

## Mental Health & Wellbeing Across MSPS

### Importance of Fathers & Father Figures to a Child's Well-being.

*When fathers feel good about being a dad, and are sensitive and responsive to children's needs, it contributes to a child's development of social and emotional skills. A father does not have to be biologically related to his child or live with his child all the time. Some children have contact with a father, while others don't. He may be a grandfather, step-father, foster father or adoptive father. Some children might have more than one father or relationships with other males who undertake a significant portion of parenting, such as uncles.*



#### There is no 'right-way' to be a father.

Each father brings unique ideas and experiences to being a supportive adult, and has a lot to contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of his child and family. Supporting a child and having their best interests in mind is what's important, as this has a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

#### Why is it important to be an involved father?

*The involvement of significant adults in a child's life is positively linked with their overall life satisfaction and wellbeing.*

- As a significant adult, a connected father may, for example, help increase a child or young person's happiness and confidence, and reduce feelings of fear and guilt, emotional distress and upset.
- When fathers are emotionally involved (e.g. acknowledging their child's feelings and helping them deal with difficult times), they are more likely to feel emotionally connected themselves and have more positive relationships with other young people. Children are more likely to embrace turn-taking and sharing, and likely to behave less aggressively towards their peers.
- When dads are affectionate and helpful, children are more likely to get on well with their siblings. When they're involved in their child's everyday activities (e.g. eating meals together, reading and helping with homework), children also tend to have fewer behaviour difficulties and better social skills.
- Babies whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to feel connected to them as a parent, and, therefore, be better able to handle new and unfamiliar situations; manage stressful situations; and are more curious and eager to explore their environment.



#### Getting involved has positives for fathers too.

- Providing effective support for children's emotional development starts with paying attention to their feelings and noticing how they manage them.
- Involved fathers are more likely to see interactions with their children positively, be more attentive to their children's development, better understand and be more accepting of their children, and enjoy closer, richer father-child relationships.

- Fathers who are involved in their children's lives are more likely to be more satisfied with their own lives, feel less psychological distress, and be more-able to understand themselves and empathically understand others.
- Feeling involved is also good for dads because they have a greater sense of self, greater general wellbeing, marital stability and relationship happiness. This is because being involved increases a sense of connectedness and inclusion. Involved fathers also have a strong sense of how important they are to their child or young person who can, in turn, be a very important catalyst in mens' lives.



### **Fathers can be involved with their children through:**

- engagement (direct contact)
- accessibility (being available to their children even when they're not in physical contact)
- responsibility (taking a role in looking out for their children's care and welfare).

There are many ways fathers' involvement with their children, and the early learning service or school, can benefit children's mental health and wellbeing.

This year *Malvern Springs Primary School* started a 'Fathering Project Dads' Group', that is led by one of the schools' fathers. The Dads' Group provides opportunities for dads and father figures from our school to meet up, chat, share fathering strategies and have fun engaging in activities with their children.



**Fathering Project Link:** <https://thefatheringproject.org/dads-groups/find-a-group/>

**BeYou Link:** <https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/relationships/engaging-fathers>

**EVERY CHILD EVERYWHERE FEELS SAFE.**

*Mrs Karen Kenny  
Mental Health & Well-being  
Coordinator - Level 3 Teacher*