

Welcome to the Dad Allies Provider Learning Series

Facilitating Fatherhood: Factors, Falsehoods and Findings in Early Relational Health

Thursday, September 5, 2024

Washington
Fatherhood
Council



Fathers and Parenting

We
know
that:

Child and family well-being improve when fathers are positively engaged in their children's lives.

Fathers play a unique and important role in children's development.

Fathers should have support and resources to become the fathers they aspire to be.



Washington
Fatherhood
Council



Facilitating Fatherhood: Factors, Falsehoods, and Findings

Nicholas Kasovac, MSOT, OTR/L, IMH-E®



Puyallup Tribe of Indians



“Generous and Welcoming to All People”

Land Acknowledgement

”We acknowledge that we are on the unceded ancestral lands and traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Puyallup tribe (aka spuyaləpabš). Even today the tribes continue to fight for their rights to exist throughout their traditional homelands. We express sincere gratitude and appreciation to ancestors past, present elders, and future generations of these people that are still here continuing to honor, illuminate, and share their ancient heritage.”

Butterfly Effect

“...the concept that small causes can have large effects.”

Changing one thing.....can change everything.

Emerging Lexicon

- Father
- Non-birthing Parent (NBP)
- Paternal Parent?

Fathers Want to Support their Partner!

- Coach them how to gather best information for baby, for partner, for Dad
- Teach them how to *scrutinize* the barrage of info they are getting (family, friends, strangers, internet, books)
- Make suggestions in advance to plan, revise, transition, & implement suggestions or ideas (eg, “Help List”)

Fathering Role

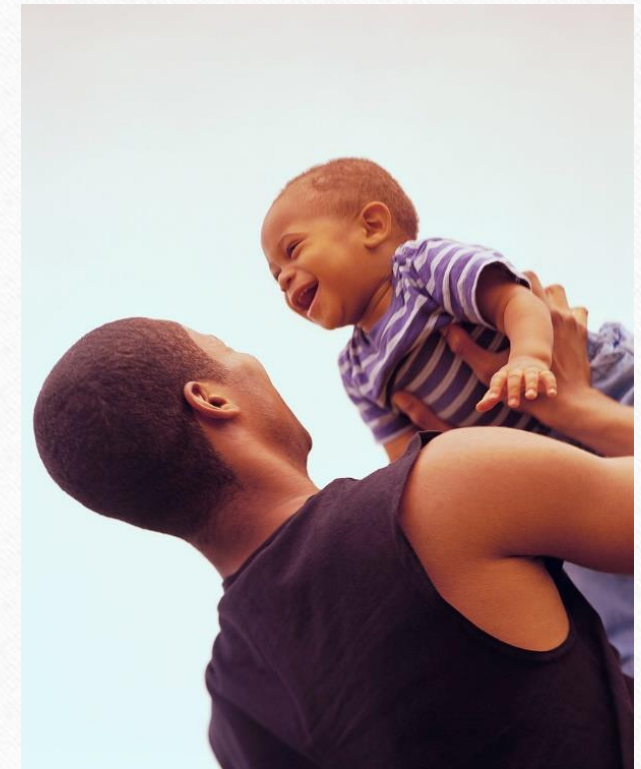
- Establish, nurture and maintain a mutually engaging and meaningful relationship with your child
- Respond and provide to your child's basic needs (eat, sleep, safety, hygiene, development) consistently, predictably, reliably
- Discuss and execute equitable agreements with child's mother
- Allow yourself to grow, change, and transform along with your child

Dads Dyad Differently

(Fathers are different than Mothers)

Most Fathers....

- Identify with role of “protector” and “provider”
- Turn their babies outward and introduce them to the world
- Prepare their babies to take risks, explore, discover and venture away from secure base
- Assist with “emotional regulation”
- Teach their children rules and socialization
- Instill inherent value in their child, like cutting and polishing a diamond, preparing to present them to the world



Fathers have emotional experiences too!

