

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Fathering after separation

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

Western Australian's are currently experiencing an unprecedented time of change and stress. For Fathers who are separated and still parenting their children, this may be an especially challenging time. With the restrictions by our government which limit where people can stay and visit at this time things may be further complicated.

Here are some tips if you are a separated dad to help you during this time:

- **Focus on the Children**

A great place to start thinking about what is best for your children is to think about what you hope and want for them. Here are some ideas:

- I want to provide my children with a sense of stability and security, especially at home
- I want to prepare them to live in a fast paced world, to survive and thrive
- To provide my children with a positive role model

- **Looking after yourself**

One of the key elements in effective parenting is to look after yourself first. Your mental and physical fitness can make a big difference to your parenting. Develop a plan of how you will do this from eating well to looking after your physical and mental fitness. If you recognise you need help in this area contact your GP sooner rather than later. Maintain relationships with family and friends that will benefit you and your children.

- **Be aware of your children's emotions**

Regardless of age, children will be affected emotionally by the separation and will need understanding and support. They need to know that the separation is not their fault and their job is not to reunite their parents. Explain to them what is happening in ways they can understand and give lots of reassurance that you will always be their parent and you will always love them.

- **Dealing with your former-partner**

The way you deal with your former-partner can have a major effect on your children. It is important not to argue or invite conflict in front of your children and to speak positively about the other parent to your children. Children do best when they see their parents trying hard to work constructively together in their children's best interests.

- **Be the best Dad you can be**

The more involved you are in your children's lives the more they will benefit. Here are some ideas:

- Share activities like bike rides, skating, cooking, backyard camping etc.
- Ask them what they would like to do with you and implement this
- Keep in contact with their school – if possible become a volunteer in their class
- Have a special bedtime ritual; read a story, a little chat, sing a song/ lullaby

- **Stay in contact**

Make the decision to stay in touch with your children and follow it through. It's very important for them that you are reliable and trustworthy.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team will continue to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face once government guidelines allow. You might like to like us on Facebook to keep up to date with support information and details of services we can offer during this time.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on **Fathering after Separation** once available, or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.