

About the Author

CHRISTOPHER A. BROWN is *President* of National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI). He received his bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of North Texas and his master's degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of South Florida. Chris lives in the Austin, Texas area with his wife.

Chris has played a critical role in shaping NFI's focus as the leading provider of fatherhood skill-building resources in the country and the leading trainer of practitioners seeking to offer fatherhood programs in their communities. In his long tenure with NFI, he has been the organization's foremost developer of its world-class fatherhood programs. Brown has authored or co-authored flagship NFI programs such as 24/7 Dad® and InsideOut Dad®, and its more recent, innovative programs such as Understanding Dad™ and Fathering in 15™. He has also authored many workshops, brochures, pocket guides, and other skill-building materials.

An applied anthropologist and author of several journal articles and book chapters on issues related to child health and well-being, he has studied masculinity cross culturally, especially as it applies to fatherhood and men's health and well-being. He has appeared as a fatherhood expert in media outlets, including the L.A. Times, New York Times, Nick Jr. Magazine, and CNN.



Contents

-  **3** Introduction / How to Use This Guide
-  **4** Who We Are / Our 3E Strategy
-  **5** Use NFI Programs, Products, and Services
-  **6** Topic 1: Family of Origin
-  **9** Topic 2: Masculinity and Fatherhood
-  **12** Topic 3: Fathering Skills
-  **15** Topic 4: Child Development
-  **18** Topic 5: Raising Boys, Raising Girls
-  **21** Topic 6: Discipline
-  **24** Topic 7: Gender Communication
-  **27** Topic 8: Building Healthy Marriages and Relationships
-  **30** Topic 9: Dealing with Emotions
-  **33** Topic 10: Grief and Loss
-  **36** Topic 11: Men's Health
-  **39** Topic 12: Sexuality
-  **41** Topic 13: Intimacy
-  **44** Topic 14: Power of Spirituality
-  **46** Topic 15: Power of a Fathers' Support Group and Network
-  **49** Topic 16: Balancing Work and Family
-  **52** Topic 17: Financial Responsibility

Introduction

So you want to work with fathers? Did you recently receive a grant to create a fatherhood program or service? Are you a community volunteer who simply has a passion for the well-being of fathers, mothers, and children—someone who wants to make a difference in this world by ensuring that more children live with great dads? Are you a divorced mom or dad who has experienced the challenge of living without your children or of raising them on your own? Perhaps you're a child of divorce who barely remembers your dad. You might even be someone who has a wonderful father and whose parents are still married, and you simply want to see more children experience the positive connection you have with your dad.



You might also be a dad raising kids who wants to help other dads. Whatever your situation or reason for acquiring this guide, you might be asking the following questions: Where do I start in working with dads? What in the world do I focus on? How do I help fathers?

How to Use This Guide

You're not alone in asking these questions. Everyone who works with fathers has asked them at one time or another. National Fatherhood Initiative® developed this discussion guide to answer these questions and, more specifically, in response to requests for help in identifying the most critical issues to address with dads. Use this guide to design lectures, workshops, seminars, events, and other activities for fathers that cover one or more of the topics addressed in the following pages.

We have identified 17 issues (hereafter referred to as topics) over the years that are critical to address when assisting fathers of any race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background in becoming involved, responsible, and committed dads.

- Each topic is covered in two to three pages. You will find background information on the topic, which includes several important factors to keep in mind when working with fathers on the topic.
- The background information is followed by key learning objectives for fathers that you should build into the type of learning format that you decide to use.
- The topic ends with key questions that fathers should ask themselves on the topic. These key questions are tied to the learning objectives.

Depending on how long and intensively you have worked with fathers, consider using additional NFI resources to more fully address some of the topics. Many of our curricula go into greater depth on most of these topics. At the end of some topics, you will find a list of one or more non-curricula resources to also consider. We also encourage you to subscribe to our **Father Factor Blog** (<https://www.fatherhood.org/fatherhood>), which includes tips, advice, and examples

on how to effectively work with dads. It will also keep you updated on the latest research on, and opinions about, fatherhood and father involvement.



