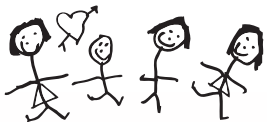




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FATHERING IS SERIOUS WORK

Across the world, more attention is being given to the importance of fathers in young children's lives. Men become fathers in married and non-married relationships. Regardless of the type of relationship, when fathers are heavily invested in their children's lives by providing economic support, being affectionate through hugging, kissing, talking and reading to them, children's academic and social development are affected in positive ways.



Researchers in different parts of the world, including the Caribbean, have found, for example, that:

1. Children form emotional bonds to fathers very early in life (between 6-9 months of age). It is therefore crucial for fathers to start involving themselves during pregnancy or immediately after the baby is born.
2. These emotional bonds are a result of warm, responsive, and consistent paternal care and sensitivity. Such care is related to the development of secure emotional bonds between children and fathers, which then lays the foundation for the development of positive, trusting relationships with others.
3. Fathers who provide support and allow two-way exchanges for example, allowing children to voice their points-of-view within reason, during conversations or while reading to children contribute to the development of language skills.

Remember, fathers have an equal and important role in the development of young children; however, just being around your child is not equivalent to quality time. Being physically present is not enough. It is the father's psychological and financial investment in the child that leads to healthy educational development and social adjustment.

What happens if the father is not around? Can other men act as social fathers? Most certainly! In many cultures around the world, including that of Trinidad and Tobago, adult males who are uncles, grandfathers, brothers etc, act as responsible father figures to young children.

So fathers:

- Read to your child**
- Have meaningful conversations**
- Provide consistent love and guidance**
- Offer him/her a safe and secure environment**
- Be understanding**
- Get involved with your child, remember - Fathering is serious work.**



IGNITING IMAGINATION THROUGH INNOVATION