

Welcome to the Dad Allies Learning Series

We
know
that:

Child and family well-being improve when fathers are positively engaged in their children's lives.

Fathers play a unique and important role in children's development.

Fathers should have support and resources to become the fathers they aspire to be.



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Father's Engagement in Mental Health

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What We'll Cover Today

- ▶ How **societal pressure** influences men's engagement in treatment in general, and how the aspect of fatherhood can be a good hook for proper engagement into therapy.
- ▶ How **Archetypes** can help create a framework for men to engage with as a tool for emotional intelligence.
- ▶ The importance of healthy, non-sexual **touch**, and its general absence for men.
- ▶ **Engaging Fathers** in treatment/leadership in their children's treatment.

General Statistics

- ▶ Men drop out of their first course of therapy at a rate of 26%; overall 44% of men will drop out of therapy at least once.
- ▶ The most common predictors of drop-out were:
 - ▶ younger age,
 - ▶ unemployment,
 - ▶ self-reported identification with traditional masculinity,
 - ▶ the presence of specific therapist engagement strategies, and
 - ▶ whether therapy made participants feel emasculated
- ▶ Current depressive symptoms and suicidality were also higher among men who had dropped out of therapy [1], suggesting that drop-outs were not occurring due to men feeling as though they had completed therapy.

Reasons for Drop Out

- ▶ The most common reason for drop out (54.9%) was for lack of connection or understanding between client and therapist.
- ▶ The next was the sense that therapy was unhelpful or “didn’t feel right” (20.2%).
- ▶ Expense or logistical inconvenience (hard to get to/find time for) came in at 18.0%.
- ▶ Only 5.5% of men reported their reason for dropping out of services was because their presenting issue was resolved.

Engagement Strategies

- ▶ Effective orientation to therapy
 - ▶ E.g., *what are your expectations of therapy? What do you know about it?*
- ▶ Adopting a strengths-based masculinities perspective
 - ▶ E.g., *talking about seeking therapy as a positive, being healthy for self and for family, reframing that asking for help is not weakness.*
- ▶ Shared control and decision making
 - ▶ E.g., *check-in regularly whether therapy is working for the client*

Poll

- ▶ Have you ever ended therapy early (before you felt like your issue was resolved)?
 - ▶ A. Yes.
 - ▶ B. No.

- ▶ If So, why?
 - ▶ A. Lack of Connection or Understanding
 - ▶ B. Therapy “didn’t feel right”
 - ▶ C. Expense or Logistical Inconvenience
 - ▶ D. Other Reason (write in chat if you feel comfortable to do so).

Story

- ▶ Engagement with male client where I forgot I had met him before.
- ▶ Ownership of my mistake, acknowledgement of the embarrassment.
- ▶ Led to a fruitful therapeutic relationship that lasted over 18 months.
 - ▶ Much of this therapeutic relationship was centered around “not feeling like a man” after the loss of a job due to a car accident.
 - ▶ It was later about grief, and how it had not been expressed following the death of his father and a close cousin.
 - ▶ It was peppered with frequent check-ins about what was working for him and was a healthy outlet for emotions he had trouble expressing before therapy.

Archetypes

How Archetypes Help Men and Fathers Define Themselves

- ▶ Engaging men using these archetypes:
 - ▶ Metaphor can be an extremely powerful tool to help men define themselves.
 - ▶ It can give tangible goals from intangible thoughts by creating a framework.
 - ▶ It can help highlight areas of need.
 - ▶ If you engage in story work, this can help drive the narrative.
- ▶ Engaging fathers using these archetypes:
 - ▶ Helps define the different aspects of fatherhood.
 - ▶ Can show areas of strength for fathers feeling overstretched.
 - ▶ Can be especially useful for fathers engaging with adolescent sons, as they develop their own masculinity.

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover [2]

- ▶ **King:** the most fully developed masculine archetype, embodies aspects of the other three, and adds leadership, ownership and fatherhood. A healthy king is centered, decisive, a man of integrity, a protector and provider.
- ▶ **Warrior:** a frequently misunderstood archetype, warrior involves men's physicality, willingness to take on a fight (metaphorically), and stand up for one's rights. A healthy warrior will stand up both for himself and for others.
- ▶ **Magician:** this archetype refers to the passing on of knowledge. A healthy magician will pass knowledge on freely and enjoy doing so.
- ▶ **Lover:** this archetype refers to both platonic and romantic love. A healthy lover will declare love and caring for their family, children, friends, and partner.

