

Notes For Dads

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The Value of a Dad on Today's Market**

The Stock Market goes up and down, up and down, and we wonder about the true value of our investment. But the value of a dad goes up and up and keeps on gaining in value.

Here's why. Four out of every

10 children will go to sleep in a home where a father does not live. The number of children living in a father-absent home has gone from 6 million in 1960 to 22 million in 1995. Society is showing the strain of this lack of dad's involvement. Research is showing that when a father is involved with his children, there are fewer behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and higher levels of school performance.

Dads really do make a difference! Of course, when there's a dad in the home, economics are likely to be better. But the money isn't everything. Dads play an important role in

nurturing their children. In the case of caring for an infant, a dad can learn a lot about himself, too!

As children continue to grow, dad's involvement in their lives includes helping with homework and with other school related activities. Even though we have thought of dads being involved with sons, daughters too, benefit from the time spent together with fathers.

One particular advantage is that gender identity can be learned as children see their dad interact with teachers, principals, and other adults. The opportunity of moral development is also present as kids model dad's behavior related to honesty, dependability, and courtesy. It's also important for the children to see Dad being helpful to Mom in the role she plays in the family.

What an opportunity to invest

in something that will increase in value! A little time here, a little involvement there will pay big dividends in terms of family stability and growth.

Families that have this investment will function better in a crisis and will have some of the built-in resources to weather the difficult times that come to all families.

What are the reasons for the absent fathers mentioned in paragraph one?

Research from the Family Information Services (1997) tells us some of the reasons. Economic barriers to a father's involvement are significant. Often a man's value is defined by how well he provides for his family. Young men who feel hopeless about their economic potential may choose to define their manliness in other ways and see little reason to invest emotionally in a family they can't support.

Poor preparation to parent is another reason why dads say they choose not to be involved. Signs of tenderness may have been squelched in dads at an

early age, and they were taught to be tough. Opportunities for boys to develop their nurturing instincts are limited, and there are few fathers who are modeling this type of behavior.

Another reason for absent fathers might be women are the barrier to father involvement. In marriage, men are sometimes criticized because they don't change the diaper the way their female partners do. Sometimes women choose to have children and completely ignore the father as if he is not important in the life of the child. Sometimes it is advantageous for the woman to be the gatekeeper to family relations when male violence is the wedge that drives families apart.

The good news is that father involvement is being talked about and many programs are being developed to strengthen the role of the dad in the family. As these programs proliferate, and as society becomes more aware of the need for the father to be engaged with his family, we will continue to see more support for this important idea.



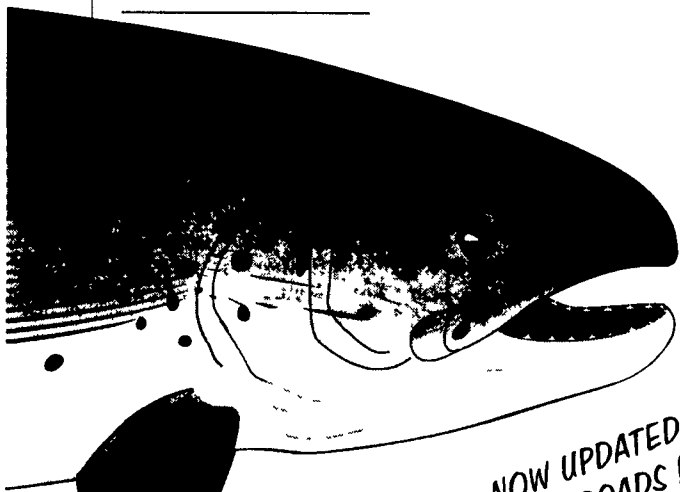
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