



Episode 10: Pure Dads  
with Billy Loizou

## Pure Dads

### A Father's perspective on becoming a first-time parent.

**Tiffany:** Hi everyone! Today we wanted to change up a little compared to previous episodes. Our guest today is Billy Loizou. Billy is a dad to a toddler and a young baby, and we wanted to bring Billy on to give a dad's perspective on his journey of Parenthood. Billy and his wife are both very hands-on parents and Billy works from home and also has his own podcast called 'Created by Marketers, for Marketers'.

In this week's episode, we discuss pre, during and post birth to provide insight to expecting fathers out there. Hi Billy, thanks for joining us today.

**Billy:** Thanks for having me, Tiffany.

**Tiffany:** It's so great to have you, Billy. I'd love it if you could start by telling us a little bit more about your experience in becoming a father for the first time.

**Billy:** Yeah sure, no worries. We're going back three years ago now. I think the best way to go through it is to break it into three areas. I'm going to talk about pre-birth, so before the child and when we found out we were pregnant, during the birth, and post birth, because a lot changed in nine months.

**Tiffany:** I can imagine!

**Billy:** A hell of a lot changed in nine months. So, pre-birth. I remember coming home from work, it was a completely unplanned pregnancy, unfortunately we struggled at the start to have kids and we just stopped trying.

I came home from work one day and my partner was really, kind of, I wouldn't say disconnected, but I felt like she was hiding something from me, so, I kept pushing on it saying, "what's wrong?", "is something up?" and she turned around and said to me "I'm pregnant". I just remember my jaw, it was probably one of those episodes in a comedy film when your jaw hits the ground, and a little bit of drool came out, she said - I don't know if I was in shock or what happened, but it was everything I had ever wanted. I really wanted to be a dad but then really quickly, this fear of change and not knowing what to do set in.

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**Billy:** (cont...) Am I ready mentally? I know I wanted this, am I ready financially? Will I ever be ready financially? Then the fear of what do I do to help? I'm not carrying this baby, I'm just merely on the journey of watching my partner go through her body changing and I'm quite squeamish of any kind of process like this. I'm not quite good at handling some of these things, so, the first thing we did was together we went to birthing classes, but it wasn't normal birthing classes, it was hypnobirthing. We felt that really helped and they take you through the process of what, Lisa, my partner, is going through at every phase of the journey and I can be there to support her both leading up to the birth and during the birth.

Then, you watch a lot of birthing videos. So, that kind of squeamish element of not knowing what can go wrong and what can change throughout the process, I knew kind of what to expect. We watched a lot of water births and natural births and you know, that really connected me with the process of knowing what I could do to not just feel like I'm a fly on the wall watching this happening.

I spent a lot of nights talking to the baby too. So, they talk a lot about building a connection as a father with the child and I would speak to it and hoping that it would know my voice and believe it or not, the baby would start moving and coming to the surface every time I spoke.

Then the final part was packing the hospital bag, so you feel like you're in control. We had a birthing plan, and I wouldn't say it went according to that, but we felt as prepared as we could be.

**Tiffany:** I think it's really great to have a bit of insight into your experience when you first found out and all those things, because it is such an incredible journey. I know myself, being a parent, just getting your head around it and then having to think about all the things you've got to do to prepare for that baby arriving is a massive thing, but it's also so exciting, so it's really lovely to hear some of the things that you chose to incorporate and what you learnt in that period.

**Billy:** Yeah, definitely. The first one was definitely a wild ride, our second was a lot was a lot easier because we knew what to expect.

**Tiffany:** Definitely! So, what about during the birth and the labour? What went on for you there?

**Billy:** Every night I'd go to bed wondering, 'is tomorrow the day?' They speak a lot about it in hypnobirthing that it happens when you're relaxed.

**Tiffany:** Yes.

**Billy:** But, it's not like the movies where she says, 'my waters broke', like that's very uncommon from what I've been able to gather. When she told me, it was like 3:00 AM or 4:00 AM, and she said 'I don't think you're going to be going to work today' and I was thinking, why? Are the trains down or is the car not working? and she's said, "I think I'm going into labour". She tells me my reaction was that I got out of bed and I was running around the house like a bit of a headless chicken and she said, "what are you doing?" And I said, "I don't know, what do I need to do?", she said "well, you've packed the bag, so let's just be patient and wait for the signals of us having to go into the hospital".

