



Defined Fatherhood Lately?

Think about your definition of fathering:

In the last few days, weeks or even months, some man has walked into a delivery room as someone's son – and walked out as someone's father.

Although we prepare as best we can for the inevitable moment when that happens, it is still one of those events in life that is just hard to be ready for. For the last several years I have been helping men prepare for that moment and one of the things I continually encourage them to think about is their definition of fatherhood.

Discuss your ideals...

For men entering into fatherhood, there is no better time to discuss your ideals around the definition, than prior to baby's arrival. After the big event, time passes so quickly and life can become so hectic that, before you know it, your child is a few months old and you have begun to settle into your role. If baby is already a joyous member of your family then the old adage "it's never too late" applies.

Here are a few ideas to consider as you begin to develop your definition of fatherhood whether you are waiting to become a father or already are one.

- **Will you be a partner or an assistant?** Unfortunately some parents fall into a situation where dad inadvertently becomes the assistant. Our children need mothers *and* fathers, not copies of each other, but individuals playing integral roles. Parenting as partners is about harmony, not competition, and there needs to be a mutual respect for each other's role. As we learn in the classes I teach "the only thing a father *can't* do is breastfeed", so find the harmony in everything else. Partnership from the very first days and weeks of baby's life will lay the groundwork for how you and mom will parent together throughout.



- **Become qualified.** Most men have little or no experience with caring for and nurturing a new baby, in order to be a true partner you must learn as much as possible so you will be prepared to fulfill your definition.
 - Take an infant care class,
 - pick up a good baby care book
 - talk to a dad you respect for some of his tips.

- **Trial and error:**

Just remember that most new parents learn what they know through trial and error. One of the best ways to get to know your child is to care for them:

- burp the baby,
- change diapers,
- find ways to soothe your crying child during tough times,
- whatever you can do for your child builds your confidence.

Let mom know that you may not be perfect at baby care, but with practice you can be just as good as anyone else.

Parenting C.P.R.

It's important that men learn to think through their fatherhood, parent with the end in mind. One of my favorite parenting philosophies is what I call my parenting C.P.R.; I build a:

- **Consistent**
- **Predictable and**
- **Reliable relationship with the children in my life.** Above all else I find this to be a powerful part of the definition of fatherhood.

Just remember some day soon your children will speak of you to people they know...what is it they will say?