

THE **ULTIMATE**
DAD
COURSE

COURSE INTRO BOOK

INTRODUCTION

**THE MOST IMPORTANT
ROLE OF YOUR LIFE**



TRUE
FATHERHOOD
CAN NEVER
BE OUTSOURCED.



INTRODUCTION

THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE OF YOUR LIFE

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IF YOU MISSED THE CLIP
**“THE MOST IMPORTANT
ROLE OF YOUR LIFE”**
CLICK PLAY TO CATCH UP.

**“The heart of a
father is the masterpiece
of nature.”**

- Abbé Prévost.



OF ALL THE ROLES MEN PLAY IN SOCIETY, NONE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE ROLE OF FATHER.

It's impossible to overemphasize the impact that we as fathers have on our children. What we do with the incredible privilege of fatherhood shapes our children's beliefs about themselves and the world and plays a significant role in determining the trajectory of their lives. A father is his daughter's first romance and his son's first hero. He is their first, most important experience of who and what a man is.

But being the most important man in someone's life is a privilege that comes with profound responsibilities. Your children will come to you to answer the deepest questions of their hearts. Throughout their developing years they will ask you a thousand times and in a thousand different ways to answer key questions about themselves that no-one else can answer quite like you can. Answer well and you will lay an unshakeable foundation for your children's emotional well-being and character. Answer badly or don't answer at all and you will wound them and quite possibly set them up for a lifetime of emotional struggle.

A graphic illustration of the importance of fathers can be found in prisons around the world. Shortly after a friend of mine started working with male prisoners he was inundated with requests from the inmates for

cards to give to their mothers on the upcoming Mother's Day. He happily obliged and a month or so later as Father's Day approached decided to pre-empt the requests for Father's Day cards by buying them before being asked.

To his shock and dismay, not one of the men who had asked for a card for their mother asked for one for their father.

When he questioned the men, almost all said that they either did not know their father or were estranged from him. What a clear illustration of the wounds absent fathers inflict on their sons!

In *Fatherless America* (Basic Books) David Blankenhorn says, "It is no exaggeration to say that fatherlessness is the most

harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the engine driving our most urgent social problems". I am convinced that the damage to humanity caused by the epidemic of un-fathered men and women is far greater than the damage caused by war and disease combined. A look at the childhood of some of the worst dictators in history bears stark testimony to this. Joseph Stalin's father was a violent alcoholic who beat him and his mother relentlessly. Adolf Hitler's father abused him physically and died when Hitler was 14 years old. Saddam Hussein was fatherless from birth.

Fathers matter. They impact their children's lives profoundly, for good or for bad. And a father does not need to live apart from his children to be absent. Many fathers live in the same house as their children but are effectively absent in mind and heart. It is entirely possible to grow up in

a household with two parents yet still have an orphaned heart. Someone aptly said that it's hard to know which is more painful: a father that you've never seen and never known or a father that you've seen and never known. Passive, disengaged fathers are effectively absent fathers and their children walk with those who are fatherless.

The world is crying out for men who will step up to the plate and be great fathers

By spending the money and taking the time to complete this course you are clearly such a man and I commend you for this! Being a great father doesn't just happen. It takes intentionality and commitment. It cannot be outsourced or delegated; it must be handled personally. Just as a

safe can only be opened by the key specifically designed for it, you as a father hold the key to unlock the potential in your child's life. Every father has a window of opportunity to provide input into his children's lives. And like most windows of opportunity, it eventually closes. The more input a father makes into his children's younger years, the greater will be his influence in their later years. Too many fathers wake up late and try to discipline a teenager who is already showing signs of bad behaviour. Fathers need to get involved immediately and stay involved for the rest of their lives. A year after my divorce, my son Luke decided to come and live with me. At the age of 12 he was a big, strong boy, tall and solidly built. He played rugby, loved riding motor bikes and was a real boy in every way. Yet I also noticed a tenderness and vulnerability in him. More than that, there was

a cry, a yearning for masculine nurture. He had questions that I needed to answer. His young developing masculine soul needed to draw from a man and that man was me, his father. For several weeks after moving in with me, Luke would creep into my bed late at night and just hold on to me tightly. It's hard to explain what passed between us during those prolonged, poignant hugs, but it was profound and beautiful. I didn't have to say anything; he was drawing substance from me, almost by osmosis. I was his rock, his anchor. I was the source of masculinity and strength for his developing manhood.

No matter what I was experiencing inside, no matter what challenges I was facing, I was Luke's dad and he needed me.

