



HOME RUN DADS

fathers stepping up to the plate

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First Edition of the HOME RUN DADS

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References

Brotherson, S., Yamamoto, T., Acock, A. Connection and Communication in Father-Child Relationships and Adolescent Child Well-Being. *Fathering*. Vol. 1, No. 3, October 2003, pp. 191-214.

Lamb, Michael E. (editor). *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. John Wiley & Sons, 2004. An excellent fourth edition that reviews and catalogs thousands of research articles describing the many ways that a father’s relationship with his children impacts their social, emotional, physical and mental development.

Baumeister, Roy F., Tierney, John. *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. Penguin Press, 2011. Roy Baumeister has published hundreds of research articles on self-control and mastering will-power since the 1970’s. This summary of his research, written as a practical and easy-to-read guide, has a chapter devoted to developing self-control in children (versus just focusing on self-esteem).



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YOU AND YOUR KIDS ARE A TEAM

Begin with asking the fathers in your class: **How many of you have ever played a sport or been on a team?** You will receive a show of hands. You can

follow up with the question: **What are some sports teams on which you have played?** Listen to individual members of the class mention the types of teams on which they have played. If any particular sport seems common, then ask for a show of hands of all those who have played that particular sport.

Also, be sure that all fathers are speaking up. Sometimes, certain adults are happy to have others participate so they back off and end up sitting quietly. If a particular dad dominates, then just prompt those who are quieter in the group in a way like this: **I have heard some great examples of sports teams that others have played on, but I would also like to hear from you who have not talked... what are some teams on which you have played or still play?**

This is like an ice breaker and you should have everyone talk. Then explain:

This class is going to be all about you and your relationships with your children. And there are many similarities to families and sports teams... so I would like to just begin with collecting as many ideas from you as possible. And ask the following question and write down the answers on a board or butcher block pad:

How is your relationship with your kids like a sports team?

This question is very general, and develops the overall comparison between families (regardless of the specific family composition) and sports teams. *Ideas:* Rules to the game; different positions are like different responsibilities (there are different roles among fathers, mothers, caregivers, and kids even though they are on the same team); good sportsmanship is like mutual respect and keeping a good attitude in a family; coaches and players (parents and kids); work together; need to be committed; sometimes coaches, like parents, need to correct and even discipline; often a team calls itself a family; team members, like family members have to have good communication; team members have to also forgive and let things go when others on the team let them down just like family members have to apologize, forgive and reconcile; team members (like family members) often show lots of praise, support, and appreciation to each other through actions and words; teams practice getting along and working together (like parents and kids, it doesn't come without effort, plans and intentions); teams develop strategies for achieving goals and overcoming the obstacles of opponents (like the challenges that parents and kids face); teams do not always win but have to handle disappointment and defeat (and parents and kids have set backs and disappointments that they have to work through); teams have "alone time" in practices and other times of just getting together like how families come together "behind closed doors" and are just with each other without anyone else around—they see each other as they really are.

Often, as you collect ideas of how families are like sports teams, someone will mention an idea that specifically points to the concept of relationships—like, "teams need to have good chemistry;" or, "teams need to get along." If these ideas come early then just write them on your

flip chart to refer to later. **Almost always someone mentions that teams have players and coaches. You can point out that dads are like coaches and their kids are like the members of the team. So this leads to next question:**

What are some characteristics of a good coach? *Ideas:* stays in charge, committed, nice, tough, explains rules/expectations, encourager, helpful, involve players in some decisions, informed advice, teaches, leads, models, disciplined, positive, knows players, builds skills, has goals and game plan.



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IDEA: Music or Video Clip—There are many examples in the movies and in sports clips of poor sportsmanship among coaches and players. If you choose to show clips, you can begin with some of these clips, interrupt your collection of ideas from the class, or wait until after you have collected the list to show some clips.

After filling the chart with ideas from the first two questions, you can turn the classes attention back by stating, **“You previously mentioned that sports teams need to have good chemistry...what do you mean by that.”** If these ideas come toward the end of the brainstorming time then you can naturally transition with, **“You are**

so right! Sports teams need to have good chemistry—and in the same way, the relationship between you and your kids needs to have good chemistry. So what are we talking about when we say a sports team or a father-child relationship needs to maintain a good chemistry?”