Emotional Intelligence in Archetypes

▶ Emotionally Intelligent Warrior:

- ▶ Knows **how** to fight for his rights and the rights of others.
- ▶ Knows that “standing up for one’s self” or others does not involve intimidating.
- ▶ Doesn’t feel threatened by challenges due to his self-confidence.
- ▶ Engages in fatherhood as an opportunity to show healthy masculinity, standing up for the rights of others, and being self-confident in adversity.

▶ The Struggling Warrior:

- ▶ Picks fights unnecessarily.
- ▶ May threaten/bluff/bluster without any real intent behind it.
- ▶ May engage fatherhood as a competition, especially with sons

Emotional Intelligence in Archetypes

- ▶ Emotionally Intelligent Magician:
 - ▶ Passes off knowledge with enthusiasm. Learning and teaching are passions.
 - ▶ Acknowledges that failure is often a part of learning.
 - ▶ Engages fatherhood by being regularly involved in the education of his children. This can take a variety of forms (schooling, trades, life lessons).
- ▶ The Struggling Magician:
 - ▶ Hoards knowledge.
 - ▶ Thinks he knows best in all situations. Doesn't rely on the experts around him.
 - ▶ As a father: "Just let me do it. You're not going to figure this out." Unable to allow for failure to occur in front of him for learning to take place.

Emotional Intelligence in Archetypes

▶ Emotionally Intelligent Lover:

- ▶ Feels comfortable with expressing physical affection that is not sexual in nature (hugs, platonic kisses).
- ▶ He is open to the emotional needs of his partner and rises to the occasion.
- ▶ As a father, he expresses pride in his children, tells them he loves them.
- ▶ He shows a full range of emotion in front of his children (e.g. Joy, Fear, Anger, Sadness).

▶ The Struggling Lover:

- ▶ Insecure in his relationships (both romantic and friendships).
- ▶ As a father he is unable to express his caring for his children. It comes across as frustration, anger or disappointment.

Emotional Intelligence in Archetypes

▶ Emotionally Intelligent King:

- ▶ As noted in an earlier slide, the King is the full embodiment of the other archetypes. Without maturity in those other roles, the full king energy cannot be achieved.
- ▶ He is king of his own life; he is comfortable with where he is but also aware of where he is going.
- ▶ As a father, he expresses all the aspects of Warrior, Magician, Lover, and earns the respect and (often) admiration of his children.

▶ The Struggling King:

- ▶ Hoards power or feels as though he has no power. He may be healthy in one or two other archetypes but feels like a failure in the third.

Poll

- ▶ What Archetype do you feel you are the most developed in?
 - ▶ A. Warrior
 - ▶ B. Magician
 - ▶ C. Lover
 - ▶ D. King
- ▶ What Archetype do you feel you are the least developed in?
 - ▶ A. Warrior
 - ▶ B. Magician
 - ▶ C. Lover
 - ▶ D. King

The Importance of Touch

Information about Touch

- ▶ Touch is an extremely powerful sense. When we are children, it communicates safety and caring.
- ▶ One of the areas that men suffer in is the lack of safe, non-sexual touch once they reach late childhood/early adolescence (typically 8-9 years). This can be mitigated by cultural norms that allow for more physical touch.
- ▶ Romantic partners often fulfill the need for touch for men.
- ▶ Touch can then be misinterpreted as sexual interest when men become touch-starved.

Illustrations About Touch

▶ Risks of touch starvation

- ▶ Increased risk of depression/anxiety
- ▶ Increased risk of social isolation
- ▶ Various levels of inappropriate touching (ranging from uncomfortable contact to assault).

▶ Simple solutions

- ▶ Encourage positive platonic touch with family. If a younger man, consider whether the family of origin is a safe source of this.
- ▶ If in a romantic relationship, encourage the same; positive, **platonic** touch. Touch that doesn't lead to sexual encounters is as important or more important when contributing to physical touch as a love language.

