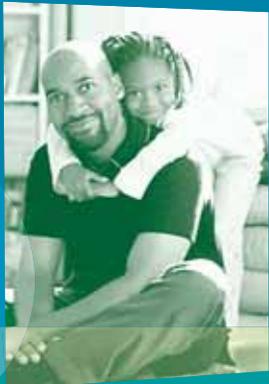


## What is a father, exactly?

Being a father is, first and foremost, understanding and assuming the huge responsibility a child represents. It means recognizing the child for what he/she is and taking care of him/her.

Although, not long ago, our fathers and grandfathers were restricted to a rather rigid role, today, we have radically transformed fatherhood. Fatherhood now allows for more diversity of expression, because there are as many ways of being a father as there are men who enter fatherhood each day.



## For more information

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*Ministère de la Famille  
et des Aînés*



**Fatherhood :**  
**The Grand Adventure**



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Québec

## Fathers are essential!

Children need their fathers as much as their mothers—for affection, tenderness, and a model on which to identify and affirm their own identity. Specialists who have studied the question unanimously assert that fathers play a crucial role, beginning with the child's earliest days. Children identify with the adults living with them. The father's presence is therefore just as important as that of the mother.

### A strong, well-balanced identity

Contemporary psychologists claim that, starting in early childhood, a warm and affectionate relationship with the father helps boys construct a strong, well-balanced identity. Girls who benefit from strong paternal love in childhood and adolescence are more self-confident later in life. Furthermore, according to some studies, children who get a lot of attention from their fathers will take more personal initiative and are more confident in school.

### A fundamental emotional reference

We don't always have words to describe the role of the father. Our vocabulary in this area seems lacking. We wouldn't usually say that fathers "father," though we regularly talk about the "mothering" mothers do. Still, one thing is clear: when men take care of children, they can do it with just as much love, pleasure and success. Their approach is different and that's just fine.

For a child, a father's love is just as important as a mother's love. So, jump right in! Be affectionate and demonstrate your interest. Be attentive, listen, cuddle, and express your love in words. Step into the world of children. All kinds of treasures are in store for you!

## The first contacts

You'll never forget the moment when you held your child for the first time—the fragility of that little being and the incredible tenderness that welled up in you! A miracle had taken place and a father was born—for life!

### Before the birth

Pregnancy and birth are special times for future fathers; these are the first moments of family life. Take advantage of the nine months of pregnancy to prepare for your future role as a father. Gather information and throw yourself into this great adventure.

### At the birth

Regarding birth, there is no single model. You will choose the location and manner that correspond to your values as a couple. The baby's arrival is when you will really begin your fathering role. It's up to you to create the best role of your life!

Skill in caring for children is not determined by our genetic makeup as women and men. Rather, it has more to do with attitude, empathy, and interest. If there is one field where we learn by doing, it has to be this one!

Like mothering, there is nothing abstract about being a father. It is a daily experience of concrete actions and constant attentiveness. Caring for the baby, tender words, caresses and intimate moments that you will enjoy initiating will soon be part of your life as a dad.

In short, fatherhood will teach you about parental responsibilities and the extraordinary privileges accompanying them.

## Balancing work and family

Finding a balance between family life and work can be a daily challenge if family responsibilities are not shared. Fortunately, men today are more willing to become involved in this domain. They are forming more equal and satisfying relationships with their spouses, and this sharing extends to emotional bonding with the children. Adopt the principle that there is no "main parent" in your home. The two of you are responsible for your children and their care. Assume your role.



Don't hesitate! Develop your skills, discover your way of doing things, and make connections.

### My dad is stronger than your dad!

Seven little words that we've been hearing for generations. Seven little words that, when the time comes, are a call for respect. Seven words that actually express the sensation of security and admiration children feel for their father. It's up to you to be this cherished dad.

You will be the father you choose to be: unique, wonderful, attentive, tender, loving, present and affectionate. Why not all of these things? It's your turn to be the strongest!