

# Fastbreak For Fathers

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

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by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County  
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In this issue: Connecting with your kids

## OBSERVATIONS

**A recent article in the *Rocky Mountain News* noted that** “. . . not since Dustin Hoffman whipped up French toast for his son in ‘Kramer vs. Kramer’ has there been such prominent display given to the demonstrative dad: Movies such as ‘Finding Neverland,’ ‘Million Dollar Baby,’ ‘In Good Company,’ ‘Spanglish’ and ‘Hotel Rwanda’ all concentrate much of their narratives around life-affirming father-child relationships.” It seems a number of well-known and talented producers and directors have entered into fatherhood and it is affecting their work.



Most dads will never direct or produce a movie that others will pay to see, but every dad plays a key part in the writing, directing and producing of home movies, so to speak, that attempt to capture the story of life together as family. Ken Canfield, President of the **National Center for Fathering**, has developed a fathering framework that can help dads write and live out an improvisational screenplay that is built around the foundational needs of their kids. Canfield's framework summarizes the growing body of empirical research and literature on fathering. His four-part framework is not a formula for fathering – a rigid step-by-step program for success, but rather a valuable guide for dads who aspire to becoming the kind of father their child needs them to be. The framework consists of the following overarching functions (*I CANs*) of a father: involvement, consistency, awareness, and nurturance. None of us will get it right with every time, but I'm convinced that with a few takes you can have the making of a blockbuster – at least in the eyes of your child!

## IDEAS

**Involvement** Research on fathers clearly demonstrates the importance of positive father involvement. The general rule is that children who have positively involved fathers tend to do better socially, emotionally, and academically than children whose fathers are not positively involved. Positive involvement means that a father spends quality and quantity time with his children. Spending time with your child sends a strong message that you care about and value him. Being involved with your child can take a variety of forms. It may consist of coaching a baseball/softball team, helping with homework, feeding an infant, changing diapers, reading together, tucking a child in at night, taking a child to the mall, playing with a child, or simply being accessible. One of the best plans for becoming more involved with your child is to ask her what she enjoys doing with you, and make plans to do it.

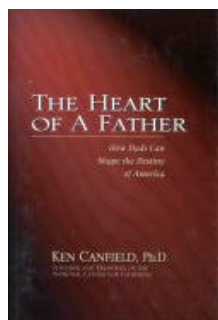
**Consistency** Responsible parenthood is rooted in consistency. Fathers build a trusting relationship with their children by providing consistent encouragement, discipline, protection, care, and love. Consistency in behavior on the part of fathers promotes a sense of security and confidence in children, which in turn, lays the groundwork for a healthy self-esteem. If your child is old enough, ask him what consistency means to him and what are the most important things to be consistent in.



**Awareness** William Shakespeare wrote, "It is a wise father that knows his own child." Becoming aware of your child's needs will help you to be better equipped to meet those needs at various stages of your child's life. If you have more than one child, you know from experience that every child is unique, each possessing a different set of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social characteristics. Effective fathers have insight into both general developmental issues and how their particular child experiences life. Become familiar with the characteristics of the developmental stage of your child. One way to increase your understanding of your child's individual characteristics is to take advantage of others' perspectives. Other people see different sides of your child's personality and emotions. Their perspectives will help you to get a more complete view of his world. Make it a habit to talk to those people about your son or daughter.

**Nurturance** Fathers play a critical role in the nurturing of their children by providing responsible and loving care that meets their emotional and social needs. A recent review of research on father love suggests that the influence of father love on their child's development is as great as and occasionally greater than the influence of mother love. One way to grow in your ability to be a more nurturing father is to focus on giving your child your child a daily dose of "vitamin A" – Attention, Affection and Affirmation.

## RESOURCES



***The Heart of a Father: How dads can shape the destiny of America*** (Chicago, IL: Northfield Press, 1996) Ken Canfield, the president and founder of the **National Center for Fathering** writes from the wisdom of a decade of research and thousands of men's experiences. The book is divided into three sections. Part 1 helps fathers put their past into proper perspective. Part 2 focuses on the four *I CANs* (see above) of fathering. Part 3 provides practical tips and straightforward how-to's by covering the life course of a father from infancy to grandfathering. The book includes a researched-based inventory to help dads assess their own fathering strengths and growth areas.

## RESEARCH

In a study published in the October 2003 issue of *Fathering: A journal of theory, research, and practice about men as fathers* authors Brotherson, Yamamoto and Acock explore the influence of communication and connection on father-child relationships. Their research supported the hypothesis that **higher levels of father-adolescent connection tend to have a positive and significant influence on the quality of the father-child relationship**. Father-child connection in this study referred to a father's efforts to create and maintain an interpersonal connection with his child by active participation in the child's life. The authors note that adolescence may be a time when connection through mutual activities is an especially important part of the father-child relationship for both sons and daughters. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health indicate that "connectedness to parents/family" is **perhaps the most important protective factor for adolescents in reducing behavioral risks** (Resnick et al., 1997).

Brotherson, S.E., Yamamoto, T., Acock, A.C. (2003). Connection and Communication in Father-Child Relationships and Adolescent Child Well-Being. *Fathering*, 1(3), 191-214.

Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., et al. (1997) Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(10), 823-832.

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## CONNECTIONS (Metro Denver)

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**Connecting with your Kid: Becoming the father your child needs you to be.** – (Douglas County School District) For dads of school age children K – 12. Thursday evenings February 3, 10, 17, 24, 2005.

- What impact do you have on your children?
- How do you discover the unique needs of your child?
- How do you become the kind of dad your child needs you to be?

These are the kinds of questions you will find answers to in *Connecting With Your Kids*. Participants will interact with four key practices of fathering and will receive direct feedback on their fathering strengths and weaknesses based on a fathering profile of best practices developed by the **National Center for Fathering**. Maximum class size: 50, Cost: \$30.00. Register by calling 303.387.0128.

**Sky Ridge Dads** – (Sky Ridge Medical Center) Four-week course for dads of infants up to eight months. Next session begins February 21. Call 720.225.2229 for more information and to register. Downloadable brochure available at: [http://www.skyridgemedcenter.com/cpm/SRMC\\_Dads.pdf](http://www.skyridgemedcenter.com/cpm/SRMC_Dads.pdf)

**Father Fraternity** – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Four-week course for dads of infants up to eight months. Next session begins in March. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

All of the above opportunities are taught and facilitated by Rich Batten. Rich is the father of four and has master's degrees in family studies and theology. He is a Certified Instructor for the **National Center for Fathering** and is certified as a Family Life Educator by the **National Council on Family Relations**.

**“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*

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**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. Images copyright © 2005 Douglas County Extension and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by  
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