You are getting to the second question which is that teams need to maintain good relationships. If needed, then you can use this transition:

Let’s take a couple of minutes and look back over this list of ways that sports teams are similar to you and your relationship with your kids. I want to point out that many of these characteristics have the common theme of being characteristics of relationships. Relationships are one of the most important keys to a successful team, as well as successful relationships that dads have with their kids!

When you think of relationships, what would you say a relationship really is? In other words,

How would you define a relationship? A relationship is...

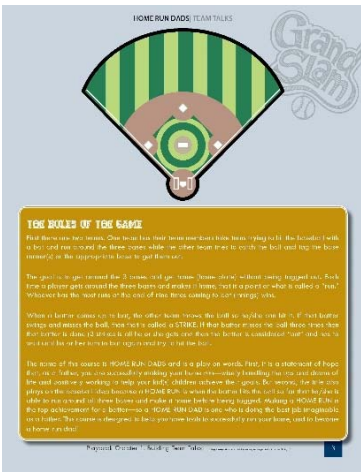
Ideas: This question is answered quickly! Collect ideas from the class, although there usually are not be a lot of ideas other than *connection, bond, cohesive, relating or connecting, system of being bound together.* Most people have never thought about the definition of “relationship” or some other relationship terms that are extremely common to use and speak of, but never have been clearly defined!

You can summarize with stating: **A relationship, then is the connection between you and another. This course is all about strengthening the relationships/*the connections* you have with your children—we will call you and your kids your family team.**

At this point, to illustrate the importance of a sports team (and ultimately a family) needing to keep good team relationships, you can ask the class for examples from sports movies. It would sound like this:

How many of you have ever watched as an adult or with your kids some Hollywood movie about a sports team? Let's name some of them. Collect as many movie names as possible—you do NOT need to write them on the flip chart. OK—let me point out that almost all of these movies follow the EXACT SAME SCRIPT! In the beginning of the movie, is the team winning or losing? They stink! And do the players get along? No, they despise each other. But as the coach begins to work with the team, halfway through, they start winning some games. But then, three fourths of the way through, just when you thought they would go ALL THE WAY, something happens and the team... ?? FALLS APART! But in the last 20 minutes of the movie, the coach makes a great speech, or a team member steps up, something happens and the team PULLS TOGETHER—and in the last minutes, in the championship game, the team _____ WINS!

You can summarize: So, we are going to refer to you and your relationship with your kid(s) as your “team” where you dads are the coaches... kids are the players... but on your team, sometimes the players coach and the coaches play. But many of the characteristics of a sports team that you just identified ALSO are characteristics of your relationships with your kids, or your father-child team.



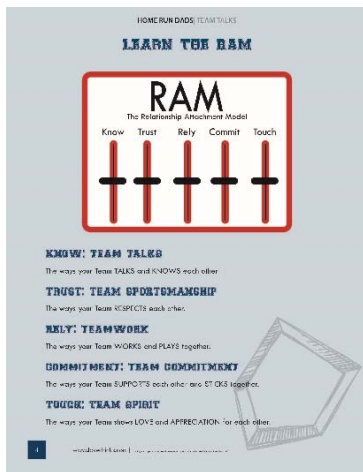
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So you can think of this course like the spring training of a baseball team... spring training is where they have what are called “exhibition games” in which they play games that do NOT count—practice games. This gives teams a chance to try out new positions, learn and practice their skills, and get ready for their long season.

So it is in Spring training that teams learn and practice what they are going to have to face in regular season, but in ways that do not have the same consequences as if they were playing for real in season. This is what this course will be like. We will talk about your father-child team and give you time to practice some

skills and even have a few “exhibition games” where you can practice getting along differently (and hopefully even better than you already do get along) but without any real-life consequences.

READ PAGE THREE THE LAST PARAGRAPH: The name of this course is HOME RUN DADS and is a play on words. First, it is a statement of hope that, as a father, you are successfully making your *home run*—wisely handling the ups and downs of life and positively working to help your children achieve their goals. But second, the title also plays on the baseball idea because a HOME RUN is when the batter hits the ball so far that he is able to run around all three bases and make it home before being tagged. Making a HOME RUN is the top achievement for a batter—so a HOME RUN DAD is one who is doing the best job imaginable as a father.