Touch and Fatherhood

- ▶ Babies, by necessity require a lot of cuddling and holding. This is cross-culturally a relatively “safe” expression of touch that can cause a resurgence of positive touch in men’s life.
- ▶ The period from birth to about 4 years is generally considered acceptable for men to express physical affection to their children.
- ▶ The older children get, or the more male they are, societal pressure begins to discourage fathers from cuddling or having other prolonged safe touch.

Story

- ▶ Self Disclosure: I was very touch starved prior to the birth of my first child.
 - ▶ It led to increased depression/anxiety.
 - ▶ It created interpersonal challenges for me.
- ▶ First child born:
 - ▶ The first 30 minutes (Alone in Recovery)
 - ▶ The next 2 years (While Married)
 - ▶ The next 4 years (While Divorced)

Poll

- ▶ When did you notice that touch started to be limited for you?
 - ▶ Age 0-5
 - ▶ Age 6-12
 - ▶ Age 13-18
 - ▶ Age 18+
 - ▶ That didn't occur for me

Poll

- ▶ If you are a father, did having children help meet this need?
 - ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
 - ▶ I'm not a father

Engaging Fathers in Treatment for their Children

Engaged Fathers: The Studies

- ▶ Numerous studies show children of engaged fathers [3]:
 - ▶ Show reduced observed behavioral problems.
 - ▶ Lower tendency to engage in risky behavior such as teenage smoking, delinquency, and contact with law enforcement.
 - ▶ They have better cognition and educational outcomes.
 - ▶ They have better peer and partner relationships.
- ▶ The Highest predictive factors of positive outcomes [3]:
 - ▶ Paternal warmth (emotional connectedness)
 - ▶ Positive direct paternal involvement with their child (shared activities)
 - ▶ Quality of Father-Partner relationships during adolescence.

Addressing Challenges for Engagement

- ▶ Let's call back to our overall reasons for drop out:
 - ▶ 54.9% lack of connection or understanding with/from therapist.
 - ▶ 20.2% therapy was unhelpful or "didn't feel right."
 - ▶ 18.0% Expense or logistical inconvenience
 - ▶ Only 5.5% presenting issue was resolved.
- ▶ When engaging fathers in treatment, the primary barriers are:
 - ▶ Lack of Connection (they don't feel necessary)
 - ▶ Lack of buy-in/interest
 - ▶ Lack of availability (can't get off work for a day-time appointment).

Engaging Fathers in Treatment

- ▶ How do we engage families/fathers in treatment?
 - ▶ **Encouraging whole family service.** Family treatment that includes more members of the family sticks to the family treatment modalities, instead of a common Medicaid approach of individual. This can be periodic as needed to meet the needs of the family.
 - ▶ **Highlighting the importance of both parents.** Several studies [3] show that outcomes are improved when both parents are engaged in the parenting process. Similar studies show improved therapeutic results with alternating or both parents attending sessions.

Creating Programmatic Equity in Treatment

- ▶ Men in SUD treatment don't often have the same access to resources as women in SUD treatment, consider:
 - ▶ Re-engaging them with their children
 - ▶ What do we do with men to help them reconnect with their kids during recovery?
 - ▶ Financial barriers for classes or visitation (State focus on pregnant/early moms, vs. dads having to pay out of pocket or utilize their insurance).



Questions or Comments?

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- ▶ Get in touch with me!
- ▶ Alex.stoker@hca.wa.gov

References

- ▶ [1]. *Men's Dropout From Mental Health Services: Results From a Survey of Australian Men Across the Life Span*. 2021. [Men's Dropout From Mental Health Services: Results From a Survey of Australian Men Across the Life Span - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- ▶ [2]. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*. Robert Moore, Douglas Gillette. 1991.
- ▶ [3] *Association between father involvement and attitudes in early child-rearing and depressive symptoms in the pre-adolescent period in a UK birth cohort*. 2017. [Association between father involvement and attitudes in early child-rearing and depressive symptoms in the pre-adolescent period in a UK birth cohort - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)