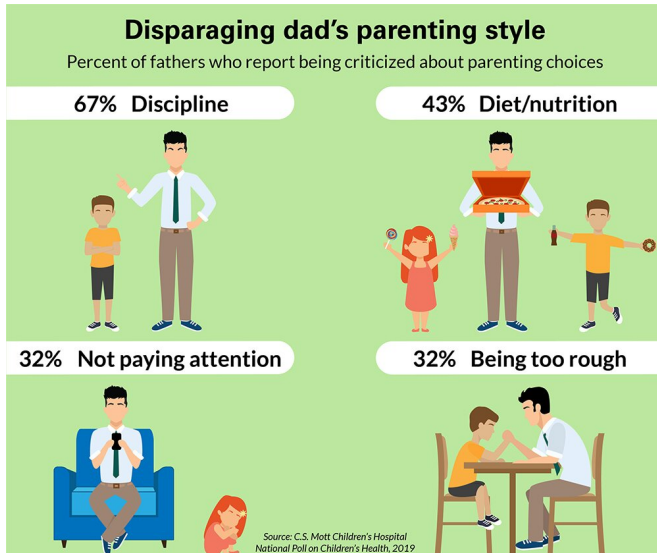


National Poll: Daddy shaming happens too

12 June 2019



About half of fathers (52%) say they have been criticized about their parenting style or choices. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan

One gift some dads may want for Father's Day: not being judged for their parenting style.

About half of fathers in a new national poll say they have faced criticism and second-guessing about their parenting choices on everything from what they feed their kids to how they play with them.

And while many fathers say they respond to criticism in a positive way, such as making a change to some aspect of their parenting (49 percent) or seeking out more information on the topic (40 percent), others had the opposite reaction, according to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan.

For over a quarter of fathers polled, criticism made them feel less confident as a parent and 1 in 5 say it discourages them from being more involved in parenting. Many fathers (43 percent) also believe

the criticism is often unfair.

The report is based on responses from a nationally-representative sample of 713 fathers of children 0-13 years old.

"Fathers who are loving and engaged can have a positive impact on their children's development and well-being," says poll co-director Sarah Clark, M.P.H.

"While some fathers say criticism prompts them to seek more information about good parenting practices, too much disparagement may cause dads to feel demoralized about their parental role," Clark says. "Family members—especially the other parent—should be willing to acknowledge that different parenting styles are not necessarily incorrect or harmful."

Dads most often felt criticized about how they disciplined a child, with two-thirds saying this was the top category for parenting put downs, according to the report.

It's not uncommon for [parents](#) to disagree over issues such as the age a child should be expected to follow certain rules or appropriate consequences for misbehavior, Clark says. But it's one of the most important areas for parents to find common ground.

"Addressing a child's misbehavior is one of the greatest challenges of parenting and parents aren't always on the same page when it comes to expectations and consequences," Clark says.

"Inconsistency between parents in responding to a child's behavior can send mixed messages to the child, and result in conflict and criticism between parents."

The second top daddy shaming category was diet and nutrition, with 2 in 5 dads saying they were criticized for what they fed their kids. Nearly a third of fathers also felt judged for not paying enough attention to children and an equal number said they

were told they played too rough.

Other topics of criticism related to a child's sleep (24 percent), appearance (23 percent), and safety (19 percent).

And the most common source of criticism often came from within the family—usually the other parent (44 percent of the time.)

"In some instances, this may be a reflection of historical gender roles, where mothers are viewed as more natural caregivers, and fathers as having limited parenting capabilities that need supervision or correction," Clark says. "When this occurs, minor differences in parenting style can cause conflict over the 'best' way to parent."

"Cultural norms, family dynamics and prior experience with his own father can also shape a dad's [parenting style](#) and influence the expectations of others," she adds.

The same goes for [criticism](#) about being too rough or not paying attention. While fathers may engage in more physical play with their children, mothers, co-parents, or other adults may perceive that the father is not adequately protecting the child from injury.

Grandparents were the next greatest dad critics (24 percent), followed by fathers' own friends (9 percent).

Nine in 10 fathers said that most dads do a good job taking care of their kids, according to the poll report. Still, some fathers describe situations in which other adults seem to discount their parental role: 11 percent have felt that a teacher assumed they were not knowledgeable about their child's needs or behavior, and 12 percent have felt that a doctor or nurse assumed they were not knowledgeable about their child's health.

Nearly a quarter of fathers polled (23 percent) have also felt excluded from communication about their child's activities.

It's important that professionals and [family members](#) don't make dads feel irrelevant when it

comes to children's lives, Clark says.

"Some fathers say they feel that professionals who interact with their child are dismissive of their parental role," she says.

"Even subtle forms of disparagement can undercut fathers' confidence or send the message that they are less important to their child's well-being. Professionals who work with children should avoid negative assumptions about [fathers'](#) level of involvement or interest in parenting."

Clark adds: "Family members should also be mindful of comments or critiques that may make dads feel like they don't know how to parent the 'right' way."

Provided by University of Michigan

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