

TALK AND LISTEN



BEING THE FATHER IN A FAMILY

# TALK AND LISTEN

The relationship with your child builds from shared experiences. It is important for your child to be able to spend plenty of time with you, preferably on a daily basis.

A strong bond with your child also brings your partner closer and keeps up a positive family spirit.

## LOOK AT ME, DADDY!

### WHAT KIND OF A FATHER DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Your way of being a father is influenced by your situation with work or studies, your spouse's expectations and the models of fatherhood near you. Yet it is important to remember that the greatest influence is you.

Do you have enough time for your family? What was your own father like? What things do you want to do the same way as he did? What do you want to do differently?

Your child does not need the perfect father. Instead, your child needs a father who makes sure they can spend lots of time together, thinks about what's best for the child and always tries his best.

### CARE, PROTECT, BE SILLY

Your child needs care and protection with the emotional ups and downs. He needs encouragement and comfort when facing obstacles in the big world. When you are there for your child, he learns that he can count on you and that it is not necessary to make it on his own.

When your child trusts you, he gets excited about challenges that often include a learning opportunity. Don't forget to have fun on the way and sometimes act silly too!

What is your typical way of playing and spending time with your child?

*"Remember to sniff and cuddle, hold them close, never abandon."* (father, 32 yrs)

Look at your child, touch and hold him and share the fun. Find some activities that involve only you two.

### OUR FAMILY ROCKS!

What are your family highlights? The kinds when you are all feeling happy?

In these moments when you are all involved and the attention is divided, your child learns the very important skill of paying attention and not constantly being at the centre of attention. Both parents can support each other and learn something new as well.



### THERE ARE MANY WAYS OF BEING A FATHER

The more you spend time with your child, the better you learn to know each other and the closer you become.

Your child enjoys noticing that you have fun when you spend time together.

What would your child reply if someone asked: "What is your father like?" What would the answer be?

### UNDIVIDED ATTENTION TO YOUR CHILD

Undivided attention is a great way of telling your child that he is important to you.

Even a small baby can tell if he's got your full attention. That is when you play and cuddle. Both the phone and computer are off.



OUR FAMILY

### Imagine:

A picture is taken of your family on an ordinary night. Who is in the picture? What is everyone doing and what do they look like? Can you tell straight away that this is "our family"? A team with the same goal?

WHEN YOU ARE THERE FOR YOUR CHILD,  
HE LEARNS THAT IT IS NOT NECESSARY  
TO MAKE IT ON HIS OWN.

MORE INFO

[www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi](http://www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi)





A SMALL CHILD BRINGS UP FEELINGS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE EVEN KNOWN EXISTED

Fatherhood comes along with feelings of pride and joy. The helplessness of a newborn baby brings up one's soft and sensitive side.

When you are not able to soothe a crying baby, you may feel useless and inadequate.

*“Living with a child involves all sorts of feelings from heart-filling happiness to massive irritation.”*  
(father, 33 yrs)

Sometimes you act in ways or say something that you regret later. It is not easy to face feelings of disappointment towards yourself or anger towards your child. It is a good idea to stop and listen to your thoughts and feelings. They should always be separated from your actions.

*“A child is at the same time the best and the most challenging thing in one's life. Be honest to yourself and forgive yourself.”*  
(father 31 yrs)

It is one of the most important things for a baby to know that he will not be left alone with his feelings. The same applies to you as well.

Your understanding of yourself and your feelings grow when you share your experiences with another parent. You will notice how similar your experiences are.

*“It is good to pay attention and learn from your friends who are already fathers.”*  
(father, 29 yrs)

*“It felt like I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders.”* (father, 47 yrs)

Things might not always go quite as planned. Circumstances can change any moment with a break-up or if you or your family member gets sick. That might affect your role as a father. If, for example, your child's mother gets sick, you can become his primary caregiver. A break-up means separation from your spouse, but the relationship to your child remains.

It is not necessary to make it on your own through a crisis situation. Even a father may ask for help and take care of his own wellbeing. That helps with standing on your own two feet even after the crisis.

*“Fatherhood is not a survival camp where you should know to pack everything you might need beforehand. You can keep filling the bag along the way.”* (father, 33 yrs)



TIPS FOR A FATHER

- You're not born to be a father; you grow to be a father.
- Start getting to know your child right after the birth. Don't wait around for the ball games in the backyard.
- Actively participating in the child's everyday life and routines will be rewarded later on.
- Fatherhood is not a project, but an ever-changing process.

MORE FATHER CARDS BY THE FEDERATION OF MOTHER AND CHILD HOMES AND SHELTERS

In addition to the card “Talk and listen”, we have also published three other cards:

*The greatest thing in the world!*

- ✿ Congratulations on becoming a father! Plenty of general information on fatherhood.

*A healthy and balanced father*

- ✿ Wellbeing and happiness for the entire family. Your own wellbeing creates a solid foundation for the wellbeing of your spouse and children.

*The safety factor*

- ✿ Father ensuring the safety of his family. As a father, how can you make sure that your children feel safe and secure?

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Ask for more father cards and information at the child health centre!