

FATHERHOOD BULLETIN

SPRING 2023
ISSUE 54



SHARED BOOK READING



Australian Fatherhood
Research Consortium



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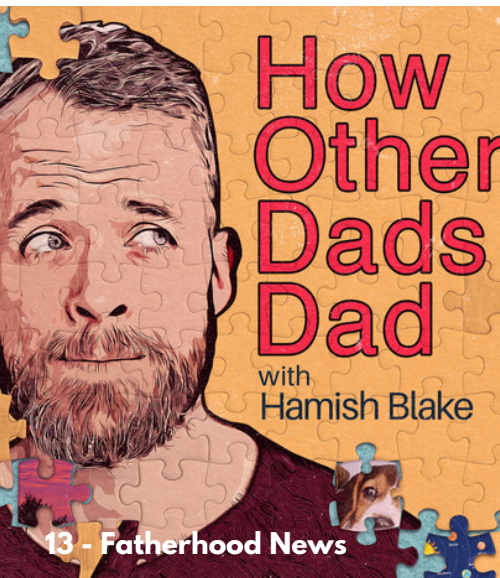
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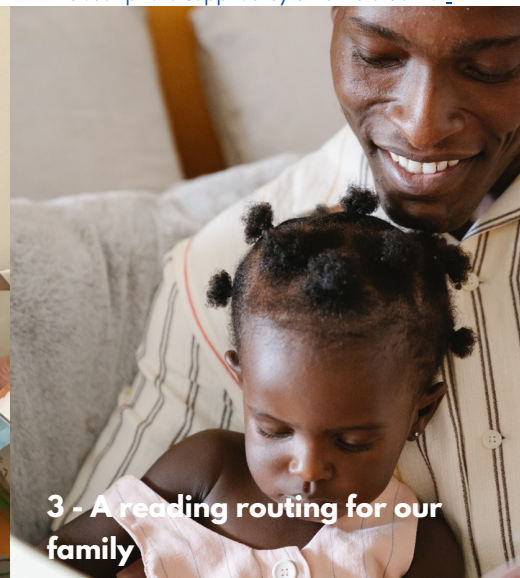
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The Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium is a collaboration of researchers, practitioners and policy makers. We exist to advance the science of fatherhood, inform practice and policy that supports men and their families, and promote healthy inclusion of fathers in family life.

If you wish to join the Fatherhood Bulletin mailing list, please email chris.may@newcastle.edu.au

Guest Editorial

ELISABETH DUURSMA, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

TRANSFORMING EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD HEALTH (TEEACH)

/SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



Shared book reading is a well-known activity in Western cultures and benefits children's development.

Most book reading research has focused on mothers, with less known about fathers reading to their children. Shared book reading does not only benefits children's language and literacy development but also strengthens the bond between children and their fathers. Fathers can serve as role models for young children when they are developing their emergent literacy skills.

When fathers share books with their children, they not only help develop language and literacy skills such as vocabulary, comprehension but they can also instill a love

for reading and books in them which can have long-lasting effects.

Sharing books with children is different from other activities as adults tend to use more complex language during book reading than during other play activities. It can open a world of imagination and discovery and provide opportunities for fathers and children to talk and share their thoughts and emotions.

When fathers prioritise reading with their children, children are more likely to follow in their footsteps and enjoy reading for pleasure. It is never too early to start reading to your child and it is a great way to start or end the day.

Elisabeth Duursma is a Research Theme Fellow at Western Sydney University. Her research focuses on parenting and child development, with a specific focus on father involvement and child language and literacy development.

Find out more about Elisabeth at: https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/dvcresearch/dvc_research/research_theme_program/research_theme_champions/elisabeth_duursma