- Do we view Fathers more than just “mother-support” and Sherpa? And can we?
- Is the Father’s role reduced to merely caregiving tasks or “maintenance?”
- ---

Fathers may not want to show it.....but do we create the space for their feelings?
- Do we allow emotional experiences and encourage it when it does surface?
- Have you considered the Father’s experience during a difficult delivery? An emergency C-section? After baby is discharged home?
- Has anyone asked the Father how he is doing with all the changes he’s experiencing?
- *Have you asked the Father what the labor & delivery were like for him?*
- Have you asked a stay-at-home Father what it’s been like for him to stay home?

Be mindful about “how” you ask the questions – go for open-ended.

~ *Brian’s Story*

Fathers Feel Left Out

- Maternal-Child Health?
- WIC – Women, Infants, Children?
- “Mother’s Birth Support?”
- Healthcare in general (prenatal, L&D, emergency C-sx, etc)?
- Where is the “paternal parent” in all of this?

~Anthony’s Story

Examples of “Potential” Father Exclusion or Father-Infant Disruption

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prenatal• Labor & Delivery• Couplet Care/Postpartum• Breastfeeding Support• Postpartum Follow Up• Infant/Parent/Family Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Articles/Research• Pediatrics• Early Childhood Organizations• Family Support Programs• Social Service Agencies |
|--|---|

More Examples of “Potential” Father Exclusion or Father-Infant Disruption

- Policies
- Peers
- Work
- Government
- Maternal Gatekeeping

- Social Media
- Grandmothers/Grandparents
- Refusal of Visitation (especially Teens)
- Artwork/Photography
- Print Media

Father-Infant Relationship is Everything!

1. Underlies all domains of development
2. Precursor to lifelong physical & mental health (ACE Study)
3. Most important factor to develop “resiliency” as a skill
4. Basis for every relationship for child’s entire life

“Talk to your baby, Daddy!”

- Talk to baby in utero
- Let them get to know you
- Recognize your voice after s/he’s born

~Newborns’ Capacity Story

Question to assist Dad with decision-making....

**“Is it best for my baby.....
or convenient for me?”**

Question to assist Provider with decision-making....

**“Is it best for this father.....
or convenient for me?”**

“Hey Dad, How Are You Doing?”

- Can we check in with fathers on a regular basis starting prenatally?
- Usually best to avoid asking about “feelings”
- Focus on what they are “doing” – or not doing
- Build up competence and confidence
- Tell them what they are doing well....and *why*

Perinatal mood & anxiety disorders (PMAD)

- 10% of Fathers – PPD; 5-15% of fathers – anxiety disorder
- Highest Prevalence for Fathers is 3-6 months postnatally – 25.6% - (Paulson, Bazemore; 2010)
- If Mom has a PMAD, Fathers are 50% more likely to also have one – but later & different symptoms
- Postpartum Support International – www.Postpartum.net
- PSI – Help for Dads - <https://www.postpartum.net/get-help/help-for-dads/>

Butterfly Effect



What one change can you make.....

.....that will change everything?



Thank you!

Nicholas Kasovac, MSOT, OTR/L, IMH-E
Kids At Play Therapy/The DAD Projects
TheDadProjects@gmail.com

My Journey



Current Projects and Initiatives

- Washington Fatherhood Council
- Washington Prenatal to 3 Coalition
- Nurture Connection Family Network Collaborative
- Nurture Connection Steering Committee
- National Center for Parent Leadership Advisory Council

- Co-Design of ERH Interview Guide
- Parent Advisor for Reach Out & Read Book Committee
- Development of Provider Training & Competencies in Michigan

Learning objectives

- To reflect on your **current mindset** about important role of fathers in the development of well-being and flourishing for next generation children and families
- To consider opportunities for **expanding practices and other disruptive system changes** that will advance father engagement and Early Relational Health (ERH)
- To **become an advocate in WA** for father engagement in all early childhood system programs, services and initiatives

Early Relational Health

Early Relational Health (ERH) is the state of emotional well-being that grows from the positive emotional connection between young children and their caregivers when they experience strong relationships with each other.

ERH is vital for creating the foundation for healthy development and lifelong health and well-being.



