



Hey Busy Dads.. Don't Let Your Kids Become Orphans

Opinion Piece By Dr Tim Hawkes OAM

WELCOME DADS

I am delighted you have found me at The Fathering Channel and are thinking about your role as a father, or father figure in a kid's life. Why am I delighted? Because I think the quality of fathering can make or break a child, determine the character of a family and influence the health of a nation.

Whether you are a father, stepfather, grandfather or father equivalent - you hold this country's future in your hands. And how do I know this?

For nearly 28 years, I have had the privilege of leading some of the nation's top schools, and I have educated thousands of children, both boys and girls. Yet - let me tell you that my work, and that of fellow educators, comes a long way second to parents in shaping the destiny of a child.

BUILDING GREAT FAMILIES

We dads are enormously clever. We can build great cities. We can work the land, fix cars, invent new technologies, play great footy and - evidently - catch the most enormous fish! But, can we build great families? Have we, as dads, been so caught up in trying to be someone outside of the home, we forget to be someone inside the home?

About twelve years ago, both my parents died. I became an orphan and had to deal with the associated grief and sorrow.

However, I was an adult – and in the great cycle of life – most of us must deal with the loss of our parents and of becoming orphans during our lifetime.

BUSY DADS CAN GIVE A CHILD A SENSE OF BEING AN ORPHAN

However, what is happening now is that many children are losing their parents, particularly their fathers, when they are children. Their dads are not there for them, they are too busy! They are becoming orphans metaphorically at an early age. Busy dads go to work, and return at night, not knowing how to communicate with their child.

Many hide behind a television, laptop, late night conference calls, or with a bottle and a book or paper that urgently needs to read. Busy dads can be emotionally and physically exhausted, totally empty with nothing left to give to those loved and held the dearest. Every drop of energy has gone to work, co-workers, the projects and left little to nothing for the family.

The result? Many children feel like they have been orphaned, left alone for much of their developing years, and without proper guidance at important junctures in their life, during a crises, or a bullying or cyber bullying incident, this may lead to emotional and mental health issues. Without their dad beside them so much can get swept under the carpet by our children who do not know how to deal with it. They keep it to themselves and lock it away because they feel they are alone.

GETTING FATHERING RIGHT – THERE IS NO RULE BOOK!

We need to recover our role as dads and get this fathering thing right. If we do not get it

right, the impact in our own lives will be huge, the damage to our families will be enormous, our kids will never fully recover, and the harm done to our nation will be massive. Why is this so important and why is the work of the Fathering Project so critical?

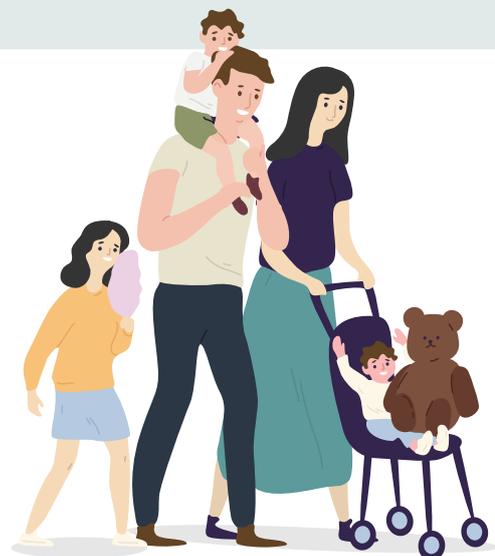
Did you know that:

- A large portion of Australian prisoners report that they had fathers who were absent, delinquent or ineffective.
- Research shows that meaningful interaction between fathers and their children has been measured as being as little as 17 seconds a day.
- Fathers are being sidelined in their children's lives by the internet and social networking sites. This is resulting in many saying that dads are becoming obsolete as carers.

» **It is time us dads fought back against the many that would rob us of our role.**

» **It is time we remember our role as dads and refine our skills in being dads.**

» **It is time we encourage each other to be the best we can as husbands, partners and as fathers.**





FATHERING VALUES – HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A typical teen spends between 2 – 5 hours a day soaking up the values found on the Net, but only a few minutes a day soaking up the values a father might want to pass on. The result? Our children are being fathered by the Net and not by us.

It is time to change this.

- We have got to reclaim our children.
- We have got to remain effective as dads.
- We have got to learn the tricks of great fathering.

GUIDE TO SETTING UP POSITIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH YOUR KIDS

Developing ways and means to engage positively with our children is an important part of our job description as dads. If it is not

currently in your job description you need to take a clean sheet and re-write it before it is too late.

If we are successful in being a mentor, protector and provider, we are fulfilling our purpose. We are fulfilling our fathering role, and setting the very best example for our kids to model as they start to build their foundations and consider who they are and what traits they will form from watching us when they become a father in the future. There is an old saying – Do you dad like your Dad did? Think about how you would answer that and if you are creating a positive or negative influence on your kid's life- model?

I doubt that any of us will ever wish we had spent more time at the office. Research suggests most of us wish we had spent more time with our children and our families. And our children need this time with us. 



I hope you find this article helpful and supportive. Fathering is a journey, and we are all here to support you, share our experiences and knowledge at The Fathering Project. — Dr Tim Hawkes OAM