

WHO LET THE DADS OUT?

— Session 3 —

Making memories

The goals

The dads should get to:

- think about how their own fathers have influenced the way they father their children.
- consider how they would like to be remembered by their children.
- examine how they spend their time and consider how their attitudes to spending time with their children may affect the process of making memories.

The brief

By now, the dads should feel comfortable in each other's company. However, if they don't seem to be relaxing yet, consider organising a time before the next session to get together socially—go for a drink, a curry or ten-pin bowling.

During this session the dads will:

- review what they have put in their Daddy Cool! scrapbooks.
- remember what their own fathers were like and consider what they would like their children to remember about them.
- examine how they spend their time during a typical week and what impact the time they spend with their children can have on the way they are remembered.
- be given another assignment to add information to their Daddy Cool! scrapbooks.

The warm-up (20 minutes)

Choose one of the following.

Desert island dads... and their guests

Tell the dads that they have each been marooned on their own desert island. Explain that they are allowed to invite three people (other than family and friends) on to their island. Ask each of the dads to say which three people he would choose—people he admires or finds interesting or entertaining, or thinks would have a useful skill for desert island life. Ask the dads to resist the temptation of choosing a person on the basis of looks alone! The people they choose might be actors or authors, comedians or musicians, characters from the Bible or fictional characters from a film, book or television programme. The dads should explain the reasons for their choices.

If there is time, you can take this warm-up a step further by telling the group that they must now all move on to the same desert island and only three guests, in total, are allowed. The dads must decide as a group which three people, of those already named, will be invited. Hold a desert island election. The dads can each vote for three people, but not their own choices. You can read out the names, ask the dads to raise their hands and count the votes, or you could hold a secret ballot by getting the dads to write their choices down on pieces of paper. The three with the most votes become the honoured guests of the Desert Island Dads.

Lounge Olympics

This consists of three throwing events: shot-put, javelin and hammer. Use a ball of cotton wool for the shot-put, a straw (ideally a paper one) for the javelin and a short length of cotton tied around a cornflake for the hammer. Hold the shot-put event first. Each dad takes a turn to throw the cotton wool 'shot-put' as far as he can. The dad who throws the furthest wins the gold medal, the second furthest wins the silver medal and the third furthest the bronze. Do the same with the straw 'javelin' and the cotton-and-cornflake 'hammer'. To make the Lounge Olympics even more memorable, you could make some simple medals with ribbons and discs of different coloured card, and award them to the winning dads.

The review (15 minutes)

This is a regular part of each session during which the dads get the opportunity to tell the group what they have put in their Daddy Cool! scrapbooks since the last session. Remind the dads that they can all have a say but that nobody should feel under any pressure to contribute. Some may prefer to keep the contents of their scrapbooks private. Ask whether any dad would like to share with the group how he decided what to include in his scrapbook. Once someone has shared, you can encourage others to do so by saying something like, 'Did anyone else decide to include anything similar?' or 'What other types of things have people put in their scrapbooks?' Encourage the dads to ask each other questions about what they have included.

The meaty bit (45 minutes)

Part 1: Memories of your father

Tell the dads that the next part of the session will give them the opportunity to explore their memories of their own fathers. Explain that this exercise is based on the idea that our approach to family life, and consequently how we parent our children, is often influenced by the way we have been parented ourselves.

Be aware that, for some dads, reflecting on how they have been fathered may be extremely painful. Acknowledge to everyone that this may be the case, and stress that people can participate as much or as little as is comfortable. Emphasise, also, that whatever is discussed must remain confidential. A dad may be recently bereaved, or his father may have been absent or violent or showed favouritism. If you suspect this, warn the whole group at the previous session so that they can come mentally and emotionally prepared.

Give out the 'Memories of my father' handout (at the end of this document). Split the group into threes to discuss the father-type descriptions on the handout and to consider which most accurately portray their own fathers.

Come back together as a whole group and ask the dads to share (they may need a few minutes to think before answering):

- what they would most like their children to remember about them.
- what they feel they must do now to ensure that those memories are made.

Part 2: Using your time to make memories

This exercise helps the group to examine how they spend their time, what their attitudes to spending time with their children are, and how those attitudes may help or hinder the process of creating good memories.

Explain that the exercise will help the dads to look at how they spend the hours over the course of a typical week. Prepare a chart to represent a week (one for each man), laid out as follows:

	Sleep	Work	Meals	Chores	Hobbies	Children	Other
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
TOTAL							

Ask the dads to estimate for each day how their time is apportioned across the categories and record the hours in the table. For example, a typical Monday for one of the dads may look like:

	Sleep	Work	Meals	Chores	Hobbies	Children	Other
Monday	8 hrs	9 hrs	2 hrs	1 hr	1 hr	2 hrs	1 hr

Then ask the dads to total the figures in each column so that each dad now has an illustration of how he spends the hours in a typical week.

Give out the 'Time and memories survey' handout (at the end of this document). Split the men into small groups and ask them to complete the survey in the handout and discuss their responses.

Come back together as a whole group and ask the dads to share some of their thoughts about the survey they have just completed and discussed. Lead the conversation on to discuss how different we may be from the people around us if we are going to make time for our children. Does that create problems for anyone in the group?

