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Fathering & the transition to
parenthood.

The Sydney



Gazette, and

N E W S O U T H W A L E S A D V E R T I S E R :

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

VOLUME THE THIRTEENTH.]

SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 1815.

[NUMBER 587.]

Communications which may appear in the SYDNEY GAZETTE, and

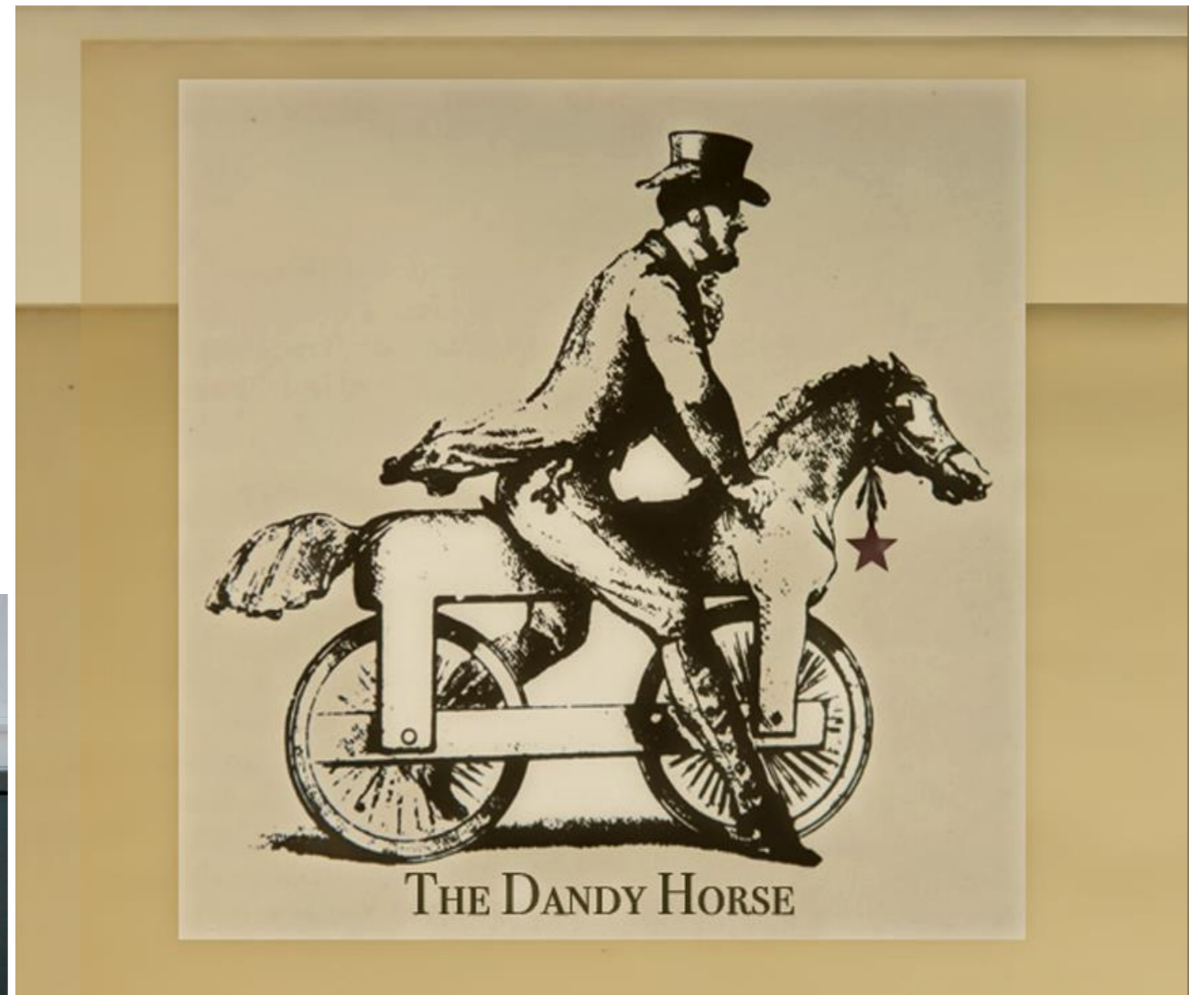
WINDSOR HORSE MILL.—L. May begs to acquaint the Inhabitants of Windsor and its Vicinity, that his Mill in the Town of Windsor is complete, and now at work. He has the pleasure to state, that from the very approved construction and power of the Machinery the best Flour will be produced.—Every attention will be paid to prevent delays; and Settlers or others arriving with Grain by water, will be assisted with Horses and Carts to convey it to and from the Mill and Wharf.