Why Early Relational Health Matters

- Creates the necessary footing for young children to optimally learn about and engage in the world around them
- Helps children to cultivate relationships throughout their lifetime
- Lays the foundation for healthy brain development, which supports their well-being, learning, and behavior into adulthood
- Foundational early relationships shape the well-being of both the child and the caregiver
- The two-way nature of early relationships affects two-generational health and well-being, both in the moment and for the long term

Because Early Relational Health is vital for the health and well-being of every child and family, creating equitable access to Early Relational Health resources and supports is also vital.

Equity

Early Relational Health Embodies Equity

Celebrating Strengths and Differences

Making ERH equitable means recognizing the importance of individuals' and communities' social, cultural, political, ecological, and spiritual identities.

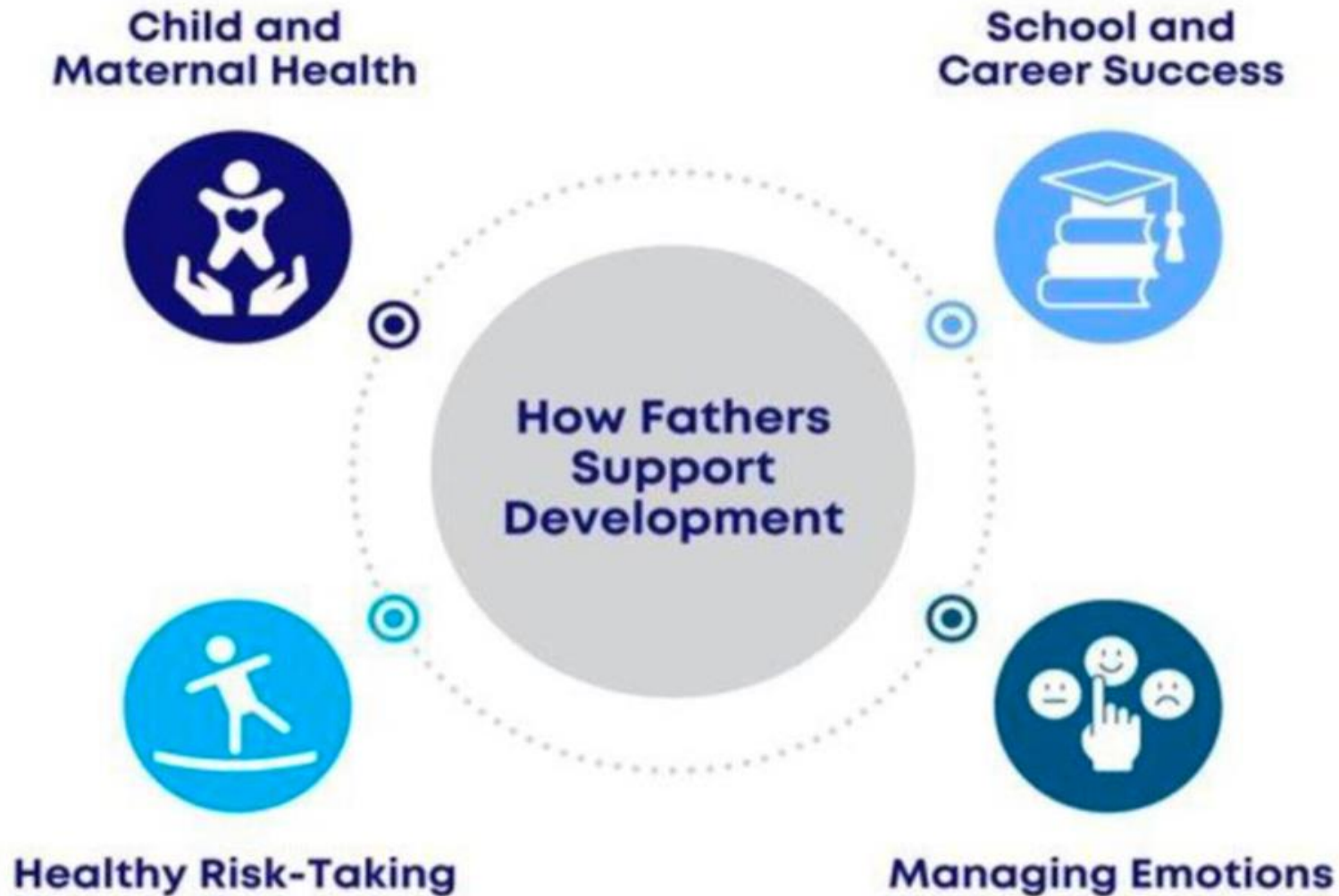
Buffering Against Adversity

Historical and systems-level inequities mean that certain families and communities are burdened disproportionately by stressors. Strong, positive, and nurturing relationships can buffer adversity for children and families.

