

FOCUS ON FATHERS

SUPPORT BOOKLET



**PARENTING
FOCUS**

www.parentingfocus.org
Support line: 0808 8010 722



OUR MISSION

Fatherhood is a transformative journey that changes a dad's life forever. Our aim is to support a father's contribution by recognising and celebrating their role, expertise and input into family life.

The role of a father is evolving with many now taking a more active and engaged role in their children's lives.



FOCUS ON FATHERS

Fathers no longer tend to be the sole breadwinner and many more fathers are taking on the role of the primary care giver and stay at home dads. Research now shows each parent can be just as good as the other at meeting the various needs of the child and carry the same responsibilities.

The simple and true fact is that both parents are important to children.

This booklet aims to share some of the experiences of fathers and highlights the important need for fathers to practice their own self-care to ensure a healthy and flourishing life.

Focus on Fathers recognises that by supporting fathers this also benefits mothers, fostering stronger family relationships

For additional information, our website is
<https://www.parentingfocus.org>
We are also found on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
Free support line: 0808 8010 722



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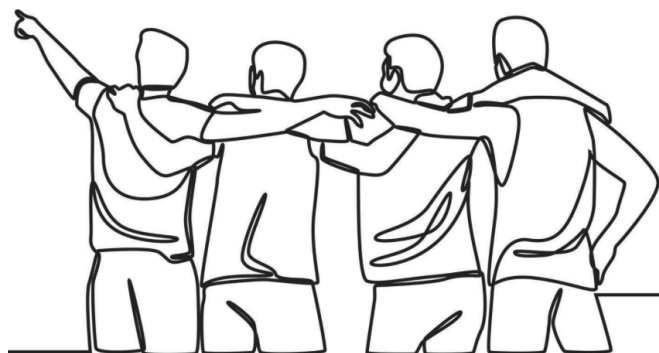


BEING A FATHER

DIARY EXTRACT FROM A FATHER

Thankfully with the aid of the dads group I found my divine intervention, my life support. They got me through my coma, the worst times. Slowly but surely my life is transforming. Chaos has turned to peace, despair into hope, emptiness into purpose. The narrative has changed: it's a lesson, not a loss; a delay, not a denial; a hurdle, not a deterrent.

To my daughter, Daddy is going nowhere. He is right beside you always, fast becoming the best version of himself, not a moment being wasted. No more animosity or recriminations between mummy & I. No more of you getting soaked in our storms. Daddy lives for you, loves you always, I promise I will see you soon.



DIARY EXTRACT FROM A FATHER

As a 53 year old separated dad to a wonderful and sometimes challenging 12 year old girl, I'm at the point in my life where I'm reflecting on the life I've led (both success and failure) and what the future holds for my daughter; both equally create feelings of depression and anxiety.

Reflecting on my life. My parents are the key to who I am. They did the best that they could, both amazing in their own right doing their best to ensure we were happy and healthy.

I accept things have changed and parents have different problems to what our parents had. Although the one thing which I feel we all still have in common (your parents and mine) is our mental health and wellbeing.



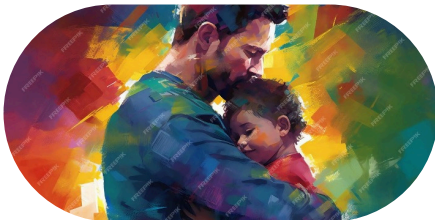
The answers to the big questions; and there are lots of them; I feel lies with me. Learning from my own uniqueness and experience, becoming the master, talking, exercising and ensuring the next generation has the opportunity to create a better version of family, where trust, empathy, selflessness, confidence and dare I say the enigma of love form the pillars on which to build. Life has no meaning except the meaning you give it. I'm not waiting for an empty life, instead I've chosen to build a strong unique family and a life that's full.

SERVICES

Weekly Online Dads Talk Sessions

Dads Talk has been developed by the project to provide regional online group meetings that offer separated dads the opportunity to meet with others, to share experiences and to explore solutions.

These regular sessions offer psychological benefits such as emotional support and mentoring which improve overall wellbeing and resilience.



Parenting Apart Programme

This 6-week programme is offered to parents to provide support after separation, to minimise the impact separation can have on their children.

