LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe key psychosocial elements in the transition to fatherhood and men's perinatal mental health
- Cite examples of how fatherhood involvement impacts the family system
- List evidence-based approaches to better engage fathers with perinatal services, with their children, and with their partners during pregnancy and early parenthood

A series of sexist, heterosexist, age-ist, and racist observations!

FAMILY DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT

U-Shaped Curve of Marital Happiness

- You are here

MEN'S SOCIALIZATION – “DADDY 1.0”

Traditional Masculinity (Brannon, 1976)
1. Antifemininity – “No Sissy Stuff”
2. Status and Achievement – “The Big Wheel”
3. Inexpressiveness and Independence “The Study Oak”
4. Adventurousness and Aggressiveness “Give ‘Em Hell”

- Dad’s Role Is To Support Mom And Earn
- Uninvolved with Children 0-5

MEN'S SOCIALIZATION – “DADDY 2.0”

Generative Fathers (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1996)
“The task of establishing and guiding the next generation.”

Nontraditional Masculine Norms
- Nurturing, Hands-On Care of Child
- Emotionally Open to Mom and Baby
- Few Models of Generative Fathers – “Generation Gap”

Mental Health Implications
- Changing Roles Brings Stress/Unsurvivability
- One in 10 have depression, One in 20 have PTSD
- History of PTSD, Abuse/Trauma
- Gender Role Conflict – “Helping,” “Help-Seeking”

THE FATHERHOOD ROLE

- Fostering a positive relationship with the child’s mother
- Spending time with the child
- Nurturing the child
- Disciplining appropriately
- Serving as a guide to the outside world
- Protecting and providing
- Being a role model

BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH MOM AND BABY
ASSERITIVE COMMUNICATION

Do NOT try to fix or win right off the bat

- **ASK:** Find out specifically why the issue is important to him/her
- **LISTEN:** Active listening – ask 3 open questions, followed by a restatement
- **ASSERT:** Communicate why this is important to you
- **COMPROMISE:** THEN find the common ground about what to do

WHY IS FATHERHOOD INVOLVEMENT IMPORTANT?

Parenting of children 0-5 is really just mothering, right?

**Child Outcomes:**
- Higher IQ, school readiness, social skills, emotional regulation, and empathy
- Increased attachment, emotional security, popularity, independence

**Paternal Outcomes:**
- Fewer mental health issues
- Increased confidence, parenting satisfaction, relationship satisfaction

**Maternal Outcomes:**
- Fewer mental health issues
- Increased responsiveness, confidence, and affection

BARRIERS TO FATHER INVOLVEMENT

- Blended / Inconsistent Family Structure
- Substance Use
- Fathers’ AND Mothers’ Socialization
- Low Self- And Other-Efficacy
- Anxiety/Gatekeeping
- Custody Arrangements/CPS
- Work/Life Balance

ATTACHMENT AND THE PATERNAL ACTIVATION RELATIONSHIP

“The affective bond that enables children to open up to the outside world, focusing primarily on parental stimulation of risk-taking and control.” (Paquette, 2013)

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE) STUDY
DADS’ MENTAL HEALTH

Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs)
Depression, GAD, OCD, PTSD, Psychosis
10-20% of men experience PMADs during perinatal period
DSM-5 “with peripartum onset” specifier – 4 weeks postpartum
Stress brings elevated risk for new episode and relapses
Men’s socialization and expression of “weak” emotions
Maternal PPD is the strongest predictor of paternal PPD

MALE “MASKED” DEPRESSION

Lower stress threshold
Substance use
Aggressiveness, low impulse control
Feeling of being burned out and empty
Constant, inexplicable tiredness
Inability to remove distress
Difficulty making ordinary everyday decisions

ANGER, ADDICTION, AND WITHDRAWAL

Screen Dads Early – “Whole Family Approach to Wellness”
Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale – Subscales; Lower Cutoff
PHQ-2 and PHQ-9
Beck Depression Inventory II
Beck Anxiety Inventory
Paternal Involvement with Infants Scale
KNOW HOW TO REFER BASED ON RESULTS!

NEW DADS GAME PLAN

“You should do everything but nurse the baby ASAP”
Learn about the child’s development – scaffolding
Weekly “state of the union” meeting with mom
Weekly “family operations” meeting with mom
Providing more than materially – “Be the best you”
Communicate assertively with mom
Diversify social support portfolio – connect with other dads
Expectant dads – take my Basic Training for New Dads class
Getting support with a “coach”

WHAT CAN MOMS DO?

Give dad “alone time” with child
Encourage dad to hang out with buddies; get social support
Get their own social support needs met
Recognize that dads’ approach to parenting is different, not necessarily bad
Manage own mental health
COUPLE

- Keeping the relationship strong starts between your ears, THEN between the partners
- Did mom or dad experience ACEs?
- Reflective parenting/partnering
- Actively cultivate and use social support outside of the relationship
- Foster awareness that dad’s involvement might look different than mom’s, but his engagement with baby is important for everyone’s sake.
- Foster empathy and understanding regarding their own and/or partner’s abuse/trauma
- Actively work to have a clear understanding of perinatal medical care “decision trees” and required resources in the event of complications.

ORGANIZATIONS / PROVIDERS

- Always assess moms’ AND dads’ mental health
- Healer, know thyself - Check your assumptions
- Ask the tough questions, assess with EPDS and know how to refer!
- Familiarize yourself with resources
- Is your organization set up to foster fathers’ attunement with moms and babies?

RESOURCES

- Basic Training for New Dads – www.menexcell.com
- Postpartum Health Alliance – www.postpartumhealthalliance.org
- Postpartum Support International – www.postpartum.net
- Strategies Father Involvement - http://www.familyresourcecenters.net/projects-2/supporting-father-involvement/about/
- Dudes to Dads - www.meetup.com/Dudes-To-Dads-North-San-Diego
- The Good Men Project - http://goodmenproject.com/category/families/
- Daddir - http://www.reddit.com/r/daddir
- Dod Labs - http://www.dodlabs.com/

REFERENCES


AND MORE REFERENCES......


THANKS VERY MUCH!

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“You can’t babysit your own kid – that’s called ‘fathering.’”