

FROM CORPORATEHOOD TO PARENTHOOD: AN INFORMATION GUIDE FOR "STAY-AT-HOME" DADS

By

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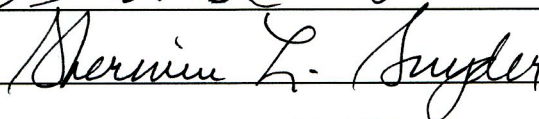
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ABSTRACT

The information contained in this thesis was compiled from literature including books, magazines, journals, periodicals and electronic media including the Internet. The purpose of the study was to create an information guide for “stay-at-home” dads. This guide gives men information to understand some general dynamics about full-time parenting which might otherwise have abrogated their decision making process regarding their status as full-time “stay-at-home” dads. The main finding of the study is that more empirical research needs to be accomplished on men’s transitional parental roles. However, there was on universal variable which permeated all the research; the importance of communication between all participating people during the transitional process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank the most powerful entity in the world for giving me the gumption and audacity to presume to write about the most important societal expedition ever experienced: full-time parenting. The entity; women. Specifically, Patricia Yvonne Mildred Dupree-Walker, my mother. For without her guidance and parenting style, I would not be the man that I am today. I would also like to thank the most intelligent, amazing, beautiful, uplifting, wise, intuitive, spiritual, caring, strong, positive, omnipresent and best friend a man could ever dream of sharing his life with: my wife Carolyne Jean Clark-Walker. Without her I would be just a “regular guy”. Last but certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge my two little girls, Isra Imani Clark-Walker and Demetra Dupree Clark-Walker. For without them my life would be meaningless. I love you all!

Ronald Lynn Walker,
“Stay-at-home” dad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| CHAPTER 1 | 6 |
| THE PROBLEM | 6 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Development of the Problem: | 7 |
| Need for the Study | 10 |
| Purpose of the Study | 11 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 12 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 12 |
| Introduction | 12 |
| Psychology | 13 |
| Societal Norms | 18 |
| Stress/Physiology | 23 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 26 |
| METHODOLOGY | 26 |
| Purpose of the Study | 26 |
| Research Design | 26 |
| Assumptions and Limitations | 27 |
| Procedure | 27 |
| 29 | 29 |
| Product Design | 29 |
| CHAPTER 4 | 30 |
| FROM CORPORATEHOOD TO PARENTHOOD, AN INFORMATION GUIDE | 30 |
| Introduction | 30 |
| CHAPTER 5 | 56 |
| SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 56 |
| REFERENCE LIST | 58 |

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Historically, mens' and womens' roles as parents have been clearly defined and articulated in American culture. However, in the past 20 years, the assumed parental roles of the family have shifted. Men have started to offer and accept a more active and primary childcare giver role for the families (Crispell, 1994).

This dynamic of men as the primary childcare givers was partly stimulated by the FMLA or the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993. Research has concluded that:

During the past forty years, the United States has experienced extensive demographic changes in the composition of its work force. The number of women in the civilian labor force has increased by about one million workers per year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted that the number of females in the work force would reach approximately sixty-six percent of the total work force by the year 2005. (Carter, 1995)

Those statistics and the fact that in the last six years the United States has had an unemployment rate of six percent or less afforded families the opportunity to make decisions on who will provide the majority of childrearing (Crispell, 1994). Many dynamics and variables inherent in the male species are presumed to prevent men from being full-time stay-at-home dads. These variables range from psychological to physiological and legal to economic. A basic understanding of men congruent to these variables and their roles in parenting is warranted (Carter, 1999).

According to (www.Baylies.AT-HOME-DADS.com Accessed 6/26.), publisher of the new quarterly At-Home Dad, “over two million fathers nationwide are staying home with their young children. Men are forming playgroups, starting home businesses, struggling to redefine their identities, and helping shoulder the burden and the blessings of round-the-clock childcare” (p. 1). Men are starting to be called “Mr. Mom.” This recognition implies a substitute mother, devoid of specific male nurturing. Men parent children differently than women but with just the same passion and sensitivity inherent in the male psyche. Men’s movement towards fuller parenting, and as a reaction against the burnout and alienation of the traditional instrumental role as family provider, are significant reasons why men are seeking increased emotional bonding with their children (Bronstein and Cowan, 1988). Male parenting is just as important to the development of the child and fully complements the parenting of women, thereby strengthening the family unit.

Development of the Problem:

Numerous books, journals, magazines, articles, and studies reflect the fact that society is changing to a more paternalistic primary childcare society.

However, as recently as forty years ago, the literature about fathers as primary childcare givers was experimental at best. Men and women had specific roles regarding families. Societal norms and economic miscegenation dictated these roles. One book has defined men and women as, “instrumental” and “expressive” in relation to the concept of the nuclear family:

The man takes the more instrumental role, the woman the expressive... The area of instrumental function concerns relations of the system to the situation outside the system, to meeting the adaptive conditions of its maintenance and instrumentally establishing the desired relations to external goal objects... The expressive area concerns the 'internal' affairs of the system, the maintenance of its integrative relations between the members and regulation of the patterns and tension levels of its component units. (Parsons & Bales, cited in Beer, 1996, p. 4)

This attitude was reflective of a majority of Americans during the post World War II "babyboom" era. The American economic system was based to a large extent upon the belief that men were the "bread-winners" of the nuclear family and did not have the time for childrearing. The American economic system has changed significantly and massive societal-cultural paradigms have shifted (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 1993).

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 allows men who work for companies with fifty or more employees twelve weeks of unpaid leave as soon as a new, adopted or foster child enters their lives (Johnson, 1998). The FMLA is the first U.S. law that has promoted the equal participation of men and women in childcare. Indeed, Altergott, Gibbs, Jacobsen and Edmondson have found that a majority of men consider their work role secondary to their responsibilities as a parent, and many are concerned that they do not spend enough time with their children (Hass & Huang, 1985).

Although the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in ten years, statistics show that "in times of economic crunch, families depend more on fathers (for child care)", says Lynne Casper, an expert in child-care issues with

the US Census Bureau. "In part, this is because fathers are more available, whether because they are unemployed or because they have more free time" (cited in Baldauf, 1997 p. 65). Twenty years ago, more than 15 percent of US pre-school children were originally cared for by their fathers, according to Census Bureau figure. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a constant rise in the number of "stay-at-home" dads. Currently, twenty percent of American preschoolers today call their primary caregiver dad (Baldauf, 1997).

In general, the father egress seems to be initiated by strong economies and a stalwart demand for skilled and unskilled labor. However, birthrates may qualify some of the trend as well. Between 1986 and 1990 the United States' birthrate reached levels higher than ever recorded since Eisenhower's tenure as president. The percentage of full-time dads dropped slightly at the end of 1991. However, President Clinton's election and subsequent passing of the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993(FMLA) stimulated a resurgence of fathers who made the decision to be the primary child care giver (Bauldauf, 1997).