MARCH 1815

27 YEARS AFTER
FIRST FLEET

25 AFTER SECOND
FLEET

The Dandy Horse Christopher May Windsor 1836



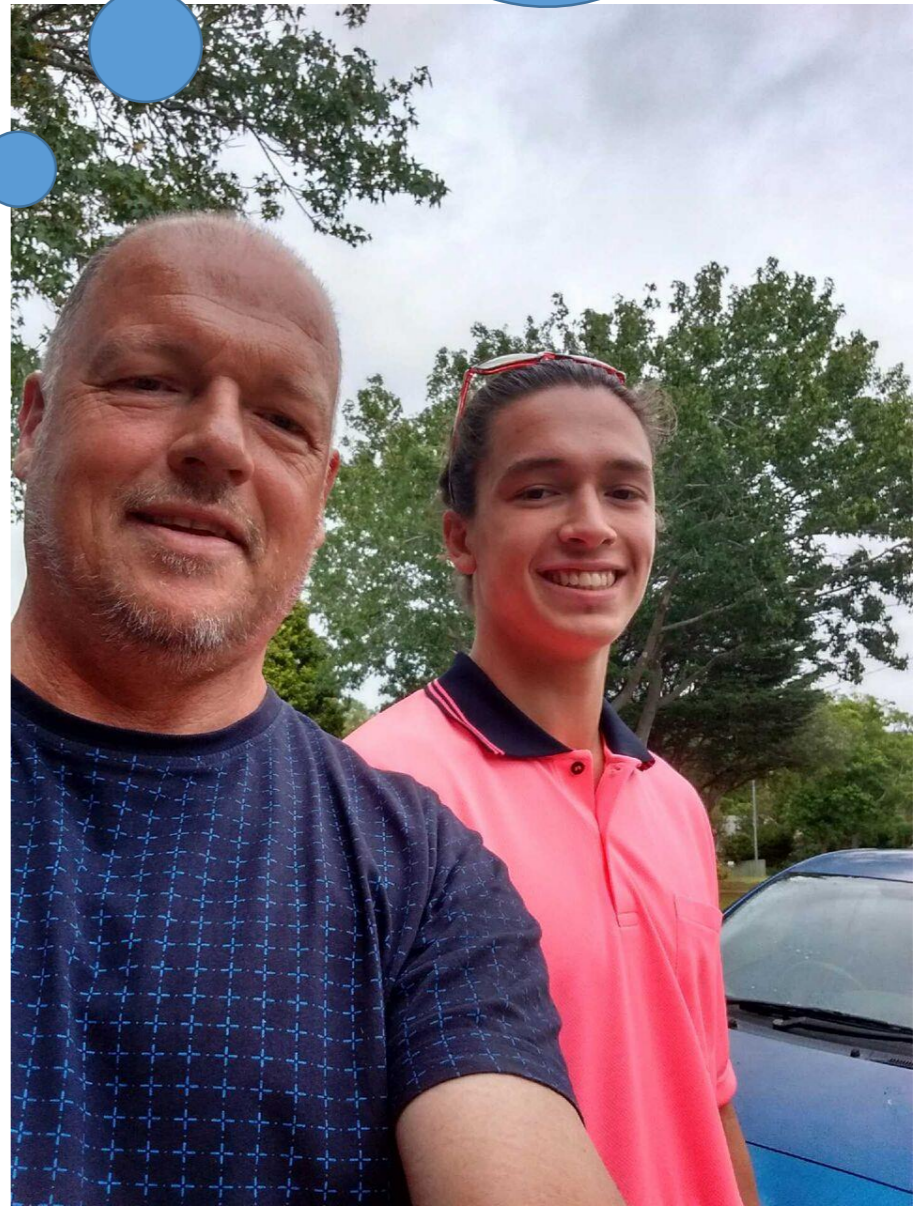
48 YEARS AFTER THE FIRST FLEET

23 YEARS AFTER OPENING FLOUR MILL



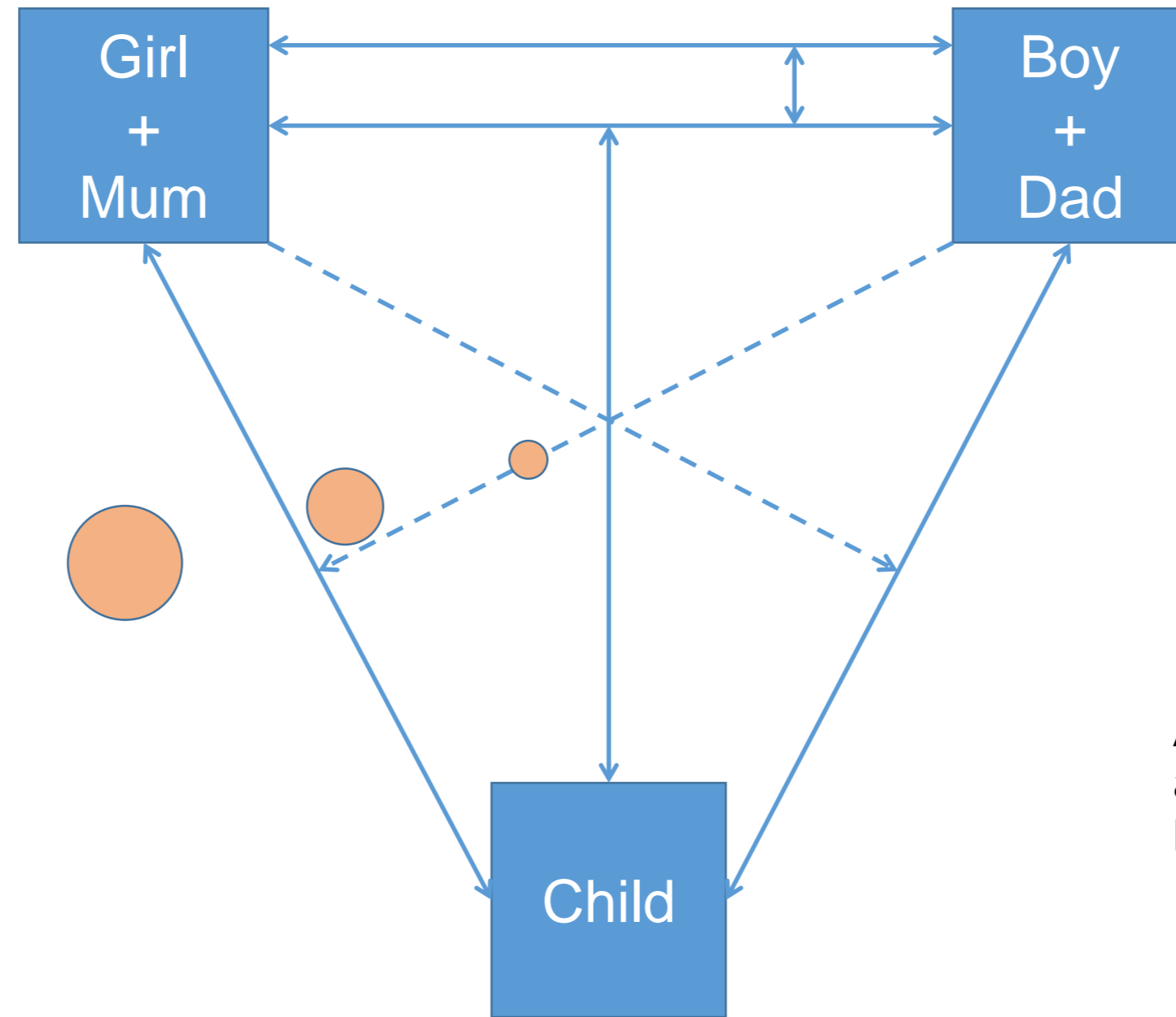
Purpose

Development
Joy
Loss



A transformational Life Project

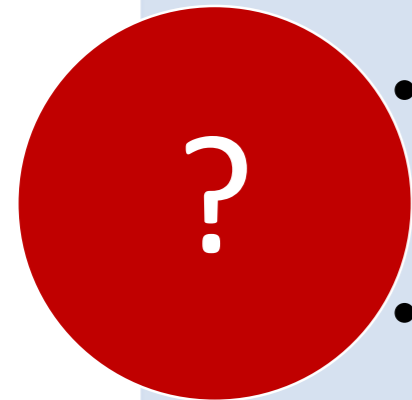
Families negotiate this on their own terms.



Adapted from Pruett & Pruett 2009 and Frescarolo & Favez, 2014

The Parenting Journey

Major life project



- Do I want kids?
- Does my partner want kids?
- Is it right to have kids?
- Adopt?

Many couples forget to have this discussion

+

- Child/n added to relationship
- Roles and responsibilities accept/grant

A major change

Transformation



- Moral Commitment
- Endurance
- Love & Loss

Most parents end up here.

The transition often experienced differently.

- Mum

- Visceral and immediate.
- Primary carer
 - Source of comfort
- Protector
 - Trust...

- Dad

- Pregnancy
 - ?
- Birth
 - Present
 - Not overwhelmed.
 - Warm, engaged, supportive and stoic.

- After the birth

- Supportive
- Often struggling to connect - “My baby hates me”



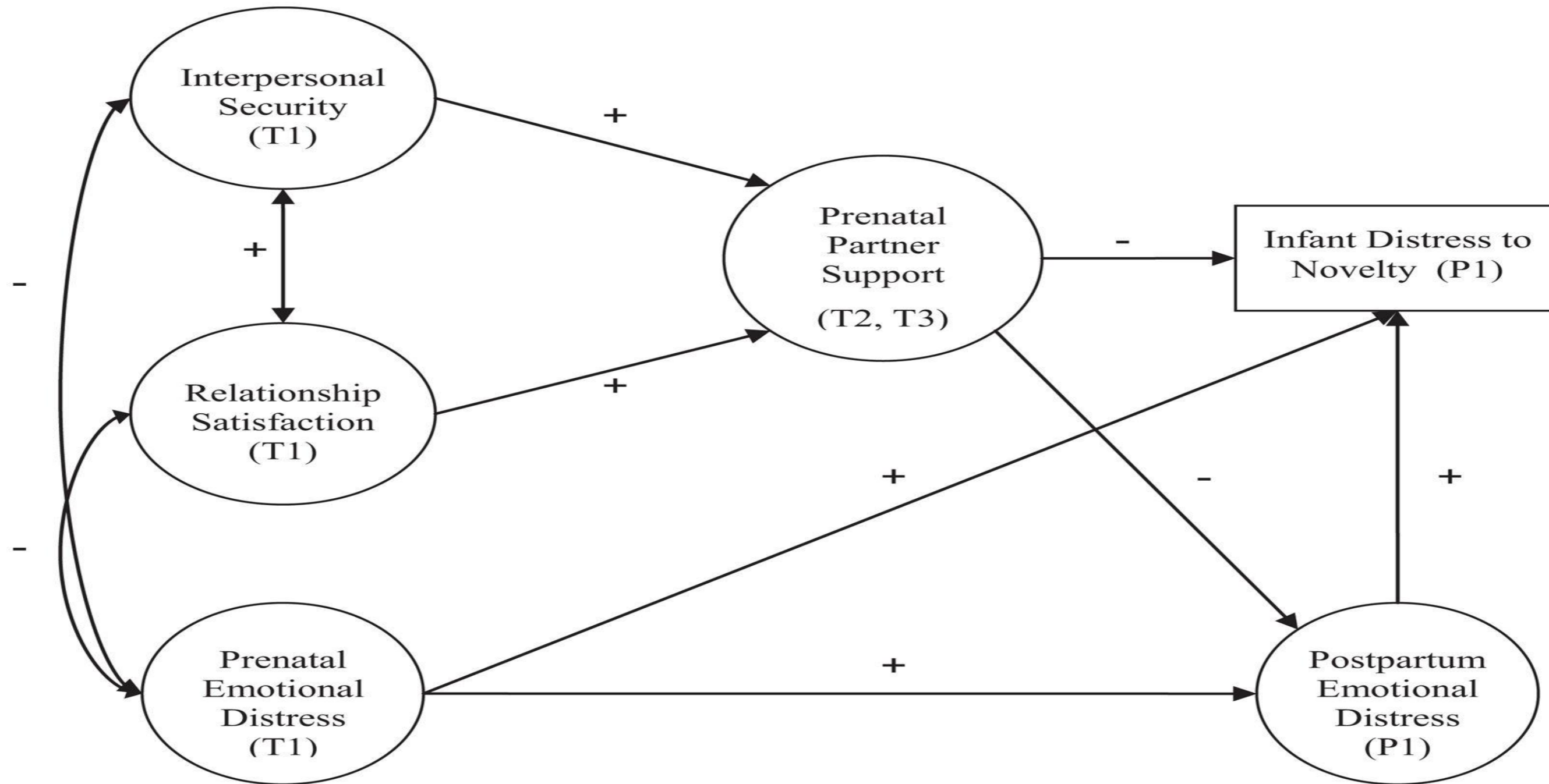
Reproduction can be isolating.

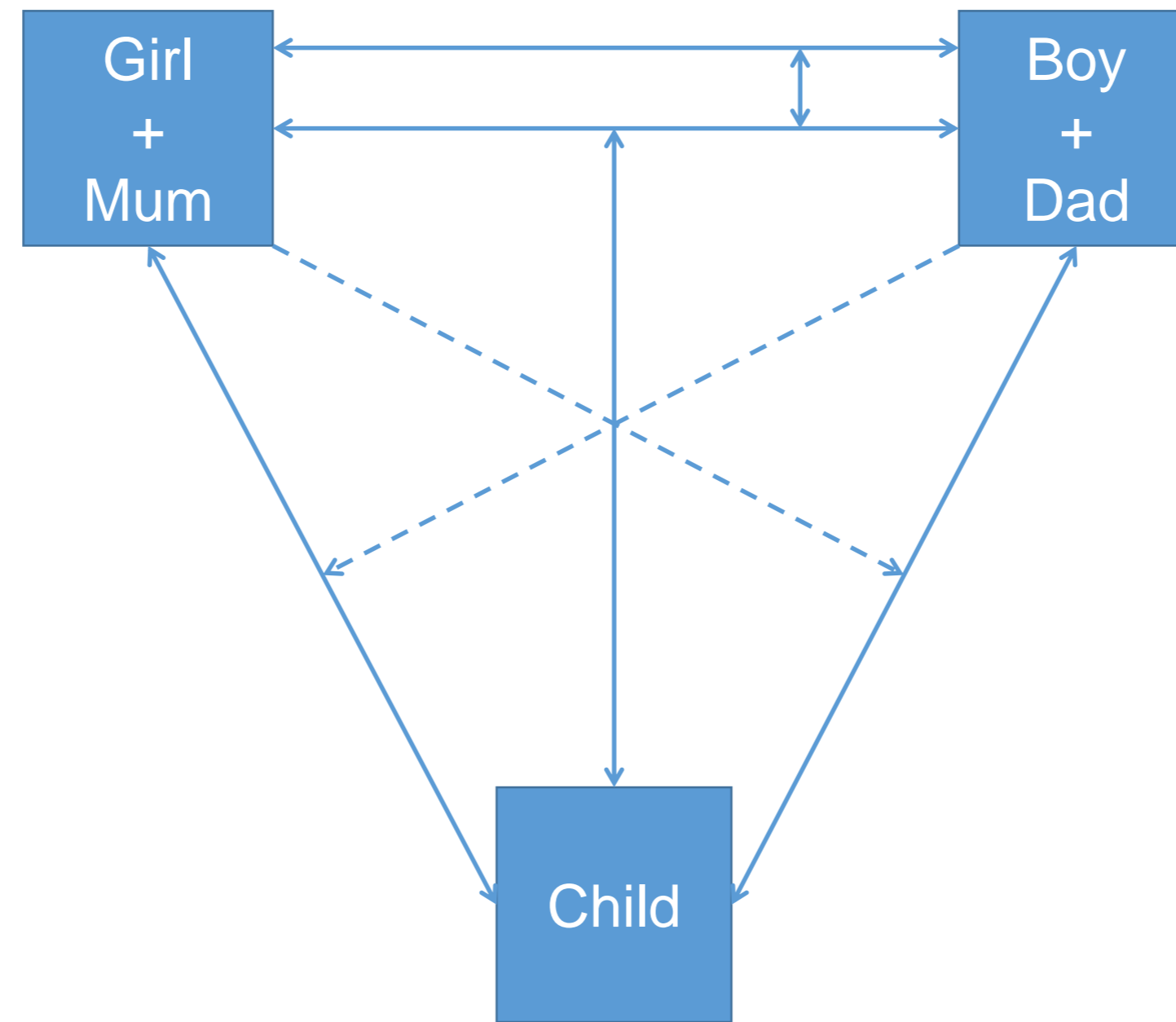
- A new romance
 - Men and women lose 2 friends
 - Apparently we can only manage about 5.
 - A new child costs them more. (Chelew & Dunbar, 2015)
- Grandchildren usually spend more time with their maternal grandparents
 - Maternal aunts and uncles too. (Pollet et al., 2007)
- Mothers are usually more active in the new social space of the family.
- Dads role/s at this time?
 - Role as support person is his link to the family



