

Fathers are Essential

School shootings, drug overdoses, runaways, and violent acts are all current issues plaguing society. Children, at a growing rate, are engaging in deceitful behavior as a cry for help. A cry that must be addressed and fixed at the root.

The foundation of a child's life is built at home. Therefore, the byproduct of a child's behavior can be traced back to their upbringing and environment. History and statistics have proven that fathers who are actively present in the home, have healthier children. Currently, more than 1 in 4 children live in a fatherless home. (U.S. Census Bureau) An absence, that is felt nationwide. If fathers understood the importance of their role and engaged, it would have the potential to shift the nation.

The absence of a father in the home affects children and society in various ways. According to fatherhood.org, children who are raised in a "father-absent home," are: 4x greater risk of poverty, 7x more likely to become pregnant as a teen, more likely to have behavioral problems, more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, more likely to go to prison, 2x more likely to suffer obesity and more likely to commit crime. The Grant Study, known as the longest longitudinal study ever done in the lives of men, notes that due to poor fathering, men are more likely to have poor marriages over their lifetime and have trouble allowing others to get close to them.

If those statistics aren't unsettling, the following percentages found on Rochester Area Fatherhood Network, further highlight the issues at hand. Children of father absent homes encompass 63% of suicides, 90% of homeless and runaway children, 71% of high school dropouts and 80% of rapist. Additionally, 92% of women who were raised without a father are more likely to divorce.

On the contrast, as a father is present, scientific evidence demonstrates how a father roughhousing with his children allows for them to be more resilient, smart, moral, and socially adept. While a mother's nurturing traits, love, touch, and discipline are crucial; cross cultural studies have found that fathers tend to roughhouse at a higher rate than mothers. (artofmanliness.com)

Children yearn for stability and stability is brought into the home with a loving father present. Although not always a perfect science, the healthier the dynamic between a father-daughter and father-son relationship exists, the higher the rate of success for the child. Brett and Kate McKay on their website artofmanliness.com, provide studies outlining some of the benefits. With a father present at home, children are more likely to have a larger vocabulary, take risk and think independently, have an enhanced capacity to play, more enjoyment of vacations, use humor as a healthy coping mechanism, more content after retirement, less anxiety, and fewer physical and mental symptoms under stress in young adulthood.

Furthermore, fathers being essential resonates in the mere fact of how sought after they are. Fathers are looked upon to provide both emotional and physical support. They are looked for to provide affection, which in turn helps build a child's social and cognitive development. Fathers have a way of setting the bar in reference to relationships. While mirror neurons are active in a child's life, the way a father treats his wife, kids, and friends, will set a precedence for the rest of the child's life. The way a father treats his daughter and wife will translate onto the way a daughter will seek her spouse. If a father lives a moral life, with love,

respect, and integrity, a daughter will seek for that in a husband. Even in a son, the way a father treats him, will translate into the way the son seeks relationships in friends. To learn how to behave and survive in the world, boys tend to look for that example in fathers, and if a father is absent, they will look for a male figure to fill that void.

Not all is lost, whether you are a biological father, adoptive father, or a stepfather, know that you are essential. Several of the issues plaguing families and society today can be turned around and significantly reduced if fathers become fully involved. To be present is a start, but not enough. Fathers who will teach, train, discipline, listen, lead morally and ethically are needed. Fathers who can provide financially, mentally, and emotionally will bring about change. Fathers who know how to lead by example, in word and in action, will reproduce themselves. Dr. Robert Enos quotes in his book, *A Time for Transition*, "You cannot change what you are reluctant to engage." If you want to see a change, engage. Till next time...