

# THE COUNSELOR

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## FATHERS: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT REALLY MATTER!

Research findings since the 1970's reveal the profound effects fathers have on their children. The father-child relationship (FCR) critically impacts children's lives; shaping their personalities, affecting their motivation, academic and vocational success, sexuality, adult relationships, their future parenting and personal effectiveness in the world. Sadly enough, the FCR has been underrated and devalued in modern society. A host of factors contribute to reducing dad's influence and removing him from his kid's lives; leaving them disadvantaged, conflicted, and vulnerable. Fatherless children account for: 63% of youth suicides; 71% of pregnant teenagers; 90% of homeless and runaway children; 85% of children with behavioral disorders; 80% of all high school drop outs; 75% of adolescent patients in chemical dependency centers; 80% of rapists motivated by displaced anger; and 85% of all youths sitting in prisons. Fathers, we need to invest in our children's lives. We desperately need to eradicate the mass father deprivation devastating our country!

### **Problems, Consequences, Causes**

**Father Absence** - The father has very little or no contact with his children. He is reduced and removed from their lives. Over one million divorces occur each year, 90% of fathers have less than full custody. Forty percent of American children will go to bed tonight without a father. Only one in six divorced fathers sees his children once a week or more. Children raised without fathers are more likely to show signs of psychological maladjustment. Father absence contributes to underachievement, antisocial behavior, and difficulty establishing and continuing intimate relationships. Father-absent teenage girls are more likely to have lower self-esteem, precocious sexual activity and become depressed. According

to FBI statistics, a missing father is a more reliable predictor of criminal activity than race, environment, or poverty.

**Disengagement** - Many fathers pull away after divorce, seeing their children less. Some cease contact altogether. These fathers cannot tolerate the overwhelming pain of "visiting" their children, especially since they had strong attachments with them prior to the divorce. Many fathers become grief-stricken and depressed. Their children become confused and conflicted over the loss.

**Parental Alienation (PAS)** - This is a distinct form of postdivorce conflict in which one parent appears to go to great lengths, at times, including making fictitious allegations of physical and/or sexual abuse, to turn a child against the other parent. In severe cases the child's once love-bonded relationships with the targeted, rejected parent is destroyed (Gardner, 1986). The consequences can be disastrous and damaging for both child and rejected parent.

**Parentectomy** - This is the removal, erasure, or severe diminution of a caring parent in a child's life following separation or divorce. The victims of parentectomy are the children and severed parents from their lives. Parentectomies are psychologically lethal to children and parents. Children feel abandoned by a loved and needed parent, frequently becoming resentful and depressed. The depression may not surface until adolescence. Suicidality may result from a parent being erased from their lives. They lack self esteem and believe the parent willfully abandoned them, never loved or cared for them.

**Paternal Deprivation** - This occurs when children are deprived of their fathers. It can thwart children in their physical, mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual development, placing them at risk for many problems. Seventy-two percent of the teenage



murders and 60% of the rapists come from father-deprived homes. Father-deprived children are 11 times more likely to become violent, and represent 80% of adolescents in psychiatric hospitals today.

**No FCR** - Sometimes fathers choose not to develop relationships with their children. This invariably causes their children to feel rejected and abandoned which often leads to hostility, depression and a multitude of psychological and social problems.

**Weak-Poor FCR's** - This occurs with minimally bonded FCRs and comes from absent (work dads), ineffective, distant, or non engaging fathers. Children are left frustrated, depressed, and angry. Many desperately strive for dad's approval or act out to get his attention.

**Father Hunger** - This is the affective state of craving for father's physical touch, emotional involvement, and interaction. Children need affection from their father. The father-starved child is stunted emotionally and usually has trouble making life's transitions. This occurs in father-absent homes and when father is physically present but psychologically removed. It is extremely frustrating and damaging for a child when the father lives at home but does not connect with his children. These children typically have problems with their anger, aggression, school performance, and establishing deep fulfilling relationships.

**Conflicted FCR's** - These occur when father is hyper-critical, angry, judgmental, or harsh. Many of these fathers are in emotional pain themselves. Some are addicted to work, alcohol, drugs, or gambling. Children often become resentful, and act outright aggressive or passive-aggressive toward dad. Many become teenagers with serious problems like sexual acting out,

underachievement, and suicidal attempts. They can become extremely troubled adults, having grown up never feeling dad's acceptance, validation, or receiving his blessing.