In most households, women are still the primary homemakers. However, in one out of five households, the men do most of the shopping (Crispell, 1994). If these new inclinations continue, one in three US homes will have a man as the primary homemaker by the turn of the millennium. Twenty-four percent of the homemakers in the US are husbands, more than three times the same statistical share in 1986. In 1993, the percentage in the US of househusbands under 35

years of age and full-time primary child care givers for children under eighteen years of age was twenty-eight percent. That number is expected to increase to thirty-two percent by the year two-thousand (Crispell, 1994). If these trends continue, prospective full-time “stay-at-home” dads need general information and education to help in this transitional period of their lives. `

Need for the Study

This researcher has been a “stay-at-home” dad for two years. The economic status of the United States enabled the researcher to develop options with the spouse regarding primary childcare duties. The researcher was interested in how this new role as primary childcare giver would affect the relationships in the family. Also, the researcher was interested in learning how societal norms would affect his transition from the workforce to “stay-at-home” dad. The general population of prospective and current “stay-at-home” dads need information available to them relative to their specific family dynamic. This information would augment decision making capabilities where childcare ambiguities exist in relation to full-time parenting. Another point of interest was whether or not the male ego or the physiological traits attributed to men had any effect, positive or negative, on the children. The researcher has a background in human resources and understands the psychological dynamics a person may go through when transitioning to a new work environment. However, the psychological transition from the work force to primary childcare giver was new territory. Knowledge regarding this significant dynamic would have been

extremely helpful in precluding stress-related behavior. Lastly, the economic impact of transitioning from a two-income earning family to a one-income family was significant. Knowledge of economic variables inherent when changing from two incomes to one income is critical when deciding to be a full-time dad.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher has made a successful transition from the corporate work environment to being a full-time “stay-at-home” dad. However, the transition was somewhat arduous and mentally stressful. General knowledge about the different dynamics that could augment this transition would have been of great use to the researcher. The purpose of this study is to create an “information guide” for men. This guide will detail some general knowledge about societal norms, male psychology, and economic and physiological variables that will help men decide whether to be full-time dads. It will also provide information for transitioning to full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

Research Question:

What is the content of an information guide for “stay-at-home” dads?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Historically, the notion that a male could function as the primary homemaker and childcare provider was dismissed as the beckoned fantasy of women all across America. However, within the past 40 years, there has been a slow transition to that exact notion (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). Males are slowly changing roles in households and becoming the primary childcare provider and homemaker. In 1994, Crispell found that if recent trends continue, one in three American households will have a male homemaker and childcare provider by the turn of the century (Crispell, 1994). The initiation of the 1993 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) created options regarding dads becoming the primary childcare provider on a full-time basis. (1999). Baylies (1996), conducted a survey that reported the top four reasons why men are making cognizant decisions to become full-time “stay-at-home” dads. Number one, men did not want to put and or keep their kids in daycare facilities. Number two; the wife was making more money than the husband. Number three, the wife wanted to work more and bring in more income. The fourth reason why men were making the transition to full-time primary childcare provider was because dads had a greater desire to stay home (Baylies, 1996).

These new trends and facts regarding the status of men as the primary childcare provider and “stay-at-home” dad do not reflect certain critical information for men. The understanding of the different psychological, sociological, economic and physiological /stress dynamics of this life change are prerequisites for the transition to full-time dad. The topics will describe the mental and emotional elements inherent in the male psyche. The topics will also describe societal impact in terms of norms, values, and mores in conjunction with “stay-at-home” dads. The economic variables in terms of the feasibility of becoming a full-time “stay-at-home” dad will be articulated. The last topic will be the stress and physiological impact of the full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

Psychology

Male psychology in relation to child rearing has been a somewhat neglected if not salient study of science. The specifics of actual adult male-child interactions are sparse in literature. Despite the lack of specification, there are general points which emerge that can help men understand their psychosomatic behavior in relation to full-time child rearing (Mackey, 1985).

At birth, the child’s consanguine family is set. The family nuclear set is established with the access to an adult male figure immediately acknowledged by the infant child. Although males are generally not given the task of primary child caretaker, their interaction with the child consists of substantial amounts of concern and affection (Mackey, 1985). Notwithstanding the male’s ability to experience a phenomenological experience comparable to childbirth, the physiological and cultural dynamics, in conjunction with economic and other

social conditions helps initiate a strong emotional bonding to the child (cited in Marsiglio, 1991). The researcher notes that after his first daughter was born he was overcome with an emotional feeling of exhilaration which seemed to be omnipresent. Three years later that feeling still exists on a daily basis.

Historically, men did not accept the notion that they could be full-time “stay-at-home” dads. Psychologically, societal norms and mores precluded men from entertaining such a role reversal. The idea that a man’s masculinity could be questioned abrogated any discussion of the notion about full-time “stay-at-home” dads. This attitude is articulated well in Peter Tatham’s “The Making of Maleness” which states:

Until about thirty years ago, the nature of a man and his masculinity was little questioned. Generally speaking, it was assumed that a man would inevitably wish to be strong, powerful, and decisive, and that he would concern himself more with what went on outside the home than with domestic details. Since this deal was assumed to arise in some way from his actual biological nature, it was therefore inescapable. Any individual who found it hard to reach this goal could be tolerated, patronized, or even pitied, provided he was seen to agree that he was failing as a man. By acknowledging his failure, he implicitly endorsed the correctness of the model. Individuals or groups, on the other hand, who appeared deliberately to flout this view of being a man were deeply disturbing. They might have included aesthetes, homosexuals, pacifists, foreigners; and their fate was scorn as deviant, to be criminalized, conquered, or otherwise controlled. Women were also expected to go along with this view of manliness, which inevitably made inferior persons of them also. (cited in Lamb, 1997, p. 4)

Statements such as Tatham’s were the norm 30 years ago. However, with the advent of economic growth and new legislation, e.g, the Family Medical Leave Act, cognitive paternal norms have changed and continue to enlighten the

male psyche. Paternal behavior is multifaceted, encompassing not only what fathers do, e.g. interaction, but also the quantity and quality parenting skills. The existing literature on variables impacting behavior focuses on patterns in direct paternal involvement, ignoring much of what fathers do for their children by way of emotional and financial support within the family (Lamb, 1997).

According to Cowan and Grossman, motivation seems to be one psychological or individual characteristic which may influence the nature and extent of male behavior. Most researchers have implicitly assumed that multifarious definitions of fatherhood are determined more by cultural and subcultural factors than by individual characteristics (cited in Lamb, 1997). Many men recollect their own childhood to set goals regarding their children, choosing to emulate their own father's behavior or correct deficiencies learned from him (Lamb, 1997). The level of psychological motivations has changed recently primarily because of the feminist movement and the questions the movement raises about traditional and nontraditional roles for men and women (Lamb, 1997). Also, the introduction of media hype about the new "Mr. Mom" trend has been negative. Politically, the media has been ambiguous about the nontraditional primary childcare roles for men. This phenomenon has affected the motivation levels of men negatively in conjunction with parenting, causing men to question their parenting skills (Lamb, 1997). However, there is evidence of greater flexibility regarding the variety of activities in which men are willing to engage. The psychological precept of non-involvement by men, despite the

additional time spent with their children, is abrogated by a feeling of self-doubt and parental subjectivity initiated by the male psyche (Andersen, 1983).