Who We Are

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) was founded in 1994 to stimulate a society-wide movement to confront the most consequential social trend of our time: widespread fatherlessness in our nation. Our mission is to transform organizations and communities by equipping them to intentionally and proactively engage fathers in their children's lives. Our vision is for every child to grow up with a involved, responsible, committed father.

Our 3E Strategy

NFI works to accomplish its mission with a focus on the following “3E” strategy:

EDUCATE

We educate and inspire all Americans, especially fathers, through public awareness campaigns, research, and other resources. We educate Americans on the consequences of father absence, the positive impact of involved fathers on children, and the importance of promoting involved, responsible, and committed fatherhood. We have generated hundreds of millions of dollars across the country in donated television, radio, print, and Internet advertising. Our campaigns focus on the unique and irreplaceable contributions that fathers make in the lives of their children, and that as a nation, we must do more to encourage and support men to be good and responsible fathers. We produce *Father Facts*, now in its 8th edition, which is the definitive source of data on the consequences of father absence and the benefits of father involvement. We conduct original, cutting-edge surveys, such as *Pop's Culture: A National Survey of Dads' Attitudes on Fathering*. (You can download many of our surveys and other free research at <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>).

EQUIP

We equip fathers and develop leaders of national, state, and community fatherhood initiatives through curricula, training, and technical assistance. We provide workshops, training institutes, and technical assistance on fatherhood issues and programs to national, state, and community-based organizations and networks that operate in all sectors, including state and local government, civic organizations, corrections, faith-based groups, businesses, education, healthcare, law enforcement, and the military. Our staff trains organizations on how to become father friendly and on how to create, manage, promote, and evaluate. Through FatherSOURCE™, we provide several leading curricula on responsible fatherhood. FatherSOURCE™ also includes brochures, posters, and interactive resources. View and shop online at www.fathersource.org.

ENGAGE

We engage every sector of society through strategic alliances and partnerships. We organize coalitions of national, state, and local leaders from all sectors of society (e.g., social services, business, healthcare, civic, corrections, philanthropic, media, military, government, education, and faith) that seek to create a culture that values and supports responsible fatherhood. At the national level, we organized bipartisan task forces on responsible fatherhood in the U.S. House and Senate. We have also collaborated with nationally renowned community-service

organizations and businesses—such as the Salvation Army, Head Start and Early Head Start, YMCA, FedEx, Twentieth Century Fox, Disney, Honda, and the National Basketball Association—to create unique initiatives that engage fathers and their families.

Use NFI Programs, Products, and Services

We encourage you to use our programs, products, and services as you become more comfortable in your work with dads. We have outstanding fatherhood programs that have been evaluated for effectiveness; workshops and online self-paced training certificates that can help you build capacity to manage, market, and evaluate fatherhood programs and services; brochures on a number of subjects related to fatherhood (e.g., for new and expectant dads); posters; and more. You can use many of these resources as you work with fathers on the topics in this guide or after you complete this work with them.

NFI has broken down its fatherhood skill-building resources into 3 levels of “intensity” to help you better select the best resources or program for you:

LOW INTENSITY RESOURCES

NFI fatherhood skill-building resources which require minimal staff time and monetary investment, and are easily incorporated into your other organizational offerings for fathers.

- Brochures, Tip Cards, and Posters
- Pocket Guides for Dads
- Pocketbooks for Moms

MEDIUM INTENSITY RESOURCES

Fatherhood skill-building workshops and resources which require moderate staff involvement and monetary investment, and are generally shorter in delivery length.

- 24/7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop
- The InsideOut Dad® Guide to Family Ties
- FatherTopics™ Booster Sessions

HIGH INTENSITY RESOURCES

Group-based fatherhood programs that require the highest level of staff time and monetary investment, (e.g., 8-12 weeks/sessions) allowing fathers and mothers to connect with one another while learning.

