

Giving dad a hand

In the 21st century we expect a lot from our dads, and that's a good thing.

Most younger men are keen to be hands-on parents and see their role in raising their children as an equal one with their spouse, so it follows that bringing fathers together with their children is a positive thing for families.

And that's where DadsLink comes in. A joint project between Relationships Australia, Mensline Australia, YMCA and the Life Is Foundation, it runs activity-based programs and provides support and information for fathers and their children in a unique hands-on program.

One of the main groups to have embraced DadsLink is separated dads and children, but the program is for all fathers who want to enjoy the positive side of being a dad and staying connected with their kids.

One goal of DadsLink is to build a protective community, and though the group is aimed at all fathers, it is clear that separated fathers in particular, and some children, face many difficulties and are at an increased risk of poor wellbeing and having life turn out badly for them. Feeling a part of a positive community and network is a great protection.

We have also found that when both parents live with their children, much of the parenting is done either together or by the mother, so if the family splits, the father often feels at a loss about being the sole parent should he become responsible for his children.

Work pressures may also mean dads are away from their kids more than they would like. DadsLink is an opportunity to further connect with kids and find out a bit more about how to achieve what most men want – to be the best dads they can.

Counselling professionals are also available through DadsLink, which can help in this situation.

DadsLink runs community events for dads and their kids, though all members of the family and friends are welcome.

Coming to a DadsLink event or session doesn't mean you're not coping as a parent. It's about building on the resources you already have. This is a positive program that gives men a chance to add to their parenting skills, with other fathers and their kids.

Keep a lookout on the RAV website for upcoming DadsLink events, such as Dads Day Out.

* Written by Tony Gee, a Relationships Australia counsellor who runs groups for separated fathers. Ph. 1300 364 277

Survival tips

- **DadsLink is for every dad who wants to be the best kind of father he can be.**
- **Separated dads who might need a bit of a boost will find DadsLink a valuable resource**
- **It's a great opportunity to get tips from other dads about the mysteries and joys of parenting.**