A shift slowly occurred in the paradigmatic view by researchers on the American father in the 1970s. Initially viewed as a somewhat unimportant parent, the paternal figure was recomposed as a potentially vital and significant parent, yet not matching the high standards that society placed on motherhood. Inevitably, any alleged decrement of fathering behavior was thus adjudged by the standard of the mother figure (Mackey, 1985). Consequently, this had a potentially devastating influence on the male psyche. Men wanted to become better fathers for their children and interact with them on a much deeper level emotionally. The comparisons with the mothers stifles this growth. According to Lamb (1997), because of the competitive nature inherent in men, the male ego often hinders emotional learning experiences when they are promulgated by women. If there is a perception that these learning comparisons are being articulated to the public then this is enough of a stimulus to the male psyche to stifle emotional growth (Lamb 1997). This overall trigonometric dialogue about the emotional well-being of children between men and women is critical for the healthy survival of the family unit (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988).

Recently, women have embraced the idea that fathers have the emotional and psychological tools necessary to nurture children. However, there are reasons for maternal hesitation about changing paternal roles. Polatnic implies that some women feel that the reversal of roles as primary childcare giver would

threaten the essential power dynamics within the family structure (cited in Lamb, 1997). Roles of “mother” and “household manager” traditionally have been areas where women have enjoyed control and power. This expansion of males in a traditionally woman’s role may comminate this authority and preeminence (cited in Lamb, 1997).

For those men who are the primary childcare givers in their households, there may be the perception that they feel unappreciated. Even though all the household chores are finished and the children are happy and content, the male may have an inferiority complex. These feelings are directly related to the woman’s subconscious perception of maternal loss congruent to the traditional perception of the family structure (Lamb, 1997). Therefore, “stay-at-home” dads must understand that even though the changing of roles in the family dynamic is a positive transition, there still is an assimilation process that needs to equalize between spouses (Mackey, 1985).

The psychology of men in relation to parenting can also be articulated in terms of macro and micro-levels. According to Mott and Seccombe;

Dynamic processes at both the macro-and microlevels will influence how males’ procreative consciousness affects their everyday life experiences. At the macro-level, social structures, processes, and policies can influence the manner and extent to which males develop and integrate procreative consciousness themes into their life experiences involving their role identities. In terms of the micro-level, males will exhibit varying levels of commitment to their role identities and may alter their commitment to each of these from time to time. When males shift their commitment to particular role identities it may be in part the result of, or produce comparable shifts in, aspects of their procreative consciousness. For example, if a workaholic man is determined to change his lifestyle by becoming a father and also a more involved partner, his experience of self

during the subsequent pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal period may lead him to restructure his salience hierarchy permanently to reflect his increased commitment to his partner and father identities. However, if this man discovers that he has an extremely low sperm count and is unable to impregnate his partner, he may reorganize his salience hierarchy by de-emphasizing his partner and anticipated father identities while at the same time reaffirming his work identity. (cited in Marsiglio, 1991, p. 268)

The role identities of males has also been confused because of the fact that men seldom have a phenomenological experience comparable, or even remotely similar, to what females have experienced, e.g., gestation and labor (cited in Marsiglio, 1991). Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which this dynamic has had a positive or negative affect on the male psyche, it is clear that the male has suppressed emotional elements that may have augmented inherent paternal parenting skills congruent to the nontraditional role of full-time “stay-at-home” dad (Marsiglio, 1991). This is critical information for the prospective and continuing “stay-at-home” dad because it validates the internal struggle men have with themselves regarding their superiority or inferiority complex towards women on the subjects of procreation and pregnancy (cited in Marsiglio, 1991).

Societal Norms

American society's definitions about the nature of paternal childrearing have typically come from the perspective of Western culture according to Bloom-Feshback, (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991). Lamb (1981) described this cultural predominance as the “disappearance of fatherhood” (p.2). The rigid traditional standards that society has endowed upon fatherhood were born out of pre-industrial revolution labor necessities (e.g., fathers working long arduous hours,

typically manual and away from the family). Despite the change in the economic standard of living in the United States, this trend continued. Scientist have argued the reasoning for this trend is the “biological pre-dispositions and imperatives of men” (p.3). Lamb, Pleck, and Levine imply that paternal role prerogatives, mandated in this cultural system were limited to economic and occupational arenas (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991). In a system where societal expectations are stringently defined by the culture, there is sparse room for family idiosyncratic variations (Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

Lamb (1981) notes however, that the 1960s brought about a cultural change in society which started to challenge the definitions of what is normal or status quo in regards to male child rearing (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

The women’s movement has challenged many of the traditional assumptions associated with maternal parenting and conversely, the male gender role rigidities were challenged. If a woman can stay home and nurture the children, why can’t men (cited in Bozett & Hanson 1991). According to Bozett and Hanson (1991), “father’s understood the changing societal dynamics of gender role reversal and started to demand a greater role in raising their children” (p. 238).

Within the past fifty years society’s perception of fatherhood has changed both across and within social classes. The males’ role in American culture started to emerge as not only the “breadwinner” of the family but as the nurturer and childcare provider. The paradigm shift of gender role reversal was slowly

starting to permeate societal normalcy. This transition often was mistaken as female “flight” from housework or traditional maternal behaviors. However, the 60s initiated the onslaught of feminism, which put an end to the myth that all women were meant to stay home and care for children (Bozett & Hanson 1991).

According to Caldwell and Lynn with the emergence of the middle class in the late 60s and early 70s, society’s perception of fatherhood started the transition into a subjective form of status quo. Fathers were valued based on their economic viability and social status (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

Data representing society’s norms and mores in relation to fathers as the primary childcare provider is scarce at most (Mackey, 1985). Existing empirical data that exist regarding this phenomenon is based on traditional maternal observations and assessments. Therefore, any systematic conclusions reached by researchers were adjudged based on a biased interpretation of paternal child rearing (Mackey, 1985).

Societal impact on fathers as primary childcare providers can be articulated based on positive and negative variations in the economic viability of a culture (Lavee, 1996). Typically, in American culture, societal perceptions of fatherhood are aggrandized because of the male dominated system. The male status quo dictates how the American culture facilitates and reconciles its thoughts and opinions regarding parenting, often reverting to post-industrial traditional value opinions (Bozett & Hanson 1991).

During the late 70s, and 80s, the male dominated status quo was “infiltrated” based on demographic changes in the United States. Women began to economically influence the way society viewed parenting. With more women in the workforce, males started to spend more quantity time with their children (Andersen, 1983).

Traditionally, children were thought of as latent recipients of parental socialization. These scientific observations were ambiguous and failed to qualify the true interactions between parents and children. The true relationship between parents and children correlates into a mutual positive codependence for the augmentation of the family structure (Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

According to Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine male parenting is often defined based on the amount of interaction with the children:

Interaction refers to the father’s direct contact with his child through care-taking and shared activities. Availability is a related concept concerning the father’s potential availability for interaction, by virtue of occurring. Responsibility refers to the role the father takes in ascertaining that the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for baby-sitters being present or accessible to the child whether or not direct interaction is, making appointments with the pediatrician and seeing that the child is taken to him/her, determining when the child needs new clothes, and so on. (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991 p.117)

Fathers are much more likely to participate in the socialization of the child when they feel that the full responsibility for childcare is their number one priority (Lamb, 1997).

Economics

Income is very important in family relations since it has a direct effect on the quality and style of life of family members (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). The transition to primary childcare provider entails planning on a large scale, not the least of which is the financial feasibility of becoming a “stay-at-home” dad (Baylies, 1998).