Unjust Systems, Policies, and Practices Drive Unjust Outcomes

For people working with young children and their families, it is important to recognize and reject implicit biases and challenge policies and practices that may be prejudicial and, in fact, racist. We must also expose the root causes of unequal and unjust outcomes for children and families.

Father's Support Development



Clinton Boyd, PhD

Prenatal father engagement can look like....

Support healthy habits for mothers

Frequently attend doctor's visits

Try a class for new or expectant parents

Talk, read, and sing to your baby/baby-to-be

Be present for labor, delivery, and immediately after birth



Children with positive and attuned relationships with fathers tend to.....



**Be more confident
and have higher
self-esteem**



**Have stronger
language and
cognitive skills**



**Enjoy stronger
early connections
with peers**



**Be more sociable
throughout early
childhood**



**Perform better
academically (reading
and math scores)**



**Have positive
benefits that last
into adulthood**

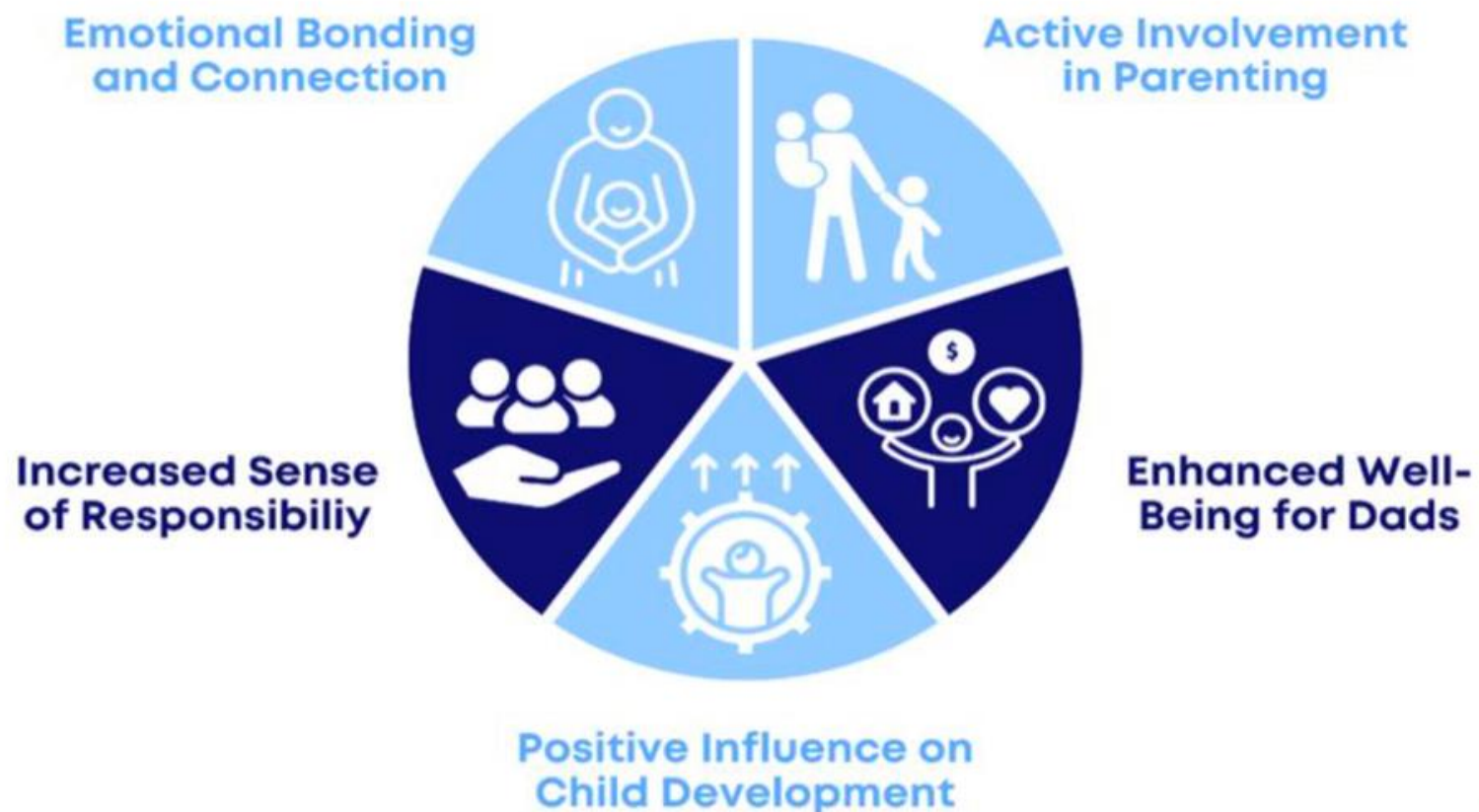
Healthy Risk Taking

Fathers tend to encourage more problem solving and healthy risk taking among their children



Fathers provide security in the context of controlled excitement of play or discipline

Fatherhood is a transformative experience for fathers and their children



How Can We Support Dads and ERH?

- Leave your biases at the door and realize dads want to be involved with their children's upbringing
- Educate staff members and colleagues how important of a role Dads play in Early Childhood (and beyond)
- Figure out what supports your organization offers for Dads
- Is something missing? What kind of supports could be provided? (Prenatal, 0-3, 3+...)
- Who can you collaborate with to provide supports for dads that you come in contact with?
- Are there opportunities for Dads to be involved in emergent or ongoing Parent work?





Factors, Falsehoods and Findings in Early Relational Health

Jose Romo





Hospital Birth



Home Birth



Romo Familia