Keeping Your Cool Programme

This programme allows parents to explore their reaction to anger and how losing their cool impacts on their children. It also helps identify the triggers and find positive ways of managing their behaviour.

Parents are given techniques to help them manage stress and understand their triggers.



Date: Mon 26th Feb
Time: 7.30 - 9pm
Location: Holywell Trust
10 - 12 bishop St
Derry/L'Derry BT48 6PN

Come along and join us at the men's cafe!
Hear about local community services, discuss worries with a local pharmacist & hear from local guest speaker's on men's health and wellbeing.

For more info call Cahir on 077394 66532 or email info@parentingni.org



Give back to others



Keep active



Enhance your health and wellbeing



Connect with others

Fathers & Families Programme

A 6-week long programme that offers support to fathers in their role as a parent. It focusses on the importance of having a father in a child's development and provides advice for communication techniques and ideas for quality time spent together.

Community Pharmacy Project

Men's Minds Matter - As part of the community pharmacy partnership the men's work in partnership with a local pharmacist in the Northwest to focus on enhancing their own wellbeing using community relationships, social network and neighbourhood services and activities.





EVENTS



Peoples Project - Empathy Tent May 2023
A safe, welcoming space for men to talk and access support from others.



Parenting Week - Empathy Tent October 2023
The empathy tent provides a public space for men to reconnect with the community. It also works towards developing men's voices locally.



Health Minister Visit - September 2024
The Northern Ireland Minister of Health visited the office and spoke with parents directly on how Parenting Focus has supported them with struggles. They raised concerns about mental health, assessment waiting lists, and the diversity of parental roles.



Derry Wellness Retreat - June 2024
An overnight escape allowed the dads group to prioritise themselves. They shared stories around the campfire and enjoyed the peacefulness of the retreat.



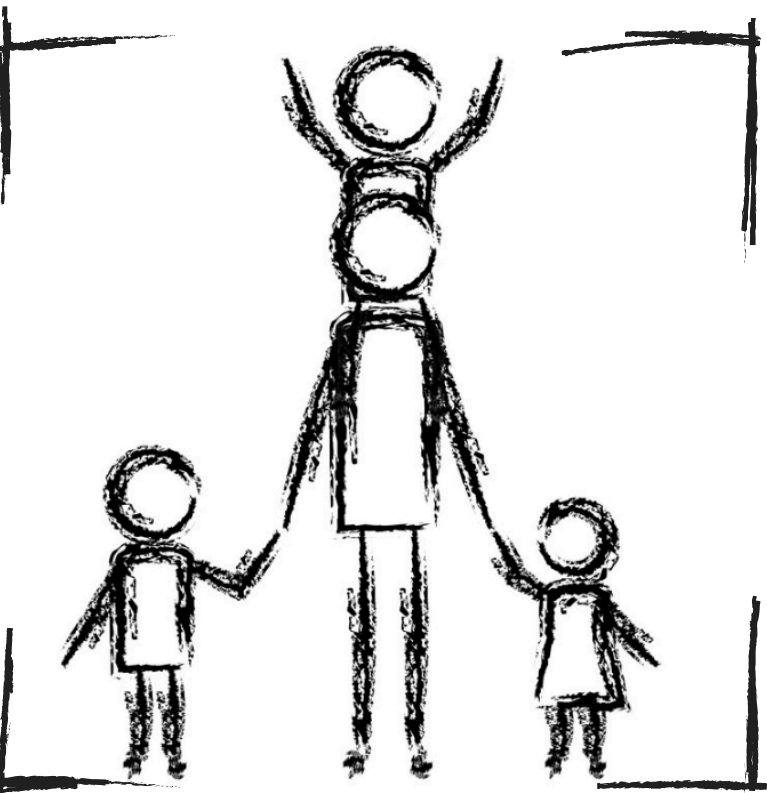
'Men's Minds Matter' held at St Columbs Park house Derry on Sat 19th Oct 2024.
This event was a celebration of the completion of the Community Pharmacy Project. Small group conversations were led by the men and each participant was awarded a certificate.



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A FATHER'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION



Research shows that a father's involvement with their child from a young age supports their academic achievements and leads to them making safer choices.