- 24/7 Dad® A.M. and P.M.
- InsideOut Dad®
- Understanding Dad™

All of these resources and more can be found at FatherSOURCE.org, NFI’s one stop fatherhood resource center, offering everything you need to effectively serve fathers and their families.



www.fathersource.org
Phone: 240-912-1263
Fax: 301-948-6776

Topic 1: Family of Origin

A father's own father is often the most powerful influence in shaping how he fathers his children.

Background

What is the most important factor that influences a father's knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior about how to raise and care for his children? If you said, "The influence of the family he grew up in," you hit the nail on the head. If you want insight into how a father thinks and what he feels about fatherhood, and how involved he is in the lives of his children, ask him what he learned about being a father from his parents and extended family. The family someone grows up in is often called a "family of origin," because it is the family in which a person begins his or her life.

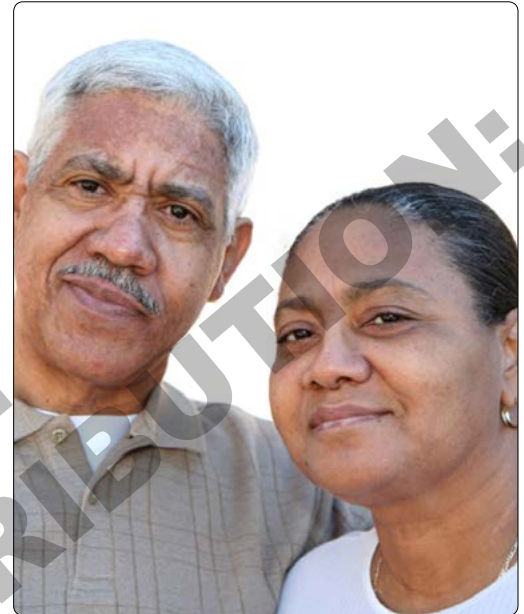
A father's own father is often the most powerful influence in shaping how he fathers his children.

This influence starts, quite simply, with his presence. Indeed, research shows that children are better off just by the simple fact that they have a father present in their lives. But we also know that the amount of time a father spends with his children and the quality of that time increase the influence of his presence. A father's influence can be positive or negative—almost always a combination of both.

The knowledge and skills of a father transfer directly to his children. This fact is true for both boys and girls. He will show and sometimes discuss the knowledge and skills of a father with his sons and daughters. The sons will use what they learn when they raise their children and the daughters will look for this knowledge and these skills in the men they choose to father their children.

A father's father is not the only powerful influence shaping his view of fathers and fatherhood. A father's mother can be as great or even a greater influence. This is especially true in families where the father was never around (and never known), or the father left the family or died during a father's childhood. In some cases, a male relative might step in to serve as a "father figure." Still, the mother in these father-absent families will shape a boy's image of his father by what she says about his father and men in general.

The media and entertainment industry today have become part of children's family of origin. Some children spend more time in front of the television, on the Internet, and engaging social media each day than they do with their parents. The problem with this development—beyond



the constant exposure of children to violent shows and games—is that the vast majority of dads are portrayed as one of the “3 Ds”—dumb, dangerous, or disaffected—unable to care for even the most basic needs of their kids. Worse yet, they are also too often portrayed as stalkers, rapists, drug dealers, and murderers. Mothers must swoop in to save their children from their dangerous fathers, and save the well-intentioned, incompetent fathers from themselves.

In working with fathers on this topic, it's vital that you help them connect with the positive and negative influences that their family of origin has had on their fathering knowledge and skills. Fathers will have selective memories. If they grew up with an involved, responsible, and committed father, they will tend to ignore the negative influence of their father. Likewise, if they grew up with an uninvolved father, or even an abusive one, they will ignore any positive influence that he might have had. When fathers begin to connect with and explore their family of origin, memories of abuse might rise to the surface. It is sensitive and delicate work to touch these memories, so make sure that you have a list of individuals and organizations that can help fathers to process these memories. Encourage fathers to talk with their children about the negative image of fathers portrayed in the media and entertainment industry, and tell fathers to encourage their children to watch shows that portray fathers in a positive light.