A READING ROUTINE FOR OUR FAMILY

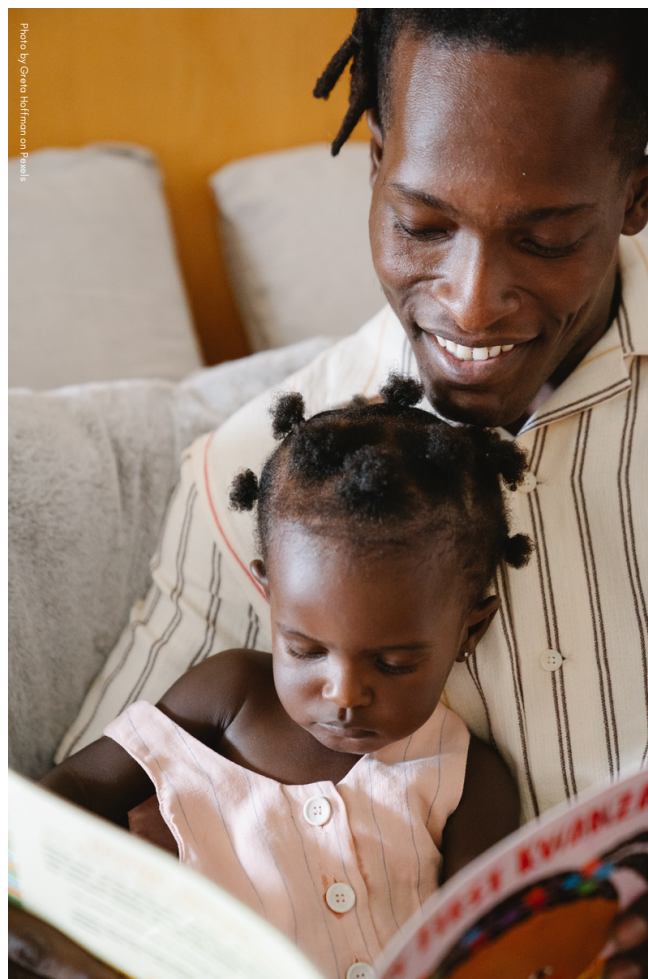
BY DAVID

I have two children, Archie is just over three years old and Harriet is 19 months. Being a teacher, I was very aware of how important it was to read to my children. We set up a routine pretty early on where we read before going to bed. That seems to work quite well for us. At the moment the routine is, because it changes, is that either me or my wife put the two kids to bed and part of the ritual of going to bed is that we read a couple of books together in bed before going to sleep. That's kind of the daily routine that we do. Occasionally, we read a book during the day or on the weekend outside of those times.

So we kind of curate the books I suppose but then the kids they choose which books they would like to read each evening from the books we provide. I found that they like to read the same book over and over again. At the moment, the favourite book is Dinosaur rumpus which is like a rapping dinosaur book. You have to be quite strategic when you read it because it gets a little bit energetic, but the kids definitely love that book. There is this rhyming book about cars and trucks that they really like that is called Dig dig dig.

As a parent it is very easy to not be present with the kids, you gotta be doing this or get this done. Books make me feel very present. You can't be doing anything else. That shared moment where you are all focused and present and enjoying the book together, yeah that's the lovely part about it.

As far as challenges to reading the books, to me, us curating the books is important because if they are boring or if they are not easy to read, like not



enjoyable to read it ourselves, it can become a chore. The repeating kind of rhyme, such as Going On a Bear Hunt, makes it quite enjoyable for me.

Advice I would give to new dads is definitely making it a routine, like putting it somewhere in the day. We find the bedtime routine is very helpful. It is a predictable part of the bedtime routine, so part of your everyday. This way we are not feeling guilty about not having been reading enough with them. We started reading with Archie very young, well before he was able to speak or anything and I felt that was like a great thing.

SERVICES FOR FATHERS

IF YOU, OR ANY FATHER THAT YOU KNOW, IS IN NEED OF SUPPORT PLEASE CONTACT A GP OR THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

Lifeline

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

13 11 14

Mental health crisis support

Men's Line

<https://mensline.org.au/>

1300 78 99 78

Men's support, counselling, referral and information

Stayin' On Track

<https://www.stayinontrack.com/>

Support & information for Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander dads

Dads Group

<https://www.dadsgroup.org/>

We promote positive parenting for men and give new Dads the support and connection they need.

Movember

<https://familyman.movember.com>

Family Man is a research-backed online parenting program designed with dads in mind.

Support for Fathers: Relationships Australia

<https://supportforfathers.com.au/>

1300 364 277

Free information/workshops for fathers.

Australian Multiple Birth Association

<https://www.amba.org.au/>

A directory for information and finding local support for multiple births

SMS4Dads

<https://www.sms4dads.com.au/>

Free SMS-based information and advice for new and expectant fathers. Also offers support modules for:

- Dads in NICU.
- Dads who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy or infant.
- Dads supporting a distressed/depressed partner.

Dad Booster

<https://www.dadspace.com.au/programs/dadbooster/>

Support program for fathers experiencing post natal depression.

START READING TO YOUR CHILD EARLY

BY FURQAN

I have two children, Yoshi is 3 and Akina is 1. My wife and I read to both. My wife started reading to Yoshi when he was less than 3 months old. I initially thought that he is not ready, but I was surprised how engaged he was. That's when I started to read him books.