Support During Pregnancy Predicts Maternal Postnatal well-being

Stapleton et al., 2012





Transformations catalysed by the parenting relationships that mums and dads share with their partner and their child.

Needs to start early.

Facilitators and barriers key to success

Gender Differences

(Spinney, 2011)

Below here the behaviour/trait is not really a useful predictor of gender at all

Sex that scores highest (where applicable)
● Male ● Female ● No real difference

Difference between males and females (standard deviation units)

Trait	Difference between males and females (standard deviation units)
Gender identity eg. How male do you see yourself?	11.0 - 13.2
Sexual orientation eg. How strong is your preference for having sex with males	6.0 - 7.0
Preference for boy's toys	2.1
HEIGHT	2
Preference for girl's toys	1.8
Physical aggression	0.4 - 1.3
Empathy	0.3 - 1.3
Fine motor skills	0.5 - 0.6
Mental rotations	0.3 - 0.9
Assertiveness	0.2 - 0.8
Perceptual speed	0.3 - 0.7
Verbal fluency	0.5
SAT-test maths (US)	0.4
Mathematics concepts	No difference
Computational skills	No difference
SAT-test verbal (US)	No difference

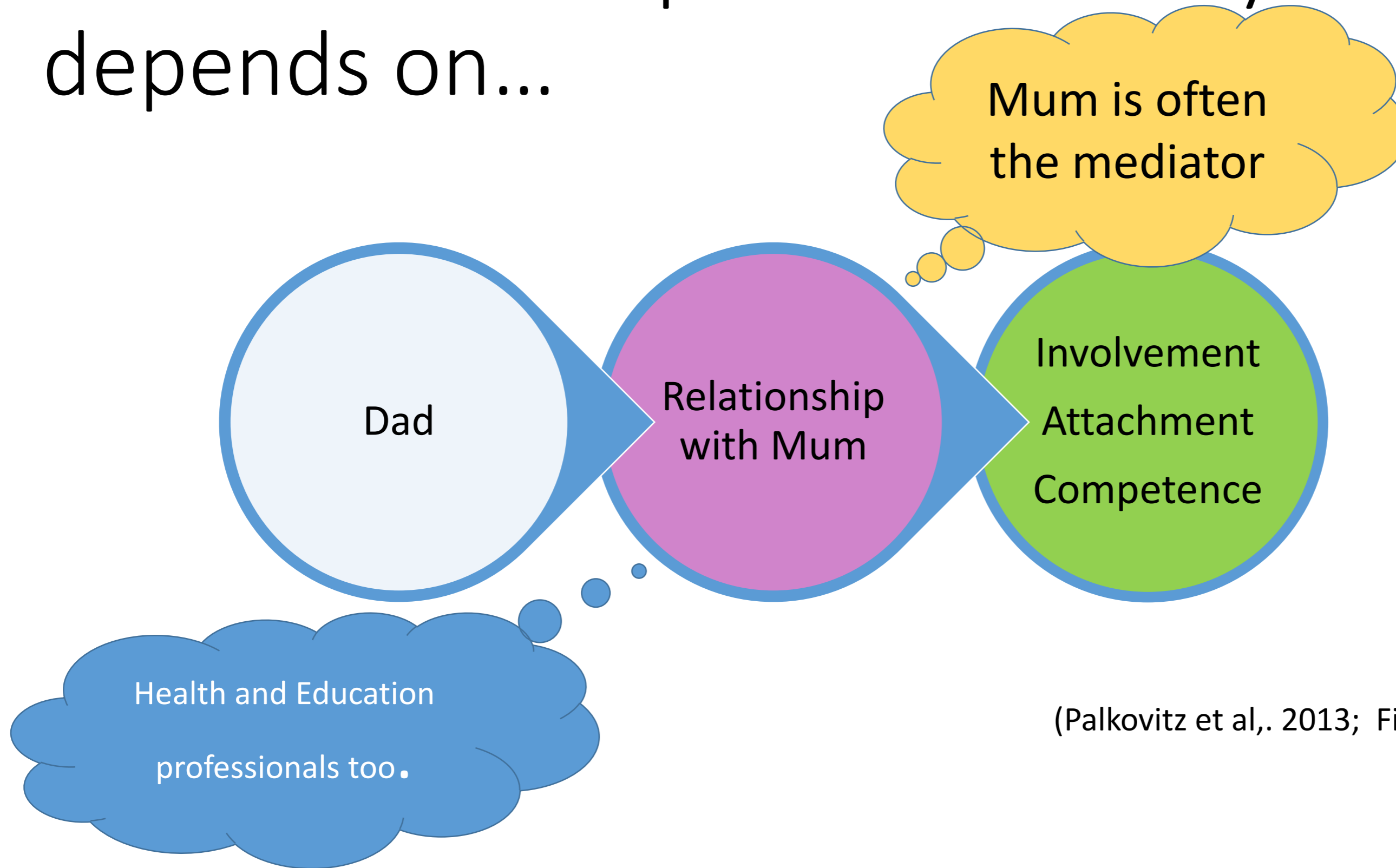
Source: Helwig, 2010

Tim Winton — SMH 11/3/18

"To meet him you wouldn't have thought he was a particularly sensitive guy or anything. But then one day, when I was about 14, I remember coming out to the back shed, and there he was, with a hanky stuffed in his mouth, bawling his eyes out."

It turned out his dad was leaving to work in another station, in another town, on a relief job for six weeks. "He loved us so much and he didn't want to be away from us,"

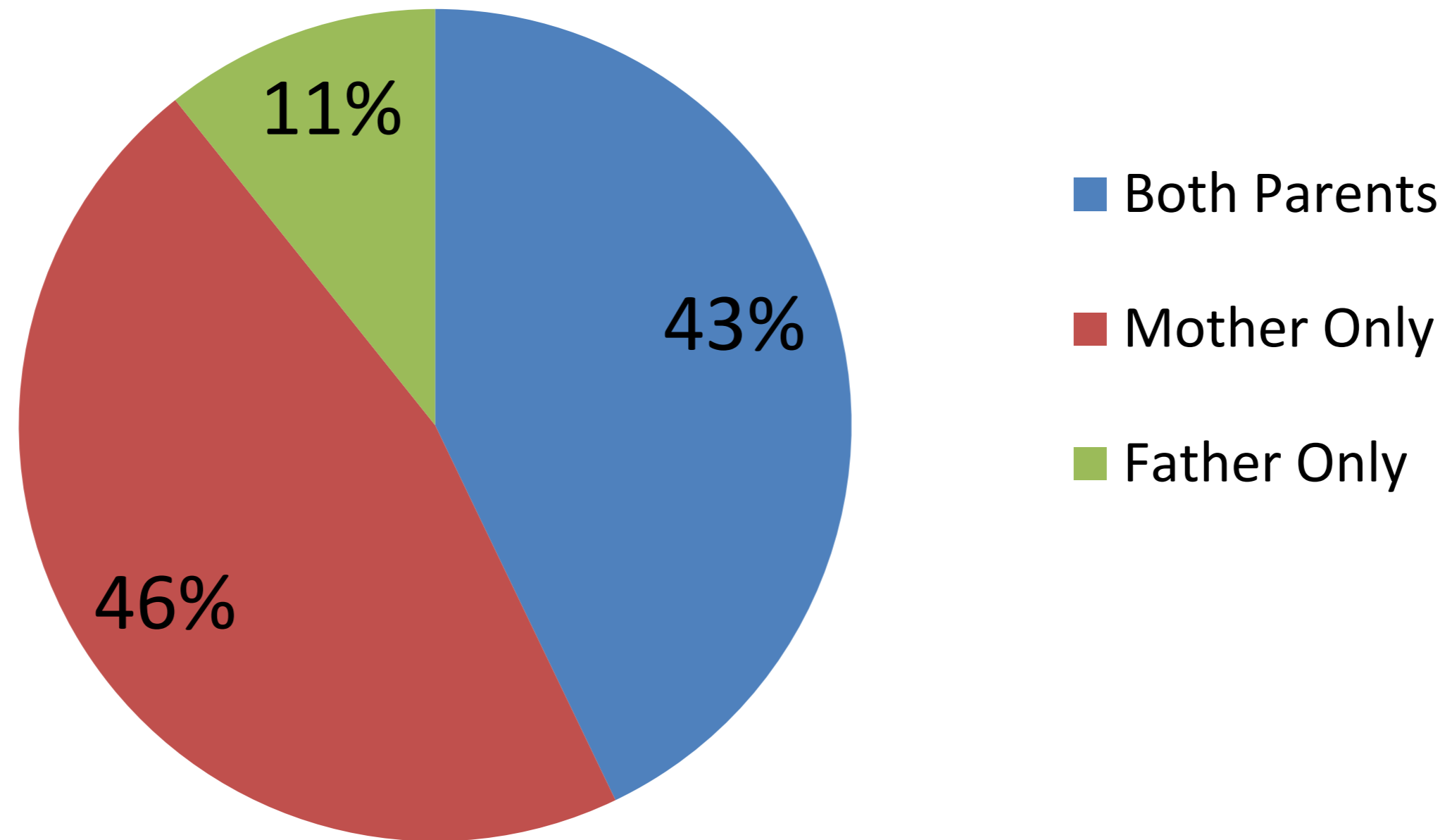
Dads relationship with his family depends on...



