



Taking Care of your Mental Health

TIPS FOR YOUNG FATHERS

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Congratulations! Becoming a new father can be an exciting roller coaster filled with emotions. For many young fathers, the realities of navigating relationships, completing their education, and making decisions about employment and housing can be challenging. Learning to manage your feelings as a new father can also be difficult. Remember, taking time to enjoy being a father and prioritizing self-care is not a luxury— it's a necessity!

Did you Know?

- Studies show that 25 percent of new fathers will suffer from symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety.ⁱ Signs may include feeling overwhelmed, sad, or experiencing changes in eating and sleeping patterns.ⁱⁱ
- Unlike mothers, fathers do not carry their baby for nine months during pregnancy and they are not able to breastfeed their new baby, but their bodies do experience similar hormonal changes that make them more sensitive and emotional than they usually are.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Self-care for fathers is seldom discussed, but it is just as critical as it is for mothers.^{iv}
- Focusing on your physical and mental health as a father can improve your children's overall health.^v
- Children do better when their parents communicate effectively and work together as coparents.^{vi}

"The busy demands of fatherhood cause many young fathers to neglect their physical and emotional health. Depression and anxiety can be difficult to recognize and deal with."

(Miller & Vann, 2025)

What you CAN Do.

🎯 **Take time to learn about your baby.**

- There are many online resources that provide helpful advice on changing diapers, recognizing your baby's needs, soothing them, feeding them, and understanding their developmental milestones.

🎯 **Make healthy lifestyle choices.**

- Exercising regularly, eating a healthy and balanced diet, drinking plenty of water, avoiding alcohol and drugs, aiming to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night, and finding ways to reduce life stresses can be game changing.

🎯 **Work with your coparent and manage any disagreements in respectful ways.**

- Be a good role model. Kids see, hear, and often imitate everything you do!

🎯 **Complete your education and/or trade programs and other training courses.**

- Increasing your skills and educational credentials can lead to more job opportunities and jobs with higher pay.

🎯 **Consider the most effective ways to manage your time now that you have new responsibilities and tasks as a young dad.**

- Decide realistically what you can and cannot do.
- Ask for help from family members or others in your support network when you need it.

🎯 **Understand there is no shame in feeling different or experiencing depression or anxiety after the birth of a child. These feelings are normal. Becoming a dad is a huge lifestyle change with emotional changes that can be intense and overwhelming.**

- Many new dads find that it takes time to bond with their newborn, so be patient and give it time.
- If you feel angry or frustrated sometimes (and we all do!), take a few moments to **breathe** and think about what your baby needs.
- Recognize that depression or anger are natural emotions. But if you sense or are told by others that your feelings or behavior are starting to hurt the people around you, seek help from a therapist or mental health professional.

🎯 **As you grow and become more confident as a father, consider offering help to other fathers. Helping others can make us happier and strengthen relationships in our own support system!**

What should men know about the process of therapy?

One of the most common reasons men don't seek therapy is the notion that there's something wrong with them if they do.

Men should know that just because they're seeking therapy doesn't mean they're mentally ill or damaged in some way. In the same way people work on their bodies through exercise or a craft through practice, therapy can be a way to improve the mental and emotional skills needed to be productive and effective partners, employees, and people in all realms of life.

(Psychology Today, 2025)

If you Need SupPort.

- Find a fatherhood support group in your community.

To find a fatherhood program or mental health professional near you:

- Check out the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) Program Map at <https://www.fatherhood.gov/program-map>
- Call the NRFC Help Center at 1-877-4-DAD-411
- Email us at Help@FatherhoodGov.Info

- Talk with fathers you know or other supportive peers. Share your feelings, talk about your fatherhood journey, and learn about theirs. You might be surprised how much you have in common and how much sharing helps you understand your child better!
- Check out this resource on [How to Talk to Your Friends](#). It includes advice on ways to talk about your experiences and feelings.
- Don't hesitate to talk to people you know who became parents when they were young. They can be helpful as they listen to your concerns and share their own experiences.
- Ask your primary care physician, friends, and others for referrals to a professional therapist.
- Search for a therapist on the national [Find A Men's Issue Therapist](#) website.
- Check out the resources in the section "For More Information and Support" at the end of this NRFC Tip Sheet.

Navigating the Backroads: Standing Strong as a Rural Dad

When you live in a small, rural community it can be harder to find a fatherhood support program or other related services than in larger urban and suburban communities, particularly if you live in a separate household from your children. This section provides information and tips to help rural dads find the extra support they may need.