Dual-income families make up more than 62% of American households today. Important social changes have occurred in the United States which makes the dynamic of the dual-income family less of a priority (Elloy, & Flynn, 1998). According to the United States Department of Labor, in 1993 women increased the labor force by 58% resulting in an increase of 58 million working women compared to 48 million women in 1982 (p. 1).

For potential “stay-at-home” dads the transition to primary childcare provider does not have to be economically stressful (Boss, 1988). The time and commitment spent in an organizational work environment mentally transfers to the home in a positive productive fashion when one’s children are priority (Elloy, & Flynn, 1998). Fathers deciding to become full-time “stay-at-home” dads may become apprehensive because they are not contributing to the materialistic well-being of the family. However, according to Pleck, Staines, and Lang (1980), the advantages of transitioning from a dual-income family to a single-income family are plenty. The dual-income families experienced increased levels of conflict than single-income families (p.2). This is primarily because when both spouses

are working their jobs tend to hinder family interaction. Single-income families assimilate less pressure and stress when children are involved because the time spent on childcare requirements is usually vested in the non-income-producing spouse (Pleck, Staines, & Lang 1980). Conversely, dual-income families experience more stress because the parenting responsibilities are shared and the time required to meet childcare requirements must be added to both work schedules (cited in Elloy, & Flynn, 1998).

According to Schein the decision to transition from a dual-income family to a single-income family should be examined with the premise that males as primary child-care providers do not have to worry about the financial solvency of the family (cited in Elloy, & Flynn, 1998). Schein surmises that the mental stress a man can exhibit in the work environment is obliterated once the man spends more time with his children and acknowledges the true priorities of family life (cited in Elloy, & Flynn, 1998). Gould and Werbel imply that self-acknowledgement by the male that the transition to “stay-at-home” dad can be a lucid and logical option, can ameliorate many self-induced economic pressures (cited in Elloy, & Flynn, 1998). Acknowledging the paradigm shift in the male psyche helps reduce the pressures of non-economic contribution in the family (Block, 1981).

Stress/Physiology

Parenting can have a positive or negative effect on all aspects of the human body. The stress of parenting is positive in the short-term and vital for

healthy communication within the family unit. However, parental stress must be managed over extended periods of time or it can turn destructive especially for those who have not been primary child-care parents (Adler, Kalb, & Rogers, 1999).

According to Adler, Kalb, and Rogers (1999), stress can be described as an immediate or perceived threat, to which the body then channels resources for strength and speed. The authors define the physiological impact major body parts can exhibit under stress accordingly:

Brain: Stress protectively dulls the body's sense of pain. Thinking and memory improve. Eyes: The pupils dilate for better vision. Lungs: The lungs take in more oxygen. Liver: Sugar stored as glycogen is converted to glucose. Heart: The bloodstream brings extra oxygen and glucose-fuel-for power. Heart rate and blood pressure rise. Adrenal glands: The medulla secretes fight-or-flight hormone epinephrine (adrenaline). Spleen: Extra red blood cells flow out, allowing the blood to carry more oxygen to muscles. Intestines: Digestion halts, allowing the body to dedicate energy to the muscles. Hair: Body hairs become erect-puffed-up hair makes animals look bigger and more dangerous.

A few minutes after the fight-or-flight response the body makes other changes to stabilize and replenish itself: The brains' hippocampus, a center of memory and learning, gets activated to process the incoming stress. Immune system: Infection-fighting is diminished, perhaps increasing available energy. Liver: Fat-stored energy is converted into usable fuel. Adrenal glands: The cortex secretes cortisol, which regulates metabolism and immunity. Over time, though, it can be toxic.

The most debilitating phase of stress mismanagement is the chronic stage. If stress response is activated too often then the immune system, the brain and the heart become injured. Within the brain, cortisol becomes toxic to brain cells, potentially damaging cognitive ability. Fatigue, anger and depression increase. Immune system: Repeated suppression of disease-fighting cells ultimately weakens resistance to infection. Intestines: Decreases in blood flow leave mucous lining vulnerable to ulcers. Circulatory system: Elevated blood flow pressure and heart rate damage elasticity of blood vessels. Even though men and women process stress differently, men are 42 percent likely to exhibit physiological systems of stress while parenting than women. (Adler, Kalb, & Rogers, 1999, p. 56).

Paternal stress levels were affected adversely twice as often than maternal stress levels. Males also exhibited a low patience level when the number of children in the family exceeded one (Lavee, Sharlin, & Katz, 1996). Also, the male (PMQ) or perception of marital quality, was found to be much lower than the females when the number of children in the family exceeded two (p. 114). Gender also makes a difference when the male parent's stress level is elevated negatively. According to Webster-Stratton of the University of Washington school of nursing, father's negativity has a less stressful effect on girls than boys (Webster-Stratton, 1996). This could be because stress related illnesses were significantly lower for girls than boys (pp. 540-551).

"Stay-at-home" dads can exhibit negative stress symptoms because of societal mandates for fathers not mothers. Societal perceptions of parental upbringing is still maternal emotionally and paternal financially (Riggs, 1997). Most scientists agree, however, that the male physiological equilibrium needs more empirical research regarding parenting and stress related illnesses in conjunction (Riggs, 1997).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The researcher has made a successful transition from the corporate work environment to being a full-time “stay-at-home” dad. However the transition was somewhat arduous and mentally stressful. General knowledge about the different dynamics that could augment this transition would have been of great use to the researcher. The purpose of this study is to create an “information guide” for men. This guide will detail some general knowledge about societal norms, male psychology, and economic and physiological variables that will help men decide whether to be full-time dads. It will also provide information for transitioning to full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

Research Design

The researcher utilized the “descriptive method” of research design to create this “information guide.” The reasoning for this method of research is three- fold. First, the descriptive method describes, “what is,” in relation to the content of the product. In this product, the “what is” consists of “general information” which prospective and current fathers can read and analyze to help them make lucid decisions regarding their current or prospective parenting roles (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Secondly, the descriptive method permits the researcher to analyze and study human life experiences and relationships

without compunction or manipulative technique (p. 71). Third, the investigative nature of the descriptive method allows the researcher to discover new variables, which might augment the phenomenon (p. 71).

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher is a “stay-at-home” dad who during his role as primary childcare provider for his two toddler daughters realized the complexity of the task. The researcher understood the uniqueness of his parenting situation and wanted to document experiences inherent to the male psyche. The researcher believes “general information” regarding the male perspective congruent to primary childcare duties was warranted to elucidate prospective “stay-at-home” dads.

Procedure

The researcher first had to decide which general information about primary childcare duties was most important for men. Since the researcher is a “stay-at-home” dad himself, he decided to examine the psychological aspects full-time parenting has on the father’s well being. The researcher also wanted to understand why there was a perception problem based on societal norms and mandates. Next, the financial and or economic change family’s experience during primary childcare role reversal was important to investigate because of the obvious impact on the family budget. Lastly, the researcher wanted to inform

prospective “stay-at-home” dads about the positive and negative stress related to becoming the full-time parent and the physiological effects of that stress.