Both Akina and Yoshi love reading books, but they engage differently. For instance, Yoshi would sit higher in my lap and listen carefully to the story. While Akina would sit fairly low in my lap and take the control – babbling while pointing a finger at pictures and turning pages without even letting me finish. With Akina, it feels like she is giving me a privilege (which I accept happily) by letting me read to her.

On the other hand, with Yoshi, it has been a learning journey from the beginning. For last one year, he has been asking me to read English language books in Urdu. This was purely his idea. Because of this, he has developed excellent Urdu speaking skills. Yoshi has excellent memory so if I changed my translations a little bit, he will correct me: “No Daddy...”.

Often Yoshi will ask me to read a book 3-10 times in the same sitting; especially if he learns something new. Then, at bedtime, he would ask me to tell that book as a story. He would analyse those stories. For instance, he would often interrupt my stories and change the storyline/characters.

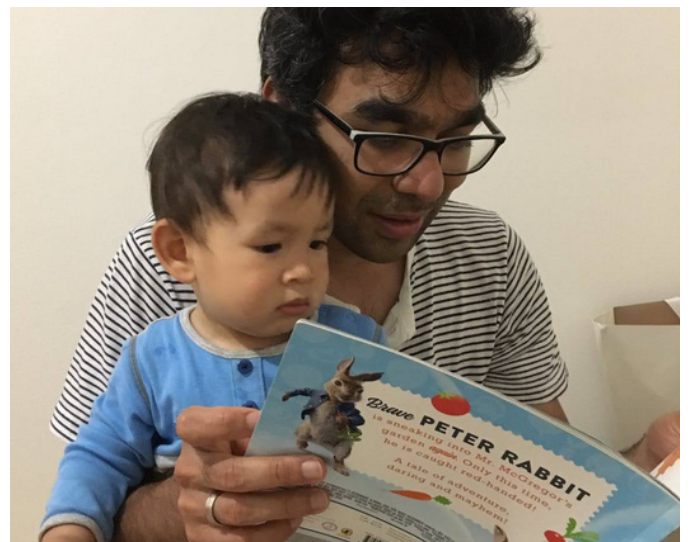
Most surprising ones for me were from Lion King book: he wanted Nala the lioness to be the main character and Simba the lion to be the supporting role he also concluded that Nala and Simba were siblings; I argued that they had different mothers but then he argued back saying that both had the

same father – I could not say anything after that.

Reading books can fix behavioural issues as well. Recently, my kids were in Vietnam to visit their maternal family where they stayed without me for more than a month. When I reunited with them, Yoshi did not engage well with me and his childcare teachers.

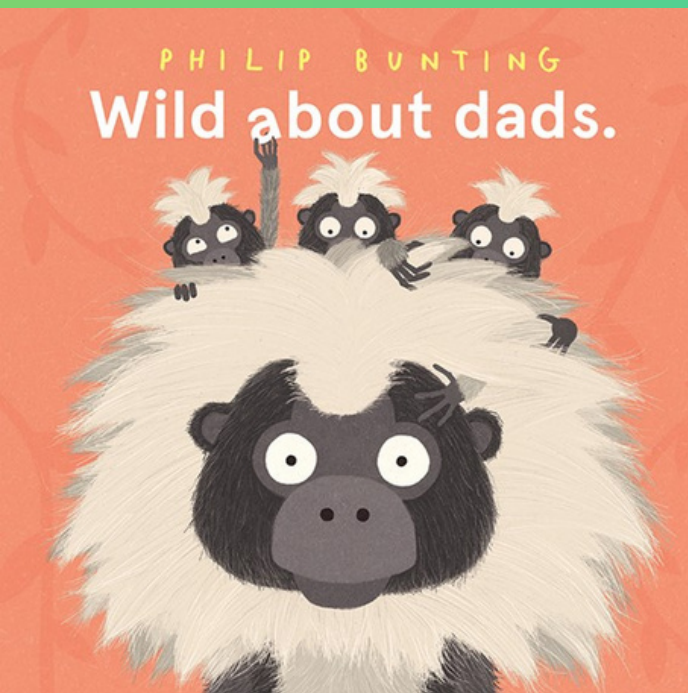
His teachers lent me a book called “Fiona finds five heroes” – a SAFE series book by NSW Office of the Children Guardian. The book described 5 heroes (including parents and teachers) who will always protect Fiona. There was an instant change in Yoshi – he asked me to read it many times. He started asking me if I will always protect him. he stopped saying that he does not want to go to the school, or he does not like his school. More recently he told me that he wants to be my hero and protect me when I need it.

