

The Role of the Father in Breastfeeding

Jarold (Tom) Johnston Jr.
DNP, CNM, IBCLC

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown

Objectives

- ▶ Discuss the value of men in obstetric care
- ▶ Advocate for recognition of fathers as equal partners in the breastfeeding and parenting relationships
- ▶ Identify effective teaching strategies to prepare fathers for their role as breastfeeding coaches

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

How do we prevent this?



A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Disclaimer

- ▶ Every infant requires as many loving and supportive adult caregivers as possible, and that the gender and biological relationship is less important than the love that these adults can offer the child.
- ▶ Breastfeeding support personnel need to be prepared to address the concerns of all parents.

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Why "Father"

- ▶ More than 80% of births in America
 - 64% Married
 - 24% "Cohabiting, not married"
 - Martinez (CDC 2015)

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

What is a FATHER?

- ▶ Moral Compass
- ▶ Teacher
- ▶ Disciplinarian
- ▶ Breadwinner
- ▶ Advocate
- ▶ Coach
 - From labor coach to breastfeeding coach

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

~~Benefits of the father~~

- ▶ Greater involvement of the Father is associated with:
 - Higher infant weight gain for preterm infants
 - Improved language skills
 - Higher cognitive skills
 - Higher academic achievement
 - Improved social and adaptive behavior
 - Great psychological well being
 - Fewer behavioral problems
 - Less delinquent behavior
 - Lower likelihood of child neglect
 - Increased self esteem
 - Increased Internal Locus of Control
 - Increased empathy and social competence

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Risks of NOT having a Father

- ▶ Absentee Fatherhood is associated with:
 - Poor infant weight gain for preterm infants
 - Poor language skills
 - Lower cognitive skills
 - Decreased academic achievement
 - Impaired social and adaptive behavior
 - Increased behavioral problems
 - Increased juvenile delinquent behavior and Adult Incarceration
 - Higher likelihood of child neglect
 - Increased External Locus of Control
 - Decreased empathy and social competence

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Benefits of the Paternal Support in Breastfeeding

- ▶ #1 Source of Support
 - Including fathers in BF education improves initiation, duration, and exclusivity (Rempel & Rempel 2011, Abbasi-Glick et al., 2019, Rempel et al., 2017, Johnston, 2018)
- ▶ Source of Breastfeeding Help
 - Rated just behind Nurses and IBCLCs as most helpful in the immediate post partum.
 - ▶ RN=2.5, IBCLC=2.4, Dad =2.3 (Buckner & Matsumura, 1993)
- ▶ Enhances continuation
 - Only the Baby is more helpful! (Montigny & Lacharite 2003)

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Fathers increase initiation

- ▶ Trained Successful breastfeeding fathers to provide peer support to new & prospective fathers
 - Breastfeeding physiology and immunology
 - Basic counseling techniques
- ▶ Increased initiation rate
 - ▶ From 71-76% to 83% in WI (Sremner and Lopera, 2004)
 - ▶ From 41% to 74% in Tx (Wolberg, 2004)
- ▶ Piscane et al., 2005
 - Two 40 min classes on promotion and basic trouble shooting

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Pisacane Data

	Trained	Untrained
Full Breastfeeding at 6 months:	25%	15%
Any Breastfeeding at 12 months:	19%	11%
Perceptions of Inadequate Milk Supply:	8.6%	27%
Breastfeeding Problems:	69%	64%
Breastfeeding interruptions due to problems:	4%	18%
Relevant help from dads:	91%	34%

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Maycock et al., 2013

- ▶ RCT n=699 Australian couples
- ▶ Intervention: 2-hour class (Benefits, difficulties, troubleshooting, resources) and weekly support information x6 weeks
- ▶ Remember that Australia has a 92% initiation rate.
- ▶ Results: ?

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Maycock et al., 2013

Finding	I - n=353	C - n=298
Any Breastfeeding at 6 weeks	81.6%	75.2%
Full Formula Feeding at 6 weeks	18.4%	24.8%
Odds ratio of Breastfeeding at 6 wks	1.46	

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

What do we have so far?

- ▶ Well educated dads can
 - Increase initiation rates
 - Increase success rates
 - Solve problems at home (we aren't there at 3AM)
 - Decrease the perception of inadequate milk supply
- ▶ Is there a downside to this!?!?

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

What do dads think?

