

FATHERHOOD NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2023



Maternal & Child
Health Service



>> Please connect with us!

Contact our Fatherhood
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A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Back-to-school time brings back fond memories of my dad's encouragement of me and my four siblings. I was the youngest of five kids with only six years age difference from youngest to the oldest. I remember saying goodbye, or waiting near the edge of the lawn to see my siblings leave and come back from school. My dad dropped out of school just before his 16th birthday to join the Navy to fight in WWII. When he returned, he went back to school and became a teacher. He was always there to support us as he asked us to try our best. So dads, with the start of school, let's be there for our kids.

SPOTLIGHT ON PARENT RESOURCE FOR SCHOOL: OKLAHOMA PARENTS CENTER (OPC):

The Oklahoma Parents Center is an organization whose goal is to support children with disabilities from birth to age 26, including physical and emotional impairments. OPC can provide parents with individual assistance and trainings on how to advocate for their child who has unique needs within school. In many cases this can mean the implementation of a 504 plan, which is a plan for school tailored to your child's individual needs such as providing sensory breaks, changing their seating, or a written or a picture schedule. OPC is a great resource for Oklahoma families who want to ensure their child's success in school. You can connect with OPC at 1-877-553-4332 or learn more at www.oklahomaparentscenter.org



Stock image/actor portrayal.

WHY FATHERS MATTER!

SEAN BRIDGES
HEALTH EDUCATOR
IN MAYES CHD

Here are some highlights from the June video conference on fatherhood: "The bond really takes shape for a father when he holds his

child and has skin-to-skin time and play. Studies show that adaptive hormones are released in men, which increase a father's empathy and ability to bond and care for their children. One unique way fathers parent, is through play. Flying your baby through your home like an airplane, bouncing the child up and down and lots of tickling. This type of play ramps up the release of oxytocin, dopamine, and beta-endorphins. This means babies and their dads get a rush of bonding chemicals. As fathers navigate the new realm of fatherhood, we need to understand the fatherhood space and man space. We must acknowledge that when a man is asking for help, societally he is taught he is admitting weakness, he is admitting that he doesn't have what it takes to be a great leader, father, or all the above. We encourage male involvement in all aspects of the family planning process, WIC process, and any other services that may be needed for family success. Remember, time is the biggest service you can give a man or a dad, and in the fatherhood space it takes roughly ten interactions before baby starts to trust you to build and engage."

THE BIRTH GUY'S GO-TO GUIDE FOR NEW DADS: HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER THROUGH BIRTH, BREASTFEEDING & BEYOND

Brian W Salmon, a doula and the author of the "Go-To Guide for New Dads", found his passion at just 19 years old. Little did he know, when a dear family friend became pregnant and asked him to coach and partner her throughout the pregnancy, with her dad's blessing, that he would find his career path to becoming a birth partner. Since then he's embraced the journey and its trajectory in life.

The style of this book takes you on a practical journey equipping, educating and empowering the dad/birth partner's supporting role to mom, the pregnancy and newborn.

New dads have a flood of emotions, fears, and an uncharted learning curve. They learn communication skills, how to write a birth plan, preparations for birth, what to do when things don't go as planned, supporting mom through pregnancy, labor, breast feeding and postpartum.

Each chapter is interspersed with anecdotal real-life stories, frequent subtitles, tables, bullet points, Counselor Corner, Mom Moment and Birth Guy (BG) pointers and ends with BG Final Shot check list. Why not see if it is available at your local library?

NEW DAD TOOL FOR YOUR TOOLBOX FOR OCTOBER: SUPPORTING YOUR KIDS EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS AS THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS¹

1. It is OK to not be OK.

Just inquiring about what excites or worries your child can ease their nerves. Helping kids name and explore their emotions, how these feelings sit in their bodies and what they can do to be calm is so crucial to their development.

2. Instill independence.

You know your child best, so you understand what type of independence

might be most appropriate for their age and developmental stage. If they have trouble tying shoes get them Velcro or pull-on shoes so they won't have to depend on someone else helping them.

3. Power of Influence: Dad, remember your power of influence and those little eyes and little ears pick up on your words, actions and attitudes like a sponge

picks up water. What you give them they will take into the world. Be open, transparent, calm, talk positive, and live to bless others.

4. Be Specific:

When asking how your kid's day went, be targeted. For example: Who did you eat lunch with today? Did anything make you sad or happy? What is the most difficult word to spell this week?



DAD BODS AND DAD BRAINS: THE NEW SCIENCE OF FATHERHOOD²

Becoming a father includes more than the often thought of lifestyle changes and shifts in responsibility, rather it has a real impact on men's physiology. Researcher Lee Gettler has found that when men transition from the single life to that of a coupled father, their testosterone decreases by about a third. Specifically, "Men with newborns

show the biggest drops...these changes in testosterone start to occur for some men in the U.S. during the mother's pregnancy, before the baby even arrives." Gettler's research suggests that fathers who take the most active roles in childcare have lower testosterone levels and are more likely to soothe crying babies and engage with their children. Men with low levels of testosterone may suffer from depression and take on fewer responsibilities. Gettler says, "There is a sweet spot in the middle for dad's testosterone that helps facilitate nurturant caregiving."

211

Call or text 211 or go to <http://211oklahoma.org/> for help with housing, food, utilities, mental health, transportation, information and other needs. **24/7 Free Service**



SPOTLIGHT ON MEN'S MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC: "ELEVATE YOUR HEALTH"

The Oklahoma State Department of Health has mobile health units in all 10 regions of the state. The mobile clinic will be at the following festivals and events this month.

October 21 in Muskogee
4000-4258 Border Ave.
Muskogee, OK 74401

October 28 in Tahlequah Farmer's Market Muskogee
Norris Park, 400 N. Muskogee Ave.
Tahlequah, OK 74464

The mobile clinic will offer the following services:

Health check-up: Blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI, testicular self-exam, prostate cancer.

Health Information: How to quit smoking, strokes, mental health, fatherhood, cardio, cancer prevention, reproductive health, sexual health, diet, exercise and stress management.

**OKLAHOMA'S
MENTAL HEALTH
LIFELINE**

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988**

References

- 1 Larson, S. (2023, June 28) <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/7/28/23782019/student-social-emotional-needs-new-school-year>
- 2 Gettler, L. (2014) Applying Socioendocrinology to Evolutionary Models: Fatherhood and Physiology. *Evolutionary Anthropology Issues News and Reviews*. 23