(Palkovitz et al., 2013; Fiscarello et al., 2015)

New Dads experience their time with family differently.

(AIFS, 2011)



Time Australian pre school children spend with mum, dad or both.

Importance of the parenting partnership

- Stronger parenting alliance predicts father involvement.

(McBride & Rane. 1998; Volling& Belsky, 1991; Reinks et al., 2011)

- Partnership is main source of support.

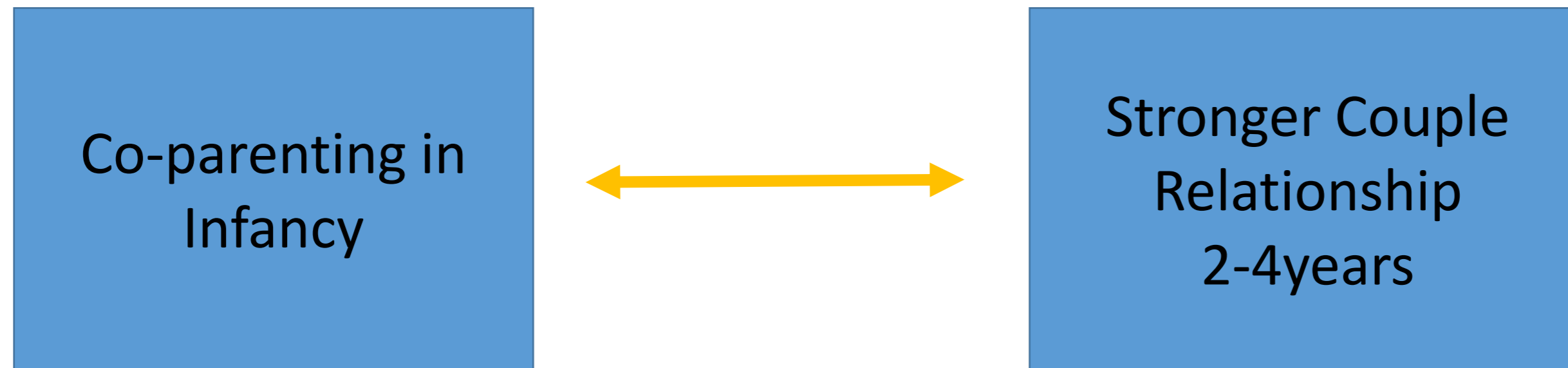
- Dads and Mums.

- Partnership quality = Strongest predictor of Parenting Stress ($N=152$).

- Mums and Dads
- Stronger for Dads

(May et al., 2014)

Early Involvement Influence on Couples.



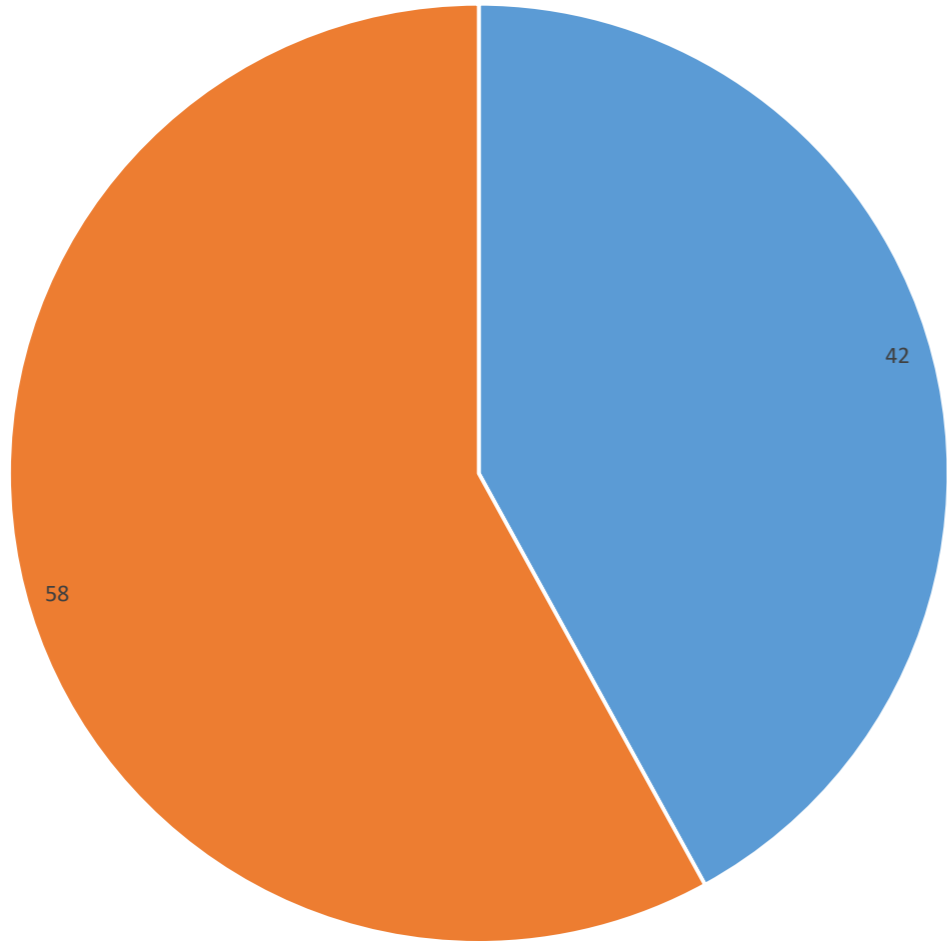
Differences in the fathering experience...

- Time on their own with children
- Often slower to form attachment relationships with their child
- Often more sleep deprived than mothers (Gay et al., 2004)
- Often little to no relationship with services
 - A trend that continues through parenthood.
- Different work expectations (Crabb, 2015 – The Wife Drought)
 - Dad
 - Employer
- Many have to win their partner's trust.



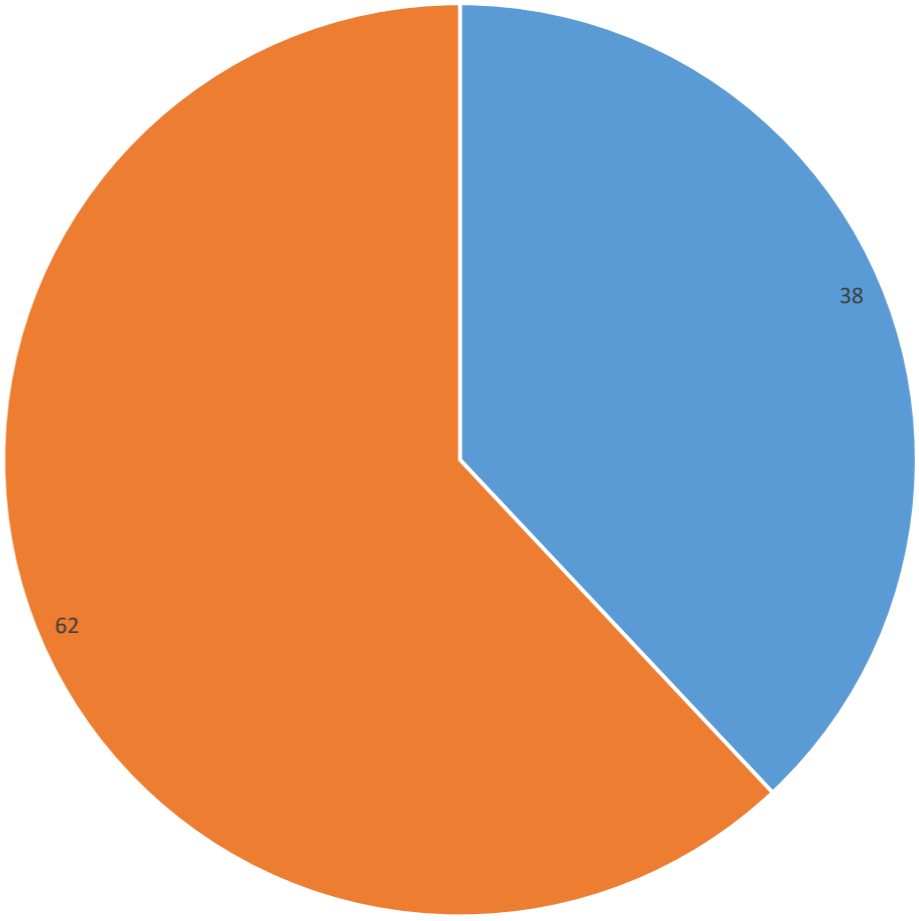
Maternal Postnatal thoughts (Hall & Wittkowski, 2006)