- ▶ In a study of 289 "critical incidents" reported by fathers in the immediate post partum
- ▶ 80% of fathers reported negative experiences with nurses or felt they were ignored by nurses
 - "I wasn't excluded by nurses, they didn't ask me to leave the room, but it was non-verbal exclusion by the way their body was... they never asked me how I felt as a dad."
- ▶ The Majority of fathers had more negative experiences than positive (58.8%)

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

What do dad's want?

- ▶ Many nurses feel that fathers are uncomfortable or uninterested in breastfeeding
- ▶ Fathers overwhelmingly expressed motivation to be involved, and to be noticed for this by the health care staff
- ▶ Fathers deplored not being addressed by nurses.
 - "Just the husband"

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

How do dad's see breastfeeding?

- ▶ 63% of fathers felt that nurses didn't give dad enough information
- ▶ 28.9% of the negative incidents regarded breastfeeding
 - "Breastfeeding was what I found most difficult. I didn't know how to help, I felt useless."
 - "It is hard to become totally involved when you can't feed him, and this, apart from sleeping, is what he is predominantly doing"

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Antwon and Debias Lee



<https://youtu.be/cuPl6VVl5A>

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Rempel & Rempel, 2010

- ▶ Interviewed 21 BF fathers
 - Teamwork (used sports analogies)
 - Valued and used prenatal education
 - ▶ Breastfeeding savvy
 - Valued the BF Mother
 - Facilitated breastfeeding

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Jealousy?

- ▶ Equated getting food with a feeling of closeness and safety
- ▶ Bonding "in the feeding zone"
 - Took part in feeding activity (burping, cuddling)
- ▶ Fatherly nurturing behavior
 - Playing, singing, bathing, bedtime rituals

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Partner Breastfeeding Influence Scale (PBIS)

- ▶ Breastfeeding Savvy
 - ▶ Knowledge about Breastfeeding
- ▶ Helping
 - ▶ Direct tangible Support
- ▶ Appreciation
 - ▶ Behaviors of encouragement and valuing
- ▶ Breastfeeding Presence
 - ▶ The domain of the father's assistance during BF
- ▶ Responsiveness
 - ▶ Father's sensitivity to the mother's needs

Rempel, Rempel, and Moore, 2017

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Discuss or negotiate with your partner about how long to continue breastfeeding.	
Discuss with your partner ideas for trying to solve breastfeeding problems or make suggestions for creative or different ways to make breastfeeding work better.	
Learn more about breastfeeding by reading books or articles on breastfeeding.	
Tell your partner your opinion about how long you think that she should breastfeed.	
Speak up in support of your partner or defend breastfeeding when someone makes a negative breastfeeding comment.	
Help your partner get assistance from others for solving breastfeeding problems or improving breastfeeding.	
Remind your partner of the benefits that breastfeeding has for her or for your baby.	
Show patience and a willingness to wait for your opportunity to feed the baby.	
Support your partner's attendance at a breastfeeding support group.	
Helping	Cronbach's alpha: men = 0.79, women = 0.82
Help out with or take care of other children; tasks with the baby.	
Give something up in order to make breastfeeding easier.	
Help out with other household tasks and responsibilities to free up your partner's time and energy.	
Help out with breastfeeding at night.	
Care for your baby during and after breastfeeding is done.	
Try to improve your partner's health and nutrition.	
Give your partner a break from the baby.	
Appreciation	Cronbach's alpha: men = 0.86, women = 0.84
Encourage your partner to do her best when it comes to breastfeeding and let her know that she is not less of a mother if she feels like quitting.	
Praise your partner for breastfeeding and let her know that what she is doing is a beautiful, worthwhile thing.	
Let your partner know that breastfeeding is natural and/or give her the message that she is breastfeeding because she wants the best for her baby.	
Listen to and encourage your partner when she is feeling frustrated or discouraged about breastfeeding.	
Show appreciation that your partner is breastfeeding.	
Tell your partner that you value and support her mothering decision and intuition around breastfeeding.	
Breastfeeding presence	Cronbach's alpha: men = 0.88, women = 0.82
Try to improve the breastfeeding experience by getting equipment or supplies ready for breastfeeding.	
Act attentively toward your partner during breastfeeding.	
Quietly share time and watch or hold your partner during breastfeeding.	
Physically help with breastfeeding related activities.	
Help create a quiet, pleasant environment for breastfeeding.	
Show pleasure and satisfaction while your partner is breastfeeding.	
Responsiveness	Cronbach's alpha: men = 0.77, women = 0.76
Make it easy for your partner to breastfeed while concealing company or visiting others.	
Respond sensitively and positively to social issues.	
Be patient and understanding of the time it takes to breastfeed and don't get upset if the other homework is not done.	
Show your comfort with breastfeeding in public and help her feel comfortable too.	

own Johnston, JT

Rempel's Findings?