The researcher did literary searches for books at public and university libraries. The researcher spent approximately sixty hours reviewing books. The researcher utilized the Internet for all journal, periodical, and magazine articles on parenting. The Internet EBSCO and AIM databases were the primary on-line resources examined and articulated. Sixty hours was spent on-line from the researcher home computer and the computers at the respective libraries. The researcher also utilized the MEDLINK database. This database consists of medical research literature. The researcher organized the material based on the order of the topics; psychology, societal norm economic/financial and stress/physiology. The psychological aspects of the project were written first because the researcher had to understand the basic decision on whether or not to become a full-time “stay-at-home” dad. Next, the researcher deduced from the psychological information that societal norms and economic/financial viability would influence the decision-making process of choosing to become a full-time “stay-at-home” dad. Finally, the matriculation of the antecedent topics surmised by the researcher concluded that stress and its positive and or negative effects on the physiology of the male body would be the last variable in deciding whether or not to become a full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

Product Design

The information guide in chapter 4 utilizes the literature review of chapter 2 as a base and adds relevant considerations for fathers throughout.

CHAPTER 4

FROM CORPORATEHOOD TO PARENTHOOD, AN INFORMATION GUIDE FOR “STAY-AT-HOME” DADS

Introduction

Historically, the notion that a male could function as the primary homemaker and childcare provider was dismissed as the beckoned fantasy of women all across America. However, within the past 40 years, there has been a slow transition to that exact notion (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). Males are slowly changing roles in households and becoming the primary childcare provider and homemaker. In 1994, Crispell found that if recent trends continue, one in three American households will have a male homemaker and childcare provider by the turn of the century (Crispell, 1994). The initiation of the 1993 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) created options regarding dads becoming the primary childcare provider on a full-time basis. Baylies (1996), conducted a survey that reported the top four reasons why men are making cognizant decisions to become full-time “stay-at-home” dads. Number one, men did not want to put and or keep their kids in daycare facilities. Number two; the wife was making more money than the husband. Number three, the wife wanted to work more and bring in more income. The fourth reason why men were making the transition to full-time primary childcare provider was because dads had a greater desire to stay home (Baylies, 1996).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should never underestimate their abilities to parent.

These new trends and facts regarding the status of men as the primary childcare provider and “stay-at-home” dad do not reflect certain critical information for men. The understanding of the different psychological, sociological, economic and physiological /stress dynamics of this life change are prerequisites for the transition to full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should explore these four variables because they have a direct affect on one’s quality of life.

The topics will describe the mental and emotional elements inherent in the male psyche. The topics will also describe societal impact in terms of norms, values, and mores in conjunction with “stay-at-home” dads. The economic variables in terms of the feasibility of becoming a full-time “stay-at-home” dad will be articulated. The last topic will be the stress and physiological impact of the full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

CONSIDERATIONS: The psychological well-being of fathers is the most important intangible characteristic for parenting.

Psychology

Male psychology in relation to child rearing has been a somewhat neglected if not salient study of science. The specifics of actual adult male-child interactions are sparse in literature. Despite the lack of specification, there

are general points which emerge that can help men understand their psychosomatic behavior in relation to full-time child rearing (Mackey, 1985).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should investigate as much information as possible regarding male parentage.

At birth, the child's consanguine family is set. The family nuclear set is established with the access to an adult male figure immediately acknowledged by the infant child.

CONSIDERATIONS: Early male bonding should occur between fathers and children, male/female, in order to stimulate their mental growth.

Although males are generally not given the task of primary child caretaker, their interaction with the child consists of substantial amounts of concern and affection (Mackey, 1985).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should be right beside his spouse during childbirth.

Notwithstanding the males ability to experience a phenomenological experience comparable to childbirth, the physiological and cultural dynamics, in conjunction with economic and other social conditions helps initiate a strong emotional bonding to the child (cited in Marsiglio, 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should immediately share in the feeding or preparation of feeding of their infant children. If the spouse is breastfeeding it is helpful to ask the spouse if she needs any assistance.

Bringing the baby to the spouse during these times is extremely helpful.

Its also good “emotional” insurance for future relationship building.

The researcher notes that after his first daughter was born he was overcome with an emotional feeling of exhilaration which seemed to be omnipresent. Three years later that feeling still exists on a daily basis.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should be cognizant that the emotional experience of childbirth is more exciting than one’s favorite team winning the superbowl !

Historically, men did not accept the notion that they could be full-time “stay-at-home” dads.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers, don’t kid yourself. You never even fathomed the idea of switching roles on a full-time basis with your spouse!

Psychologically, societal norms and mores precluded men from entertaining such a role reversal.

CONSIDERATIONS: Today many working fathers wish they could stay home full-time and parent the children.

The idea that a man’s masculinity could be questioned abrogated any discussion of the notion about full-time “stay-at-home” dad .

CONSIDERATIONS: Today fathers are cognizant of the sophisticated and technologically advanced world. It is imperative that fathers recognize that their children will be growing up in this world and they need the male guidance even more.

This attitude is articulated well in Peter Tatham's "The Making of Maleness" which states:

Until about thirty years ago, the nature of a man and his masculinity was little questioned. Generally speaking, it was assumed that a man would inevitably wish to be strong, powerful, and decisive, and that he would concern himself more with what went on outside the home than with domestic details. Since this deal was assumed to arise in some way from his actual biological nature, it was therefore inescapable. Any individual who found it hard to reach this goal could be tolerated, patronized, or even pitied, provided he was seen to agree that he was failing as a man. By acknowledging his failure, he implicitly endorsed the correctness of the model. Individuals or groups, on the other hand, who appeared deliberately to flout this view of being a man were deeply disturbing. They might have included aesthetes, homosexuals, pacifists, foreigners; and their fate was scorn as deviant, to be criminalized, conquered, or otherwise controlled. Women were also expected to go along with this view of manliness, which inevitably made inferior persons of them also. (cited in Lamb, 1997, p. 4)

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers this is a pretty conservative quote. But remember, many of the male boneheads in society still think this way! Its up to you to make the change in the male psyche!

Statements such as Tatham's were the norm 30 years ago. However, with the advent of economic growth and new legislation, e.g, the Family Medical Leave Act, cognitive paternal norms have changed and continue to enlighten the male psyche.

CONSIDERATIONS: Investigate the Family Medical Leave Act in conjunction with your employment policy. Ask pertinent questions to your HR representative regarding the transition to full-time parent.

Paternal behavior is multifaceted, encompassing not only what fathers

do, e.g. interaction, but also the quantity and quality of parenting skills.

CONSIDERATIONS: Beware fathers! Full-time parenting will stimulate emotions within you that have never surfaced before. Most of them will be positive. However, there will be negative emotions. You must manage those emotions and remember the circumstances which initiated them. Subconsciously you will be building an “emotional database” in your mind which will allow you to facilitate the diverse situations and experiences which are forthcoming in your parentage.

The existing literature on variables impacting behavior focuses on patterns in direct paternal involvement, ignoring much of what fathers do for their children by way of emotional and financial support within the family, (cited in Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers get real! The only reason men started utilizing the FMLA was because it gave you more time to watch t.v. and scratch yourself in private!

According to Cowan and Grossman, motivation seems to be one psychological or individual characteristic which may influence the nature and extent of male behavior.

CONSIDERATIONS: Full-time parenting will influence your behavior in such a manner that it often will be hard to distinguish between maternal or paternal parenting.

Most researchers have implicitly assumed that multifarious definitions of fatherhood are determined more by cultural and subcultural factors than by individual characteristics (cited in Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers, you will revert to every situation, experience, circumstance, and information to help you to define your parenting style. It will take a little time but the daily interaction with your children will expedite this process.