Only I should look after my baby



■ At times think only I should look after my baby ■ Never think this

Trusting other people with my baby



■ I don't trust anybody with my baby ■ Never think this

N=158
Non-
depressed



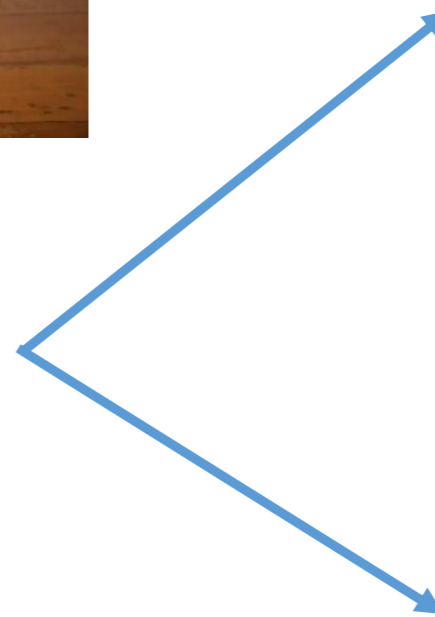
Engaged and Involved Fathering **Transforms Men.**



Nasal
oxytocin



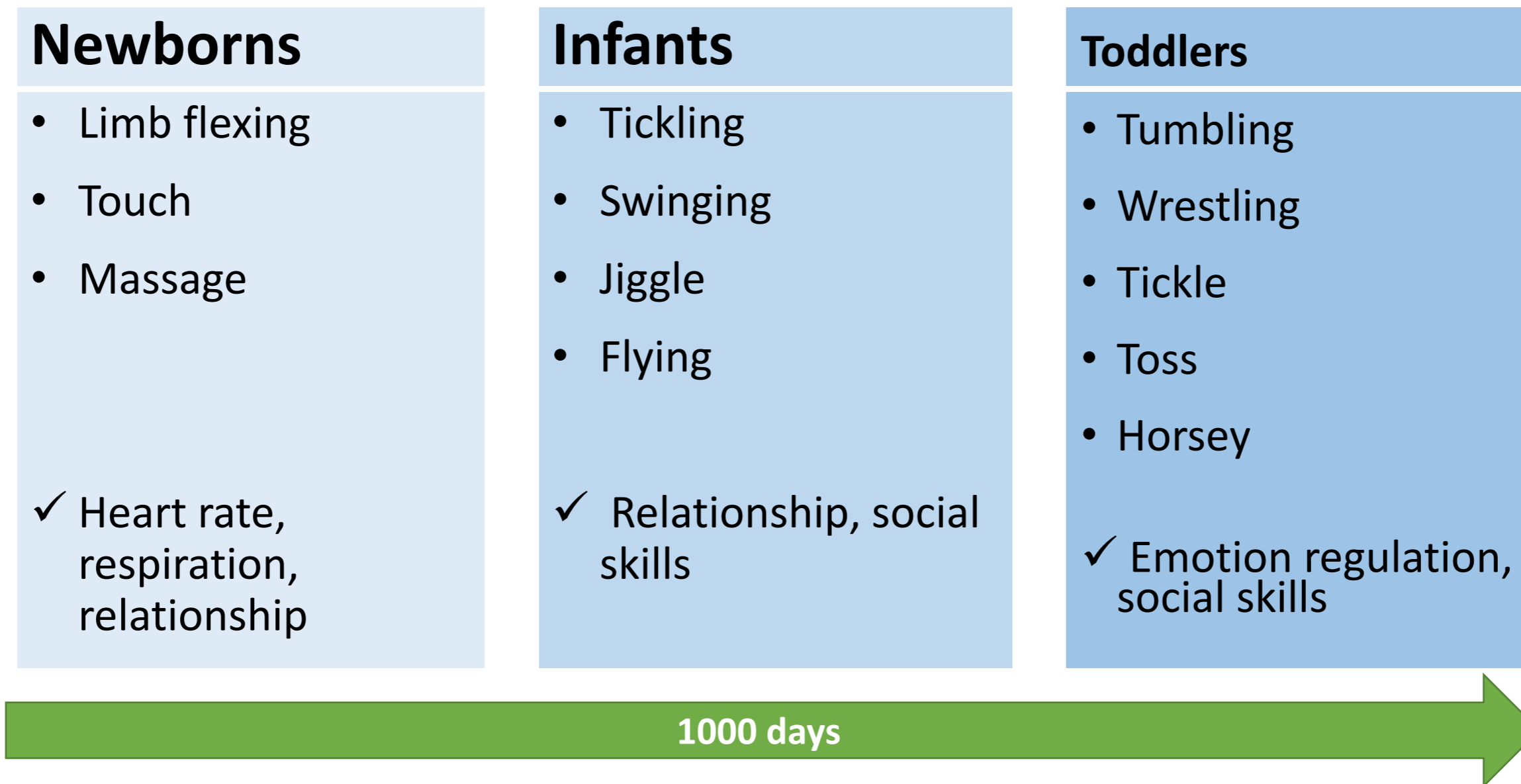
Lower
Testosterone



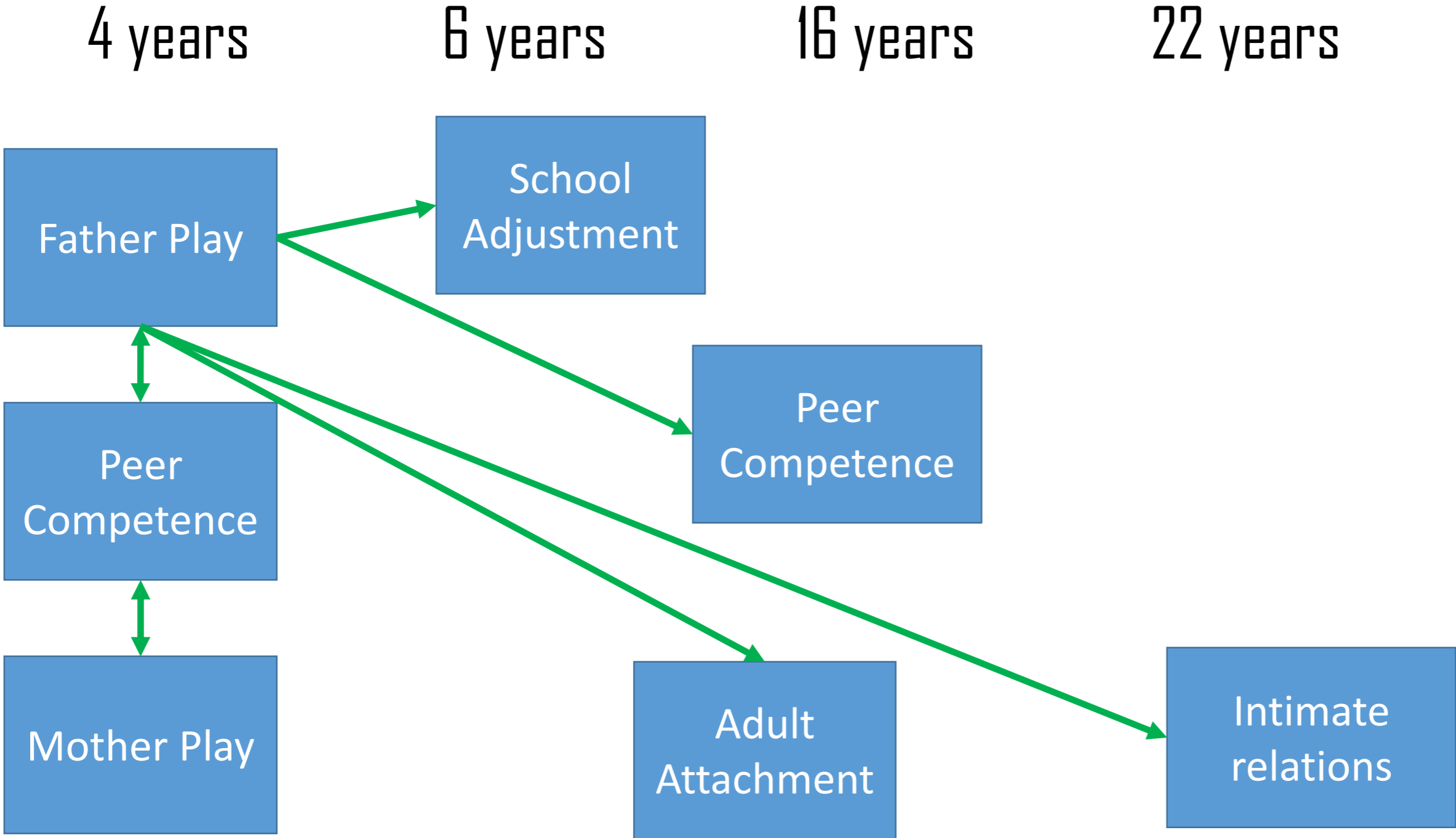
Infant-Father
Positive
Affect – Less Hostile