So, I called the hospital and said you're going to be expecting us probably within the next 12 hours, not knowing how long the labour would take. They say you need to wait for the contractions to be a certain time apart and to be lasting a certain amount of time. I tried to help in every way I could. I would bring Lisa a glass of water and give her a massage, we would create positive affirmations and songs that we think would calm her. I made her a warm bath and was just really was there to offer help. We have a dog who decided to jump on the bed and curl up next to my partner as well, it's like she knew what was going on, which was quite cute.

We had a long drawn out labour, so, hypnobirthing really worked in our favour up until a certain point in time, I think it was 23 hours into the labour Lisa was still very calm and collected and breathing and in a meditative state. We wanted a water birth, but unfortunately, when we got to the hospital the midwife that was there at the time didn't have hypnobirthing accreditation, so we couldn't have the water birth. Instead, we set up the room quite tranquil with music and candles and a bit of ambiance and every nurse that walked in and the doctor that walked in had commented on how good the environment was in our room.

**Billy:** (cont...) So, we had to unfortunately have some medical assistance, and I went from that squeamish partner who didn't want to even be in the room, to doing everything I could to get the baby out safely. I felt like a completely different person. I think you surprise yourself in those situations.

**Tiffany:** Yeah, I think when you're going through something like that with your partner and having that bit of experience with watching other videos and preparing yourself as you said mentally and what to expect a bit more and obviously you worked really hard on creating that beautiful environment for the two of you and obviously, that that did really pay off.

Finding out that you went from being very squeamish to not and really being there for her and present and being able to cope with all of that and supporting her, is a really great thing to hear. I think hearing that it is possible to move past some of those things, because I think sometimes people think if they're already very squeamish or if they can't handle blood, they're not going to be able to handle birth, whereas you clearly are a perfect example of that being possible. So, it's really great to have heard that.

What about that post time? As post-labour is a whole other journey.

**Billy:** I'd fainted at the drop of a hat, but not anymore!

**Tiffany:** Wow!

**Billy:** It's completely changed me, and I think in that part and it's nowhere near as bad as you think about. It's actually, I don't know I'm not actually going through the labour, but I would say that it's a beautiful process.

**Tiffany:** So, then post labour. I guess that's a whole other journey and a whole other realm, isn't it? What were the first things for you that you found were those big moments, post birth?

**Billy:** We were in the public system, so we were out of hospital within 48 hours.

**Tiffany:** Wow.

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**Billy:** I remember you having the chair all set up in the car and heading down to the hospital to pick up my son. Carrying him so carefully and putting him in the car and thinking “he’s so small”, coming home and putting him on the couch and thinking to myself, “what do we do now?” We’ve had all of this help at the hospital and now what do we do? Our dog was walking around sniffing, you know, “what is this thing that you put into the house?”

The thing that hit home for me as a dad was, I had to figure out my role. At least my partner knew she could feed the baby and she had to learn the art of breastfeeding, which had its challenges as well, but I just had to figure out what can I do to help my partner in any way possible. You know, simple things again like, bringing a glass of water, helping change the nappies throughout the night, burping the baby, holding the baby when the baby was crying and trying to put it back to sleep so my partner could get some well needed rest as she was healing.

I only had two weeks off work. I clearly don’t think that’s enough time, you know, as a father you still want to be there. But, when you go back to work, you don’t really know how to give 100% of yourself at home and at work, because you feel so much pressure to deliver, i.e. bringing in the money for the family and being effective at work, but then you have this stress of “how do I also be present when I’m home”. It’s challenging because you’re a walking zombie at work as well. Our baby wasn’t a great sleeper and the fogginess of the first, it always felt like the first twelve months, because he didn’t want to rest, and he had quite a pair of lungs on him.

But what I learnt from that was, there’s no perfect baby, and you don’t need to put too much pressure on yourself, particularly at work where people are there to help you, that’s if you got a team environment. It’s not helpful putting stress on your shoulders and worrying about all the minute details. It was quite a challenging time and I reflect on that now because as I had my second baby, I definitely found a balance with having other parents at work, other fathers at work, that I could empathise with and communicate with that work life balance and kind of chip in and help each other out.

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**Billy:** (cont...) It did take a toll on my on my mental health. Finding ways to fill my cup is important as a dad, as important as it is for a mum as well, because you see how it impacts your health as you would put work and family first before some simple things like, going out and shooting the basketball, or going for a walk. Things that you know a good for your mental state and will help you perform better in both work and at home if you just do those things. I very much chose to put my family and work before my own needs.