Many men recollect their own childhood to set goals regarding their children, choosing to emulate their own father's behavior or correct deficiencies learned from him (Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers need to come "clean." They aren't worried about emulating their own father's behavior because they know the universal language of parenting: "go ask your mother"! This statement may seem funny to many of you but wait until your spouse starts saying: "go ask your father."

The level of psychological motivations has changed recently primarily because of the feminist movement and the questions the movement raises about traditional and nontraditional roles for men and women (Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Stay-at-home mothers wish that their working spouses could experience their "job" as full-time parent.

Also, the introduction of media hype about the new “Mr. Mom” trend has been negative. Politically, the media has been ambiguous about the nontraditional primary childcare roles for men.

CONSIDERATIONS: Directly, the media has been ambiguous about the nontraditional primary childcare roles for men. However, indirectly the media espouses nontraditional parental childcare roles for men.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should note that the feminist movement only succeeded in threatening man’s feminine side of his ego. Isn’t this an oxymoron of thought patterns of some sort?

This phenomenon has affected the motivation levels of men negatively in conjunction with parenting, causing men to question their parenting skills (Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: The male ego is more sensitive than the females. And since the media is controlled by men then it follows that men would be more susceptible to information which may question their parenting skills.

However, there is evidence of greater flexibility regarding the variety of activities in which men are willing to engage.

CONSIDERATIONS: The notion that men are not flexible will be put to rest once full-parenting is in “full-swing.”

The psychological precept of non-involvement by men, despite the additional time spent with their children, is abrogated by a feeling of self-doubt and parental subjectivity initiated by the male psyche (Andersen, 1983).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should be aware that when you become a “stay-at-home” dad there may be times when you wish you could make like Jimmy Hoffa and disappear.

A shift slowly occurred in the paradigmatic view by researchers on the American father in the 1970s.

CONSIDERATIONS: Sometimes I think men in the 70’s were a cross between the fathers in the Brady Bunch, All in The Family, and Good Times!

Initially viewed as a somewhat unimportant parent, the paternal figure was recomposed as a potentially vital and significant parent, yet not matching the high standards that society placed on motherhood.

CONSIDERATIONS: Even though you may be the full-time parent, children will always revert to mom when she comes home. That’s the nature of children.

Inevitably, any alleged decrement of fathering behavior was thus adjudged by the standard of the mother figure (Mackey, 1985).

CONSIDERATIONS: The more time spent with your children the more their attitudes will reflect your personality. This evolvment within your children will be fun to watch!

Consequently, this had a potentially devastating influence on the male psyche. Men wanted to become better fathers for their children and interact with them on a much deeper level emotionally.

CONSIDERATIONS: If you are honest with yourself fathers, you knew that the dependant tax clause policies were being reanalyzed so that you could get a better tax right-off in the 70's!

The comparisons with the mothers stifles this growth. According to Lamb (1997), because of the competitive nature inherent in men, the male ego often hinders emotional learning experiences when they are promulgated by women.

CONSIDERATONS: The fact of the matter is, men make a cognizant decision to be “knuckleheads.”

If there is a perception that these learning comparisons are being articulated to the public then this is enough of a stimulus to the male psyche to stifle emotional growth (Lamb 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Initially, it will be somewhat uncomfortable for you as a full-time stay-at-home dad to articulate exactly what your new occupation is. However the longer you experience full-time parenting the easier this will become. You will start to understand exactly how important your job is. You will realize that children and parenting is the most important duty on earth.

This overall trigonometric dialogue about the emotional well-being of children between men and women is critical for the healthy survival of the family unit (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988).

Recently, women have embraced the idea that fathers have the emotional and psychological tools necessary to nurture children.

CONSIDERATIONS: When making the decision to become a full-time stay-at-home dad never question your emotional viability as a man. It serves no purpose. Those qualities are inherent in all parents.

However, there are reasons for maternal hesitation about changing paternal roles.

CONSIDERATIONS: Over time there will be exchanges between you and your spouse regarding control issues. Do not worry, this is a natural reaction by women because of diminished maternal bonding. She will reach an equilibrium within herself. When you notice this behavior be proactive and ask how she is feeling.

CONSIDERATIONS: Father's know that in general the job of parenting is the hardest and most challenging job they will ever have to do.

Polatnic implies that some women feel that the reversal of roles as primary childcare giver would threaten the essential power dynamics within the family structure (cited in Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: As long the essential parental dynamics of emotional stability and communication are present then the reversal of parental roles will be successful.

Roles of "mother" and "household manager" traditionally have been areas where women have enjoyed control and power. This expansion of males in a traditionally woman's role may comminate this authority and preeminence (cited in Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should be aware that those role dynamics do not discriminate based on gender.

For those men who are the primary childcare givers in their households, there maybe the perception that they feel unappreciated.

CONSIDERATIONS: This is a natural reaction based on changing roles.

There are more appreciated days than unappreciated. The longer the tenure as full-time stay-at-home dad, the more apparent this becomes.

Even though all the household chores are finished and the children are happy and content, the male may have an inferiority complex. These feelings are directly related to the woman's subconscious perception of maternal loss congruent to the traditional perception of the family structure (cited in Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers be cognizant. Once you start taking on the duties as primary childcare giver full-time, your spouse also is going through a transition which is just as difficult and important as yours. Even more so because the element of child abandonment is involved.

Understand this feeling for what it is and support your spouse.

Acknowledge her feeling and ask how you might be able to make the transition smoother. Never minimize her perceptions. That will cause problems. Constant communication is the key to success during this period of transition.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers might compare this feeling to a drop in the stock market of 100 points or their favorite pastime being eliminated.

Therefore, “stay-at-home” dads must understand that even though the changing of roles in the family dynamic is a positive transition, there still is an assimilation process that needs to equalize between spouses (Mackey, 1985).

CONSIDERATIONS: Check –in with your spouse on a daily basis. Ask open questions regarding the new role transition. Listen intently. Give advice only if she asks for it. Remember, she was doing “this thing” a long time before you!

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers might come to realize that the statements, “ I have a headache or, I’m to “tired” are very relevant!

The role identities of males has also been confused because of the fact that men seldom have a phenomenological experience comparable, or even remotely similar, to what females have experienced, e.g., gestation and labor (cited in Marsiglio, 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Once full-time parenting is in full-swing then all fathers will realize that the transition they are going through mentally can compare to the mental anguish of childbirth. This will be reinforced during the constant communication and check-in between spouses regarding daily parental duties.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers need not worry if they think that they don’t have the emotional skills to be a “stay-at-home” dad. Once that “little

person” starts to wail, you will find out that Celine Dion has nothing on you especially when you sing the “ga ga-goo goo” song.

This is critical information for the prospective and continuing “stay-at-home” dad because it validates the internal struggle men have with themselves regarding their superiority or inferiority complex towards women on the subjects of procreation and pregnancy (cited in Marsiglio, 1991).

Societal Norms

American society’s definitions about the nature of paternal childrearing have typically come from the perspective of Western culture according to Bloom-Feshback, (cited in Bozett & Hanson).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers need not worry about associating with parents of different cultures. There is a tacit universal understanding between parents. Once you have children you’ll know what this is.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should know that in today’s society it is not taboo to be a full-time “stay-at-dad”.

CONSIDERATIONS: You will be amazed at how many people will envy you once they know that you are a “stay-at-home” dad.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers will be judged on their parenting in public from everyone. Especially if you are alone with your children without your spouse.

