

THE MOMENTS THAT SHAPE FATHERING

Quick Confidence Builds are brief activities that practitioners can use when working with dads in face-to-face or virtual group-based or one-on-one settings. (The group-based version is described first.) These activities help build fathering confidence, a vital factor influencing dads' involvement in their children's lives.

Dads only need 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 with dads face-to-face or a virtual whiteboard or chat when working with them virtually. Estimated times include reflection, discussion, and practitioner feedback. The exact timing will depend on many factors, such as practitioner experience and skill, the size of a group, 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 to learn more about the book released on June 2, 2026!

Quick Confidence Build: A Moment that Shaped My Fathering

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

The Goal: Help dads identify a moment in their recent or distant past that had a profound impact on how they father (or will father) their children.

Why This Matters: There are defining moments in everyone's life that shape their identity and behavior. This is true of fathering. Helping dads identify the defining moments that shaped how they father or will father their children can help them leverage the positive impacts and minimize the negative impacts—and build their confidence in the process.

The Activity (Group-Based)

Step 1: What is Child Development? (4 minutes)

(Write “Moments Shape Us” on a flip chart or whiteboard.)

ASK: What’s a moment—recent or long ago—that helped shape the person you are today?

(Record their responses. If you hear any words, phrases, or meanings that are part of or similar to the following meaning, acknowledge that as you share the meaning.)

SAY: I’ll give you two minutes to write down the moment and how it shaped you. Be brief.

(Give them time. Then have them report back.)

Step 2: The Moments that Shaped My Fathering (10 minutes)

(Divide the dads into three or four groups for this step.)

SAY: Work in your group for the next seven minutes. Have each dad share one or two moments that shaped his fathering and how they shaped it. Be brief when you share. Choose someone to record those details for reporting back to the larger group.

(If any dads are expecting their first child, instruct them to share moments that could potentially shape their fathering.)

(Have the groups report back, sharing each dad’s moments and how those moments shaped his fathering. Listen for positive and negative consequences of those moments for reference in the next step. Because this activity can touch on deeply emotional moments, listen with compassion and without judgement.)

Step 3: Positive and Negative Impacts (3 minutes)

(Write “Positive or Negative?” on the flip chart or whiteboard. Then point out how specific moments shared during Step 2 had a positive or negative impact on fathering.)

ASK: Would anyone mind sharing more about how one of your moments had a positive or negative impact on your fathering?

(Be patient in waiting for responses. No one has to share more than they’re comfortable sharing. For those whose moments had a negative impact, ask whether they mind sharing anything they’ve done to minimize that impact. If anyone says a moment had both positive and negative impacts, acknowledge that some moments can affect fathering in more than one way.)

Step 4: The Next Step (6 minutes)

SAY: Getting in touch with the moments that shape your fathering and their impact can help you become a more confident father. You can draw on the positive impacts and minimize the negative ones. Take the next three minutes to write down one of your moments and how it shaped your fathering. If it had a positive impact, write down one way you can draw on that impact, such as creating similar moments for your children that could help them if they have children one day. If it had a negative impact, write down one way you can minimize that impact, such as doing all you can to ensure your children don’t have the same or a similar moment.

(Give them time. Then have as many share what they wrote as you have the time.)

SAY: Add one more thing to what you wrote down. If there's anyone who can help you follow through on what you'll do in response to the impact of your moment, write down who that person is, when you'll ask for their help, and exactly how you'll ask for it. Keep your plan brief.

The Activity (One-on-One)

Step 1: A Moment that Shaped Me (2 minutes)

(Write "Moments Shape Us" on a flip chart or whiteboard.)

ASK: What's a moment—recent or long ago—that that helped shape the person you are today?

SAY: I'll give you two minutes to write down the moment and how it shaped you. Be brief. Then share what you wrote with me.

Step 2: The Moments that Shaped My Fathering (5 minutes)

SAY: Take the next four minutes to write down one or two moments that shaped your fathering and how they shaped it. Be brief. Then share what you wrote down with me.

(If he's expecting his first child, instruct him to share moments that could potentially shape his fathering.)

(Listen for positive and negative consequences of those moments for reference in the next step. Because this activity can touch on deeply emotional moments, listen with compassion and without judgement.)

Step 3: Positive and Negative Impacts (2 minutes)

(Write "Positive or Negative?" on the flip chart or whiteboard. Then point out how specific moments shared during Step 2 had a positive or negative impact on his fathering.)

ASK: Would you mind sharing more about how one of your moments had a positive or negative impact on your fathering?

(Be patient in waiting for his response. He doesn't need to share more than he's comfortable sharing. If he shared a moment that had a negative impact, ask whether he minds sharing anything he's done to minimize that impact. If he says a moment had both positive and negative impacts, acknowledge that some moments can affect fathering in more than one way.)

Step 4: The Next Step (5 minutes)

SAY: Getting in touch with the moments that shape your fathering and their impact can help you become a more confident father. You can draw on the positive impacts and minimize the negative ones. Take the next three minutes to write down one of your moments and how it shaped your fathering. If it had a positive impact, write down one way you can draw on that impact, such as creating similar moments for your children that could help them if they have children one day. If it had a negative impact, write down one way you can minimize that impact, such as doing all you can to ensure your children don't have the same or a similar moment. Then share what you wrote down with me.

SAY: Add one more thing to what you wrote down. If there's anyone who can help you follow through on what you'll do in response to the impact of your moment, write down who that person is, when you'll ask for their help, and exactly how you'll ask for it. Keep your plan brief.