Going back to that point I mentioned earlier about building a connection, I think a lot of fathers don't feel like they can connect with the baby because they're not as involved as they think they could be, or that they feel like they should be. I very much had skin on skin connection at the moment the baby came out and because I felt like I spoke to the baby so much before he came out, he automatically would know my voice. His eyes would follow around the room every time I would talk and that made me build a special connection with him. So much so that I would have certain sayings that I would say to him and I would say to him, "aim for the sky", before I put him to bed, which made its way into my rap career or my poetry career of creating a song for him as well, which he listens to now called, 'Baby on the Moon'. Anything I could do to build a relationship with him at that point in time.

**Tiffany:** That's beautiful. It's so lovely to get some insight for everyone out there, it sounds like you've been on quite a deep self-discovery journey, and you've learnt so much along the way so far.

It was so lovely to hear about that strong relationship that you forged with your first born by writing such a beautiful heartfelt personalised poem and speaking to him regularly and what a gift to you and to your baby. I think that's such a wonderful idea, so I really take my hat off to you for doing something so beautiful and being such a hands-on dad. I think that's a wonderful thing to share and to give a way in which other dads could potentially look at finding ways to connect with their baby, that's so beautiful.

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**Tiffaney:** (cont...) So, as that hands-on dad, if you were to put the ultimate survival kit together, what would it contain? That's another thing a lot of people think about, what do I really need as a mum or a dad? So, what kit of things would you really recommend for a dad's survival kit?

**Billy:** Oh, good question. A survival kit. You know, I remember the first day I took Levi out for lunch with my brothers and I was so nervous. I was making sure I had everything and that I didn't forget anything and what could go wrong? A bit of advice to all of the dads, don't Google anything. Google is never your friend. Anything you Google always leads to, you know, to something that you just don't want to get your head into that space - colic is definitely the one that comes up on top of the list.

**Tiffaney:** Yeah.

**Billy:** But, in the survival kit I would say a nappy bag. 100% bring as many extra nappies as you can, because you never know what can happen any point in time. A change of clothes, because of, you know, back to point 1, you never know what can happen any point in time, and baby wipes - that's for cleaning you and the baby at any point. The things that I think would keep them entertained, so something musical. My son and my daughter always liked something that played some music. A comforter or a teddy of some kind.

If they were sleeping somewhere else, they loved some white noise. There's an app that we have on our phones which plays just some white noise, either raindrops or some wind chimes, and that would always help them get to sleep and would definitely block out any noises that may wake the baby up will stop them from falling asleep.

Then, lastly for both of them, a ball or toy of some sort. My son just loved carrying a ball around with him, if it was a soccer ball or a basketball, or a football and my daughter is very much the same, she's a little bit more rough than him though, you never know where you're going to find anything that you give her, whether it's in her mouth or, you know, behind the chair - she's definitely character.

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**Tiffaney:** Yeah, great tips there. I found even as my kids got older that baby wipes were just one of those things and having some sort of wipe to as you said, clean yourself, as well as the child and all those other things you have mentioned have been great tips, so thank you so much for that insight there.

So, what have been some of the most important purchases that you've made as a dad and how did they help you on your journey as a new father? There are so many things to purchase out there, so many things are unnecessary, but some things are really vital. So, what would you say has been the best purchases you've made?

**Billy:** I think there is a reason for this and I remember when I used to live at home with my parents, I was quite young, there was a lady that used to run past our house, she was very fit actually, and she was pregnant. I saw her running and every day she'd run past, same time, same day as she went from zero to nine months, and then I think after nine months she disappeared for maybe like a week, and then I saw her running with the pram, and then I saw her running with the baby carrier, and I always thought to myself, "I want to be physically active when I have kids as well, and I don't want that to limit me from going out and doing exercise".

So, the two things that we invested in was baby carrier, like a Baby Bjorn. Because it's great for you to get out of the house and get that fresh air, walk down to the coffee shop, go for a walk around the park, go for a walk to the beach - it just literally hangs on you and the baby can sit there from quite young and they can sleep on you, and when they get older you can turn them around and they can see the world as you as you go on your adventure. It's really practical and easy to put on.

And the second is a really good functional pram. One that's easy to lift and easy to collapse and fits in the back of the car. You use that even until they're walking, you know, you just change some of the modules and they still sit in it and you can get on with your day.

We found those two were 100% the most important purchases that you need.