A father's engagement with their child also supports the creation of better social skills and responses to stress, which helps them to better navigate adulthood and entering into the workplace.

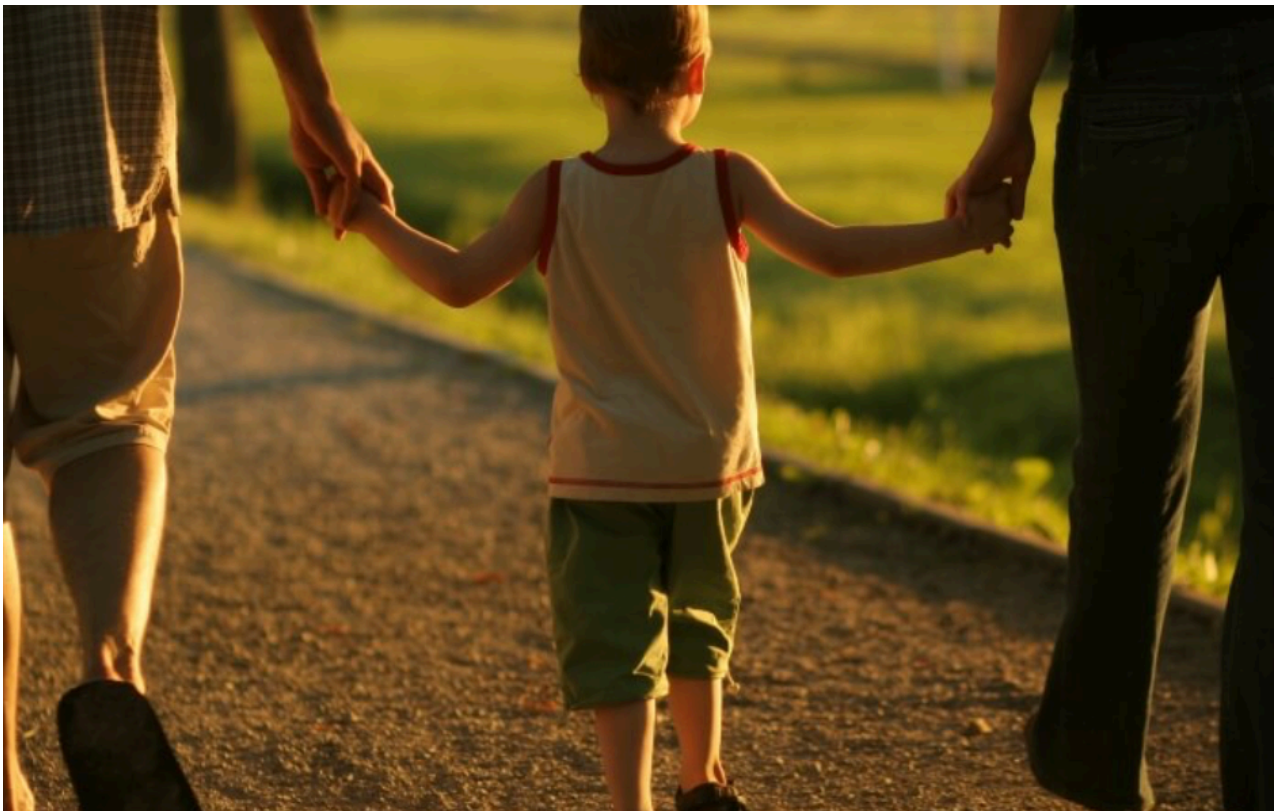
Divorce can impact a child's ability to form relationships in the future. However, the involvement and engagement of a non-resident father significantly reduces this impact. Quality time spent together is the most important way to help encourage a child to develop healthy relationships with others.

Fathers are also incredibly important in helping the child raise their self-esteem levels. Research also shows that a father's involvement can reduce a child's likelihood to be a victim of bullying and chance of becoming a bully themselves.





CO-PARENTING FOLLOWING SEPARATION



TRUST AND RESPECT ARE PARAMOUNT.

Parents that have experienced positive and healthy co-parenting emphasise the importance of trusting each other's capabilities as parents and love for their child.

It is good to accept that issues will arise and there will be conflict. It is those who have focused on reparations and overcoming them that have reported a more seamless coparenting experience as well as a peaceful environment for the child.