- ▶ Fathers who were supportive but not pushy had partners who BF longer and better
 - Men were sometimes "not sufficiently sensitive and response to their partner's needs"
- ▶ Invisible support improved self-efficacy
 - Non-directive support, co-operation, what advanced the mother's agenda
- ▶ Working as a cohesive and supportive TEAM

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Paternal Self-Efficacy

- ▶ BSES-SF, modified for fathers, 15 questions
 - ▶ "I can always help mom..."
 - ▶ Fathers with higher SE at 6 weeks had partners who were exclusively BF at 12 wks
 - ▶ Co-Parenting techniques enhanced SE
 - ▶
- (Dennis et al., 2017)

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Co-parenting Theory

- ▶ Joint Breastfeeding Goals
- ▶ Shared Breast-feeding Responsibility
- ▶ Proactive Breast-feeding Support
- ▶ Father's/Partner's Parental-child Interactions
- ▶ Productive communication and Problem Solving

▶ Abbass-Dick and Dennis, 2017

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Co-parenting RCT (2015)

- ▶ One 15-minute in-patient intervention
 - Co-parenting's 5 components
 - Access to a workbook, breastfeeding book, website, a co-parenting video, and follow up e-mails
- ▶ Follow up at 6 & 12 weeks
 - Breastfeeding, Exclusive BF, Self-Efficacy and Satisfaction with partner support

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Results?

- Any BF @ 6 wks (98.1% v 92.2%)
 - EBF @ 6 wks (72.1% v 60.8%)
 - Any BF @ 12 wks (96.2% v 87.6%) *
 - EBF @ 12 wks (67.3% v 60.0%)
 - ▶ Paternal SE Scores: (55.9 v 52.1)
 - ▶ Help from fathers (71% v 52%) *
 - ▶ Maternal Satisfaction (89% v 78.1%) *
- ▶ (Abbass-Dick et al., 2015) * = significant

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Follow on Study (2018)

- ▶ Breastfeeding is not always easy, we should know that
 - ▶ There is guilt (on both sides) when BF doesn't work
 - ▶ Most fathers preferred the in-patient discussion
 - Most mothers preferred the "Breastfeeding Matters" book
 - ▶ Fathers appreciated being treated as a parent rather than as a "support person"
- ▶ Abbass-Dick & Dennis, 2018

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

How do you teach dads?



A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Father Friendly BF Education

- ▶ Evening or weekend hours
- ▶ Emphasis on the paternal perspective of breastfeeding and parenting
- ▶ "Triad focused" to emphasize the role of all three key players (mother, father, infant) (Johnston & LaRay, 2018)
- ▶ Discussion on the value of breastfeeding
 - Pros and cons, monetary costs, health of the infant
- ▶ Demonstrations of tangible and realistic tools
 - Positioning, latching, troubleshooting
- ▶ Measurable signs of successful breastfeeding
 - Signs of milk transfer, signs of satisfaction, expected weight gain
- ▶ Honest and realistic information regarding breastfeeding issues
 - Working baby into the family, breastfeeding in public, and the effects of a newborn on intimacy (Sheriff, Pantoni & Hall, 2014; Rempel et al., 2017)
- ▶ Male specific? Single Sex programs?

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Male Specific?

- ▶ "It has to be clear and specific to fathers, otherwise I would just dismiss it at yet another health leaflet... If it's aimed at dads then I'll take the time to look... if it's all just among the other stuff, it becomes saturated and I don't want to have to sift through volumes..." F2 father of 2

▪ (Sherriff, Panton & Hall, 2014)

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Let's talk a little about beauty

- ▶ Pregnant women and mothers are beautiful
 - They are also superhuman
- ▶ We can encourage fathers to say the same things



