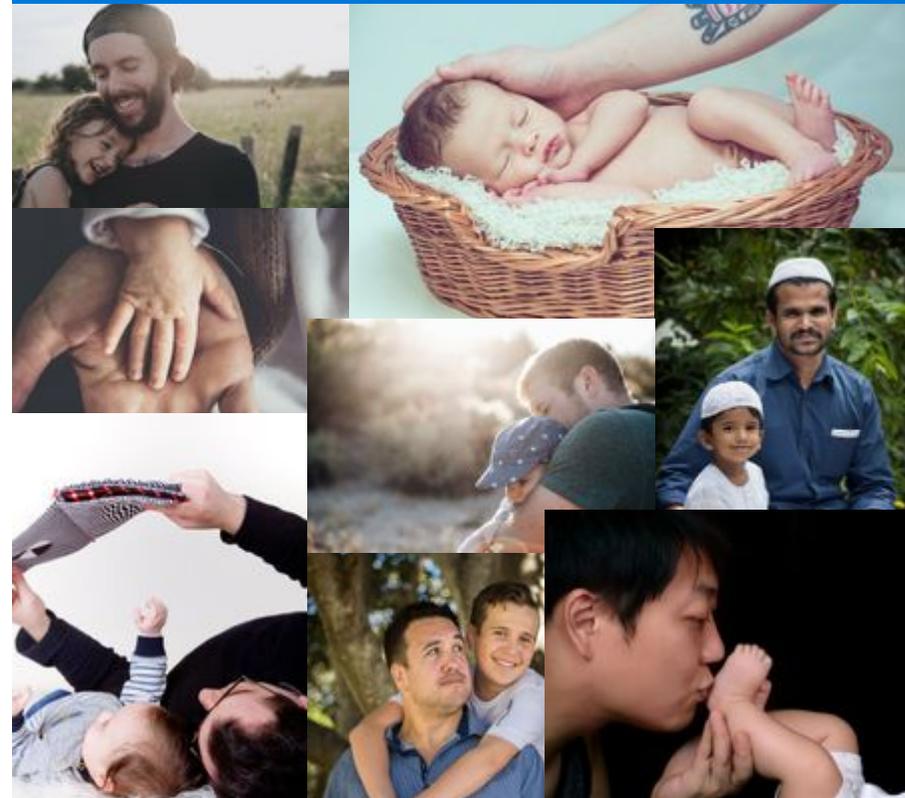


# I am D.A.D.

**Dedicated And Devoted**

**The Ultimate Guide for Fathers who do not live with their children**



Luke James Temple (Final Year BECE Student at DCU)

### **Aim of Book**

Most resources targeted towards separated fathers focus on the legal stuff. While this is important, separated fathers should be supported their main role - **to be a Dad**, regardless of the situation. This mini-booklet will be your quick guide of the first 5-years of fatherhood

### **Acknowledgements**

To the Parenting Team at OneFamily, and my supervisor Geraldine Kelly, for providing me with the opportunity to develop this resource. I would also like to thank the lecturing team of The Bachelor of Early Childhood Education in DCU, especially my tutor Aishling Silke, for her ongoing support.

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# Congratulations!

To all new Dads, or potential ones:  
**Welcome to Fatherhood!**

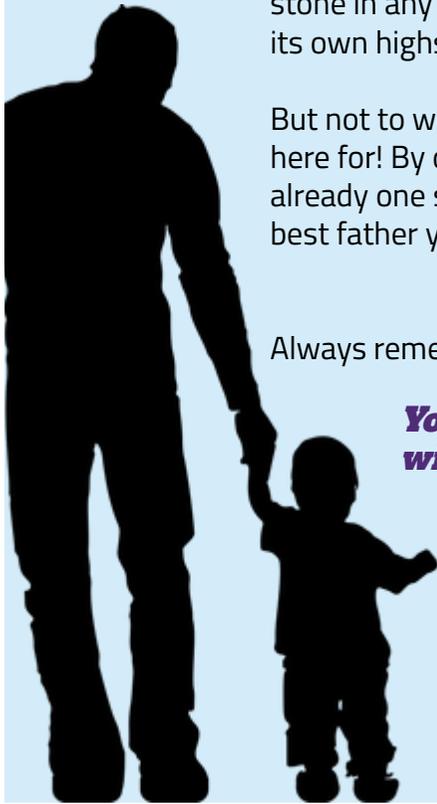
Congratulations on making it this far! Becoming a father is a new stepping stone in any man's life, that comes with its own highs and lows.