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So, let's begin with this important area of **RELATIONSHIPS!** Sports teams and your own father-child team **MUST KEEP STRONG RELATIONSHIPS.**

There are **FIVE KEY AREAS OF A RELATIONSHIP** in a sports team as well as between **YOU and YOUR CHILDREN.**

They are captured in this picture that is called the **Relationship Attachment Model or RAM.** This is a theoretical model that was developed in the 1980's to portray the major components within relationships. This is a big label for a very simple idea—this picture shows the main **"CONNECTIONS"** in your relationships, both on a sports team and especially in your father-child team. Remember, we just said that a relationship is a connection between you and another. So these five areas are actually the **FIVE CONNECTIONS THAT MAKE UP A RELATIONSHIP.** You are connected together in each of these **FIVE** areas, and when you put them **ALL** together you see what your father-child team relationships are all about.

You can read each of the following starting with the specific relationship connection represented in the RAM, and the one sentence description of what is involved in a father-child team in this specific connection, and then provide a brief explanation of each relationship connection. An easy way to make the point is to simply drop each one and ask if dads can experience this (drop) in their relationships with their kids, and how this "deficit" or lowered connection in their relationship affects the feelings of closeness. For instance, drop the **KNOW** and ask: **For whatever reasons, can you lose some contact or understanding with what is going on in your child's life? Can it get to the extreme of the proverbial, "two ships passing in the night?" What happens to the feelings of closeness and connection when this area of your relationship lowers? So keeping good talks and open communication—*staying in the know*—is one vital source of connection and closeness in your relationships with your children.**

You would then move to **TRUST** and follow a similar explanation beginning with reading the brief description (below) and then dropping the trust level and asking if this can happen and if so, how would it impact feelings of closeness and connection in their relationships with their kids.

Read each brief description, and then provide a short explanation as just explained.

The first CONNECTION is KNOW—this refers to: *The ways that you and your kids TALK and KNOW each other.* So we will call this your **TEAM TALKS!**

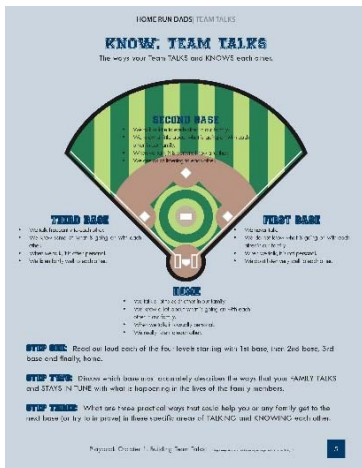
The second CONNECTION is TRUST and this refers to: *The Ways that you and your kids RESPECT each other!* So we are going to refer to this connection as your **TEAM SPORTSMANSHIP!**

The third CONNECTION is RELY and this refers to: *The ways you and your kids WORK and PLAY together.* Therefore, we will refer to this as your **TEAM WORK!**

The fourth CONNECTION is COMMIT and this refers to: *The ways you your kids SUPPORT each other and STICK together.* This connection is a major source of resilience within families. We will refer to this connection as your **TEAM COMMITMENT.**

And the fifth CONNECTION is TOUCH and this refers to: *The ways you and your kids show LOVE, AFFECTION and APPRECIATION to each other.* Therefore, we will refer to this as your TEAM SPIRIT.

We are going to use these five connections of the RAM as the FIVE CHAPTERS of this DAD's PLAYBOOK. So we will have five sessions and in each session we will dig deeper into just one of these five connections of successful FATHER-CHILD TEAMS.



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ACTIVITY: LEARN THE RAM

DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY: LEARN THE RAM

In order to understand these five major connections in your relationships with your children, I would like to create five groups of dads and assign each group one of these five connections. Each group will discuss that particular connection as described in the three steps at the bottom of each page. In your dad's playbook, there are actually five pages that look very similar but describe EACH connection and have three steps that I want each group of dads to follow. As you can see, each page has a baseball diamond and the three bases, and home plate. At the bottom of the page are three steps.