Why do fathers withdraw their love, affection, and involvement from their children? Why do they abandon their children or fade back from cultivating relationships that bless and equip them? Many fathers are hurting. They carry baggage from their own childhood. Emotionally blocked fathers seem distant, weak, sad, angry, and empty. Many have issues with their own fathers. Others want that FCR but are blocked out by their ex-spouses and the courts. Many fathers struggle with addictions which pull them away from their children. Others are so obsessed with getting ahead that they spend long hours away from home.

## **Father Roles and Images**

Historically fathers have fulfilled many different roles and functions. Traditional fathers were viewed as providers, protectors, commanders, moral supervisors, disciplinarians, educators, authority figures, and sex role models. Biblical fathers like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joshua were spiritual leaders for their families. They were Godly men of obedience, faithfulness, and courage. They were honored, respected and admired by their families. These fathers had character, strength, drive, wisdom, paternal love, and deep abiding relationships with God, the Father. Fathers' roles in modern society have changed over the years, especially since the Industrial Revolution and Women's Movement. Their hold on the family is considerably less. Fathers in the media are often presented as pitiful, ineffectual and almost inconsequential. The Promise Keeper's Movement challenges men to reevaluate their roles, relationships, and draw close to God. Men are learning to express their feelings and connect with their loved ones.

## **Strong, Healthy FCRs**

The healthiest FCRs have fathers who are deeply connected and rightly related to God first. They are free to love their children unconditionally because they experience the unconditional love of our Heavenly Father. Strong FCRs have fathers who are warm and close with their children. They are attached to them and involved in their lives. They care about their children and are sensitive to their issues and needs. These fathers provide love, affection, guidance, and nurturance. They touch their children physically and emotionally. Strong

## **Calling All Fathers!!!**



Fathers, I beseech you: connect with your children, build strong FCRs!

Break any generational problems handed down from your fathers. Mothers, I praise you who foster strong relationships with your children and their fathers. I challenge all mothers to facilitate strong FCRs rather than hinder them. Lawyers, judges, politicians, and decision makers, please heed the evidence. I appeal to you, do everything in your power to keep fathers connected with their children. Fathers, invest in your kids, put

future stock in your relationships with them, if you don't, the inheritance you leave behind may be squandered by your angry, resentful, damaged, children! Don't fill your children up with things that will leave them empty. Christian fathers, we are called to live Godly lives, build Godly relationships, and love one another deeply from the heart, not just to make money. Fathers, and mothers, surrender your bitterness to God and forgive one another. I challenge you, fathers, build relationships that really matter. Don't wait. Do it now!

I am blessed to have strong FCRs with my sons because of my strong relationship with my father and God's love and help. I have spent most of my career helping fathers and children develop healthy relationships. If you have any questions or need help, call me anytime.

FCRs are flexible, flowing and trusting. Father and child are open with one another, share feelings, and communicate clearly the joys and agonies of life. The children feel secure with dad. Strong healthy FCRs exude kindness, respect, compassion, and love.

The father's warm, loving, caring, closeness builds self-confidence in his children. They feel worthy and important. Boys develop a healthy male identity and real masculinity. Strong father-son relationships prepare boys to become excellent, loving husbands and fathers. Girls experiencing healthy father-daughter relationships, look for the same qualities in their future husbands. Healthy father-daughter relationships help girls appreciate their femininity and relate to men appropriately. Healthy FCRs facilitate internal drive for academic and vocational achievement. Strong FCRs promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth. Godly FCRs empower and equip our children to face life's adversities courageously.

Fathers, guard against anything that competes for your love, affection, and time with your family! Engage in the everyday activities with your children. Read a bed time story, help fix a bicycle tire, go with your teen to the grocery store, laugh with them, walk with them, and talk to them. Share things that you did or heard that made you laugh. Share your feelings, and acknowledge your children's disappointments, defeats, challenges, victories. Build your kids up, complement them on their appearance, capabilities, and accomplishments. Give them your undivided attention. Connect with your children around

church activities, worship, praise, prayer, and devotionals. These shared experiences create strong bonds and memories. Fathers, give your children (of all ages) unconditional love with your words and actions. Bless them by affirming them and asking God to grant them favor. Make friendships with other fathers committed to building strong marriages, and relationships with their children. Remember, children need love from both their parents, and the best parent is both parents.

## **F.Y.I.**

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## **SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**

**INFO: 713.984.1314**

4/2/00 - Loving Discipline  
Second Baptist Church

5/9/00 - Helping Millennial Teens  
Overcome Divorce  
(Youth Pastors Forum)