But not to worry! That's what we're here for! By opening this booklet, you're already one step closer to becoming the best father you can be for your child.

Always remember:

***You're an apprentice parent  
with apprentice children***

- Brendan O'Carroll as Mrs Brown



# How to use this guide

This book breaks down how your child will develop over the next 5-years into simple, easy-to-understand stages.

Your child will have different needs at each stage. So it is up to you as the Dad to rise to the occasion and support your child's development.

This booklet provides you with links to:



**Videos**



**Tips**



**Other services**

to enable you to become the best father you can be.

No matter the situation, whether you are married, separated or single, you will always have the responsibility of being a father to your child. The support you give in the early years will last a lifetime.

# What to expect when expecting

When expecting, it is normal to feel left out of the experience as you eagerly wait for your baby to arrive.

**But why wait?** Even if you are not living with the expecting mother, *you* are still an expecting father, so get stuck in where you can!

You can still bond with the baby when you are not present. Your unborn child will respond to sound, so it might be a good idea to record you **singing, reading or even just talking** to your baby – this will be music to their ears!



[Click here for 20 free short-stories to read and record!](#)

Pregnancy can be a rollercoaster, especially for the expecting mother as she battles with hormones, cravings, even stress.

You or the mother should not give each other ultimatums. It is important to negotiate early on in the pregnancy. The well-being of your child should always be the centre of discussion.



**Remember, by supporting the mother, you are supporting the baby.**



How to make a Parenting Plan



You and the mother should create a **Co-Parenting Plan.**

Some topics to be discussed include:

*When will you have time with your child?*

*Will the baby be breastfed, or will you use formula?*

*How will you share the responsibilities for your child?*

## When baby arrives...

This is your time to bond with the baby, when possible.

Interactions with your new-born, such as **holding, hugging, feeding and bathing** are the foundations of the relationship between you and your child.

You can ask your midwife to guide you through these important, relationship-building experiences.

# The Wonderful Ones

Your child will grow rapidly in their first 12-months.

Clear and direct communication with the mother is important. This can be challenging when you are not living with her or the baby.

You may have differences in parenting styles - this is good for the baby! But some consistency in routine will help your baby develop.

Routines will help you and your baby bond in the early stages as you become familiar with another.



**SINGLE DADS AND THEIR BABIES** What to expect and some tips for the first 12-months

## *In your Co-Parenting Plan, you should outline the following:*

### **Sleeping**

**Agree on a set bedtime.** Well-rested babies are happy babies! Infants need about **12-14 hours** of sleep per day.

Playing with your baby during the day will help them sleep at night. Having some wind-down time before bedtime will help soothe the baby for sleep.

Washing your baby



Try having a bath!

### **Feeding**

Your baby will show you signs when they are hungry, such as putting their hands in their mouth.

Weaning to solids



Babies can begin to eat **solids from about 6-months old.**



Cheap & Easy Recipes!

Your baby's teeth may begin to grow from about **6-months. Teething rings** cooled in the fridge will soothe your baby's gums

Signs of teething



# The Terrific Twos

Who said it had to be *Terrible*?

Your child will begin to test your boundaries. You and the mother should agree on how you respond to these.

Your child will also begin to walk and talk. These are important milestones for your child.

Your child will enjoy exploring their surroundings. They need plenty of space to play, so try bringing them to your nearby park.

Talking to your child, playing games like hide-and-seek, naming and explaining their emotions to them will support their development.



**TODDLER TALK** Have fun talking to your child. Even if it is nonsense, the back-and-forth interaction teaches them the basics of conversation

# Key Milestones

## Potty-Training



You and the mother should decide if you think your child is ready to be toilet-trained.

Start using a toddler potty first, and **praise** your child when they successfully use it. **Do not punish or discipline them if they have accidents.**

When your child feels comfortable using the potty, you can use a training seat on a full-sized toilet with a step to help your child get up.

**This process will take time**, and there will be a lot of accidents along the way. Your child might need to continue wearing pull-ups at night-time

## Tantrums



You might find that your child's favourite word is **No**.

Tantrums are a good thing because children need to learn how to control their emotions all the time.

Be **calm and consistent** when responding to tantrums, and **model good behaviour** around your toddler.

# The Talkative Threes

Children are naturally curious. As your child develops, they will begin to ask '**how**' and '**why**' questions.

