

To young females: Your relationship to your father supports you to create healthy relationships with other men in your life. If treasured by your father you feel valued as a female.

“One theme I see is that I don’t have a father who has been a part of my life. I’ve only recently been willing to have pain about that. Because of his absence, there was no father who could say, “I see you, you are my daughter.” I am seeing that in my relationships with guys I have a feeling of not being recognised.

I am not standing as a victim because of this. It brings me to the questions that I need to be asking about men and women. So I am thankful for that as part of my biography and I know that’s a big part of the questions and the work that I bring.”
– Rachel (16) USA.

It’s never too late to change your relationship to your father. Adolescence gives you an opportunity to do that.

FATHER

Clare (14)

*Father don’t pretend to be so strong,
You’ve always been the one to rely on.
If you don’t feel confident,
I’m willing to lend a hand.
If you can’t do it, I promise I’ll understand.
Don’t hide your emotions,
Or suppress your fears.
Don’t hold back laughter,
Especially don’t hide tears.
I won’t be the one to judge you,
Or make you feel ashamed.
We are all equal, our emotions feel the same.
If something is not right,
Please go ahead and speak,
I’ll do the best that I can,
To help you find your feet.
Please tell me that you love me,
More often than not,
It will be weird at first, it will come as a
shock.
But as the two of us get closer,
I know we’ll be ok.
‘Cos I really need a daddy,
Just like yesterday.*

“I’d never had a strong relationship with my dad but I really, really yearned for one. This poem to my dad expresses how I was feeling. When he heard me reading my poem I knew he felt the way I did. Since then we’ve done heaps of stuff, sung a duet, we have long conversations in the car on the way home from piano lessons. I feel more relaxed around him now. He’s not as angry. He’s nice to me and I’m happier.”

Fathers Leaving

It is hard for children and teenagers to accept that fathers have left them either physically or emotionally. Some teenagers have never known what their dad looks like. They look into the faces of men... wondering is this my dad? Everyone is affected differently when dads leave. It is vital that their dads stay in some kind of relationship with them.

Some Dads:

- become overwhelmed,
- don’t realise what parenting is about before their children arrive,
- don’t stick around long enough to take responsibility for their family,
- leave the family without a word and never contact their children again,
- muddle through, not quite knowing what to do or what’s expected and do the best they can,
- take care of the physical requirements of their kids but not the emotional or spiritual,
- commit themselves fully to their family and give everything they can to ensure the wellbeing of their children.

A father, who has not grown up emotionally and is still behaving like a boy, can be a burden in a family. It can be like another dependent child to the mother who may be struggling to keep her head above the water.

It can be heartbreaking for men, when for many reasons, their wives kick them out. They can lose everything – care of their children, their home, the emotional support a relationship gives them. Men in this situation can easily feel displaced, abandoned and alone. Sometimes they can become depressed. If your father is in this situation and does not make contact, it may be because he is not dealing with his pain very well and may not be able to reach out and support you. Maybe, if you are ready, you could reach out to him. This could mean a lot to his sore heart.

In the current legal system, women almost automatically get custody of children when parents separate. This is painful for the men who have been loving and caring fathers.

“At school I was getting a lot of stuff from people who didn’t understand that I wasn’t the same as them. It was making me really sad and angry all the time. Then I started feeling the effects of my parents’ divorce. I was missing the fun of having a dad for the first time in my life. It took a while but we talked about it. Now he knows what I’ve been going through. I also found out a lot about my father that I had not known before. Now I will do the same thing with my mother. Actually I was also annoyed at my father because I thought he had left me and mum out in the cold, but after talking to him I found that he really cared and tried. Talking is a great way to making you feel better about things.” – Malcolm (14)