To all new dads, start reading early and be ready to repeat the book several times – even if you are bored. In addition to all the developmental and learning benefits, it will create great bond between you and your child. If you are lucky like me, the oxytocin released with these bedtime activities will make you sleep like a baby.



Great Picture Books For Dads to Read With Their Children

Five books that will excite children and make storytime with Dad a lot of fun



Wild About Dads

PHILLIP BUNTING

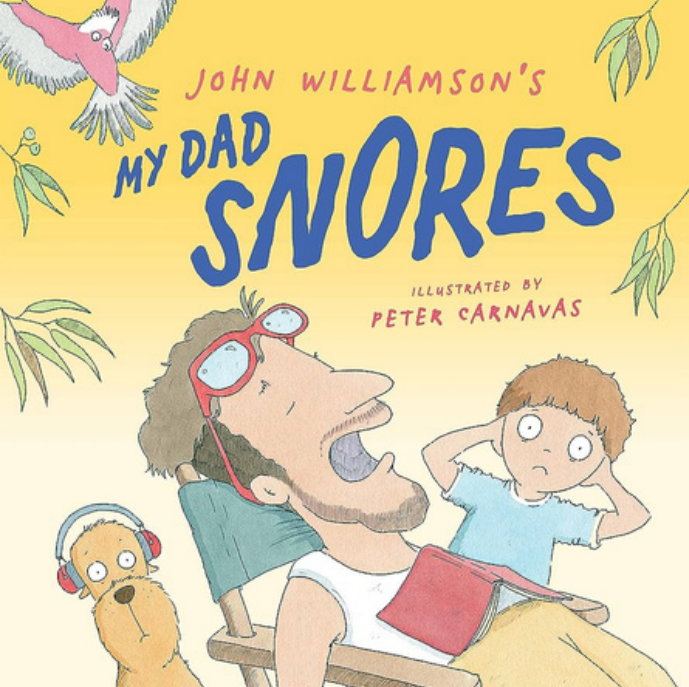
This book celebrates fathers with a laugh-out-loud book which combines humour and beautiful illustrations with fascinating facts about what fatherhood looks like across the animal kingdom.



There is Only One Dad Like You

JESS RACKLYEFT

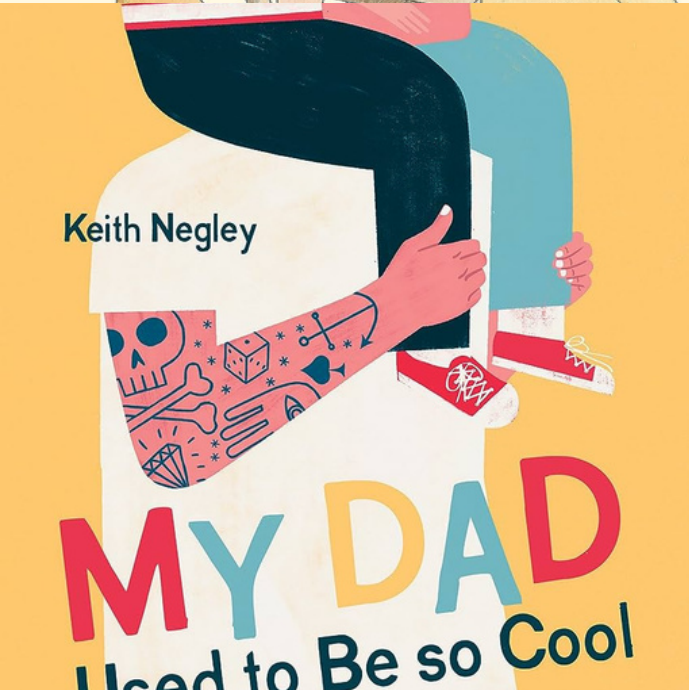
This book is a celebration of the merry magic of dads including wise dads, caring dads, daring dads and creative dads- every dad brings his own sense of fun.