What we teach our children must come from who we are as men, not what our heads tell us is the right thing. What is in our hearts reflects in the way we live. Whether love or bitterness, anger or peace, the content of our souls spills out into the conduct of our lives.

This leads to three crucial and inescapable realities every father needs to embrace:

1. The way we live speaks louder than anything we say.
2. We can only impart to our children what we have inside us to impart.
3. What we have inside us, both good and bad, will in some measure be imparted to our children.

I once lectured in a subject that I had not previously studied and I remember anxious nights spent learning the material that I would have to teach with authority the

very next day. Fatherhood often feels that way. What Luke and Blythe have asked of me has often highlighted what I never received myself. Often what we are called on to impart to our children highlights the very thing we ourselves lack and the wounds that we carry.

Being a father requires us to examine our own lives and embark on a journey to become the man our children need us to be.

There is no greater inspiration for becoming the best version of yourself possible. The first courageous step we need to take in doing this is to deal with our own masculine wound.

You may immediately respond

with the thought, *“This doesn’t apply to me. Perhaps I should skip to the next section”*.

Don’t be so hasty. If you are one of the rare and fortunate men who had a near perfect father and childhood you may be close to being able to say, *“I know who I am and what I am worth. My validity as a man is in no doubt; I am completely authentic in all I say and do. If my thoughts and heart were an open book to my family and the world, I would fear no embarrassment, for I have nothing to hide. The person I present to the world in every circumstance is the real me, without any posturing. I carry no anger, no regrets about what could have been. I am content with who and what I am and where I am going, with the kind of man, father, and husband I am, and I know my wife and children would say the same about me”*. If you can say all this with honesty

and conviction then by all means skip to the next section. Very few men can. It’s pretty safe to say that all men have some level of woundedness in their masculine souls and if we are serious about the business of manhood and fatherhood, we need to be honest enough to admit it and brave enough to deal with it.

As men we tend to cover up our wounds and just get on with life.

And after years of covering up and burying our wounds deeply in our psyche we are not even aware that we carry a wound. But our woundedness drives our behaviour in ways that are often unconscious. Fathers with wounded masculinity either perpetuate the wounds they received from their own fathers or overcompensate in the

other extreme. Fathers trying to live out their unrealised dreams vicariously through their children are wounded and are wounding their children. Fathers who set no boundaries because their own fathers were disciplinarians are wounding their children. Fathers who relentlessly pursue wealth and success at the expense of time with their family are wounded and are wounding their children. Fathers who escape into addictions like pornography, alcohol or overworking are wounded and are wounding their children.

I entered fatherhood a wounded man. My sense of identity was scattered, my belief in self was shaky at best. And so I did what men do so well: I played the man, or at least what I believed the man ought to be. My soul was not whole and so it sought comfort and validation and solace in ways

that compromised me and those who I loved and who relied on me. I began to see that unless I received healing for my own masculine soul, any deficiencies, insecurities and hurts that I had would so influence the way that I fathered that I would run the risk of passing them on to my children.

A long journey of healing and re-fathering began in my life. There have been casualties along the way: a failed marriage, lost opportunities, dysfunctional behaviour, the pain of living in a different city to my children, the expense of constant travelling to be with them, and the inevitable heartache of separation. Healing our masculine wound requires intentionality, time and help. It does not happen by default, nor does it happen overnight, and it certainly will not take place in a vacuum. My own healing and re-fathering

has been (and continues to be) a deliberate and increasingly conscious process. I have read extensively, prayed much, attended countless workshops, sat through counselling sessions, talked with friends, seen things in myself I hated to see, and been through times of near despair. But as tough as it has been, it has also been a beautiful, life-changing journey.

Fatherhood is a parallel process – being and becoming a whole and true man while raising our sons and daughters to themselves become whole and true men and women.

This course is one of many resources that will help you along this all-important parallel journey. The end result will be wholeness and freedom for you and your children. Life as it was intended to be.

DADHABITS

LIVE WITH A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF
how important you are to your children
AND THAT YOU ONLY HAVE A FEW YEARS OF THEIR
LIVE AND YOURS TO IMPACT THEM DEEPLY.

.....
Use your time and resources
TO SHOW YOUR CHILDREN HOW MUCH
YOU VALUE THEM.
.....



COMPLETE
EXERCISE ONE
CALLED:
"YOUR FATHER
EXPERIENCE"
AND EXERCISE
TWO CALLED:
"A LOOK IN THE
MIRROR."



