



Transition into Fatherhood: A Time of Risk for Mental Illness




Ewa Andersson, Midwife, PhD




Subjects for this lesson

- Fathers' transition into fatherhood
- Fathers' role
- Fathers' impact on children's development
- Fathers' mental health
- Strategies in the presence of depression in the new couple




Fathers feelings about parenthood

- New roles
- Pride
- Pleasure
- Desire to be available



Transition into Fatherhood

- Stress
- New roles
- Social isolation
- Marital satisfaction




Fathers' impact on children

- Fathers' direct impact
- Fathers' indirect impact



Research: Fathers' Importance to Children






Examples of Cognitive Ability


Children of present / prosperous fathers have better:

- Cognitive development at 6 months and 1 year
- Problem solving ability at 2-3 years
- IQ at 3 years.
- Speech development in preschool age
- Score, IQ, learning ability, motivation, social and emotional maturation of school age
- Study, economic and professional success and psychological well-being as adults.




Impact on children of father's involvement

- Involvement at 3 months predicts the child's social development at 3 years.
- Involvement at 7 years predicts social competence at 20 years.




Fathers' Vulnerability

- Theory about vulnerability
- Predisposition
- Mental vulnerability




Preparation for Fatherhood

- Preparation for birth
- Preparation for fatherhood
- New roles in the 21st century
- Need for new supportive models





Relation between Fathers' and Mothers' Mental Health

- Mothers' mental health affects fathers'
- Double vulnerability increases the load on the child




Conflicts?






For a secure attachment, children need:

- Patronage: To be protected against dangers
- Consolation: In situations perceived as threatening
- Responsiveness: Anyone who hears and can interpret the child's signals in a reasonable time
- Predictability: The parent reacts consistently to signals from the child



1940-1970
Father as gender model





The 1970s: The fathers as leader in Play



1980s: The Absent Father



1990s: The Present Father



2000s: Direct and Indirect Impacts



2000s: The Father's Mental Health



Blues among Fathers




Mental Illness in the Puerperium

- Blues
- Depressive mood / depressive symptoms
- Anxiety disorders
- Distress / adjustment problems
- Depression
- Mental illness: bipolar disorder, psychosis

Common Mental Health Problems in Women and Men in the First 6 Months Postpartum		
Adjustment criteria	Mothers	Fathers
Depressed mood	2.3	1.2
Anxiety symptoms	18.6	12.2
Mixed anxiety/depression symptoms	2.9	0
Diagnosis		
Major depression	0	0
Minor depression	0	0
Anxiety disorders	8.7	4.1
Major depression and anxiety	0.6	0

Risk Factors for Depressive Symptoms among Fathers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low education • Young age • Economic vulnerability • Lack of social support • Relationship • Migrated within 5 years • Severe life events • Negative lifestyle • Former mental disease

Screening for depression in fathers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) • Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)




Studies about depression symptom among Fathers

- Lindberg L. & Carlberg M. (ongoing): 3653 fathers 15 % had symptoms at 6 months postpartum (cutoff EPDS10 p)
- Bergström M. (2013): 812 fathers 10.3% had symptoms at 3 months postpartum (cutoff EPDS 11 p)
- Massoudi (2013): 885 fathers 6% had symptoms at 3 months postpartum (cutoff EPDS12)
- Kerstis B. (2012): 305 couples 8% had symptoms at 3 months postpartum (cutoff EPDS10 p)



Depressed fathers of 1-year-olds children





Depressive Symptoms after Birth in Expectant Fathers with Migration Background

- New experiences of paternity roles
- Wrestling with adjusting to fatherhood in the new country.

Behaviour among depressed fathers




General Strategy of Supporting Systems

- To create a minimally secure environment
- To ensure the presence of people
- Temporary foster care
- Set clear limits

Summary

According to research:

- Fathers' transition into fatherhood and fathers' role are similar to mothers' but also different
- Fathers' mental health during transition into fatherhood has been neglected; some risk factors have been identified
- Fathers' mental health during the perinatal period has impact on children's development and family harmony
- Some interventions are effective to support family during this period of crisis
- More research is needed about fathers' mental health during the perinatal period



Thank you for your attention

Ewa Andersson
ewa.andersson@ki.se