My Dad Snores

JOHN WILLIAMS

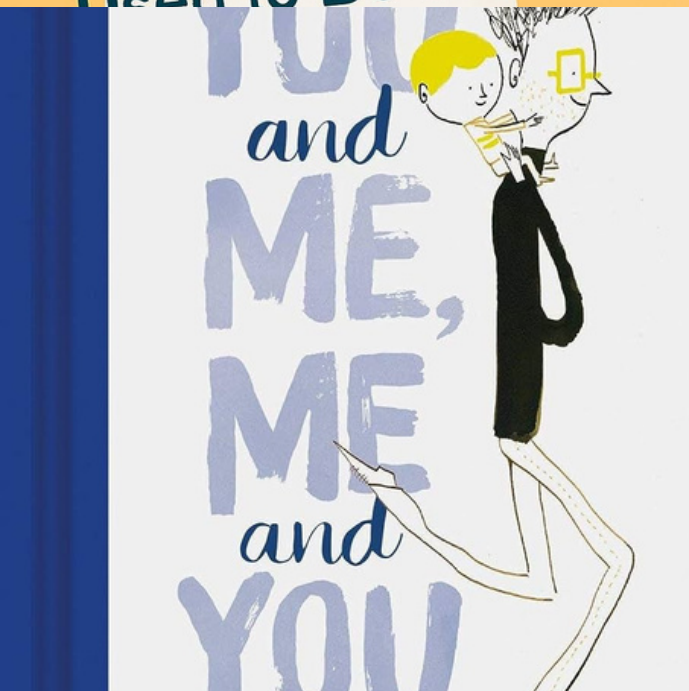
My dad snores so much that no one else can sleep... until we find a really clever solution. For all the children with snoring dads.



My Dad Used To Be So Cool

KEITH NEGLEY

Did your dad used to be cool? What happened to his rock band playing and skateboarding days. This funny and relatable story shows children how their parents are still cool after all, even though it is not in quite the same way. A book full of humour with emotive illustrations.



You and Me, Me and You

MIGUEL TANCO

This book is a touching tribute to fathers. The special bond between a father and a child is honoured by illustrated vignettes in which a father and a son are walking together and discuss life amid a city's bustle, play, and grow, side-by-side.

CALLING ALL FATHERHOOD PROFESSIONALS & RESEARCHERS TO ATTEND



AUSTRALIAN FATHERHOOD RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM 2024

16TH & 17TH MAY | MELBOURNE & ONLINE

[Quick, click here to register](#)

The official annual event of the
Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium



@ausfatherhood | #AFRS2024



Australian Fatherhood
Research Consortium



Thomas Mayo at the 2023 Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium

Thomas Mayo Thomas Mayo is a Kaurareg Aboriginal and Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander man. He is a signatory of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and has been a leading advocate since its inception in May 2017.

Thomas managed to find time in his busy schedule to speak at the AFRC Symposium 2023 about his book, *Dear Son*, where Australian First Nations men share letters written to their children around key themes of life, manhood, love, culture and racism.

In this book Mayo invites 12 indigenous men including; Stan Grant, Troy Cassar-Daley and Blak Douglas, to share letters that they have written to their own fathers, sons or nephews.

These letters talk to the strengths that these men find in their culture and connection while also talking to their families shared experiences of dispossession, enslavement, incarceration and other wrongs dealt out to their families and communities.

Thomas spoke of the central and important place that men hold in these communities, particularly in relation to younger men, as they seek what most of us take for granted such as a sense of pride in their culture, strength in their families and purpose in their lives.



While talking to a sympathetic audience, Mayo encouraged all of us to understand this work in the broader context of work that he is doing to help Indigenous Australians forge a path that addresses historic wrongs and builds pride, strength and resilience across Indigenous Australia.

This gentle, considered and evocative presentation was rounded up with encouragement for everyone to take a few minutes to read or listen to the Uluru Statement From The Heart so that they can understand what First Nations people are asking for and to consider this from their own heart.

AFRS 2023 REFLECTION: WORKING WITH FATHERS ACROSS THE CHILD & FAMILY SECTOR

BY MIKE KELLY & THE UNITING SERVICES TEAM

What did we learn from the latest research and practice in working with fathers? This was the key question Steve Hunt, Family Services Team Leader, Anas Elwakil, Senior Family Services Practitioner, Colin Scott, Family Services Practitioner, Nilesh Gaikwad, Family Services Practitioner and myself, Mike Kelly, social worker, and writer, asked when we met to discuss our learning from the Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium, held in May 2023 at Deakin Downtown Melbourne.

First, we reflected on our own work with fathers across the Child and Family Services sector. A father engagement focus team is part of the Uniting Southern Melbourne Family Services programme, which is an innovative programme that works with a diverse range of fathers who are primarily the primary carers for their children. Fathers with complex issues are included in the programme, and all are referred through the Orange Door entry point.

The 'Being Dad' group is a component of Uniting's parenting and skill development programme, which is facilitated by father engagement focus workers. The six-week course covers topics like 'being a man,' 'parenting,' 'child development,' and cultivating 'respectful relationships.'

The work of the Family Services, Father Engagement Focus Team (The Team) includes assisting fathers with custody of their children, providing individual support, developing parenting skills, and providing secondary consultations. The program's development reflects an increase in fathers who are primary carers for their children in Southern Melbourne, as well as an increase in the number of young families and higher proportions (than in metro Melbourne) of fathers from various CALD backgrounds, particularly from India, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan, as well as a growing Chinese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese population.