EXERCISE ONE: YOUR FATHER EXPERIENCE

This exercise is designed to help you get in touch with any hurts that you may have received from your relationship with your father. Very few men enter adulthood without some kind of wound from their father. How we deal with this wound lays the foundation for much of how we live our lives, father our children and relate to our wives. Father wounds are passed from one generation to the next until someone has the courage and awareness to stand up and say, "Enough! It stops with me. I will break the cycle." You may have had a great relationship with your father growing up, you may have had an absent father, an abusive father or

not even have known your father. Whatever your history, this is a useful exercise to go through.

How would you rate your father in the 12 statements given below?

1. My dad knew my heart. He took time to really hear me, to know my likes and dislikes, my fears and dreams and what made me come alive.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. My dad saw my unique talents, abilities and personality traits. He valued and acknowledged them and helped me to discover and develop them.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. My dad regularly spent dedicated quality time with me.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. I felt validated and affirmed by my dad.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. I always knew without any doubt that my dad loved me. The words he used and the way he treated me clearly and consistently showed me.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. I always knew and still know today that my dad approved of me, that he wanted and cherished me. I entered adulthood with a sense of his blessing on my life.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. I could always go to my dad for comfort and nurture and to share whatever was happening in my life.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. My dad always protected me emotionally, physically and spiritually. He was there for me and I knew that he would fight for me whenever I needed him to.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. My dad provided for me to the best of his ability. I know that he made my needs as his child a priority.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. My dad taught me to handle life well. He made sure I had the life skills I needed.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. My dad lovingly disciplined me without using fear. He set clear and reasonable boundaries and was fair and consistent in making sure I kept within them.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. My dad set an example for the way he expected me to live. His life matched his words.

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	SOMETIMES	MOSTLY	VERY MUCH
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now respond to the following five questions:

1. What are five positive life lessons that you learnt from your father?

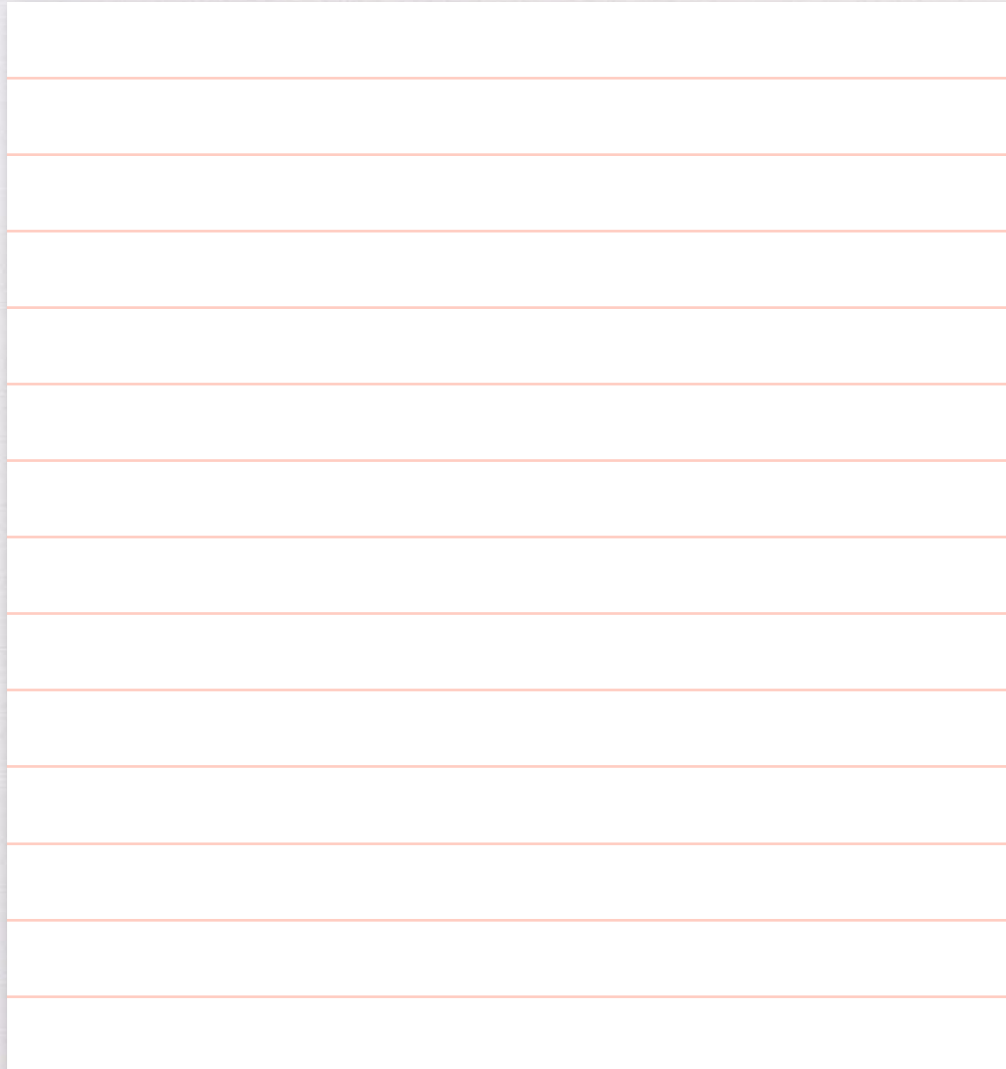
ITEM	DESCRIPTION
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