Synchrony in
Interaction - Exploration

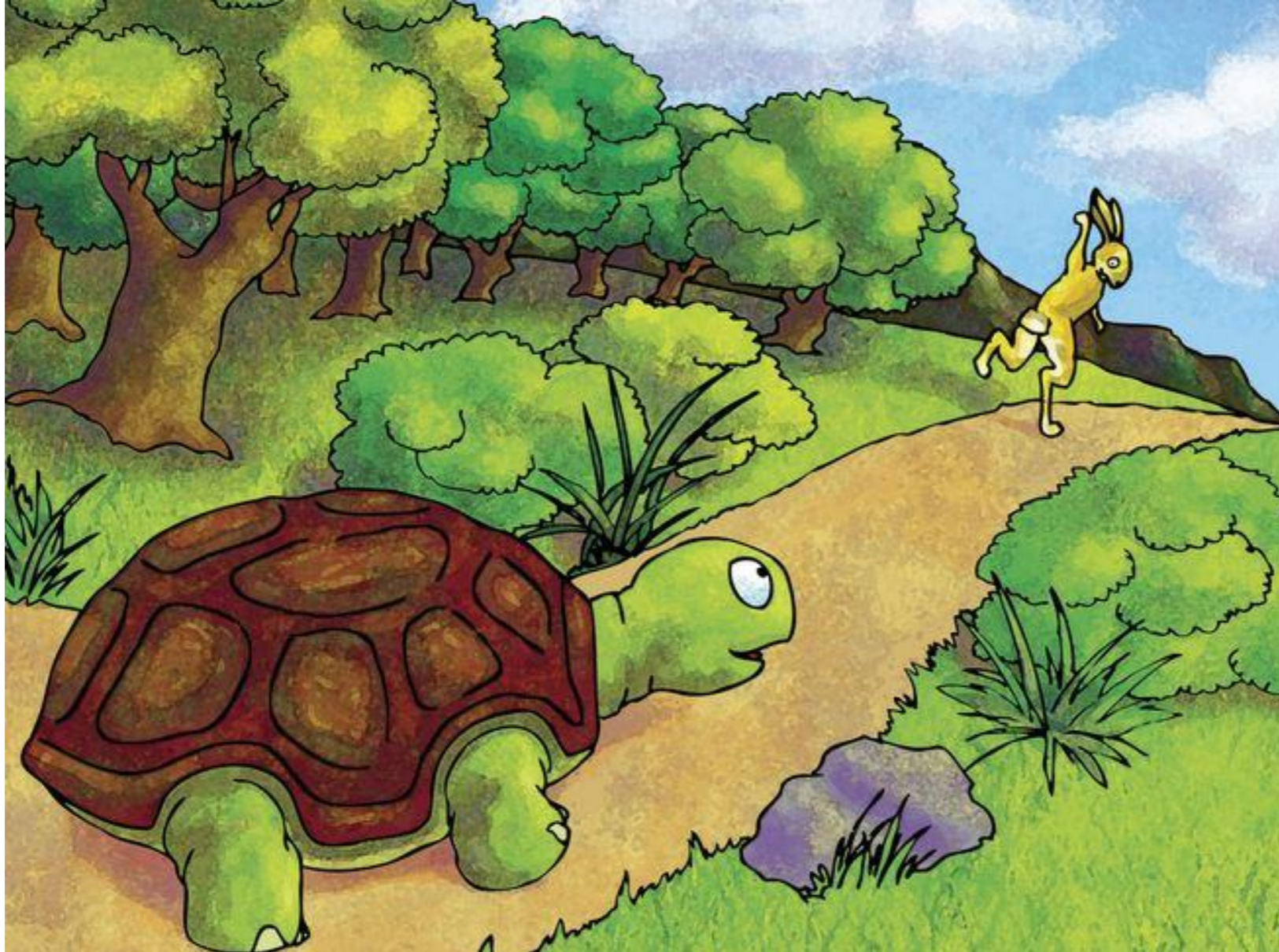
Engaged and Involved Fathering **Transforms** Children.



Engaged and Involved Fathering Transforms Adults.



Things are Changing Rapidly in Families

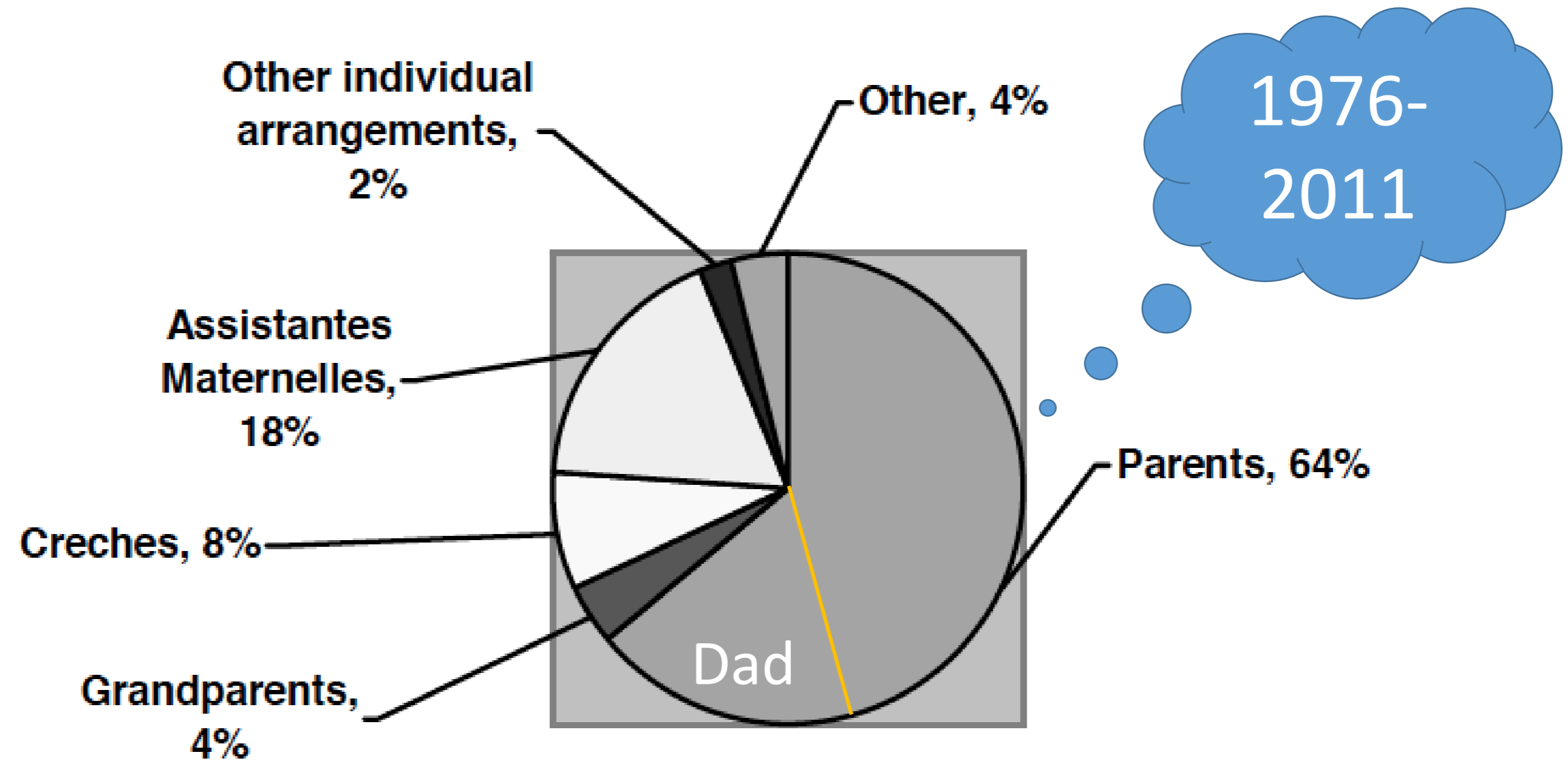


Relationships
with services are
slower to change.

Fig. 1: Primary ECEC arrangement for children under 3

Kan, Sullivan & Gershuny
(2011)

European Data Trends

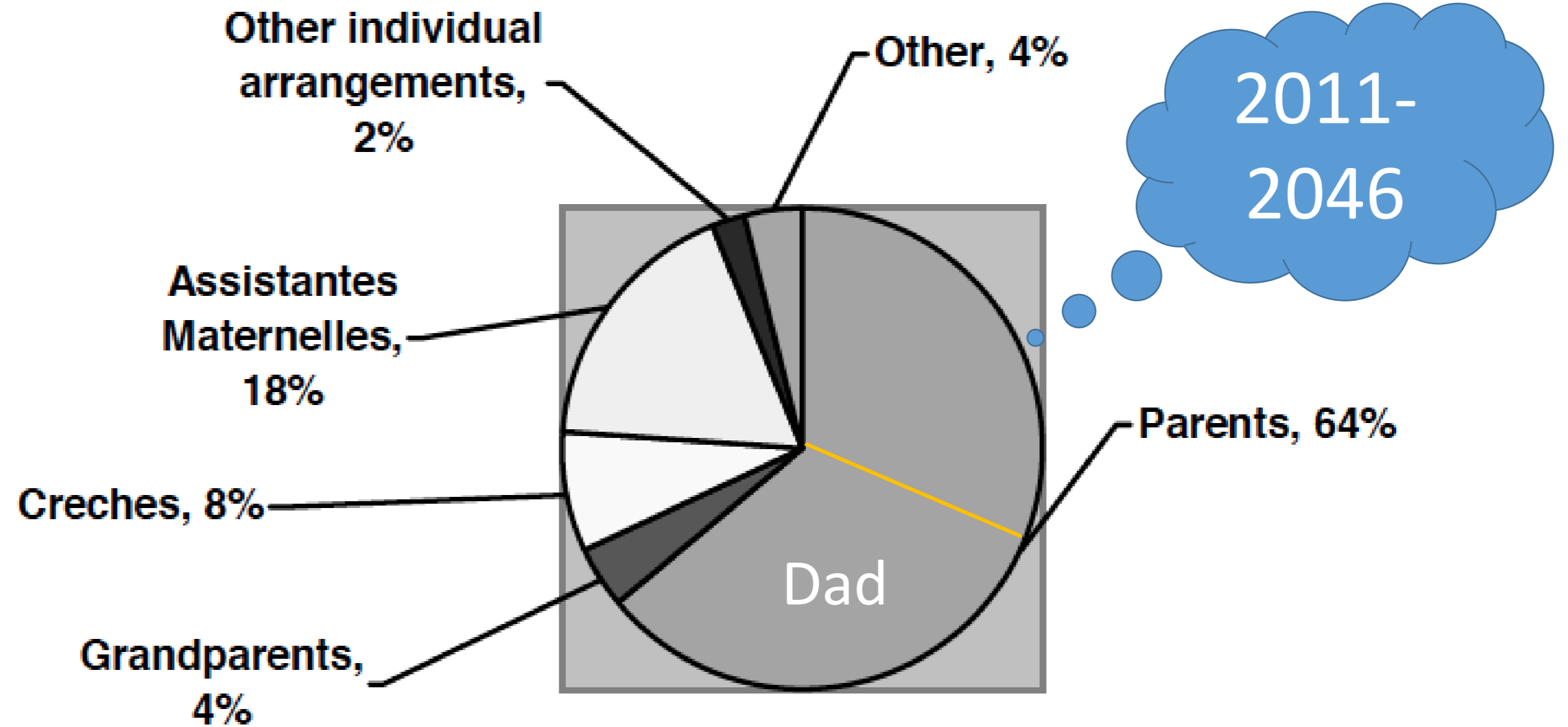


Source: DREES, Enquête Modes de garde et d'accueil des enfants de moins de 7 ans, mai 2002