The Team's hopes for what might be learnt from the Symposium were closely related to the challenges of engaging with fathers within the Child, Youth and Family sector.

The Team's work with fathers takes place within the wider Australian culture, where the role of men as fathers is rapidly changing, with dads taking on more active and caring roles at all stages of child and adolescent development.

Important developments with 'father inclusive practice' are happening within the health and primary services sector. This is reflected in the array of Symposium presentations addressing the engagement of fathers with health services and family, particularly during the critical perinatal stage of a child's life.

Notably, the activities of the Team, while inclusive of mental and physical health needs, encompasses the wider social needs of vulnerable families, working with fathers across all the stages of child and adolescent development.

The Team's work is underpinned by the research showing that involved fathers have positive benefits for children's cognitive and emotional development, as well as decreasing negative child development outcomes. 'Children are better off when their relationship with their father is secure, supportive, reciprocal, sensitive, close, nurturing and warm' (Allen & Daly, 2007).

The Team works with fathers through 'respectful engagement' whilst holding a 'primary focus on the safety of women and children'. Team members were keen to learn as much as possible from the latest research on fathers from health and primary care research and practice. This openness to connecting and sharing with other disciplines, is related to the broad nature of the Team's work, which entails collaborating with a diverse range of services including mental health, disability, social



Uniting Being Dad

security, corrections, homelessness, family violence and child protection, to name a few.

As a social worker who has managed child protection services, family services, youth justice, mental health, and community health programs for Government and not for profit agencies, I was also very aware of synergies and shared learning opportunities across health and family services systems. We all approached the Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium with the question, 'What can we learn that is going to assist our work with fathers?'

To read more on the Symposium's presentations, [click this link: https://bitly.ws/WTsE](https://bitly.ws/WTsE)

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY FATHER OF THE YEAR

Dodzi was so stunned by being noticed for his fathering that he could barely speak when accepting this award just prior to Father's Day.

As a father and stepfather, Dodzi embodies values of patience, kindness, respect, diligence, and humility. He arrived in Australia as a refugee from Ghana in 2010 and has since that time built a complex family while also becoming a community leader.

In his role as a community leader Dodzi has organized numerous cultural events designed bridge the gap between communities. As a Refugee Case Manager, he extends his caring nature to the elderly and ill.

Over the past decade, he has been a dedicated stepfather, helping raise a son who is now 16, and later marrying to welcome a son of his own into the world. In the face of adversity, he stepped up when his father's passing left him and his wife to become guardians for his youngest sister.

Despite the lack of support from his own family, Dodzi's is committed to commitment to his own children's well-being as well of those in the broader community. This is evident in his role as a coach for his son's local soccer team, where he aims to imparts the discipline, skills, and teamwork that will serve the players throughout life.

Holding his baby son and giving him his first bath was a significant cultural shift for Dodzi, a moment of honour in which he found himself promising to protect and nurture his first biological child in amongst his complex, blended family.

Dodzi's fathering tip is one of wisdom: be kind to yourself, for the love and guidance you give your children will shape their future.

- This article has been adapted from [a story on the Australian Fathering Awards website](#).
- The AFRC acknowledges the important work of the Fathering Project and the Australian Father's Day Council in maintaining and hosting these awards.



FATHERHOOD NEWS

The latest need-to-know news on dads in one place

AUSTRALIAN FATHER OF THE YEAR 2023

[The Fathering Project](#)

On 31 August 2023, the Fathering Project revealed Hamish Blake as this year's Australian Fathering Award winner. The Australian Father of the Year Awards celebrate and acknowledge the vital role that fathers play within families, and in the wider community.



EQUAL PARENTAL LEAVE NOW AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA

[Services Australia](#)

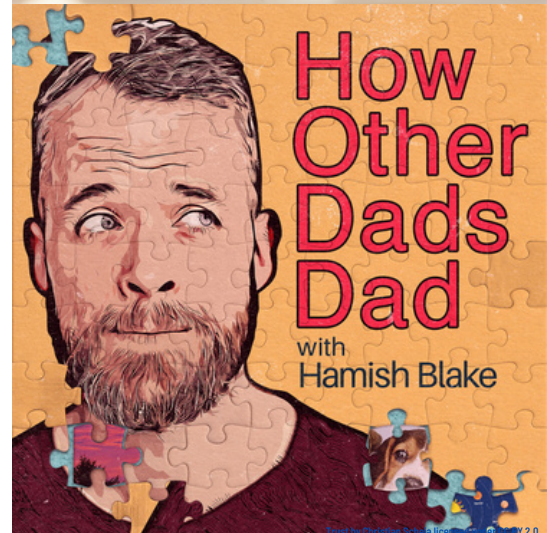
The Australian Federal Government has balanced the regulations around maternity and paternity leave, by changing to Parental Leave. From 1 July 2023, families have up to 20 weeks (100 days) to share between working parents.



