Healthy dads? The challenge of being a new father

Research commissioned by beyondblue and proudly funded with donations from The Movember Foundation

How was the research carried out

- Knowledge audit
- Literature review
- 16 discussion groups
- 8 expert interviews
- 5 in-depth interviews
- Online forum with 23 new dads
- 1,531 Online survey respondents

Fathers with children under 5 years

There were 7 key outcomes

1. New dads internalise pressure
   - Agree they ‘need to be the rock’ for their family (79%)
   - Feel ‘being the rock’ causes a lot of stress and anxiety (47%)
   - Feel overwhelmed by the sacrifices they make for their family (41%)

2. First time dads are at the greatest risk
   - % experiencing a moderate level of stress
     - First-time fathers: 33%
     - Expectant fathers: 39%
     - Pregnant with 1st child: 41%
     - 1st child aged <1: 21%
     - 1st child aged 1-4: 21%
     - 2+ kids, youngest <1: 21%
     - 2+ kids, youngest 1-4: 21%

3. New dads have an incomplete understanding of PND
   - 45% Unaware PND can affect men as well as women
   - 31% Consider PND & anxiety among men is a sign of weakness

4. There is a strong reluctance to identify the challenges of fatherhood with depression and anxiety
   - Using the term ‘Dad stress’ is likely to be more effective

5. The partner relationship is critical
   - Having a child deepens the relationship between parents, but it also changes it fundamentally
     - 72% Find their relationship is stronger
     - 69% Talk to partner to cope with stress
     - 51% Depend on partner for direction on caring
     - 51% Say they ‘fight a lot more’
     - 47% Feel less important to their partner

6. New dads seek information reactively
   - New fathers tend to ‘learn as they go’ and seek information specific to the challenge they are currently facing.
   - 56% did not seek information of support during stressful times
   - 55% consider there is not a lot of information directed to them as a father

7. New dads want more engagement
   - 53% Wish they knew more about parenting
   - 52% Want more involvement with the healthcare system

The research highlights the need to value and support both mothers and fathers in the transition to parenthood

“I’m honestly surprised that I made it because I didn’t turn to anybody. It was like you can’t show your emotions, you’ve gotta be there for her and for the child and you’ve still got to keep a roof over your head and get the bills paid and work like nothing’s happened.”

To read the full report, visit www.beyondblue.org.au/dads-research