

# marri *Findings*

FAITH & FAMILY

## Fathers Matter in the Health of Their Children

**“My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person, he believed in me.”**

*Jim Valvano, American college basketball player, coach, and broadcaster*



Despite the chaos around us, the social sciences are having their impact for good --- by changing micro dimensions of cultures, father-infant bonding practices being one of those changes. Below we see again the impact of that [simple but powerful Hong Kong study](#) we reported before. It appears here again within a meta-synthesis study on a father’s skin-to-skin contact with his child in establishing deep bonds between them. A Korean study shows similar impact by fathers giving physical and emotional care to the infant child. Worth noting is that the state of the marriage bond bonding between the parents has significant impact on the father-child relationship. Belonging between the parents increases belonging throughout the whole family.

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## **Father Involvement Influences Attachment to Their Children**



A [2019 meta-synthesis](#) examined fathers' experiences, needs, and perceptions of their involvement with their infants. Findings from this meta-synthesis showed that fathers' relationship with their infants became stronger the more time and the more physical contact they had with their infant child. Moreover, their relationship with their wives and the level of support from them influenced the strength of their bond.

Also, the better their relationship with their own fathers the greater their desire to be involved with their infant child. However, most fathers reported that work commitments, sleep deprivation, perceived lack of caregiving skills, breastfeeding, and exclusion by healthcare professionals during labor and the early postpartum period hindered them from spending time with their infants, and made them feel left out.

Fathers who had skin-to-skin contact once their infant was born expressed their desire to be both the caregiver and provider, and altered their lifestyles, sacrificing their leisure time and hobbies, to be more physically and emotionally present with their infants.

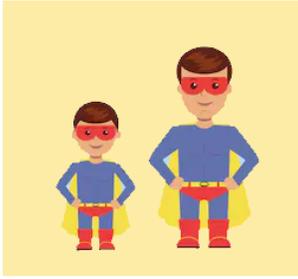
## **Paternal Involvement Impacts Infants' Brain Development**



A [2016 Korean study](#) investigated the association between paternal involvement and the brain development of infants, aged 3 to 4 months. Results: fathers who take care of their infants by changing their diapers, feeding them, dressing them, and by providing emotional support to their wives increased their infants' brain development (and decreased their wives' stress levels). The mother's level of stress modified both the depth of relationship of the father and their infants' brain development.

## **Paternal Involvement at the Earliest Stages of Their Child's Development Makes a Positive Difference**

A [2016 study](#) using data from [the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study](#) examined 10,600 children to find out how father involvement affected developmental



outcomes during the prenatal, perinatal, and infant stages. The results: infants with absent and/or uninvolved fathers had a greater likelihood of attention deficit and learning disorders, as well as speech and language disorders.

**Conclusion:** The profoundly enhancing effect of deep relational and physical belonging between parents and children reveals the physical and spiritual dimensions of the nature of man, the spiritual (relational) being fed by the physical --- within the family, especially the married family with the father present and close to his wife. May every infant be so blessed, and may we strive to be a nation that delivers this blessing to every baby.

For the good of the child, the future of the world,  
Pat Fagan Ph.D.



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