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Children of divorce benefit from having a relationship with both of their parents. Research cites the best ways for fathers to stay connected to their children

Divorce or separation is the furthest thing from a man's mind on the day he says, "I do." And being separated from his child is the farthest thing from his mind when he hears, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" Yet, close to 50% of marriages end in divorce, and roughly 80% of mothers receive primary custody. This leaves many fathers feeling disconnected from their children.

Increasingly, fathers report wanting to be an active part of their child's life after the divorce. Contrary to popular belief, most fathers are not "deadbeat dads". In fact, research tells us that nearly 3/4 of fathers meet their financial obligations as a father. Fathers also report wanting to be an active part of their child's life. They want to share experiences, help with homework, and provide emotional support.

"Fathers and children share a special bond with one another, one that is unique from that of mothers. Divorced fathers express a desire to protect, guide, and provide for their children. They have an endless amount love, a selfless kind of love that is unlike any of their other relationships. On the heels of divorce or separation fathers often struggle to connect with their children. Many express the need for strategies for making the most of their time together," says Shelly Mahon, Ph.D. Student in the Human Development and Family Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Program Director of Apart, Not Broken: A Place for Learning, Connecting, and Creating.

Interestingly, research tells us that having a strong father-child relationship has as much or more to do with the kind of interactions they have than the amount of time they spend together. This is good news for fathers who may have limited access to their children. In other words, "Make your time together count," says Mahon.

Decades of research tells us that having a strong father-child relationships after divorce is important for the health and well-being of both children and fathers. In fact, one of the most significant factors impacting a father's adjustment is the movement from ongoing contact with regular opportunities for parent-child interactions to limited contact and new barriers to relationship building. Similarly, research shows that no single factor contributes more to the well-being of adult children of divorce than having a relationship with both parents while growing up.

The University of Wisconsin is conducting an evaluation to examine the effectiveness of this online intervention program. *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create* gives fathers a place to learn from the real experiences of other fathers and get current information about divorce and parenting after divorce. Using videos and a variety of online tools, fathers are given creative strategies to connect with their child and manage their relationship with their ex-partner. Fathers will be asked to respond to a pre and post survey, and provide feedback about their experience using the online program.

If you are interested in getting more information, or registering for this program, please visit the homepage at www.divorceddadinstitute.com/ or contact Shelly D. Mahon at apartnotbroken@gmail.com.