

How to Break the Deadbeat Dad Cycle

Celebrities may deny it. Feminists may lead us to believe otherwise. But the fact of the matter is, children do much better in life when they have a father to guide them through it. In fact, [research shows](#) that children with an active father experience better physical and mental health, better development, and better behavior in school and in later life.

But even while we know the importance of an active father, it seems that many children still live without this commodity. Is it possible that we are seeing a lack of active fathers in America because men are simply clueless on how to be one?

New research out of New York University suggests this is a possibility. According to [Science Daily](#), researchers recruited a number of low-income fathers to participate in a study to see how shared reading experiences could benefit their child's readiness for school.

But while this study sounds like hundreds done before it, there was an important difference, as researcher Anil Chacko explains:

*"[F]athers in this program were not recruited to work on parenting or reduce child behavior problems, **but to learn** – with other fathers – skills to support their children's school readiness..."*

For the fathers, this learning took place by having them watch "videos showing fathers reading with children but with exaggerated errors." According to researchers:

"The fathers then identified and, in small and large groups, discussed better approaches to these interactions. Fathers

were then encouraged to practice the strategies they identified at home with their child during shared book reading.”

Contrary to most studies of this sort, researchers noted that a large percentage of the original group stayed with the program the entire time. Furthermore, “the data suggest more than a 30 percent improvement in parenting and school readiness outcomes.”

As the researchers point out, the study’s effectiveness and popularity seem to stem from its non-condemnatory nature. Instead of going into the study implying that fathers were doing something wrong from the get-go, the study offered an opportunity to “learn... skills to support their children’s school readiness.”

Judging from this result, one has to wonder if many men have a great desire to be a good father, but simply have never been given the opportunity to learn how to be one.

And who can really blame them? After all, [a large portion](#) of today’s fathers have grown up in single mother homes themselves. If they never had the living example of a father to observe and learn from, then how can we expect them to effectively practice the same role?

If we don’t provide today’s young men with more male role models from whom they can naturally learn to be an active father, will we continue the cycle of deadbeat and disappearing dads?