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Divorce and separation does not diminish the capacity to parent. Evidence shows that there are more similarities between married and separated parents in their capabilities of being a supportive parent than there are differences.

"We" language also promotes healthy positive co-parenting. This encourages the focus to be on the child's wellbeing and the collaborative process of bringing up the child.

Consistency in childcare and quality time spent with your child is crucial. However, a level of flexibility allows for respect and trust to grow between parents. Flexibility also helps to make sure your child doesn't miss out on any special events.

When these aspects of co-parenting are combined, it provides stability and security for the child. It is this that will encourage your child to thrive in all aspects of their lives.





PRIORITISING A FATHER'S MENTAL HEALTH

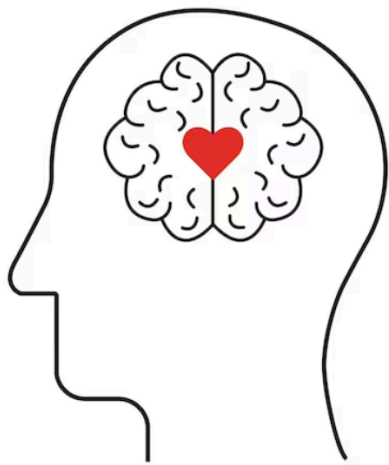


1. MAKE THE BORING TASKS FUN!

Turn daily chores into fun and games. This helps them to become more enjoyable and provides laughter throughout the day. The tasks involved in fatherhood do not have to be boring or a burden.

3. QUALITY TIME WITH YOUR CHILD

Spending time with loved ones is seen to reduce depression and anxiety levels. Spend some time watching a film together, or doing activities such as going to the park, swimming, or cooking.



2. REACH OUT TO FELLOW DADS

Local support groups for fathers and community meetups provide support and understanding for any struggles you may be feeling as a dad. Doing this helps you to also spend time being sociable and develop new friendships, whilst also being able to voice the concerns you have. Most importantly, they provide you with a safe space to be as a father.

4. STAY ACTIVE



Be sure to keep up regular exercise. Exercising has been proven to also help reduce levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

5. CELEBRATE YOURSELF!

Being a dad is hard! Take the time to see how far you have come on your journey as a father and acknowledge all the obstacles you have overcome. Celebrate this and give yourself credit for the hard work and effort you have put in.





& USEFUL CONTACTS

QUOTATIONS FROM FATHERS WHO HAVE ATTENDED DADS TALK SESSIONS

'The sessions help us to come to terms with what we're going through and allow us to focus on being our best selves.'

'You learn something that you can apply to your own circumstances every week.'

'There are many benefits to sharing your story with others. You'll be blown away by other fathers' stories and it will help put your experience into perspective and be grateful for what you do have.'

'Don't hesitate to join, it's invaluable.'



USEFUL HELPLINES



Child Maintenance Choices NI: 0800 028 7439

Samaritans of Belfast: +44 116123

Parenting Focus: 0808 8010 722

Parent Line NI: 0808 8020 400

Family Mediation NI: 028 9024 3265

Housing Rights NI: 028 9024 5640

Sólás: 028 9024 7600

Lifeline: 0808 808 8000

FIND OUT MORE

Choose to live better - <https://www.choosetolivebetter.com/content/getting-active>

Out More NI - <https://outmoreni.com>

NI Direct - Alcohol and drugs - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/taxonomy/term/708>

Action cancer - <https://actioncancer.org/info-hub>

Money Helper - <https://MoneyHelper.org.uk>

Advice NI - <https://www.adviceni.net>

SUPPORT GROUPS

Mens Advisory Project:

028 7116 0001 (Foyle)

028 9024 1929 (Belfast)

Families Need Fathers:

Belfast.meetings@fnf.org.uk

07711 022151

(Based in Belfast)

Mens Alliance NI:

<https://mensallianceni.co.uk>

<https://mensallianceni.co.uk/contact-us/> - (contact page)



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CONTACT US

Parenting Focus, First Floor, Unit 3, Hawthorn Office Park,
39a Stockman's Way, Belfast, BT9 7ET, Northern Ireland

Free support line: 0808 8010 722

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Website: <https://www.parentingfocus.org>

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