Early Relational Health: is the state of emotional well-being that grows from the **positive emotional connection** between babies and toddlers and their parents/caregivers when they experience strong, **positive**, and **nurturing relationships** with each other.



<https://nurtureconnection.org/early-relational-health/early-relational-health-explained/>



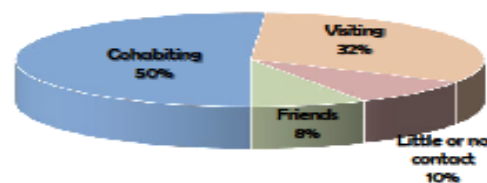
From the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing (The Future Families and Child Wellbeing Study) Study Fact Sheet

fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/publications

Non-marital childbearing has increased dramatically since the 1970s. At that time, about 10% of all births were to unmarried parents. In 2006, the number was nearly 40%. To gain a better understanding of what these trends imply for parents, children and society, the *Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study* has been following approximately 5,000 children born in large U.S. cities between 1998 and 2000, including a large oversample of children born to unmarried parents. The study has yielded a number of important findings.

A large proportion of unmarried parents are in "marriage-like" relationships at the time of their child's birth. One-half of unmarried parents are living together at the time of their child's birth, and another 32% are in 'visiting unions,' defined as romantically involved but living apart. Less than 20% are not romantically involved at the time of the child's birth.

Figure 1. Unmarried Parents' Relationship Status at Birth



Most unmarried fathers are very involved during pregnancy and immediately after the birth, especially fathers in cohabiting and visiting unions. Over 80% provide support to the mother during the pregnancy and over 70% visit the mother and baby at the hospital. In addition, the vast majority of unmarried fathers say they want to help raise their child.

Table 1. Unmarried Fathers' Involvement, By Parents' Relationship Status at Birth

	Cohabiting (%)	Visiting (%)	Non-romantic (%)
Gave money, bought things	97	84	28
Visited hospital	97	71	29
Name on birth certificate	96	80	52
Mother wants father involved	99	99	74

Unmarried parents are much more disadvantaged than married parents.