DID YOU KNOW? [vii](#)

- ⦿ Compared with their urban counterparts, rural Americans have higher depression and suicide rates but are less likely to access mental health care services. They also have a higher incidence of heart disease, cancer, and stroke. [viii](#) Accessibility, availability, and affordability of support services are challenges for fathers in rural communities.
- ⦿ Rural fathers face higher unemployment rates, lower educational attainment, and limited job opportunities; these factors make it more difficult to engage in fatherhood.
- ⦿ People in rural communities are often reluctant to seek help.

TIPS FOR RURAL DADS

- ⦿ **Check out the resources at ruralminds.org.** This website provides fact sheets on mental health conditions and information on programs and resources for rural America.
- ⦿ **Seek out a virtual fatherhood group.** Fatherhood groups are designed to help men share their experiences in an emotionally safe environment, whether in-person or online. You're not the only one doing this work, and you don't have to do it alone.
- ⦿ **Build a support network.** Contact family, friends, or other dads and look for ways you can encourage, guide, and provide practical support to each other.
- ⦿ **Talk to someone you trust.** Choose someone you can talk with about your feelings and experiences. Sharing the load is the first step in healing.
- ⦿ **Make a call to a support hotline** or attend an online meeting. Even one small step can help build momentum.
- ⦿ **Look into remote work.** If you have a phone and a reliable internet connection, there are jobs you can do from home. Websites like FlexJobs.com or Upwork.com have listings for customer service jobs, freelance work, and much more.
- ⦿ **Map your resources.** List all the community organizations, workforce centers, libraries, or colleges within a 30-mile radius and note the types of services they offer.
- ⦿ **Check with your local one-stop career center** (<https://www.careeronestop.org/>). These centers can help you apply for jobs, create a resume, identify training opportunities, and even cover the cost of learning a trade.
- ⦿ **Look for other education and training opportunities** (see <https://www.jobcorps.gov/student-graduate-resources> for some ideas).

For More Information and Support

NRFC RESOURCES

- NRFC Help Center: 1-877-4-DAD-411
- [Navigating the Fatherhood Lane: A Driver's Guide for Young Dads](#) (2024)
 - This publication includes a special section for rural dads.
- [Tips for Young Dads from NRFC Dads](#) (2024)
- [Mental and Behavioral Health Resources for Men and Fathers](#) (2023)
- [Fathers' Mental Health Impacts on Child Well-Being](#) (2022)
- [Tips for Young Dads](#) (2020)
- [Coparenting Tips for Dads](#) (2020)
- [Tip Card for New Dads](#) (2018)
- [Healthy Fathers, Healthy Families](#) (2015)

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [Child Care Financial Assistance Options](#) (ChildCare.Gov)
- [Child Development](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - This website provides parenting tips, information on developmental milestones, and how to get support if you are concerned about your child's development.
- [Crisis Resources and Support](#) (Rural Minds)
- [Dads can be positive role models for living a physically and psychologically healthy life](#) (American Psychological Association)
- [Find a Men's Issues Therapist](#) (Psychology Today, National Search Tool)
- [Mental Health Resources: A-Z](#) (Rural Minds)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)
 - Search for local groups on their website, call the HelpLine (800-950-6264), or text "NAMI" to 62640
 - [How to Talk to My Friends](#)
- [National Directory of Mental Health Treatment Facilities](#) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023).
 - Their [National Helpline](#), 1-800-662-HELP (4357), provides confidential information and referrals for treatment and information on mental health and/or substance use disorders.
- [National Rural Health Association](#)
- [The New Father: A Dad's Guide to the First Year](#) (Armin Brott, 4th edition, 2024)
- [Medicine Assistance Tool](#) (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America)
 - This confidential search engine can help you find therapy assistance free of charge. It also includes information about health insurance, savings cards, and financial assistance. To receive assistance by phone, call 571-350-8643.

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- vii. **Unless otherwise noted, information in this “Did You Know” section comes from Mack, B., Whetsell, H., & Graves, M. (2022).** *Mental health in rural areas*. National Rural Health Association. <https://www.ruralhealth.us/getmedia/cf3c3922-25cb-49a0-bb04-0bad81d634f9/NRHA-Mental-health-in-rural-areas-policy-brief-2022.pdf>
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