CONSIDERATIONS: Never discipline your children in public.

CONSIDERATIONS: Always take your children to a private area to discipline them.

CONSIDERATIONS: Disciplining your children in public gives the child an arena for more attention and sympathy which exacerbates the negative behavior.

CONSIDERATIONS: Disciplining you child in public will always give negative fodder to people who do not have children. Thus perpetuating their false assumptions about your parenting skills.

The women's movement has challenged many of the traditional assumptions associated with maternal parenting and conversely, the male gender role rigidities were challenged. If a woman can stay home and nurture the children, why can't men (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should be aware that if they are parenting full-time then they will soon need Henry Kissinger to mediate their disputes and disagreements with their children and spouses based on traditional perceptions of parentage.

According to Bozett and Hanson (1991), "fathers understood the changing societal dynamics of gender role reversal and started to demand a greater role in raising their children" (p. 238).

CONSIDERATIONS: The "Stalin" approach to parenting is acceptable on a limited basis based on your children's age. However, the younger the child, the more diplomacy and compromise will be needed.

Within the past fifty year's society's perception of fatherhood has changed both across and within social classes. The males' role in American culture started to emerge as not only the "breadwinner" of the family but as the nurturer and childcare provider.

CONSIDERATIONS: It will take some time to get use to the idea that you are primarily responsible for the majority of the nurturing in the family.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should know that when the "tender" side of male parenting is exhibited it can be the most powerful tool of communication within the family unit.

CONSIDERATIONS: Remember, the children will sense all harsh and negative feelings from you. If your tone is harsh then the children will emulate your tone.

CONSIDERATIONS: Your children are a reflection of you!

CONSIDERATIONS: They will always want to please you. Especially, if your were not the primary childcare provider.

CONSIDERATIONS: They have always wanted to get to know you better, now is their chance.

CONSIDERATIONS: Never underestimate your children's feelings.

CONSIDERATIONS: The younger the child, the harder it is to for them to articulate their feelings.

CONSIDERATIONS: Crying is often a sign of frustration for the younger children. What they can't say in words manifests in tears! Be patient!

CONSIDERATIONS: Remember they are just little adults!

The paradigm shift of gender role reversal is permeating societal normalcy. This transition often was mistaken as female “flight” from housework or traditional maternal behaviors. However, the 60s initiated the onslaught of feminism, which put an end to the myth that all women were meant to stay home and care for children (Bozett & Hanson 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should know that most women in today’s society applaud men who decide to become “stay-at-home” dads.

According to Caldwell, (1964) and Lynn, (1974), with the emergence of the middle class in the late 60s and early 70s, society’s perception of fatherhood started the transition into a subjective form of status quo. Fathers were valued based on their economic viability and social status (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Perceptions that “stay-at-dads” are wealthy is a myth. Most are middle-class working people.

Data representing society’s norms and mores in relation to fathers as the primary childcare provider is scarce at most (Mackey, 1985). Existing empirical data that exist regarding this phenomenon is based on traditional maternal observations and assessments.

CONSIDERATIONS: Obviously, your parenting style will be based on your experiences from your own upbringing. Be cognizant of the adverse

experiences and try not to emulate them. Remember, children learn from you!

CONSIDERATIONS: The fact of the matter is that parenting can only be learned by trial and error. However, the more knowledge you know regarding the general dynamics of parenting, the smoother the transition will be. Who really knows!

CONSIDERATIONS: Societal impact on fathers as primary childcare providers can be articulated based on positive and negative variations in the economic viability of a culture (Lavee, 1996).

CONSIDERATIONS: Investigate all economic variables before making the transitions to full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

CONSIDERATIONS: The transition will encompass budgetary constraints. Initially, it will be a “shock” because of the change in monetary flow. However, with good financial preparation and information, the transition will be less stressful. Hopefully, you will be making the transitions during positive economic growth.

CONSIDERATIONS: Typically, in American culture, societal perceptions of fatherhood are aggrandized because of the male dominated system. The male status quo dictates how the American culture facilitates and reconciles its thoughts and opinions regarding parenting, often reverting to post-industrial traditional value opinions (Bozett and Hanson, 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Fiscally conservative males do not have an advantage during these decision making periods. There are just too many intangible variables.

CONSIDERATIONS: Beware fathers, if you are still using Senator Jesse Helms' value system when you enter parenthood be prepared for long litigious experiences!

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should make quality time for their children whenever possible.

CONSIDERATIONS: Talk to your children on a daily basis. Inquire about their thoughts and feelings.

CONSIDERATIONS: Read to your children as much as possible.

CONSIDERATIONS: Children love repetition.

CONSIDERATIONS: Explore most elements in your household. Not the "non-lethal" elements of course.

CONSIDERATIONS: Compliment the children with praise and accolades.

Traditionally, children were thought of as latent recipients of parental socialization. These scientific observations were ambiguous and failed to qualify the true interactions between parents and children. The true relationship between parents and children correlates into a mutual positive codependence for the augmentation of the family structure (Bozett & Hanson 1991).

CONSIDERATIONS: Remember, children learn every thing from their parents, especially from the primary child care provider, e.g, YOU!

According to Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine male parenting is often defined based on the amount of interaction with the children:

Interaction refers to the father's direct contact with his child through care-taking and shared activities. Availability is a related concept concerning the father's potential availability for interaction, by virtue of occurring. Responsibility refers to the role the father takes in ascertaining that the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for baby-sitters being present or accessible to the child whether or not direct interaction is, making appointments with the pediatrician and seeing that the child is taken to him/her, determining when the child needs new clothes, and so on. (cited in Bozett & Hanson, 1991 p.117)

Fathers are much more likely to participate in the socialization of the child when they feel that the full responsibility for childcare is their number one priority (Lamb, 1997).

CONSIDERATIONS: Don't worry fathers, once you undertake the responsibilities of full-time "stay-at-home" dad, the socialization of your children will become as apparent as Bill Clinton's infidelity!

Economics

Income is very important in family relations since it has a direct affect on the quality and style of life of family members (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). The transition to primary childcare provider entails planning on a large scale, not the least of which is the financial feasibility of becoming a "stay-at-home" dad (Baylies, 1996).

CONSIDERATIONS: "At the risk of redundancy," fathers should do extensive research on the family budgets congruent to becoming a full-

time “stay-at-home” dad. Oh yes, and don’t forget to include your spouse in these financial decisions! This cannot be stressed enough!!!

For potential “stay-at-home” dads the transition to primary childcare provider does not have to be economically stressful (Boss, 1988).

CONSIDERATIONS: One of most difficult periods for men during this time of transition is getting used to “things” which were considered necessities during your outside employment but are now luxuries.

CONSIDERATIONS: Your financial priorities will be become “clear” and your attitude will change when you are the budgetary manager of the family incorporating daily childcare duties.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should assimilate any piece of constructive and productive information regarding financial planning and parenting.

This makes the transition much, much, much, smoother!

Fathers deciding to become full-time “stay-at-home” dads may become apprehensive because they are not contributing to the materialistic well-being of the family.

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers should be aware that the feelings of non-contribution financially is a normal reaction based on historical perceptions of paternal duties. Fathers also miss the control factor they had over the family unit when they made most of the income in the family!