STEP ONE: read out loud each of the four levels beginning with first base; **STEP TWO:** talk about how you are doing in that specific area in your own relationship with your children; and then **STEP THREE:** brainstorm ways any father can improve that particular connection in their father-child team.

Divide the dads into five groups and keep the number within each group the same (as much as possible). If the total class is less than 10 (pairing off the dads for the five groups), then you can form fewer groups of fathers and assign more than one of the connections of the RAM to several of the groups.

Assign one page in the Dad's Playbook to each father group. Explain to them: **In STEP TWO, there are BRIEF DESCRIPTIVE POINTS IN CAPITALS of what is involved in that specific connection. Then at each base there is a box that explains what each of those brief descriptive points look like if your relationship is functioning at that particular base.** As you explain the meaning of the bases, refer to the RAM chart and move levels to represent first, second, third bases and home.

So if you JUST GET TO FIRST BASE, then this is what your relationship with your child looks like. But if you get to SECOND BASE, then you are doing better. And if you get to THIRD BASE, then you are doing even better. And if you get home then you are doing GREAT. However, none of us are hitting home runs EVERY TIME so sometimes we are only on FIRST BASE... and sometimes we get STUCK ON JUST FIRST BASE, or second or third base; and then there are times we simply STRIKE OUT in our relationships with our kids! MAKE SURE EVERYONE IN YOUR GROUP UNDERSTANDS THE FOUR LEVELS, AND THEN BRIEFLY DISCUSSES

STEP TWO—the base that most accurately describes the relationships between you and your children.

Then, complete **STEP THREE** by brainstorming and choosing three ideas for any father to use to improve his relationship with a child, and move from any of the bases to the next base. Before finishing, choose how your group will explain to the rest of the class the aspects of this **CONNECTION** (descriptions in capitals) and **THREE WAYS ANY FATHER-CHILD TEAM CAN IMPROVE THIS CONNECTION IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS** (step three).



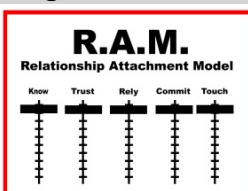
When the father groups have completed their activity then you can have them make their presentations. Before the presentations explain:

I would like each of the five groups to present their three ideas to the class—so before we do the presentations of each of the five connections in relationships (from the RAM) take a couple of minutes and figure out how you would like to make your group presentation (one or more presenters from each group of dads). Here is what you should include in each of the five group presentations:

1. Review for the class the 3 or 4 characteristics of your connection—these characteristics are found in your sheet under **STEP TWO** and are in **CAPITALS**.

2. Share with the class the three suggestions of what fathers can do to move from where they are in their relationships with their kids to the next base—in other words, to improve. These suggestions **DO NOT HAVE TO BE ANYTHING PERSONAL** to your relationships... but they should be realistic and helpful.

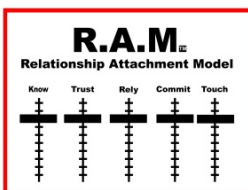
You are not sharing how your relationships are doing in this particular area of relationships... in other words, you are **NOT** sharing with the rest of the class what you talked about in **STEP TWO**. You are only briefly summarizing the description of this area of relationships and their ranges and three ideas of how to move to the next base (**STEP THREE**).



AFTER THE FIVE PRESENTATIONS... HERE IS A QUICK SUMMARY.

You would summarize and move the levels in this way.

So let me summarize what the five groups of dads have so clearly explained. Your father-child relationships are connected by these five connections... the ways you **TALK AND KNOW EACH OTHER**, the ways you **TRUST AND KEEP A RESPECT OF EACH OTHER**, the ways you **WORK AND PLAY TOGETHER TO MEET EACH OTHER'S NEEDS (RELY)**, the ways you **COMMIT TO SUPPORTING EACH OTHER**, and the ways that you **REACH OUT AND TOUCH EACH OTHER IN LOVING WAYS**.



As we noted before your presentations, these five connections fluctuate in your relationships with your kids—in other words, even if you reach a high level in all of the areas of the RAM, then that is no guarantee that you won't drop back to "first base" a short time later.

And certainly there are times when you are only relating at second base...

Or first base...

