

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 28, 2009**

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## **This Father's Day Remind Dads They Provide for their Kids In Many Ways – Not Just Economically**

**Oakland, CA** – Men face unprecedented economic hardship and strain in the current economic downturn. In California, the unemployment rate is now over 10 percent. Men represent more than four out of every five people who've become unemployed. Many of these unemployed men are dads, and this Fathers' Day they're struggling to provide for their families in the way they're most used to – economically.

“Many men believe that providing financially for family is central to being a man and a father,” says Will Courtenay, Ph.D., an internationally recognized expert in helping men and fathers, a psychotherapist, author and researcher, known as “the Men’s Doc” [[www.TheMensDoc.com](http://www.TheMensDoc.com)]. “So, falling on tough economic times, can hit home very hard for these men.”

Some may question, “How can this be? Times have changed and the father as the ‘breadwinner’ is a thing of the past, especially since the majority of homes with kids now are two-income households.”

But, according to Courtenay, this notion dies hard. “Certainly American culture has shifted from defining fathers primarily as breadwinners and discipliners to recognizing them also as caregivers and nurturers,” Courtenay says. “But, the fact remains that many men base their self-identity on being strong, physically and financially.”

So, what is needed to help fathers look at themselves differently, especially now, when economic times are so tough?

First, kids – especially young kids – don’t even notice a loss in dad’s income. “What they notice is whether he’s around or not – and if he’s around, whether he’s playing on the floor with them,” Courtenay says.

There remains a lot of debate among social scientists and researchers about whether a family’s income has any effect on kids’ development. But, according to Courtenay, there isn’t any doubt about the positive effects of a father’s involvement. Research clearly shows that there are all kinds of positive benefits for kids when fathers are involved in their lives growing up. Studies consistently show that these kids do better socially, behaviorally, psychologically, and cognitively.

“Everything we know about the positive impact fathers have on their kids has little to do with income. It’s about how engaged and emotionally involved dads are,” Courtenay says.

So, as Father’s Day nears Dads should take pride in knowing that they have a huge impact on their kid’s lives. And, remember that it’s the simple things like a conversation on a walk, reading a book or throwing a ball that really make a difference for their children. For Mothers and everyone else celebrating Fathers Day, they, too, should take note of this. According to Courtenay, research shows that a mother’s encouragement is one of the biggest factors contributing to a father being involved with his kids. So, Mothers, on this Fathers Day, can play a big part in helping Dad realize how important he is to the family.

-30-

## **Did you know?**

- Fathers have a unique impact on their children, in part because they tend to interact differently with children than mothers do. For example, fathers tend to engage children in physically active play.
- Boys whose fathers offer praise and compliments perform better on tests of cognitive achievement than boys whose fathers are cool and aloof.
- Higher levels of father involvement with their children (i.e., eating meals together, going on outings, helping with homework) are associated with fewer behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and a high level of school performance among children and adolescents.
- 99% of fathers believe that being a father is a very important part of who they are.
- 54% of fathers felt prepared for fatherhood.
- 89% of fathers said their wife, partner, or child’s mother was their greatest source of help they drew upon to be a better father.
- 47% of father said that work responsibilities were the biggest obstacle to being a good father.
- 77% of fathers feel a responsibility to help other fathers improve their fathering skills.

Courtenay says it’s interesting to note that in the studies that show that income matters, it’s often because kids don’t have dads in the home and that’s why the household’s income is lower. “If all it took was money to be a good dad, NBA basketball players would be the best dads in the world,” Courtenay says. “Unfortunately, that’s far from the case.”

Percentages source:

National Fatherhood Initiative (2006). Pop’s Culture: A National Survey of Dads’ Attitudes on Fathering. Author: Gaithersburg, MD