

## If you are single or in the process of becoming separated:

All fathers want to be the best dad they can. If you are single or separating and trying to father a young child it can be a tough gig. How you got to this point is different for everyone; however, reaching out for help and support can prove invaluable.

For those in the process of separation, it can be difficult to be positive around your kids. You may be dealing with strong feelings like sadness, loneliness or anger or be facing immediate worries that take up a lot of time and energy. For some men it can be a challenge to even get contact with their children.

It is important to remember you are not alone. Finding good support and help can make all the difference.



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## Where can you go for information, guidance and support?

It can be hard to talk about your experiences and emotions, but evidence and the experience of other fathers show that talking and exploring strategies can really help.

To speak to a counsellor at the **Early Parenting Counselling Service** call the Community Health Intake (CHI) team on **(02) 6207 9977**.

CHI will take your details, ask you some specific questions about your health care needs and will send a referral through to us. You'll hear from us within a few weeks of your call.

### You can also speak to:

- **Your GP**
- **A Maternal and Child Health Nurse** or Clinic.
- **PANDSI** (Post & Ante Natal Depression Support & Information Inc.) on 02 6288 1936
- **Everyman Australia** (Canberra): 02 62306999 [www.everyman.org.au/](http://www.everyman.org.au/)
- **Beyondblue** 1300 22 4636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- **Info for Dads** on the go: [www.sms4dads.com/](http://www.sms4dads.com/)
- **Mensline**, 24/7 telephone and online support service for Australian men, 1300 789978
- **Black Dog Institute**: [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
- **Lifeline** 13 11 14

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# FATHERS MATTER: Counselling support for all men in the early parenting years.

## EARLY PARENTING COUNSELLING SERVICE.



## Being a Father can be a challenge and a joy.

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Despite loving their children, many fathers encounter struggle for all sorts of reasons. There are things you can do to help yourself and there are people to support you.

Some of the things other fathers have experienced include:

- Anxiety, depression or excessive tiredness (theirs or their partner's)
- Difficulty dealing with life stressors like work, friends, or health issues
- Heightened emotions following the birth of their child
- Difficulty coping with a traumatic pregnancy or childbirth experience
- Lack of confidence in parenting
- Challenges in bonding with their baby or toddler
- Challenges associated with their baby's developmental delays, disabilities, or additional needs.
- Isolation from their friends, family, or community
- Using drugs and alcohol to cope
- Issues from their own past or childhood impacting on their wellbeing or parenting experience
- Feeling unsure about how your relationship with your partner is changing.
- Conflict and stress in your relationship with your partner.

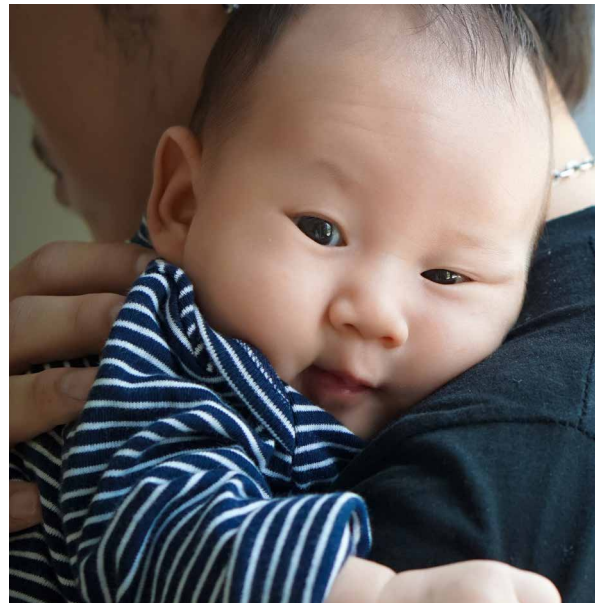
If you have experienced any of these, don't feel like you are the first. Many other fathers have felt like this before you and, counselling or other supports can help.

Talk with supportive others about your experience of the pregnancy, birth, and new parenthood.

## Helpful tips for being a new dad.

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- Give yourself time to acknowledge what you're going through. This is a significant change in your life and it does take time to adjust.
- Talk about your experience with a trusted friend, family member, or someone else with whom you feel comfortable.
- Understand that any birth, especially one that is challenging or traumatic, can impact on your relationships; it can take time for things to settle down.
- If physical intimacy is a concern, it's important to take things slowly and not pressure yourself or your partner. Take time to look after your own health; eat well, exercise, and relax.
- Avoid using drugs or alcohol to manage or suppress difficult or challenging thoughts or feelings.
- Think about checking in with a professional as a safe and confidential space to talk about what you're going through.



## Things couples can do to support each other:

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- It is important to remember that you are not alone. You and your partner can support each other, and sometimes these challenges may even bring you closer.
- Take time to listen to your partner's concerns and remember that you don't need to solve your partner's problems.
- Talk together about each of your experiences of the pregnancy, birth, and new parenthood. Have the conversation when things are calm, and distractions are minimal.
- Be active and involved in day to day care by bathing, holding, and changing your baby. It's important to let your confidence grow by being as involved as you can.
- Be active in household chores and tasks like cleaning and cooking. Remember that having a new baby is a fulltime job; sharing tasks is important so both you and your partner get time to rest and relax.