

## HOW TO CREATE HEALTHY FATHERING HABITS

I'm excited to introduce **Quick Confidence Builds**, the first article in a special 10-part series of Championing Fatherhood blog posts for practitioners! Each post contains practical, brief activities you can use with dads in face-to-face or virtual group-based or one-on-one settings. We'll post these articles bi-weekly in May-July and monthly in August-November.



**Purpose:** These activities help build fathering confidence, a vital factor influencing dads' involvement in their children's lives. Dads only need a pen and paper to write down information when instructed. The practitioner needs only something to record on when instructed, such as a flip chart or whiteboard when working face-to-face with dads, or a virtual whiteboard or chat when working with them virtually.

The group-based version is described first. Practitioners can download a PDF of each activity for their use and to share with others. Estimated times include reflection, discussion, and practitioner feedback. The exact timing will depend on many factors, such as practitioner experience and skill, group size, how comfortable dads are with sharing their experiences and ideas, and their commitment to growing in their fathering.

**Source:** The activities are inspired by *The 24:7 Dad: 12 Habits of Confident Fathers* by NFI President Christopher A. Brown. Visit [confidentfathers.com](http://confidentfathers.com) to learn more about the book about the book being released June 2, 2026!

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**Quick Confidence Build:** Cue, Routine, Reward

**Time:** 20-25 minutes (group-based); 10-15 minutes (one-on-one)

**Materials:** Pen and paper

**The Goal:** Help dads identify one specific habit that strengthens their fathering—and leave with a clear plan to practice it. When dads build the right habits, they don't just parent better—they feel more confident doing it.

**Why This Matters:** Much of fathering happens on autopilot. The habits dads build—intentionally or not—shape how they show up every day.

## The Activity (Group-Based)

### Step 1: Start with What's Already Working (3 minutes)

ASK: What's one habit you have—daily or weekly—that you rarely miss doing?

*(Have a few dads share. Keep responses brief)*

ASK: Why do you stick with it?

*(Draw out consistency, ease, or payoff. You're setting up the idea that habits serve a purpose.)*

### Step 2: Introduce the Habit Loop (1 minute)

*(Write "The Habit Loop: Cue, Routine, and Reward" on a flip chart or whiteboard.)*

SAY: Every habit follows the same pattern: a cue triggers what you do, and you keep doing it because of the reward you get:

- Cue – something that triggers the behavior
- Routine – the action you take
- Reward – the benefit your brain expects

This loop is what puts us on autopilot—and that can either help or hurt our fathering.

### Step 3: Make It Real (2 minutes)

SAY: Here's a parenting example. At the same time each night—the cue—you go through a bedtime routine—bath, pajamas, reading, lights out. The reward? Your child settles down, and you get rest.

ASK: What would happen if that habit didn't exist?

*(This deepens appreciation for structure and consistency.)*

### Step 4: Build or Identify a Fathering Habit (10 minutes)

SAY: Identify a habit you already use that helps your fathering or create a new one you want to build. Then identify its three steps: Cue, Routine, and Reward.

*(Let them work individually or in pairs. Then have as many dads as you can share their habit and its three steps. Help refine vague ideas into specific behaviors.)*

### Step 5: Strengthen the Habit (4 minutes)

ASK: What will make your habit easy to repeat?

*(Guide them toward: making the cue obvious, keeping the routine simple, and choosing a meaningful reward.)*

### Step 6: Commit to One Small Action (3 minutes)

SAY: Write down one habit you'll start or continue this week to improve your fathering. Share it with at least one other dad in the group.

## The Activity (One-on-One)

### Step 1: Start with What's Already Working (2 minutes)

ASK: What's one habit you have—daily or weekly—that you rarely miss doing?

*(Have the dad share.)*

ASK: Why do you stick with it?

*(Draw out consistency, ease, or payoff. You're setting up the idea that habits serve a purpose.)*

### Step 2: Introduce the Habit Loop (1 minute)

*(Write "The Habit Loop: Cue, Routine, and Reward" on a flip chart or whiteboard.)*

SAY: Every habit follows the same pattern: a cue triggers what you do, and you keep doing it because of the reward you get:

- Cue – something that triggers the behavior
- Routine – the action you take
- Reward – the benefit your brain expects

This loop is what puts us on autopilot—and that can either help or hurt our fathering.

### Step 3: Make It Real (2 minutes)

SAY: Here's a parenting example. At the same time each night—the cue—you go through a bedtime routine—bath, pajamas, reading, lights out. The reward? Your child settles down, and you get rest.

ASK: What would happen if that habit didn't exist?

*(This deepens appreciation for structure and consistency.)*

### Step 4: Build or Identify a Fathering Habit (5 minutes)

SAY: Identify a habit you already use that helps your fathering or create a new one you want to build. Then identify its three steps: Cue, Routine, and Reward.

*(After he finishes, have him share his habit and its three steps. Help refine a vague idea into specific behavior.)*

### Step 5: Strengthen the Habit (2 minutes)

ASK: What will make your habit easy to repeat?

*(Guide him toward: making the cue obvious, keeping the routine simple, and choosing a meaningful reward.)*

### Step 6: Commit to One Small Action (2 minutes)

SAY: Write down one habit you'll start or continue this week to improve your fathering and then share it with me.