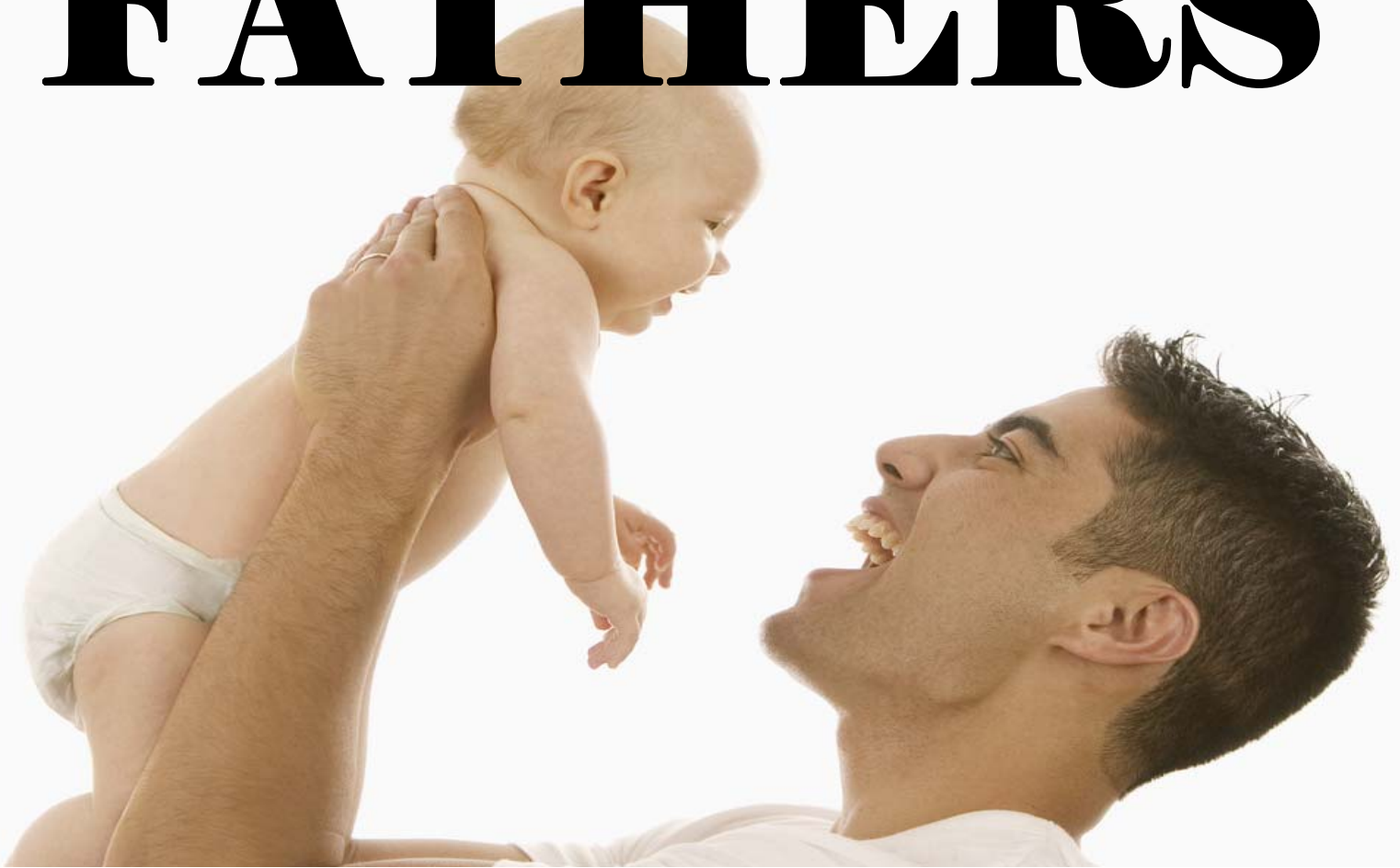


FATHERS



How To Be An Involved Participating Parent

In a world where two paycheck families are now the norm, both parents must share the daily responsibilities of raising children. But many new fathers never had a role model for being a participating parent. How do fathers learn to take an active role in their children's lives?

Involved From The Start

Today's new father has the opportunity to be involved even before the baby is born by attending prenatal classes with his wife and by being in the labor room. Many describe their child's birth as the "the greatest experience of my life."

For many fathers, witnessing their child's birth becomes a pivotal step towards viewing parenthood as a team effort and development a close relationship with the child.

The Mother's Role

The father's participation level depends a great deal on how the mother enlists his support. The new mother who admits that she has no idea why the baby is crying may find herself with an ally willing to help her find a solution.

As she encounters laundry and dirty dishes piling up, she shouldn't try to do it all herself and silently fume because her spouse is not a mind reader. She must ask for help with specific tasks as she is to gain support.

On the other hand, she must be willing to concede that this method may be different, but works as well as her own. The woman who constantly redoes chores to her own satisfaction soon loses her spouse's help because he assumes that he can't do it right. If the infant is taken from his arms every time he or she starts to cry, for example, the father never has the satisfaction of finding his own way to soothe a child.

As The Child Grows

A participating father should try to take an active role in school or other activities involving his child. He must be willing to attend occasional conferences with the child's teacher and take his turn at helping out with homework assignments. Perhaps he doesn't want to take on the job of PTA president, but he can volunteer to help with one fundraiser during the year.

A father's interest naturally grows from the home to the community. He may become involved with community or church groups and service organizations. By staying on top of school board or local government activities, the father can participate in those issues which affect his family.

The child learns from the involved father that men can take an active role in the child's life and in improving the child's world. And, of course, women benefit from a spouse willing to share child care and household tasks. But the father who participates daily in his child's upbringing is rewarded the most. Unlike his own father, the participating dad has the opportunity to really get to know his child and becomes richer for the experience.