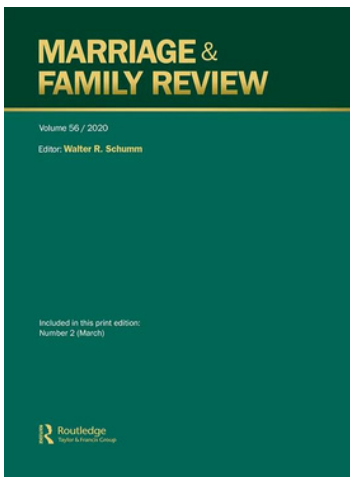
HOW OTHER DADS DAD

[Podcast](#)

Father of the Year, Hamish Blake, chats with other dads he really admires (and whose phone number he had relatively easy access to) about their approach to dadding, and in the process hopefully learn a little, steal some of their hard earned wisdom and help us all dad a tiny bit better.



Fathers' Shared Book Reading Experiences: Common Behaviors, Frequency, Predictive Factors, and Developmental Outcomes.



Sharing books between parents and children has long been acknowledged as part of a daily routine for many children (Anderson et al., 2004; Kassow et al., 2006). However, still little is known about fathers reading to their children, while there is ample research on mothers.

This study provides a critical review of the shared reading literature focusing specifically on fathers. Children's picture books can serve both as "windows and mirrors" where children are exposed to the lives of other individuals unfamiliar to them (windows) while also seeing themselves represented on the pages in front of them (mirrors). (Bishop, 1990 Cutler and Palkovitz (2020) provide a comprehensive review of empirical research focusing on father participation in shared book reading experiences.

The authors report on research focusing on different aspects of paternal book reading including but not limited to common behaviours demonstrated by fathers while interacting with young children, frequency of book reading, predictive factors of book reading and child outcomes.

The authors suggest that studies that move from beyond the traditional model of only analysing outcomes specific to children to also include outcomes specific to fathers would be helpful. This would position father participation in early literacy activities as contributing to the father-child relationship quality (Cutler and Palkovitz, 2020).

Cutler, L., & Palkovitz, R. (2020). Fathers' Shared Book Reading Experiences: Common Behaviors, Frequency, Predictive Factors, and Developmental Outcomes. *Marriage & family review*, 56(2), 144-173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2019.1683119>

Parents' physically performative behaviors during shared book reading: A comparison of mothers and fathers.

This study examined the physically performative behaviors of mothers and fathers during shared book reading with their pre-school aged children. This study is unique as it focuses on physical reading styles and provides a more comprehensive picture of parent-child shared book reading experiences. It also provides information on how parental physical behaviors contribute to various aspects of parent-child shared book reading quality. The participants included 40 families (both mothers and fathers and their children) from a predominantly White and higher educated (73% of mothers and 47% of fathers had a graduate degree) in this U.S. sample. Both fathers and mothers were videorecorded (separately) reading the same book to their preschoolers (average age 46 months). Parents were also asked to report their level and their child's level of enjoyment of the activity on a Likert scale.



The study did not find the usually reported more intense, physically demanding behaviors fathers demonstrate while engaging with their children during play activities (Kazura et al., 2000; Olofson & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2022). Mothers demonstrated significantly more behaviors including hand/body gestures elsewhere in space and facial expressions than fathers supporting the existing literature that mothers take on a more active role during shared book reading than fathers do (Anderson et al., 2021; Tomasello et al., 1990). Mothers also engaged in more physical contact with their child than fathers. However, fathers were significantly more likely than mothers to engage in close, interlocking physical contact with their child with the authors suggesting that fathers could view shared book reading as an opportunity to foster an emotional bond between themselves and their child choosing interlocking physical contact as a way to do so.

The authors mention that the differences between fathers and mothers might be due to overall gender differences between men and women in regard to physical interaction.