Fig. 1: Primary ECEC arrangement for children under 3

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Connecting with Families

20 page booklet, 11 adult pics



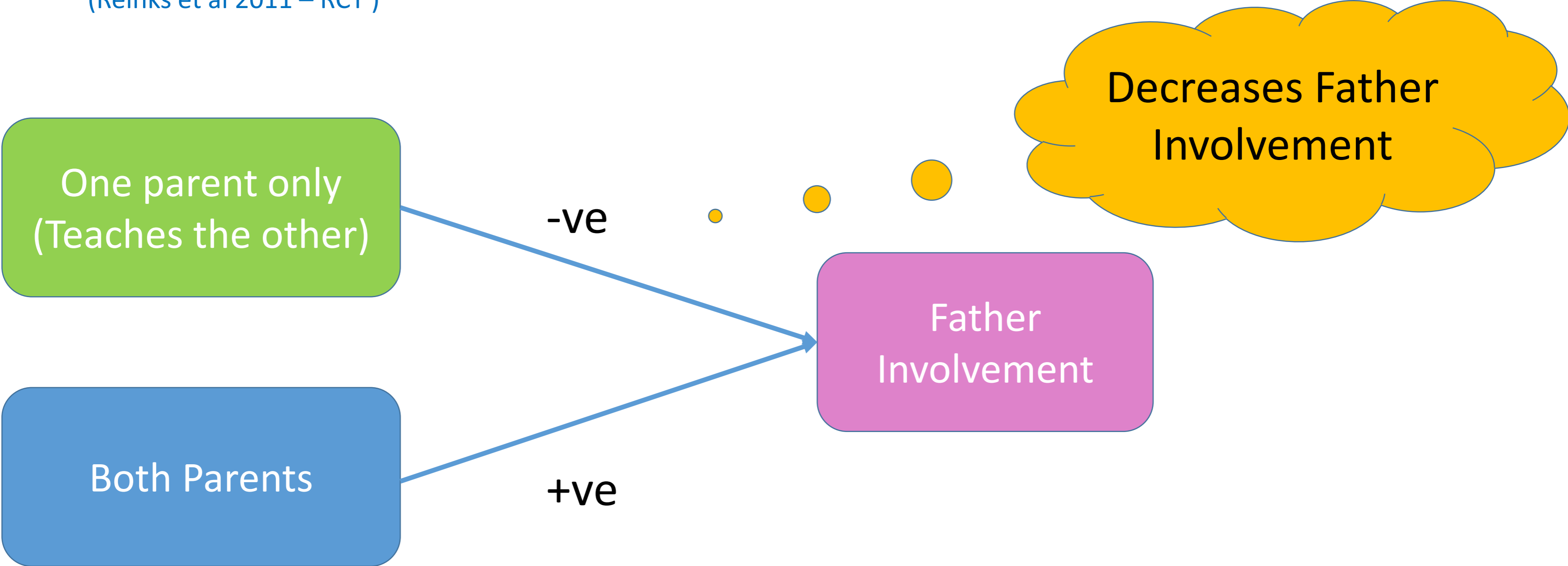
When we say parents...what do we mean?

- Triple P
 - Reductions in **parent** reported levels of dysfunctional parenting
 - Significant effects...**parent** mental health
 - Retaining (attendance) high risk **families**
- *How many dads in this sample?*
- $16/1610 = <1\%$

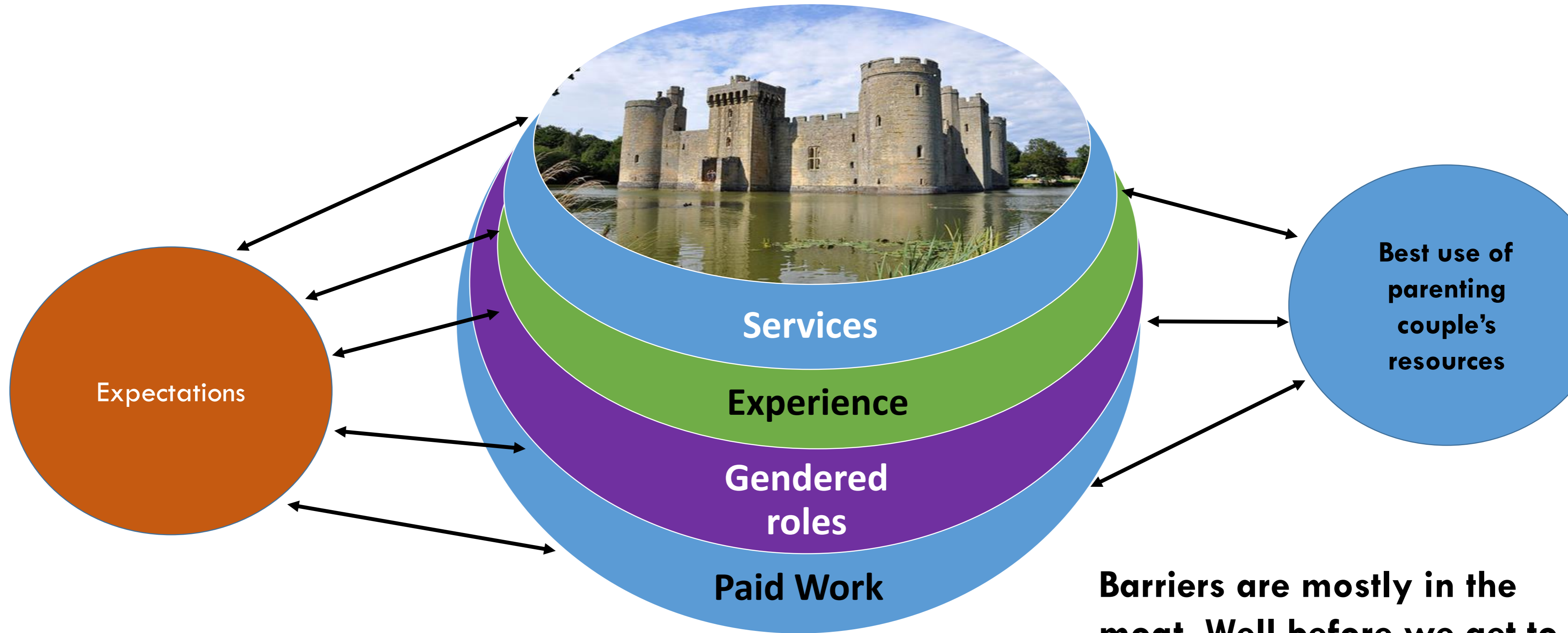
It can be harmful to leave fathers out.

14 hour couple-based program with disadvantaged parents.

(Reinks et al 2011 – RCT)



Hard to get to dads.



Barriers are mostly in the moat. Well before we get to the dad.

What can we do?

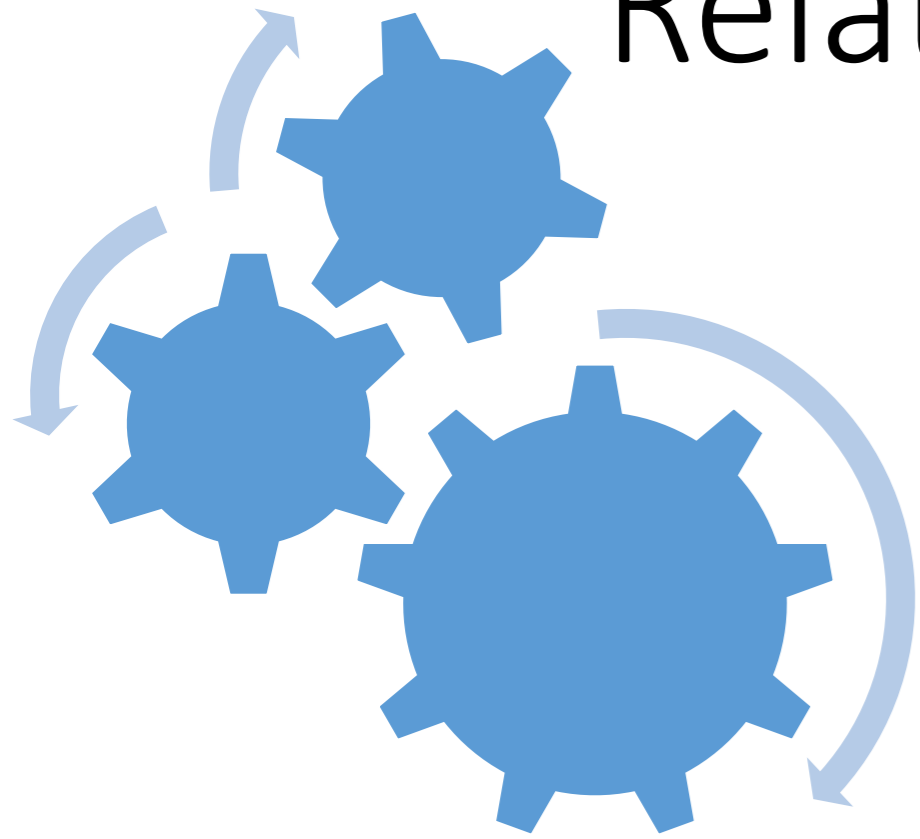
- With Mums or Dads.
- Concentrate on the Key Issues
 - Trust
 - Conflict
 - Support