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**Tiffany:** Yeah, great advice there. I think it's fabulous that you've made some great suggestions and it's interesting to hear what you found most practical because everyone does have different ideas and there might be something that someone else might find better than others. I'd definitely say in my experience too, a baby carrier and a good pram is definitely the way to go.

So, what would you recommend for other dads to help them feel empowered and confident as a new father? You've mentioned a little bit about hypnobirthing, but I guess delving into a little bit more, did you feel it that really was the biggest thing that empowered you and made you feel confident as a father?

**Billy:** I went through a phase, and I still really believe in, the practice of meditation for your mental health. What hypnobirthing allowed you to do is: it was a really safe environment, there were like six couples on a beanbag and we were all just really open sharing and talking about what we think of birth versus you know being educated on the realities of the birthing process, and we had a really good teacher. They took us through you know different parts of the labour, different types of breathing your partner can do to help push the baby out, because at the end of the day, it's the body performing a function.

For me, I like getting into the nuts and bolts of how things work, I was one of those kids who would break something just to fix it, but I wouldn't always fix it unfortunately, and hypnobirthing did that. It really empowered me to know what was going on, what my partner was experiencing, and what I could do to help, and it just made me feel 100% more confident if things did go a certain way or certain direction or if I knew my partner needed something, I felt like I knew what I could do to be supportive in every moment of it.

**Tiffany:** I've certainly heard a lot more people participating in hypnobirthing classes and calm birthing courses, in particular. It's great to hear that helped you in those ways and it helped you feel more empowered.\

So, did you need to reach out for support, either yourself or your partner, at any point during the pregnancy or post birth? If so, was there some helpful things that you found that that you would recommend to people? And, who did you reach out to for any sort of help mentally?

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**Billy:** Good question! As internal and external help, I think externally we definitely had some support. My mother-in-law and a lactation consultant - and the lactation consultant was interesting, I'd say. I think her support was useful, but at the same time, I think added internal pressure. You know, not knowing how much to feed the baby, or over feeding the baby, under feeding the baby, and it really started to I guess create a lot of overthinking as to what we were doing and the moment we realised that the more relaxed we were as parents, than our baby would also be quite relaxed then the tension was relieved.

We internalised a lot of our stresses during the first birth, but I opened up to my partner quite a bit during the second birth and towards the middle parts about their first birth with my son. It's weird how certain things trigger certain emotions and I remember my partner saying to me how her relationship with our dog has changed now. You know, the other person in the house that we'd forgotten about. She noticed that she wasn't taking her for walks as much and wasn't giving her all the attention that the dog needed, and it really struck a nerve with her and she found us a way to incorporate the dog into our day to day lives again. It doesn't sound like a big deal now, because we look back at it and go what were we worried about, everything is fine, but you just don't know how things are going to change, and I think that creates a lot of discomfort.

The challenges with breastfeeding, I think you see it see being so simple, but it's not. A lot of people struggle with it and it's not as painless as you think. I know for my partner, in particular, that was a challenge at the start, but once we got into that rhythm and everything was locked and loaded, should I say, it was a relationship that she had with both of our kids that she really enjoyed. It was actually getting emotional when she knew it was coming to the end of breastfeeding and she had to go to bottle, because she really treasured those moments.

The hardest part is why your baby won't sleep. We complicate that so much. You think to yourself, are they overeating? Are they not eating enough? Are they sleeping too much during the day or they under sleeping during the day? Are they watching too much TV, or they are watching TV at all? Should we have the TV on in the background? Should we turn the lights off? Have we had too many visitors over today that over stimulated them? All these things.

**Billy:** (cont...) The reality is, you know, they're baby and they're not meant to sleep throughout the night. You're going to have to get up and you're lucky if you've got one that does sleep throughout the night - enjoy every moment of it!

**Tiffany:** Thank you for sharing that important information about your experience there. It can be difficult to sometimes deal with those sorts of mental health issues in becoming a first-time parent.

So, what are some key things that you think dads should know more about? For example, pregnancy, and what would you recommend in way of books, apps or podcasts before they become a dad? Knowing a little bit more about where you can reach out to or what tools you can utilise might be really helpful.

**Billy:** Look, podcasts weren't a huge thing when we were having our kids and now, they are. I would have definitely jumped on to a lot more that content because I like audio content, but I did watch content. Beyond Blue released a set of videos called Dadsvice and it's kind of comical dad humour around being a parent and I think men have a certain way of engaging with each other, which is making fun of a situation, and hearing other parents or other fathers talk about changing nappies or getting vomited on for the first time and just things that you can find the humour in really helped me. I got a good laugh out of it and knew that if it happened to me, it's not the end of the world.