This can be draining, but it is the perfect opportunity to explore the world with them. Children don't need lavish holidays or expensive toys. They just **need to be heard** and **interacted with**.

Talk to your child, and develop shared understandings of how the world works. **Avoid using 'yes' and 'no' answers**. You are encouraging your child to think and question.

Read books **with** your child, rather than for them. **Talk about the book** before and after reading it, and **ask questions** while reading to guess what will happen next.

This will continue building your relationship with your child, develop their language, and make the experience last longer.

Books don't have to be expensive either! Borrow from your local library or join swap-and-trade groups on Facebook and other social media.

Make the most out of reading



List of books to read to your child

# Shoeboxes



**OPENING UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD** Learn how to make miniature play-scenes using only a shoebox!

## Why make a Shoebox Play-Scene?

**Reusable:** it can change depending on your child's interests

**Affordable:** all you need is a box, household materials, a bit of creativity

**Portable:** your child can bring them anywhere, including the other parent's house as a reminder of you

Check out these other great shoebox ideas!

Football



The Ocean



Dinosaurs



## The Fierce Fours

As children grow older, they become bigger and stronger. This allows them to explore more through their play.

Play is how children learn. Play is like fun and effortless work to your child - they **need** to play.



Children play in many different ways, and it becomes more complex as children get older. They create art, build towers, recognise shapes, role-play, among others.

**Get involved** in your child's play. You and your child can take turns in being the leader, or choosing which game to play.

Children need to be **challenged** in their play. This develops problem-solving skills and builds **resilience**; skills they need now and in later life.

## Rough-and-Tumble Play

Also known as play fighting, this is a type of play that allows children to:

- **Develop strength and muscle**
- **Test limits and boundaries**
- **Take risks**
- **Learn to control emotions**
- **Understand other people's feelings and the consequences of their actions**

As their father, you can teach these important life skills to your children by playing games.

It's important to find the **balance** - letting your child win, and encouraging them when they lose.



**LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE** Bonding with your child through rough play like chasing and wrestling

# The Fearless Fives

By now, you will have a good understanding of your child, what they like and don't like, and how they communicate.

As your child grows up, their needs change and develop all the time. This does not mean you stop parenting - that's a job for life.

You will learn to grow and adapt your parenting skills in response to your child's ever-changing needs. As their father, it is your responsibility to meet these needs **as best you can**.

You should always be there for your child, regardless of the situation. The time you give your child now will have a **lasting impact**.



# Going to school

Even in the earliest stages of their lives, your child will have made friends with other children, adults, even pets!

One of the first-ever biggest changes children will have to face will be leaving home and going to school.

This is a monumental moment in their lives - think about how you felt on your first day of school. Nervous, excited, scared?

Get involved in your child's education. Make arrangements with the other parent to be there on their first day of school

You will also have to meet with the school to discuss the situation between you and the mother. For example:

*All letters from the school must be sent to both addresses*

*Any decision regarding the child's education you should be made aware of too*



# The Legal Situation

In the Republic of Ireland, unmarried fathers have **no automatic legal rights** in relation to their child, even if your name is on their birth certificate.

Familiarise yourself with the following terms to learn about your rights in your situation.



Know your rights!

Visit [legalaiddboard.ie](http://legalaiddboard.ie)

## Guardianship

Guardianship is the collection of rights and duties an adult may have in relation to the care and upbringing of their child. A guardian is responsible for making all major decisions of a child's life, including:

- Where the child lives
- Where the child goes to school

### There are 4 ways you can become a guardian:

1. Sign a [Statutory Declaration Form](#) in the presence of a solicitor
2. Live with the mother for at least 12 consecutive months, including 3-months after the child is born
3. Go to court (after completing a [Statement of Arrangements](#))
4. Marry the mother

## Custody

Custody is where you have responsibility for the day-to-day needs of the child.

In the situation where parents are not married, mothers have sole custody of their child. However, a father can still share custody (joint custody) of a child, even if he is not a guardian or does not live with mother.

If the mother and father cannot meet an agreement on an informal basis, they can avail of mediation services ([www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)) or Collaborative Law ([www.acp.ie](http://www.acp.ie)).



