

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Dads raising boys

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.

We know that boys whose fathers are involved with them from a young age do better in lots of ways.

During these uncertain times, you may be spending much more time with your son, so this could also be the time to discover your fathering talents.

Here are some tips to build your relationship with your young son:

- **Keep up with physical activity if that is what your son enjoys**
Young boys often have bursts of energy which need an outlet, so head to the park to kick a ball or go for a bike ride together. But also put relaxation time on his daily routine to help him wind down.
- **Enjoy rough and tumble games**
Boys love rough and tumble games so use these for enjoyment and teaching him self-control, such as knowing when to back off and not 'lose it'. Play fighting can be a great way for you both to let off steam. But set some rules first, like no elbowing and no punching. And remember to give yourselves some time to calm down before moving on to the next activity.
- **Teach him new skills**
Your son loves to learn from you, so use this time to teach him new skills. If you're skilled as a handyman, work on a project together - this could be the time to make that billycart or build a model plane or ship. If you don't know how, this could be the time to learn together.
- **Do the things together you enjoyed doing when you were a kid... or wish you had done**
Teach him how to safely climb a tree if you are lucky enough to have a garden; fix up an old bike together; sleep in the tent in the backyard without mum.
- **Manage your emotions**
Your son learns about feelings and how to express them by watching you and other men. You may be feeling irritable or frustrated but try not to get angry (which is probably more comfortable). Saying "I'm frustrated too" has a far bigger impact than yelling, swearing or slamming doors.

- **Respect their mother**

Whether you're living with your son's mother or not, being respectful to her is vitally important. If tensions mount, and they probably will, don't criticize or use abusive language. You will be great role model if you can argue calmly and still be polite. And NEVER allow your son to speak disrespectfully to his mother.

- **Don't be too tough on him, especially now**

It can be tempting to turn games into lessons and giving advice when he just wants to be understood. Most of all, your son wants your approval and acceptance. A boy equates his dad's pride in him with being loved.

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 ***Dads Raising Boys*** once available, or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.