

Fathers, let's think of the kids

This is a strange and stressful period that we are living through, and although we have been relatively lucky in Aotearoa and in the Pacific Islands compared to many other parts of the world, many of our families are struggling during this global pandemic - with loss of income, cut off from or worry about relatives overseas, and even just coping with the fear of Covid-19 itself.

Given this current situation, how as fathers can we do the best for our families, and particularly our children, through all of this?

Research from the Pacific Islands Families Study at AUT tells us about one thing that is crucial: We need to spend quality time with our children and be involved in their lives.

Researchers found that young Pacific children exhibit and develop more positive behaviours and attitudes when they have involved fathers.

This research was the topic of the **Kiribati Language Week instalment** of AUT's Pacific language video series for 2020.

At 6-years-old, behavioural differences were examined amongst children in the PIF Study.

Researchers observed most fathers in the study were actively involved in their kids' lives, and these children were found less likely to have emotional difficulty and to exhibit aggression.

With the world in turmoil it could be easy to forget what for many of us is common sense; but this research reminds us that taking an interest in our children is important, no matter what's happening in the world.

Whether this is simply taking care of them, being engaged with sports and extra-curricular activities or helping them with their homework. Every action counts.

It can be hard to find the time to do this in a world that demands so much of us, let alone find time to connect face to face with our children when our digital lives are so demanding, but the benefits are huge - not just for them but for us too as dads.

For example, our research also found that Pacific fathers who were



involved with their children were themselves more likely to make healthy choices as role models for their kids – such as, giving up or reducing their smoking or alcohol intake.

And for those families who don't have a dad in the home for whatever reason, don't despair.

What's most important is that children have a father-figure or role-model involved in their lives, someone for them to look up to and trust.

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