2. What did your dad do or fail to do that hurt you emotionally or psychologically?

3. What would you have liked your father to have done differently?

4. Is there any unfinished business between you and your father? If yes, describe it.

5. Do you have any anger or resentment towards your father? If you do, write down your feelings towards him. Be honest and open; no-one has to read this but you.



Going through this exercise may have brought up some strong feelings that you will need to deal with wisely. This is a great opportunity for breakthrough in your life as a man, a son and a father. This is not about blame or revenge, it's about healing. It's not a witch hunt to find out where your dad messed up, neither is it about blaming your father for all that has gone wrong in your life. It's about setting your heart free and becoming whole. It's about taking full responsibility for your life as a man and as a father.

If you have found any residual anger with your father as you worked through this exercise, the first thing you will need to do is start the process of forgiving him. This can be very difficult but is absolutely essential for your freedom. As the well-known saying goes, bitterness is like taking poison and hoping the

other person will get sick. Lack of forgiveness is toxic to our souls and lives. It is a cancer that must be removed. There is no other route to emotional wholeness. The deeper the wound, the harder it is to forgive, but the good news is that it is entirely possible.

One of the greatest aids to forgiving your father is to realise that he himself was a flawed man who carried his own father wounds into his relationship with you, his son. Your father did what he knew how to do. He fathered you out of what he had inside to call on. Don't justify or minimise the hurt that he caused you but understand where it came from.

It is very important to understand that forgiving someone does not mean you endorse the behaviour that caused pain. It is not the same as saying to someone, "What you did is

okay; I have no right to be hurt.” Forgiveness requires a frank acknowledgement that what someone did to you, deliberately or not, was wrong and it hurt. Only from this position of truth can you begin to forgive.

You may find yourself trying to justify your father, rationalising his behaviour and feeling guilty about condemning him. You may find yourself so filled with anger that you cannot see anything good in him. You may find yourself blaming yourself for your father’s shortcomings. None of these positions is helpful. As difficult as it may be, given the emotions involved, it’s important to work on being objective. See it as it is. What you feel is valid. What he did or didn’t do is reality. Deal with that truth.

Forgiveness starts with a simple decision to forgive. Make up

your mind to forgive your father for whatever hurt he caused you, whether by commission or omission, whether deliberate or unconscious. This is a decision to choose life and freedom and break the chains that may have been holding you back from being emotionally whole. You may not feel an instant relief; sometimes the process of letting go of the pain takes a while. Persevere. Resolve in your mind and heart that you will forgive, and the freedom will come. The second action that you will need to take is what psychologists call re-parenting yourself. This is the process of learning all the emotional and life skills that you didn’t necessarily learn growing up. It is the journey of this course and it takes most of us the rest of our lives. We men are work in progress (hopefully not just work!): growing in love, truth, awareness and wholeness.

It starts as always with awareness, with looking in your emotional mirrors and seeing yourself, warts and all, and it continues with a commitment to growth and transformation. This commitment becomes a quest and a beautiful journey of discovery and healing. There are many great resources to help you on your way. There are books, workshops, courses and men’s groups to join. The important thing is that you are on the journey and that as each year goes by you are a better man than you were the year before.

EXERCISE TWO:

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

For this exercise you will need the input of friends and family. It is a beautiful exercise in self-awareness which is guaranteed to touch your life. Select five people to give you feedback. Choose people who know you well and who will give you honest feedback, not just tell you what they think you want to hear. If you are married, make your wife one of them. The other four can be friends, family members or work colleagues.

Send an e-mail to each of the five people you have chosen. Explain to them in your own words that you are doing a course to become

a great dad and ask them to complete the following two sentences.

1. I respect and appreciate the following 10 things about (insert your name):

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

2. (insert your name) would be more attractive and effective as a person if he worked on the following 10 things:

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Tell them that the feedback you need is not just about you as a father but you as a person. Use the templates if you like or just ask them to complete the two sentences.

REFLECTIONS

NICE WORK!

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