The meal (30 minutes)

By this third session, the dads may, without prompting, be talking to each other in smaller groups of twos and threes while they eat their meal. Sit back, relax and enjoy the conversation yourself. When the meal has finished, continue working through the programme material.

The assignment (10 minutes)

This week's assignment is to include in the scrapbook:

- a record of the memories the dad has of his own father.
- the dad's thoughts on how he would like to be remembered by his own children.
- something to show what the dad most likes to do with his children.

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Handout 1

Memories of my father

Which of the following father-type descriptions most accurately portrays your own father as he was when you were a child? It may be that your father had a mixture of the different father-type characteristics, or you may feel that your father is not covered by any of these descriptions.

Explain to the group:

- what your father was like.
- how you are similar to your father in the way you parent your children.
- how you are different from your father in the way you parent your children.

Father type	Characteristics
Indifferent Dad	Not really that keen on children. Content to leave caring for the children's practical and emotional needs to his wife/partner. Rarely initiates any activity with the children, but will do so reluctantly if instructed by his wife/partner. Spends his spare time pursuing his own interests.
Sidelined Dad	Keen to get involved but his wife/partner does not trust him to look after the children properly. When he does get to look after the children, she leaves detailed instructions of how to do it and complains that he 'does it wrong'. Other women in the family, such as his mother-in-law, are allowed to take a more active role in parenting than he is.
Fully Involved Dad	Relishes being a dad and plays an equal part with the mother in caring for the children. Willingly looks after the children's practical and emotional needs. Work sometimes gets in the way but the children are left in no doubt that their dad wants to be with them.
Not Interested Dad	Only agreed to have children to please his wife/partner. He refuses to get involved in caring for the children. Resents the limiting impact it has on his life and hates talking about children and parenting with other parents.
Nervous Dad	Wants to be a good dad but does not feel very confident about his parenting abilities. Accepts his wife's/partner's authority in caring for the children and always looks to her for guidance. For example, he cannot decide what clothes to dress the children in. He is particularly fearful about looking after the children alone, and when he does he makes sure his wife/partner leaves a contact telephone number.
Controlling Dad	This dad feels he knows best. He never seeks advice and is critical of other people's way of parenting. He will often suggest to his wife/partner that she is not doing things for the children in the right way. He is very reluctant to let anyone else look after the children.

Hunter/Gatherer Dad	This father takes a pride in being able to provide for his family. He sees his main role as keeping a roof over the family's head and putting food on the table, and he does it well. He is often out early and gets home from work late. Most of the caring for the children falls to his wife/partner, but he tries to take them to their activities at the weekends.
Distant Dad	He does not live with his children and has little contact with them. He does not get along with their mother and so avoids seeing her. He is also happy to leave responsibility for the children to her. He regards the children as belonging to a previous phase of his life from which he has now moved on. He seldom remembers or bothers with birthdays. He may occasionally initiate contact but only to appease a rare and short-lived prick of conscience. Each contact is followed by a lengthy period of silence.

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Handout 2

Time and memories survey

You now have an illustration of how you spend the hours in a typical week. Complete the following survey, and then discuss your responses with the rest of your group.

I am happy with the way I spend the hours in my week. **Agree / Disagree**

I need to make some changes to the way I spend my time. **Agree / Disagree**

The thing I spend too much time doing is...

The category I spend too little time on is...

It's not important how much time I spend with my children; it's only important that the time I spend with them is high quality. **Agree / Disagree**

It doesn't matter what I do with my children; it's just important that I am around. **Agree / Disagree**

The thing that stops me spending more time with my children is...

Other people control how I spend my time; I can't do anything about it. **Agree / Disagree**

The more time I spend with my children, the more they will remember about me. **Agree / Disagree**

Memories can't be manufactured; they just happen. **Agree / Disagree**

Session 3 assignment

This week's assignment is to include in your Daddy Cool! scrapbook:

1. Your memories of your own father. Record the memories you have of your own father by, for example:
 - Writing your memories down. As well as writing about what your father was like, try to include some specific memories of something your dad did (for example, the time he made a mess of a DIY job and you laughed) or something you did together (for example, your memories of going swimming with your dad every Saturday morning) or a description of the jobs/responsibilities your father had (for example, what he did, who he worked with, or what he wore to work).
 - Including photographs that you feel capture the essence of your father or evoke particular memories.
 - Putting something in the scrapbook that your father has passed on to you, such as a copy of a drawing he made or a copy of his birth certificate.

If, for any reason, you cannot remember your father, record what you know of him from other people's memories or, if that is not possible, express how you imagine your father would have been or even how you would have liked your father to have been if he had been around.

2. Your thoughts on how you would like to be remembered by your own child. You could head the page: 'The three things I would most like you to remember about me are...'. You could then write, draw or include photographs or other items to show how you would like to be remembered as a father. For example, if you would like to be remembered as a breadwinner, include a photograph of you at work, or if you would like your child to remember you as a fun dad, write about the sort of fun things you do that you hope your son or daughter will remember.
3. Something to show what you most like to do with your children. Again, you could write or draw or include photo-graphs to show what you most enjoy doing with your children.