

The Impact of Father Absence

A study conducted by Michael Lamb of the University of Michigan found that 7- to 13-month-old children reacted equally to separations from both parents. For instance, when their fathers left, the children would cry and complain just like when their mothers left. Obviously, **fathers play an important role to their children just as much as mothers.**

Research on father-child involvement shows that fathers are significant for children, sensitive to children, and they play with children differently than mothers do. **Warm and affectionate fathers can not only help their children develop positive self-esteem, but also influence the development of their children's gender role behavior. Fathers are significant for both girls and boys. Studies show that fathers have a positive influence on achievement in boys and personal adjustment in girls. Loving fathers who provide limit setting, moral reasoning and reasonable and firm guidance without imposing their will can help promote competence in their children.**

Fathers are also important to boys because they need to be with their fathers for gender role identification and experience growing up as a male. They need to learn from their fathers about male interests, activities, social behavior and skills. Although mothers can help boys learn some masculine activities, it may not be sufficient for children to learn the real things. That may create some pressure for single mothers to perform a father role.

Some studies show negative impacts on children when they experienced nonexistence or infrequent contact with a parent (usually the father). The studies indicate that the majority of children miss their fathers very much. Young children usually grieve the divorced father as if he had died. For some children, the permanent separation or father's absence may lead to prolonged grief. When children of divorce were asked what they would like to change, "spending more time with Dad" was the most common response.

In addition, father absence can have a negative effect on both boys' and girls' social behavior. Research found that children who experienced father absence were likely to have behavior problems and receive more criticism from their teachers and didn't do well in school, particularly in math.

Clearly, research results prove the importance of a father role for children to grow. If you have not been involved much in your child's life, start to spend quality time with your child now. For a divorced and non-residential parent, it is very important to keep regular contact and spend quality time with children.