Basic Learning Objectives

Fathering is a generational issue.

Fathering knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills are handed down from generation to generation. A father learns these things from the fathers before him and will influence fathers in his family for generations to come.

Generally, the most powerful influence in a father's life is his own father.

A father might be motivated to be a great dad by either a positive or negative influence of his father. Don't assume that if a father had an uninvolved father that he will be uninvolved, too.

A father's mother is also a powerful influence on his image of fathers and fatherhood.

Fathers must connect with what they learned from their mothers about being a father. A father's extended family is another powerful influence. Fathers must connect with what they learned from their grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and other relatives about being a dad.

The media and entertainment industry is now a part of children's family of origin.

Today's dad must focus not only on the influence that he, the mother of his children, and his extended family have on shaping his children's views of fathers and fatherhood. He must also be wary of the powerful influence that movies, television, radio (e.g., song lyrics), social media, and the Internet have on his children's image of fathers.

Basic Questions for Fathers

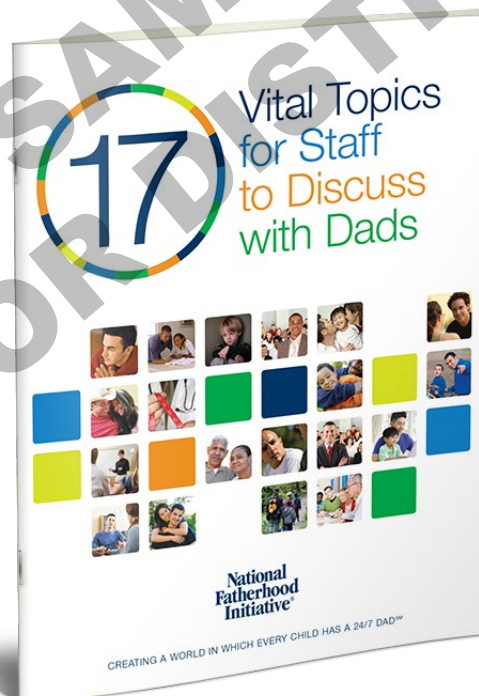
- What fathering knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills did I learn from my father?
- What did I learn from my mother about fathers and fatherhood?
- What did I learn from my extended family?
- Who in my family of origin was the most powerful influence on how I father my children?
- Did my family of origin provide me with a positive or negative image of fathers and fatherhood?
- (If negative) How can I work to overcome that negative image?
- Are there some positive things I learned that I tend not to acknowledge?
- (If positive) How have I used that positive image to father my children?
- Are there some negative things I learned that I tend not to acknowledge?
- How much time do my children spend watching television and movies, listening to the radio, playing video games, using social media, and surfing the Internet?
- Have I talked with them about how they see fathers being portrayed by the media and entertainment industry?
- Which shows and movies should I encourage them to watch that portray dads positively?
- Do my children listen to music that portrays dads negatively?

A Guide for Practitioners and Staff to Use in Presentations, Home Visits, or Meetings with Dads

The structure of the guide helps you customize a discussion with dads in any way you want. Use the guide to design lectures, workshops, seminars, events, and other activities for fathers. Cover one or more topics at any depth you like, in any format you like, and within your time constraints. Use the guide to experiment with the topics, format, and discussion length that works best for you/your organization.

- Each topic is covered in two to three pages. You will find background information on the topic, which includes several important factors to keep in mind when working with fathers on the topic.
- The background information is followed by key learning objectives for fathers that you should build into the type of learning format that you decide to use.
- The topic ends with key questions that fathers should ask themselves on the topic. These key questions are tied to the learning objectives.

Purchase your copy today!



17 Vital Topics to Discuss with Dads - Buy Now!

Visit: store.fatherhood.org/17-vital-topics-for-staff-to-discuss-with-dads