Compared to married parents, unmarried parents are:

- ✓ more likely to have started parenting in their teens,
- ✓ less likely to have lived with both biological parents growing up,
- ✓ more likely to have had children with other partners,
- ✓ more likely to be poor,
- ✓ more likely to suffer from depression,
- ✓ more likely to report substance abuse,
- ✓ more likely to have spent time in jail, and
- ✓ disproportionately African American and Hispanic.

Despite their high hopes, most parental relationships do not last, and as a result many children experience high levels of instability. Only 35% of unmarried couples are still living together five years after the birth of their child, and less than half of the 35% are married. Couples that were cohabiting at birth are more likely to be together than couples in 'visiting unions.' Just over 50% of cohabiting couples are married or cohabiting five years after the birth.

Once their relationship with baby's father ends, many unmarried mothers form new partnerships and many have children with new partners. Nearly 40% of all unmarried mothers



CONSCIOUS FATHERING™



A Guide for Expectant Fathers

By Bernie Dorsey

"The hardest thing we will ever do is parent.
Funny that it will also be the single most important."

Conscious Fathering - Jose Romo Ramirez
<https://www.multicare.org/event/conscious-fathering-class-at-good-samaritan-hospital-2/>



Dove Commercial



Parenting

The act or process of becoming a parent





Rituals= Parenting
Experiences



Benefits of Creating Rituals

- Creating consistent, predictable experiences is road map to parenting success.
- Parents/caregivers- helps build parenting confidence
- Promotes positive childhood experiences
- Creates time to talk together
- Create healthy behaviors
- Helps build emotional connection in relationship
- Prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACES)-potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17)

Daddy can do it too!

ERH for Infants

Eye contact

Mirroring

Holding baby

Feeding baby

Soothing baby

Changing baby





Conscious Fathering-Jose Romo Ramirez
<https://www.multicare.org/event/conscious-fathering-class-at-good-samaritan-hospital-2/>



Parenting CPR

Consistent
Predictable
Reliable



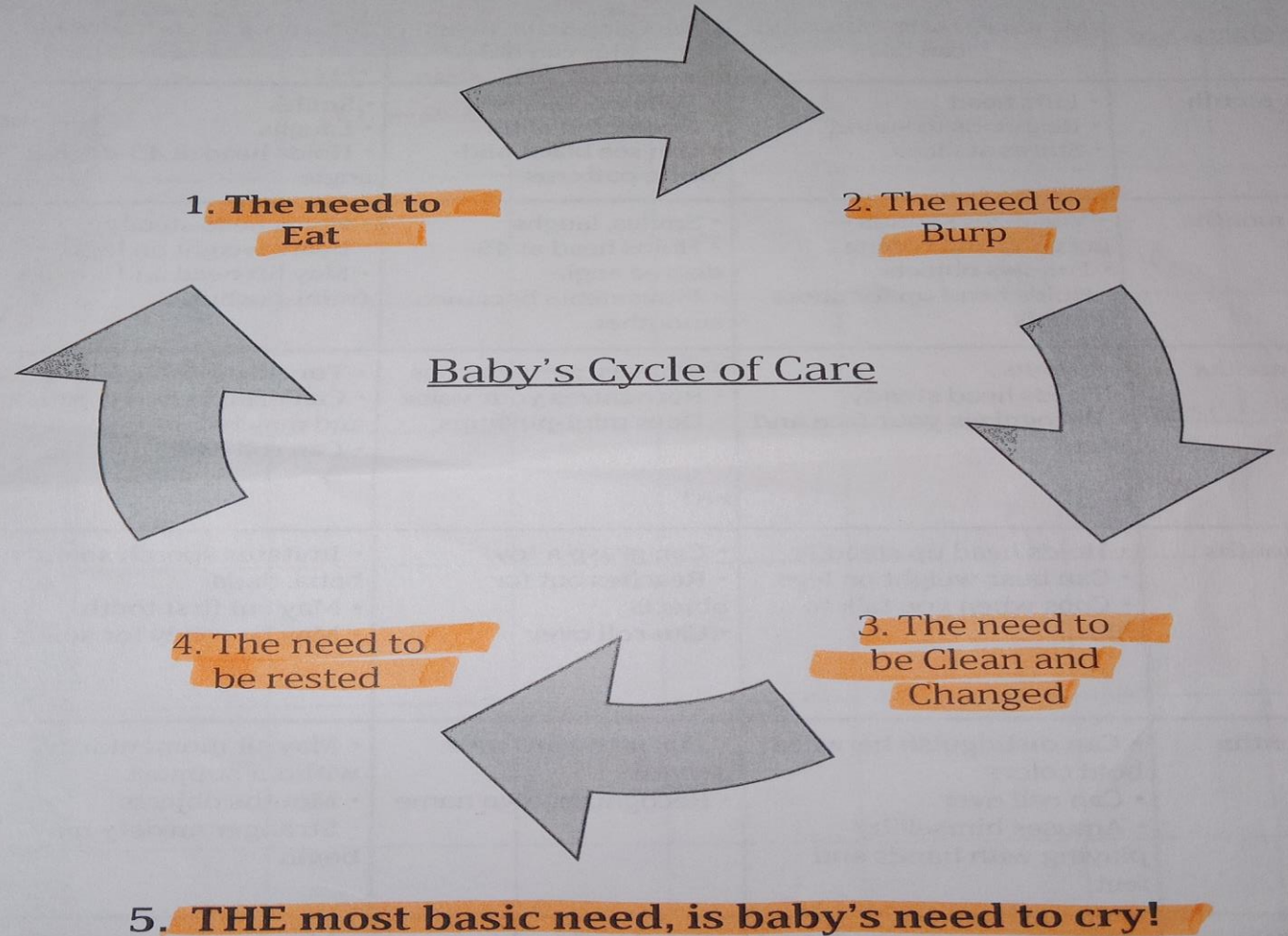
A close-up photograph of a pair of hands gently holding a baby's feet. The hands are positioned on either side of the feet, with fingers slightly curled to support them. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the hands and the baby's legs, creating a warm and nurturing atmosphere.

