

Notes To Dad

by
Nina Redding

Adams Co.
Extension Agent

Learning to be a Father

Over the Christmas holidays, we watched videos of the boys' first days and years of life. Our oldest was so surprised that we gave him his first bath on the counter by the kitchen sink. He was so tiny and had such a loud cry. In the end, it was Daddy who came to his rescue.

Russell lovingly wrapped baby Garrison in a warm towel to dry him and then tried to comb his hair. Just as Russell was about to run the comb through Garrison's hair, he stopped abruptly and felt his own head to see which side he parted his own hair! Then without hesitation he proceeded to comb and part Garrison's hair on the left also. What a tender moment between father and son to catch on tape.

How is it that men learn to be fathers? I asked Russell that question the other evening. He told me he built on childhood memories of his own father and gut instincts.

He said, "How do people learn to cook or ride a bike? You keep trying and practicing."

Garret D. Evans from the University of Florida Cooperative Extension writes that learning to be a good father is a very compli-

cated issue. It takes time and energy, interest and responsibility. Most of all, it takes your love of your child.

No two days are the same. Everyday brings new questions and a new challenge. It often leaves ourselves asking: "Where do we learn to be a good father?"

Evans shares that there are five common ways men learn to be fathers. The first way is watching our fathers. If our dad was involved in raising us as kids, or even if he wasn't, many of us will remember and imitate much of what he did. In many ways, our fathers are one of the strongest influences on how we raise our children. Through our connections with our dads, we build a sense of identity for the family. We may pass on family traditions, values, and opinions that continue for generations.

The second way to learn to be a dad is from television, movies, and the media. If you've watched any episodes of "Father Knows Best," "Crosby", or "Home Improvement," you may have picked up some ideas on how fathers stay involved in their families. In 30 minutes or less, these fathers can solve problems that are serious, and perhaps not so serious.

They communicate well with their children and always seem to be able to work it out in the end.

The third way is what's the other guy is doing? Probably one of the best sources of information on how to be a father is watching our friends, brothers, and even strangers parent their children. Since we tend to keep company with people who are generally similar to us, it makes sense that we could learn a lot about being a parent by watching how others do it. We can see if their strategies are successful. We can get new ideas for how to handle situations. If things don't work out so well, we can decide to try a

different strategy if we're faced with the same situation.

The fourth way fathers learn to be dads is through videos, magazines, and books. Educational materials such as these are great sources of factual information and advice for being a father. Through these, we learn from experts who have studied fathers for years and can give men many of the "tried and true" strategies for being an effective father.

The last way mentioned was through parenting classes. Parenting classes are often a very useful tool for learning how to be an effective father. Folks often go to parenting classes if they're

having a specific problem with their child, but many parents find them valuable even in they are not having any specific problems. Parenting classes are great because they get parents together from various backgrounds to talk about what works and doesn't work for them. They are helpful for practicing new strategies and getting advice on specific issues.

The bottom line is that in order to learn how to be a good father you just have to do it. Your interest in learning to be the best dad that you can be is a great indicator that you are going to be just that, a great father!

Canola Oil Is Safe To Consume

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Canola oil comes from the 'rapeseed' plant. Recently someone reported that rapeseed is toxic to humans and the oil should only be used for industrial purposes.

This is a classic case of "a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing."

It's true that original forms of rapeseed contained high levels of erucic acid, a fatty acid that's not exactly healthful for humans and other animals if they're exposed to it in high enough amounts.

But rapeseed oil has been used for centuries for both industrial uses and for cooking in some parts of the world. At that time, most oil prepared from rapeseed contained anywhere from 30 percent to 60 percent erucic acid.

According to the Food and Drug Administration, it wasn't

until the 1970s that European researchers found a link between long-term consumption of erucic acid and cardiac lesions, a form of heart disease.

That bit of news spurred on scientists in Canada who were already trying to breed low-erucic-acid rapeseed for food uses. Canada had started growing rapeseed during World War II when European supplies were cut off. Breeders analyzed variety after variety of rapeseed until they found types with very low amounts of erucic acids, and they began a breeding program. By the late 1970s, all Canadian rapeseed produced for food contained less than 2 percent erucic acid.

By the late 1980s, the average amount was 0.6 percent. The Canadian govern-

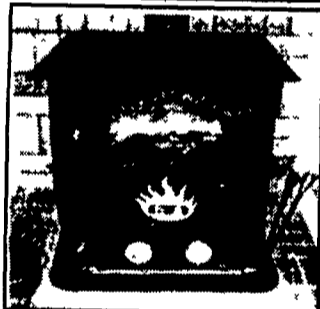
ment officially named the new type of oil "canola," short for "Canadian oil." In 1985, the FDA approved canola oil as "GRAS," or generally recognized as safe, as long as it had an erucic acid content of 2 percent or less. That was great timing, because it was just about then that Americans began paying attention to the saturated fat content of their foods. The new canola oil had high levels of oleic acid, a monounsaturated fat. Like polyunsaturated fats, monounsaturated fats are believed to be healthier for the heart than saturated fats.

Olive oil and some forms of sunflower seed and safflower oils also contain higher amounts of monounsaturated fats.

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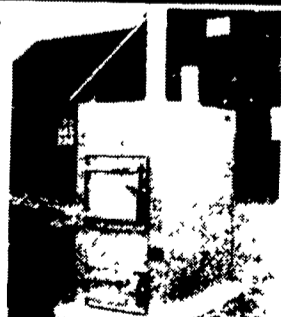
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