one researcher put it, "is that everyone is working long hours . . . (and) nobody is doing much time in the easy chair."

For many families "chore wars" are the result of differing expectations and poor problem solving skills. The primary issue should not be how your family compares to other families, but rather how satisfied each of you are with how the household labor is divided up.

**Now that I've raised the issue . . .** tell your spouse how much you appreciate the housework she does. Ask her if she feels your family is maintaining a good balance in this area. Listen to what she has to say (after you revive her from her shock!) and work together to find the best strategy for your family and life circumstances. Your entire household will be glad you did.

---

<sup>1</sup> Outcomes summarized with references by Joshua Coleman in his book, *The Lazy Husband: How to get men to do more parenting and housework*. (p. 3) See resource section of this newsletter.

**Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.**



## RESEARCH

**A study published in the May 2005 issue of the *Journal of Marriage and Family*** compared men and women's estimates of time spent on housework with an "experience sampling method" (ESM) – participants wore a watch that randomly beeped once every two hours. Upon hearing the beep they wrote down what they were doing. This information was then used to estimate time spent during a week on chores, such as shopping, cooking, washing dishes, laundry, cleaning the house, family paperwork and maintenance.

Comparison of surveys and ESM estimates suggest that wives inflate their own time substantially more than they inflate their husbands', whereas husbands over-estimate both their own time and their wives' time consistently.

Lee, Y., & Waite, L. J. (2005) Husbands' and wives' time spent on housework: a comparison of measures. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 328-336.

## ACTION Plan

Many of you are planning right now to print this page, show it to your wife and say, "See I'm not the only husband who thinks he does more of the housework than he's given credit for!" Resist that temptation!

A far more productive discussion would be to say; "I read an article today about household chores. It seems both husbands and wives tend to overestimate the amount of chores they do and that wives tend to underestimate what their husbands do. I really appreciate all you do around the house (insert specific examples) and I'm wondering if you feel I contribute as much as you would like."

The following suggestions should help your family find a win-win when it comes to household chores:

- Spell out expectations.** Everyone benefits from knowing what is expected.
- Help without being asked.** Do onto others what you would like to be done onto you.
- Ask for help.** Don't expect your family to read your mind.
- Switch off on unpleasant chores.** No one should be shouldered with cleaning the toilet for life . . . unless of course they want to.
- Involve the kids.** Their future roommate or partner will thank you!
- Express appreciation . . . daily.**

## RESOURCES



***The Lazy Husband: How to get men to do more parenting and housework*** by Joshua Coleman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005). I can guarantee that this book is not on the wish list of the men who read this newsletter, but I can promise you that if you were to buy this book for your wife to read she would definitely take notice! Coleman recognizes that his readership is women (Chapter eight is written for husbands – 20 pages). Coleman believes that small, sometimes unbelievably small, adjustments in workload or appreciation can make a world of difference to a marriage. His focus is on how to motivate men to be better husbands and fathers because marriages and children do much better when they are. But change begins with oneself, and so Coleman helps both men and women take responsibility for how they contribute to the problem and begin to approach the issue as a team. Not a bad perspective regardless of your gender.

**Are you a Stay-at-Home Dad? Check out [www.slowlane.com](http://www.slowlane.com)** - A great source of support for stay-at-home dads, primary caregiving fathers, men and their families.

**Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.**

## Connections & Classes (Metro Denver & Beyond)



**Denver's WB Work and Family** – The WB's Morning Anchor, Natalie Tysdal discusses work and family issues with Rich Batten at approximately 6:40 AM every other Tuesday. Additional information on each segment is available at [www.douglascountyextension.org](http://www.douglascountyextension.org) (click on the WB2 logo). Upcoming segments include: June 21 – *The Chore Wars*, July 12 – *The Motherhood Study: Fresh insights on mothers' attitudes and concerns*.

### **Boys to Men: Building your son's character** A workshop for parents of sons grades 4-12

What and how are we teaching our sons to become men? Not just an adult by age, but a maturing young man who has developed an internal voice that compels him to act in an honorable, compassionate and responsible manner. Character is not a given in our children—it is developed through the continuing interplay between your son's distinctive wiring, his family, friends and experiences. Join other parents as together we explore ways to build our sons' character.

July 21, 28 (a two-evening class, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. at Grace Chapel, \$15.00 per person \$20.00 per couple. Offered through the *Douglas County School District's Parent University*. Call 303.387.0128 to register or download the course booklet and registration form at [www.douglascountyextension.org](http://www.douglascountyextension.org) (click on the Family & Consumer Science link – classes).



### **Bringing Baby Home** A Workshop for Pregnant Couples and Parents of Infants and Toddlers

Prepare yourself for life with your baby and learn how to be the best parenting team possible. Learn how to stay connected with your partner, interact with your baby, keep both parents involved, and deal with conflict in a positive way. This workshop will help to energize your relationship and prepare you for the most important and rewarding job you will ever have, *raising a child*.

Saturdays July 23 & 30 from 9 AM to 4 PM - \$150.00 per couple. Class size is limited to 12 couples. Offered through the Sky Ridge Medical Center in Lone Tree. Call 720-225-BABY (2229) or visit [www.skyridgemedcenter.com](http://www.skyridgemedcenter.com) to register.

***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](mailto: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. Images copyright © 2005 Douglas County Extension and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Back issues of *Fastbreak* are available online at [www.douglascountyextension.org](http://www.douglascountyextension.org) and [www.beafanofyourkid.org](http://www.beafanofyourkid.org)

**Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.**