Conscious Fathering Overview

- Parenting C.P.R.
- Baby's Basic Needs
- Cycle of Care
- Handling with Care
- Partnership
- Define Your Fatherhood

- **Eat**
- **Burp**
- **Clean and Changed**
- **Rest/Sleep**
- **CRY**

Meeting Baby's Basic Needs



Diapers of the Breastfed Baby

Looking at a baby's poop and pee can help you tell if your baby is getting enough to eat.

The baby's poop should change color from black to yellow during the first 5 days after birth.



The baby's first poop is black and sticky.



The poop turns green by Day 3 or 4.



The poop should turn yellow by Day 4 or 5.



Poop can look seedy.



Poop can look watery.



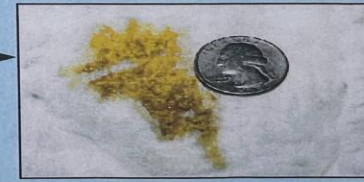
Illness, injury, or allergies can cause blood in poop. Call Doctor.



Babies make some large and some small poops every day.

Only count poops larger than this.

By Day 4, most breastfed babies make 3 or 4 poopy diapers every day.



On Day 1 or 2 some babies have orange or red pee.

By Day 3 or 4, breastfed babies should make 3 or 4 wet diapers with pee that looks like clear water.

A wet diaper is as heavy as 3 tablespoons of water.







Resources

- www.Fatherhood.Gov
- **Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences**

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>

- **Engaging Men and Dads At WIC Toolkit- California WIC Association**

<https://www.calwic.org/what-we-do/engage-wic-families/engaging-men-a-dads/>

- **National WIC Association-WICHub.org**

<https://thewichub.org/engaging-dads-in-wic-toolkit/>

- **Nurturing Connections**
<https://nurtureconnection.org/early-relational-health/early-relational-health-explained/>

- **Diapers of the Breastfed Baby -2002**
K.Hoover/B. Wilson-Clay

- **Families and Child Wellbeing Study Fact Sheet**
fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/publications

Thank You For Joining Us

Anne Stone, WA Fatherhood Council Director

anne.stone@dshs.wa.gov

Nick Kasovac - nick.kasovac@gmail.com

Steven Thibert - nick.kasovac@gmail.com

Jose Ramirez - jose.romoramirez@doh.wa.gov

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