



Dad Central  
Réseau Papa

ONTARIO

# My Dad Matters

Engaging Fathers in Young Children's Learning

[dadcentral.ca](http://dadcentral.ca)



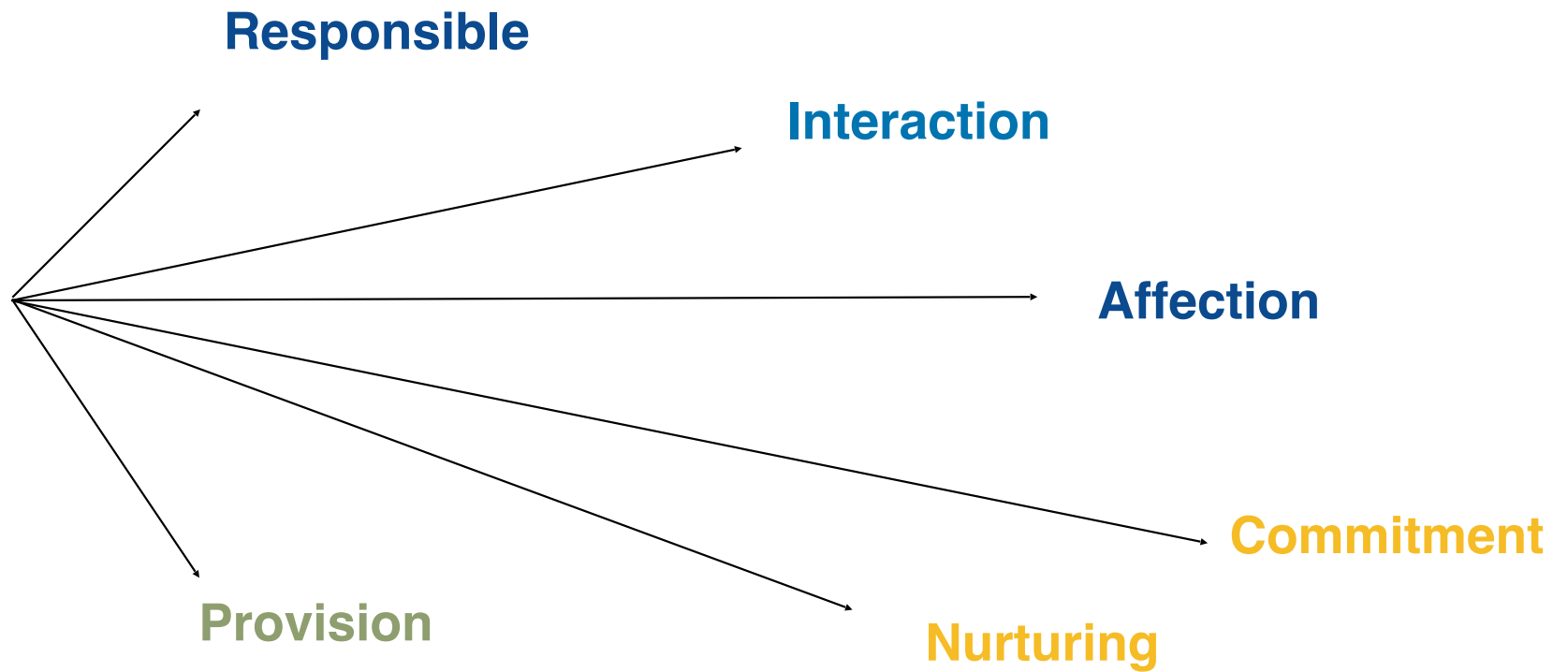
[mydad.ca](http://mydad.ca)



# An Involved Father . . .

- a man who takes intentional interest in the care and well-being of a child.