A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

24-Hour Crib-side Assistance



<https://newdadmanual.wordpress.com/2016/11/05/welcome/>

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

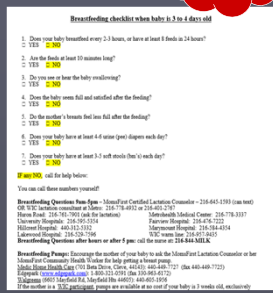
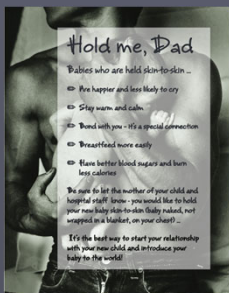
"Breast For Success"

- ▶ University Hospitals of Cleveland
- ▶ Specific father focused program
- ▶ "Dads2U"
- ▶ <http://www.uhhospitals.org/macdonald/health-and-wellness/pregnancy-resources/lactation-services/breast-for-success/for-fathers>



A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Dad 2 Dad info

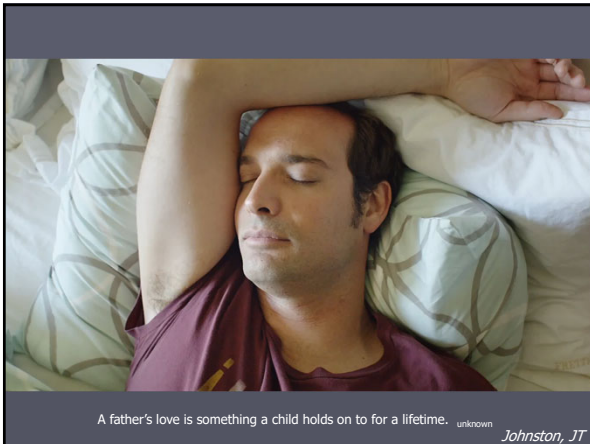


A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

How do we involve fathers?

- ▶ Teach fathers how to breastfeed
 - ▶ Father specific language is important to fathers
- ▶ Do not suggest that the father can change diapers!!
 - Mom gets the head and I get the butt!
- ▶ Dad's Job is to do our job when they go home
 - ▶ We have a duty to prepare them

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT



What Is YOUR Role?

- ▶ Remember, you made this baby too!
- ▶ From labor coach to breastfeeding coach.
- ▶ Support support support!!!

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

The Value of DAD

- ▶ It takes two to make a baby
- ▶ The couple principle
- ▶ You have enormous pull in raising your baby

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Man Myths

- ▶ Breast feeding is women's work!
- ▶ Mom needs a break from feeding during the night
- ▶ Breast feeding makes the breasts sag
- ▶ Breast feeding is just not natural

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

#1 Man Myth

- ▶ Breastfeeding interferes with my chance to bond with the baby
- ▶ I want bond with the baby too

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

So What Do I Have to Do?

- ▶ Learn about your baby before he gets here
- ▶ Learn HOW to breast feed
- ▶ Be supportive
- ▶ Don't be afraid
- ▶ LOVE, BREASTMILK AND WARMTH!!!

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Three Things to Know

- ▶ When does my baby need to eat?
- ▶ How does my baby eat?
- ▶ When is my baby finished eating?

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

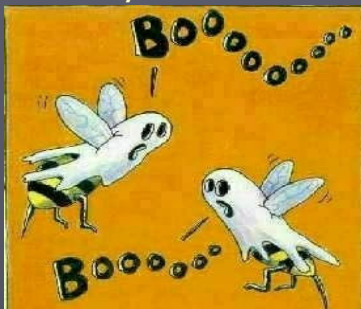
SPORTS – Corrective Action

- ▶ SLAP
- ▶ PPULL
- ▶ OBSERVE
- ▶ RELASE
- ▶ TAP/TRY AGAIN
- ▶ SHOOT



A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Wanna see my Boobees? (USE HUMOR)



A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Men, Sex, and Breastfeeding

- ▶ The problem:
 - Men are physical, sexual creatures
 - Women ... not so much

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Problems for Dad

- ▶ "Madonna" Complex
 - She's a mother now
- ▶ She's always holding the baby
 - Q: Can you get pregnant while breastfeeding?
 - ▶ A: Yes, but you should put the baby down first.

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Post partum mom problems

- ▶ She's just not that into you
 - AKA Decreased Libido (thank you prolactin)
 - Increased Libido (thank you oxytocin)
- ▶ Vaginal Dryness
 - Decreased Estrogen
- ▶ "all touched out"
 - Baby care is a physical, demanding job
- ▶ TIRED!