There's a really good app called Wonder Leaps, which tells you when the baby is going through certain growth spurts. It's a great app, Tiff. It's one of those ones that tells you today or this week your baby is going to be able to see different distances, which means their world opens up around them, and they're going to start engaging with different things, but that may also be a reason why they're not sleeping. It was always so accurate! Even now with my second, we still use it and it's just as accurate. Why is she grizzly? She's in the middle of her third leap. You know, the leap of relationships. She's realising that you're not there in her room with her when she's trying to sleep, so that's creating anxiety and stress for it that's why she's crying.

**Billy:** (cont...) The third was the consultants. While we had some great advice from some of our consultants also take that advice with a grain of salt. I think take what you want from it and make your own decisions on what works best for you, but at least you're getting the advice. I think getting the advice is better than no advice at all.

**Tiffany:** Yeah, definitely. It's really great to have some suggestions there for other dads that are going to be going through this because it can be really hard to know where to turn.

So, what would you recommend for dads to prepare for labour and birth to best support their partner during that birthing process?

**Billy:** Hypnobirthing. You know, it's going to be the phrase of this podcast. Watching birthing videos so you know what to do and what to expect and to offer support and how to create a nice environment. You know, that's what it's all about for me and that's the main thing to focus on in what can be quick or very long labours. It's just so important for dad to know how we can be helpful.

Now that I've become a father, a lot of other dads speak to me because I was one of the first in my friendship group to have kids. Asking me what I am going through and vice versa, I wish I could've opened up more and spoken to more fathers when I had the chance. What are you going through? How do you deal with certain things? We do actually have a dads group now, all of my mates have kids now, and we just say that for example, that my son is two years old and he's doing certain things that he never used to do before that are quite cheeky, how do you discipline and how do you deal with that? Really creating that open network and being vulnerable I think is really important.

**Tiffany:** Although it might have been hard for you to watch some of those birthing videos, it sounds like it really helped normalise that birthing process for you which is really great. Talking to other dads and discussing ways to deal with things sounds like a really great idea also.

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**Tiffaney:** (cont...) So, what has been some of your biggest learnings as a father since you started your parenting journey? Knowing what you may have gained may open things up for other people and help them realise the amazing things you can learn on this parenting journey. It would be really nice to hear that from a father's perspective.

**Billy:** There's probably three things that I would say. I said before, that I was one of the first in my friendship group to have kids, and quality over quantity really came through as one of the most powerful themes of having kids, and it was the biggest learning. You know, people come and go in your life, but the ones who really want to be there for you during these challenging times and these beautiful times, will definitely shine through.

So, more quality time with the ones you love and more quality time doing the things you love, is really important. All of those things that fill your day before you have kids disappear, and I do miss some of those things, but I felt much more purpose in less quality things, rather than more things, if you know what I mean.

Just being there and being around my kids. Making sure I'm home for dinnertime, making sure when I'm here, I'm present, small things that are so important, and they won't forget that. My son yells at me now, 'get off of your phone!', you know, if I'm on my phone and I'm at the dinner table. Be mindful of the quality as there's always time to do that work when they're asleep.

Having empathy for yourself and your partner and communicating as much as possible. Remembering that it's ok to feel a certain way, just let it pass. You know, just like a cloud, it will go away and it's not going to stick there with you forever. Learn how to deal with those things and open up about them.

For men in particular, don't stop looking after yourself. You can really be a better dad and better at everything you do if you work out ways in the first few months of the baby being born to do things that fill your cup. So, go and exercise, listen to music, write music, go to the gym or whatever it is that you need to incorporate into your life as a father, make sure you do that.

# pure parenthood

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**Tiffany:** I think that's so important. Thank you for your insight today, Billy. It's really been interesting hearing about your journey from your perspective and I think everyone will have really enjoyed hearing about your experience, as I have. I'm sure it's been so insightful to everyone out there. Thank you again.

**Billy:** No, thank you again. To all the dads who are listening, you can do it! It's the most fulfilling thing you could ever do in your life. So, good luck.

**Tiffany:** That's wonderful. Thanks for that advice, Billy. I hope you've learned a few things while listening today. If you'd like to learn more about Dadsvice, please head to [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) and search for Dadsvice. Thanks so much everyone.