# What Children Need





# Connection

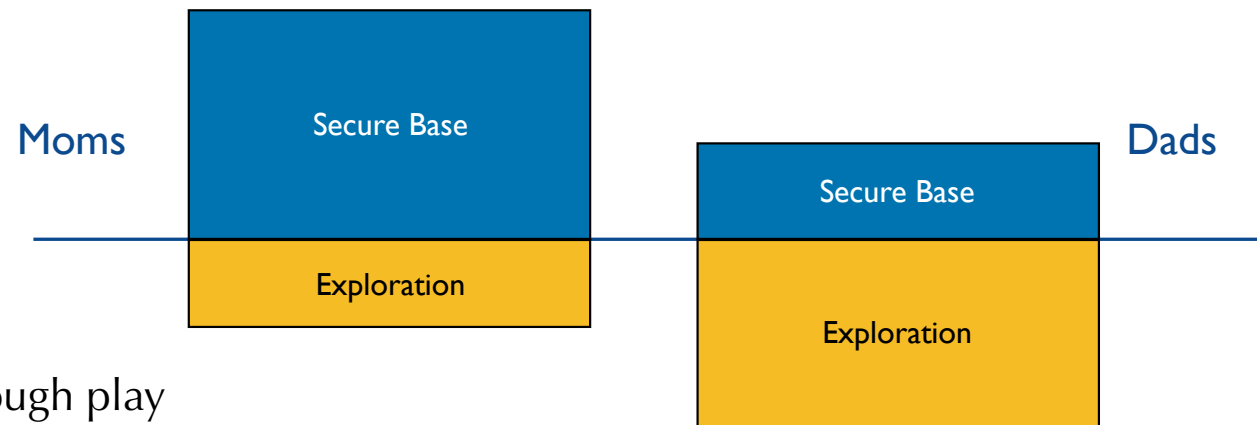
- attachment is often through a maternal paradigm
- fathers context of bonding is play and activity
- still an emotional connection
- two-way street - reading cues



# The Activation Relationship

- an affective bond that permits children to open up to the outside world
- focusing on parental behaviour in relation to ordering child exploration of their environment
- fathers are catalysts for risk-taking behaviour encouraging children to take initiative in unfamiliar situations

# Uniqueness



- focus on bonding through play
- more likely to hold his newborn when mom is not around
- realists: practical, future-oriented information
- offer less-immediate support when child is frustrated
- stress physical risk-taking behaviour
- 5WH questions



# Bonding

- familiarity with the child
- knowledge of care-giving practices (soothing, holding, etc.)
- degree of relatedness
- cultural values and parenting goals



# A Father's Way

- nurturing instinct
- how fathers carry babies
- how fathers speak with babies
- reading baby's cues
- how fathers play with children
- rough 'n' tumble





# Play Sensitivity

- fathers and mothers play different roles in the attachment system
- fathers' play sensitivity is prominent in creating the security of the attachment

Lamb, The Role of the Father in Child Development

- fathers' play sensitivity predicted adolescent attachment

Grossman, et al, The Uniqueness of the Child-Father Attachment Relationship (2002)



# Play Sensitivity

- a father values his child's independence
- more focused with exploration in the proximity/exploration balance
- attachment bond emerges mainly in playful, active exploration

Mendonca et al, The Origins of Father-child Security of Attachment, 2006



# Activation Relationship

- men tend to excite, surprise and momentarily destabilize children
- encourage to take risks while ensuring safety and security
- only effective in the context of an emotional bond between father and child
- activation relationship vs. attachment relationship

Paquette, Theorizing the Father-child Relationship, 2004



# Reading Cues

- fathers can develop competencies
  - reading cues
  - forging parenting skills
  - protect child's safety
  - soothe child when needed
- fathers - stimulation, protection/control, and warmth
- mothers - affect, communication, engagement, physical control



# Child Care

- father's involvement in child-care influences his sensitivity
  - increased reciprocity between dad and child
  - more adaptation to needs and requests
  - acknowledgement of infant's interactive bids
  - greater fluency of interaction and positive affect
- taking part in the “mundane” activities of house and childcare promotes men's sensitive relations with their infants



# The Value of Play

- explore and understand the environment
- develop their brains
- learn what they can do with their bodies
- learn and practise new skills
- develop social skills
- learn about life - adult skills
- have a good time



# Attachment and Academics

- secure attachment: high need for achievement w/ low fear of failure
- insecure attachment: less need for achievement w/ higher fear of failure

**The relationship between attachment and academic achievement**  
by *Omivale, Mariam, Ph.D.*, LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY, THE BROOKLYN CENTER, 2009, 118 pages



# Engaging Dads

- get dad's info at registration
- develop a father-friendly environment
- have male staff/facilitators/volunteers
- invite men directly, not just parents
- look for ways to include them in school events
- offer workshops or activities focused on fatherhood
- encourage dads to read to their children





# Things Dads Do

- share stories from his childhood
- read with his child
- use the library
- play games and/or sports
- take his child to a park, zoo, museum, and/or participate in cultural activities.
- work on routine jobs together
- teach his child a skill
- watch educational television
- have a weekly family night
- model perseverance
- explore interests together
- share eating family meals together and encourage discussion
- express love and pleasure in being with his child.