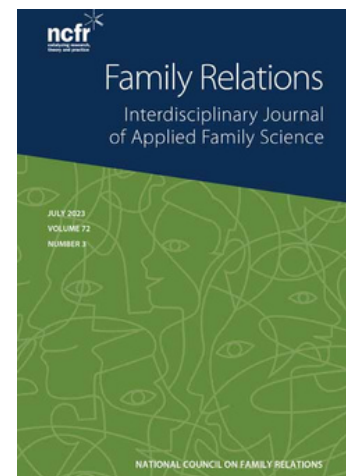
Cutler, L (2023). Parents' physically performative behaviors during shared book reading: A comparison of mothers and fathers. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 64, 129-138. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2023.02.009>

Emerging Ideas: Father–child exchanges, configurations, and discourse during shared book-reading: An interaction analysis.

Shared book reading provides an opportunity to better understand parents' interactions with young children. Most book reading studies have focused on children aged three years and up and less is known about the mechanisms supporting shared book reading for younger children. Physical aspects of book reading such as spatial positioning, gesture and gaze are important for very young children who are less verbal than older children (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). The authors argue that they can examine how reading practices and contexts are connected by analysing spacing and gesture in shared book reading. Features such as gaze and gesture between parents and infant can have positive associations with future language (Topping et al., 2013).

This study used interaction analysis which looks at the context in which an activity takes place, as well as how people are socially situated to investigate the learning processes (Campbell & Schindler, 2022). The sample consisted of nine predominantly low-income Hispanic fathers living in the U.S. Fathers were asked to share a picture book with their child and the interaction was videotaped in the home. Videos were transcribed and analysed using interaction analysis. The goal of the analysis was to understand what discourse strategies fathers were using during shared book reading and how fathers' physical mechanisms supported joint attention, and how the discourse and practices can support child learning. Fathers used a range of strategies during shared book reading depending on the child's level of development and actions. Fathers used extratextual talk and discourse which is similar to earlier research focusing on fathers' use of complex and challenging language which supports later language learning (e.g., Malin et al., 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2009). Fathers explicitly referred to print concepts and took the child's developmental stage into consideration. Fathers and children used physical spaces in the home where they were comfortable and fathers kept the focus on the books during the interaction. The authors argue that more sensitive measures of positive interactions between fathers and children may be more meaningful to development.

This study examined the effects of a parenting intervention, Fathers Supporting Success in Pre-schoolers (FSSP): A Community Parent Education Program which focused on combining behavioural parent training with shared book reading to engage and improve father and child outcomes. The FSSP is a preventive/promotion-focused intervention developed by community partners and researchers to improve positive parenting behaviours of fathers specifically targeting low-income urban communities. The program was delivered in a group-based father-to-father local knowledge transmission format which has been successfully used to engage fathers in Behavioural Parent Training (BPT) studies, an intervention with strong empirical support



to improve parent behaviour and child functioning (Fletcher, Freeman, & Matthey, 2011). The novel aspect of the FSSP program was that the authors included BPT skills training into a key parent-child context, book reading, using dialogic reading techniques, which has been shown to improve early academic readiness in preschool children (e.g., Lonigan & Whithurst, 1998; Whitehurst et al., 1994).

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of FSSP program on improving 'key proximal outcomes (parenting), secondary outcomes (child behaviour and language), and distal outcomes (parenting stress and depressive symptoms compared to waitlist control group' (p. 5), using a control trial design (Chacko et al., 2018) (n=126). The FSSP program was 8 weeks and consisted of a 90-minute per week group-based intervention held at the child's Head Start centre. Videotaped vignettes of father-child reading interactions were used to provide opportunities for small- and large-group discussions. Results showed that BPT-focused intervention was effective in improving both parenting (observed and reported) and child behavior in young children from at-risk communities. Fathers reported improved discipline approaches and improved promotion of their child's psychological growth. Observation of the father-child interactions showed that fathers in the intervention (FSSP) had lower rates of critical statements towards their children and more positive parenting behaviors.

This study demonstrates the positive effects of dialogic reading on emergent literacy skills in preschool children from high-risk communities. This study was unique as it used a strengths-based context, e.g., book reading, where fathers learned, with other fathers, skills to support children's school readiness.

Campbell, C. J., & Schindler, H. S. (2022). Emerging Ideas: Father-child exchanges, configurations, and discourse during shared book-reading: An interaction analysis. *Family relations*, 71(3), 1304-1318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12653>



Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium

The Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium is a collaboration of researchers, practitioners and policy makers. We exist to advance the science of fatherhood, inform practice and policy that supports men and their families, and promote healthy inclusion of fathers in family life.

If you wish to join the AFRC, and be kept up-to-date on our annual symposium and other resources of interest, [please click here](#).

If you wish to join the Fatherhood Bulletin mailing list, please email chris.may@newcastle.edu.au