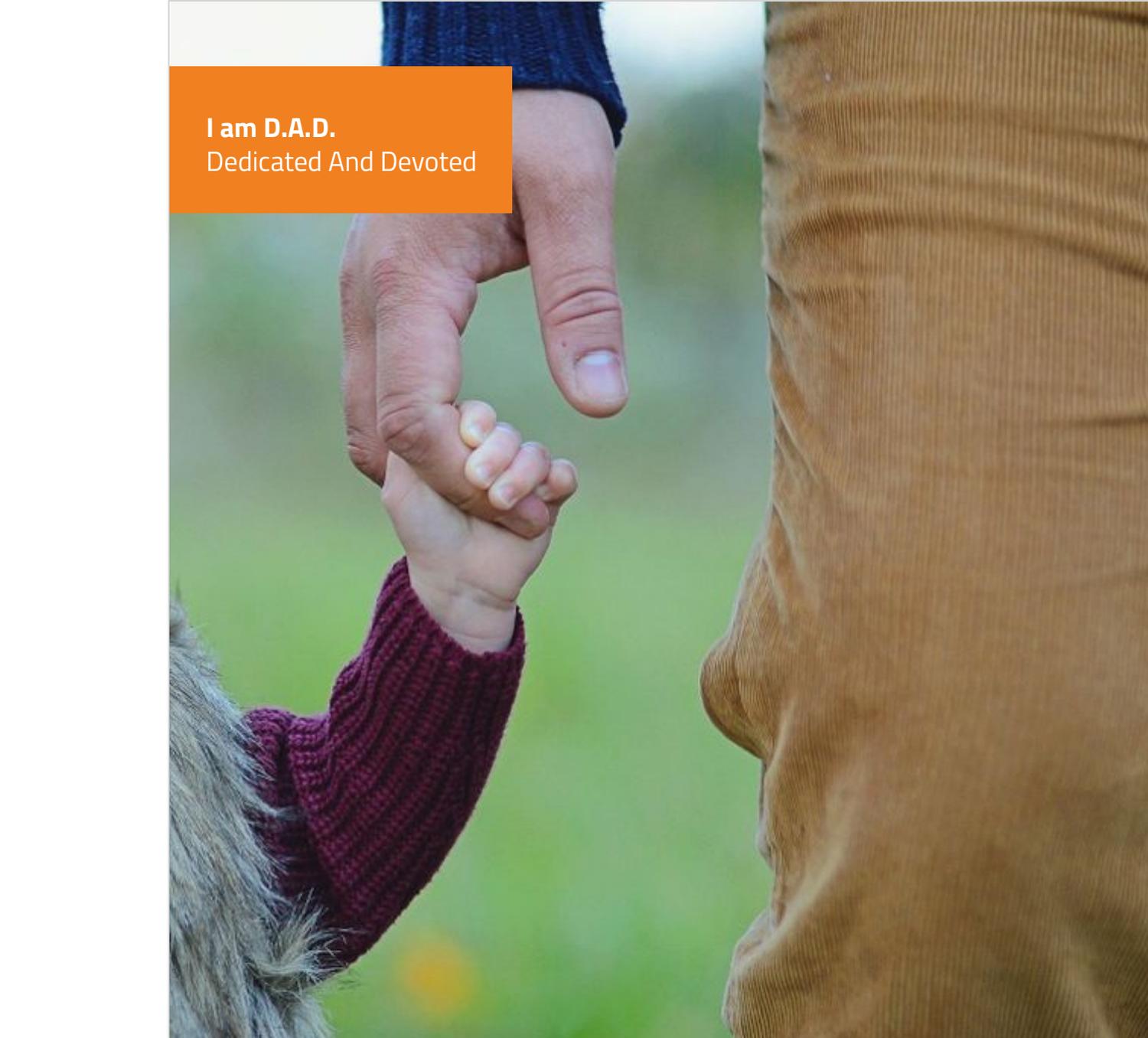
Citizen's Information  
on Separated Couples

## Access

To have access means an adult has the right to spend time with the child, even if the child does not live with them. Anyone related to the child can apply for access.

A father can apply to the court for access even if they are not married to the mother or if their name is not on the birth certificate.





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## Useful Contacts

One Family  
01 662 9212  
info@onefamily.ie  
[www.onefamily.ie](http://www.onefamily.ie)

Treoir  
info@treoir.ie  
[www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

From Lads to Dads  
fromladstodads18@gmail.com  
[Facebook Page](#)

Legal Aid Board  
1890 615 200 / 066 947  
1000  
info@legalaidboard.ie  
[www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)

Free Legal Advice Centre  
(FLAC)  
01 874 5690  
[www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)

Men's Aid  
01 5543811  
crisis@anyman.ie  
[www.mensaid.ie](http://www.mensaid.ie)