However, according to Pleck, Staines, and Lang (1980), the advantages of transitioning from a dual-income family to a single-income family are plenty. The dual-income families experienced increased levels of conflict than single-income families (p.2). This is primarily because when both spouses are working their jobs tend to hinder family interaction.

CONSIDERATIONS: This will seem illogical but true. The conflicts about finances after the transition to full-time “stay-at-home” dad will become less because of understanding about what is important to the family unit. When the emotional and educational well-being of the children become priority everything else seems frivolous.

CONSIDERATIONS: It is imperative that communication between the spouses is at its highest when transitioning to full-time “stay-at-home” dad. If communication decreases during this time, then the family is being “set up” for a fall!

Single-income families assimilate less pressure and stress when children are involved because the time spent on childcare requirements is usually vested in the non-income-producing spouse (Elloy & Flynn, 1998).

CONSIDERATIONS: It will be amazing to notice the financial changes which you think will be negative, turn out to be positive transitions!

CONSIDERATIONS: Communicate, communicate, communicate!

CONSIDERATIONS: You will indirectly learn to save money in ways you would never have thought of if you were not the full-time “stay-at-home” dad.

CONSIDERATIONS: Learn to use coupons.

CONSIDERATIONS: Learn the days for double and triple coupon usage.

CONSIDERATIONS: Plan your meals ahead of time.

CONSIDERATIONS: Consult your “mother” on recipes!

CONSIDERATIONS: The more of the daily responsibility you embrace the less conflict you have with your spouse. You will not hear statements such as, “well I might as well be home doing all the work.”

CONSIDERATIONS: Fathers, it will not take long during the transitional phase of full-time parenting before an “enlightened” peace of mind becomes cognizant.

Gould and Werbel imply that self-acknowledgement by the male that the transition to “stay-at-home” dad can be a lucid and logical option, can ameliorate many self-induced economic pressures (cited in Elloy & Flynn, 1998).

CONSIDERATIONS: The better the planning, the easier the transition to full-time “stay-at-home” parenting!

Stress/Physiology

Parenting can have a positive or negative effect on all aspects of the human body. The stress of parenting is positive in the short-term and vital for healthy communication within the family unit.

CONSIDERATIONS: It is critical for men to get as much exercise as possible during this portion of their life. It does not matter what type of exercise. “Relatively speaking, of course.”

However, parental stress must be managed over extended periods of time or it can turn destructive especially for those who have not been primary child-care parents (Adler, Kalb, & Rogers, 1999).

CONSIDERATIONS: Run, walk, take kung foo, parasail, ski, race cars, do something physical. This is the key to dealing with parental stress!

According to Adler, Kalb, & Rogers(1999), stress can be described as an immediate or perceived threat, to which the body then channels resources for strength and speed. The authors define the physiological impact major body parts can exhibit under stress accordingly:

Brain: Stress protectively dulls the body's sense of pain. Thinking and memory improve. Eyes: The pupils dilate for better vision. Lungs: The lungs take in more oxygen. Liver: Sugar stored as glycogen is converted to glucose. Heart: The bloodstream brings extra oxygen and glucose-fuel-for power. Heart rate and blood pressure rise. Adrenal glands: The medulla secretes fight-or-flight hormone epinephrine (adrenaline). Spleen: Extra red blood cells flow out, allowing the blood to carry more oxygen to muscles. Intestines: Digestion halts, allowing the body to dedicate energy to the muscles. Hair: Body hairs become erect-puffed-up hair makes animals look bigger and more dangerous.

A few minutes after the fight-or-flight response the body makes other changes to stabilize and replenish itself: The brains' hippocampus, a center of memory and learning, gets activated to process the incoming stress. Immune system: Infection-fighting is diminished, perhaps increasing available energy. Liver: Fat-stored energy is converted into usable fuel. Adrenal glands: The cortex secretes cortisol, which regulates metabolism and immunity. Over time, though, it can be toxic.

The most debilitating phase of stress mismanagement is the chronic stage. If stress response is activated too often then the immune system, the brain and the heart become injured. Within the brain, cortisol becomes toxic to brain cells, potentially damaging cognitive ability. Fatigue, anger and depression

increase. Immune system: Repeated suppression of disease-fighting cells ultimately weakens resistance to infection. Intestines: Decreases in blood flow leave mucous lining vulnerable to ulcers. Circulatory system: Elevated blood flow pressure and heart rate damage elasticity of blood vessels. Even though men and women process stress differently, men are 42 percent likely to exhibit physiological systems of stress while parenting than women. (Adler, Kalb, & Rogers, 1999, p. 56)

CONSIDERATIONS: You must have outside stimulation of an adult nature.

CONSIDERATIONS: You will notice that most of your conversation is at an infant or child level. This will soon effect you if you don't "check-in" on a daily basis with an adult.

CONSIDERATIONS: Don't be too hard on yourself.

CONSIDERATIONS: Look at behaviors with your children as learning experiences. They are not trying to get on your "nerves" they are just being kids!

CONSIDERATIONS: Try to schedule fun outings with your children.

CONSIDERATIONS: Take them to the park. Let them run and burn off energy! Sometimes you will wonder where they get all that energy.

CONSIDERATIONS: Read a good book!

CONSIDERATIONS: Read the newspaper. It is a nice piece of literature for escape.

CONSIDERATIONS: If you have "down" time, get off your feet. Rest! It does not matter if it is only 10 or 15 minutes. You will notice how refreshed you feel with a 15 minute power nap!

CONSIDERATIONS: Try to eat as healthy as possible.

CONSIDERATIONS: Drink plenty of fluids. Every once in a while have a glass of wine. Even though you may feel like having more than one, just stick to one! Then when the spouse comes home have more! (Within reason of course!).

CONSIDERATIONS: Always find at least 30 minutes a day for you and your spouse to debrief the days activities.

CONSIDERATIONS: Try to go on a date with your spouse at least every two weeks, if not every month.

CONSIDERATIONS: Enjoy this time while you can!

CONSIDERATIONS: If fathers exercise on a regular basis they will experience a mental euphoria which, along with the wonderful transition to full-time “stay-at-home” dad is a feeling unmatched in the annals of time. Positively, marvelous!.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The information which has been investigated and researched in this thesis was compiled from literature including books, magazines, journals, periodicals and the electronic media including the Internet. The purpose of the study was to create an information guide for “stay-at-home” dads. The information researched gives men an opportunity to understand some general dynamics about full-time parenting which might otherwise have abrogated their decision making process regarding their status as full-time “stay-at-home” dads. The descriptive method of research was used because it ascertains “what is” in relation to the content of the information guide congruent to men.

Conclusions

It is clear from the research that men are complex human beings who need to be understood from a scientific point of view and also more importantly, from a practical perspective. Full-time “stay-at-home” dads are unique and underrepresented in a society where emotional stability within family units is critical for healthy survival. General information about specific topics congruent to male full-time parentage is needed more today because of the changing paradigms and demographics inherent to the 21st century.

Recommendations

The “Information Guide for ‘Stay-at-Home’ dads” should be made available to human resource departments for distribution to all male employees who are leaving the workforce for transitional full-time parenting or paternity leave. The guide can also be used by first time fathers to help guide them through “uncharted waters” regarding parenthood.

Finally, all men should read the Information Guide to get a historical and research based perspective on why men are such complex human beings.

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48