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown Johnston, JT

Bibliography

- Martensz, GM. Three decades of nonmarital first births among fathers aged 15-44 in the United States. *NCHS Data Brief* No. 204, June 2015.
- Pohlman, S. (2005) The primacy of work and fathers in preterm infants: findings from an interpretive phenomenological study. *Advances in neonatal care*, vol. 5 no. 4 (August), 2002-2008-249.
- Mullanah, S, Tach, L, Schneider, D. (2013) The Causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 39: 399-427
- Rempel, L.A., & Rempel, S.K. (2011). The breastfeeding team: The role of involved fathers in the breastfeeding family. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 27(2), 115-121. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0890334110390045>
- Johnston, JT (2018) Incorporating Father Family Breastfeeding Support in Maternity Settings. *J Perinatal & Neonatal Nursing*, 28(2), 112-115.
- Abbas-Dick, J., Steyn, H., Jackson, K.T., Rempel, L., Dennis, C.L. (2015) Perinatal breastfeeding interventions including fathers/partners: A systematic review of the literature. *Midwifery*, 35, 99-105.
- Rempel, L.A., Rempel, K., Moore, K.C. (2017). Relationships between types of father breastfeeding support and breastfeeding outcomes. *Maternal Child Nutrition*, 13, e12337.
- Montgomery F and Lacharia C. (2003) Father' perceptions of the Immediate Postpartal Period. *JGIM* 18, 328-339
- Rosta, E.; Colvin MC; Important factors in breast feeding success. *NCON: The American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing*, 6, 12 v. 7, p. 174-176, 1982
- Carlson, J., Kandel, A., Edson, F. Becoming a good father: The developmental engine of first-time fatherhood. *Fathering*, 2015;13:182-202.
- Wething, K.; J.; Nichols, K. B.; Daniels, W.; O'Carroll, P.; Bremer, Y.; & Brindock, J. (2009) Dads as breastfeeding advocates: Results from a randomized controlled trial of an educational intervention. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 191(3), 700-702.
- Szemler, J., & Lowra D., (2004) Insight from a Breastfeeding Peer Support Pilot Program for Husbands and Fathers of Texas WIC Participants. *Journal of Human Lactation* 20(4) 417-422.
- Piscarene A, Contino GJ, Adinucci M, D'Amico S, Contino P., (2005). A controlled trial of the Father's role in breastfeeding promotion. *Pediatrics* Vol 116 No 4, October, 694-698.
- Maycock, B., et al., (2013) Education and support for fathers improves breastfeeding rates: A randomized controlled trial. *J Hum Lact*, 29(4), 484-490.
- Dennis, C.L., Brennan-Smith, G., Abbas-Dick, J. (2018). Measuring paternal breastfeeding self-efficacy: A psychometric evaluation of the breastfeeding self-efficacy scale-short form among fathers. *Midwifery*, 64, 17-22.
- Abbas-Dick, J., Dennis, C.L. (2017) Breast feeding co-parenting framework. *Family and Community Health*, 40(1): Pg 20-31
- Abbas-Dick, J., Steyn, H., Nelson, L.E., Watson, W., Dennis, C.L. (2015) Co-parenting breastfeeding support and Exclusive Breastfeeding: A randomized controlled trial. *Pediatrics*, 135,182-189
- Abbas-Dick, J. & Dennis, C.L. (2018). Maternal and paternal experiences and satisfaction with a co-parenting breastfeeding support intervention in Canada. *Midwifery*, 56, 135-148.
- Johnson, JT & LaRroy, A. (2018) Engaging and Supporting Fathers with Breastfeeding Partners. *Clinical Lactation*, 9(11), 18-22.
- Sherriff, N., Hill, V., & Parnis, C. (2014). Engaging and supporting fathers to promote breast feeding: A concept analysis. *Midwifery*, 30(6), 667-677. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2013.07.004>
- Dad Central Ontario. New Dad's Manual, 24-hour Cribside Assistance. Retrieved from: <https://www.dadcentral.com/new-dads-manual/2018/11/05/new-dads-manual/>
- University Hospitals of Cleveland. Breast for Success, Dad2U! program. Retrieved from: <http://www.uhospitals.org/parenting/child-development/breast-for-success-dad2u-program/>
- Johnson, JT, in Kochs-Paul, E. (2020). Dads and breastfeeding. In *Breastfeeding in combat boots: A survival guide to successful breastfeeding while serving in the military* (pp. 207-240). Amarillo, TX: Nash Publishing, L.P.

A father's love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown *Johnston, JT*