 - Attachment
 - Parenting Partnership
- Think/talk about competency/self-efficacy. (Bandura, 1977+)
 - Importance of partner validation
 - Importance of early success
- Think about Complementary Relationships
 - Differentiated Roles and Responsibilities
 - The Family as a Business





Relationship Enhancement Model



support contributes to trust
which
enhances relationship satisfaction

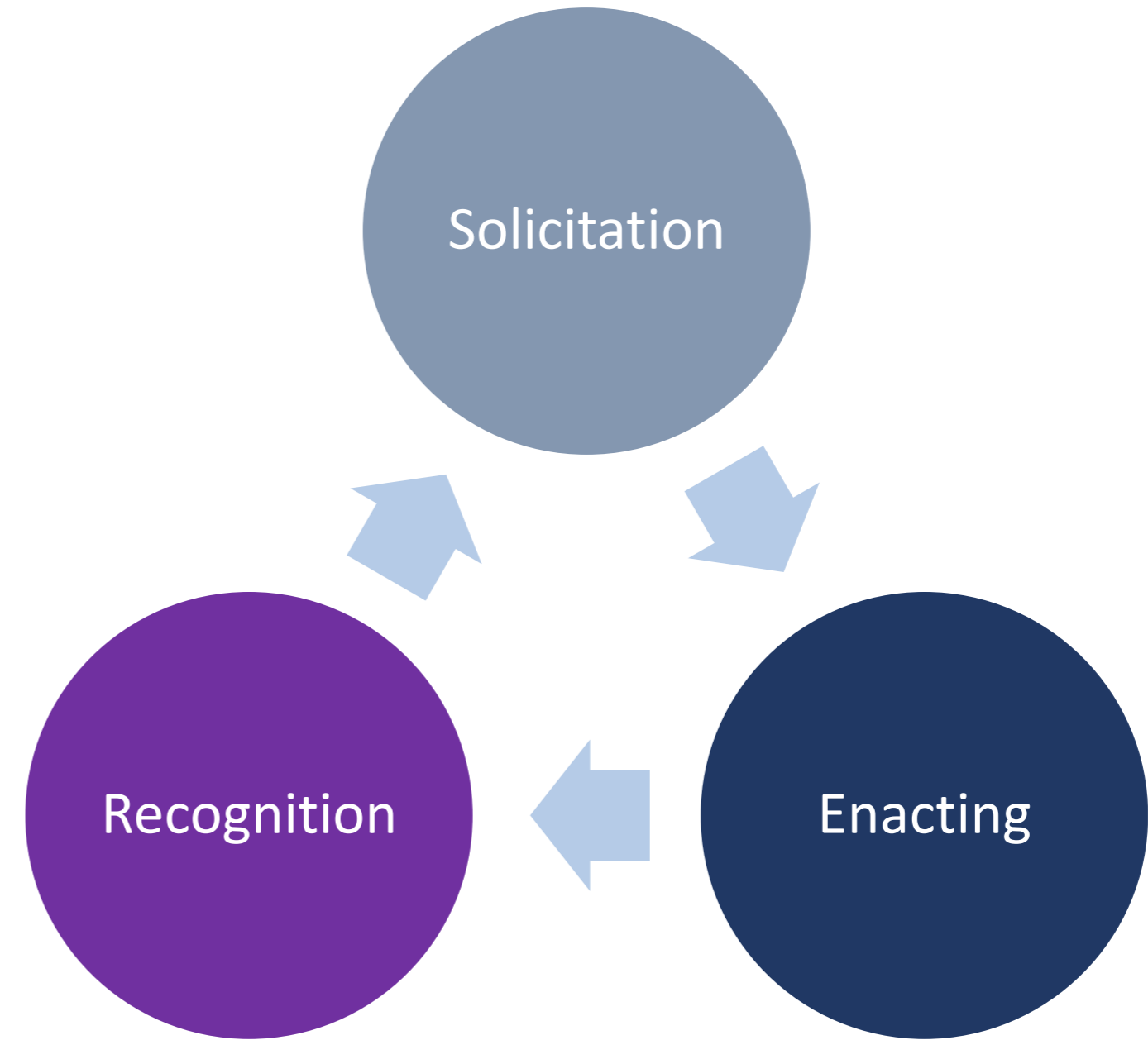
Poor experiences have opposite influence.

(Cutrona et al., 2005)

What comes to mind when we think of Support?



HUMAN TO HUMAN SUPPORT AS A TRANSACTION



- Giving and receiving can be beneficial
- Quality more important than quantity

Support – A Complex Transaction

- We bring our history into our relationship with our partner
 - People with insecure attachment styles are less likely to seek out and/or accept support?
- Do we learn from our relationship with our child?
 - Does this influence our capacity to be warm and sensitive with our partner?
- Early success is important (Bandura, 1977+)

Dads getting it Right

- A birth experience
- Breastfeeding Support
- Winning Trust
 - Putting own needs aside
 - Not complaining
- Love sandwich
 - Instruction
- Plug for Stories



Challenges for the MCHN

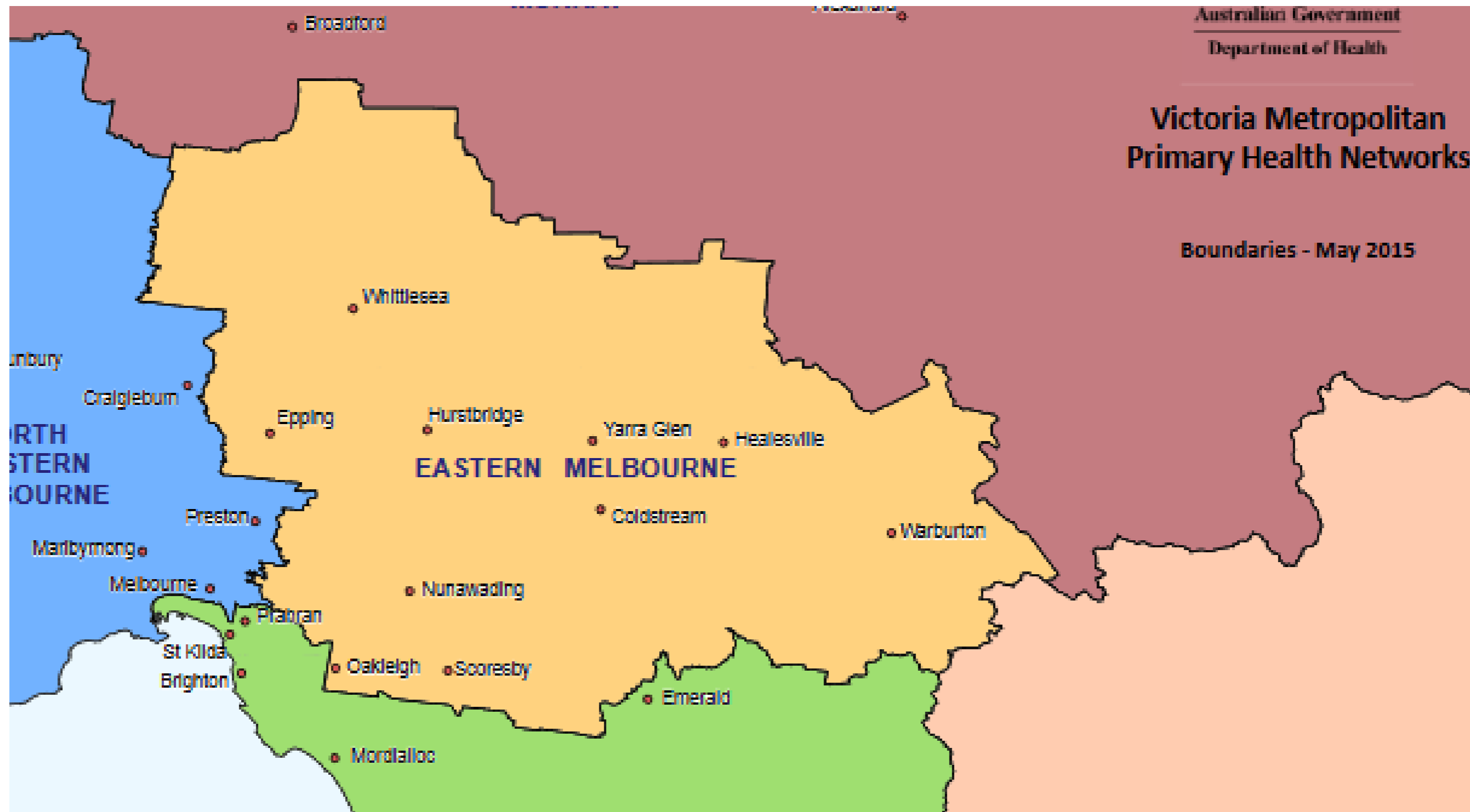
- Helping mothers to better manage support
 - Initiation
 - Feedback
- Fit with family culture.
 - Has to fit with his/her needs and his abilities.
 - Family likely to have strong expectations of MCH role.
- Pushing him could be counterproductive.
 - Nobody likes to be pushed
- Attachment is an important carrot
 - Dads relationship with his child



Summary to this point.

- **Fathering is an important barometer of family functioning**
 - Children live in a network of relationships
 - Men's influence on child outcomes extends over many years
- **Things are rapidly changing in families**
 - Parenting is quickly becoming less mother centric
 - This includes families across the SES spectrum
- **It is important to involve fathers**
 - Including fathers does not disadvantage mothers – it goes the other way.
 - **But you may often struggle to do this directly**

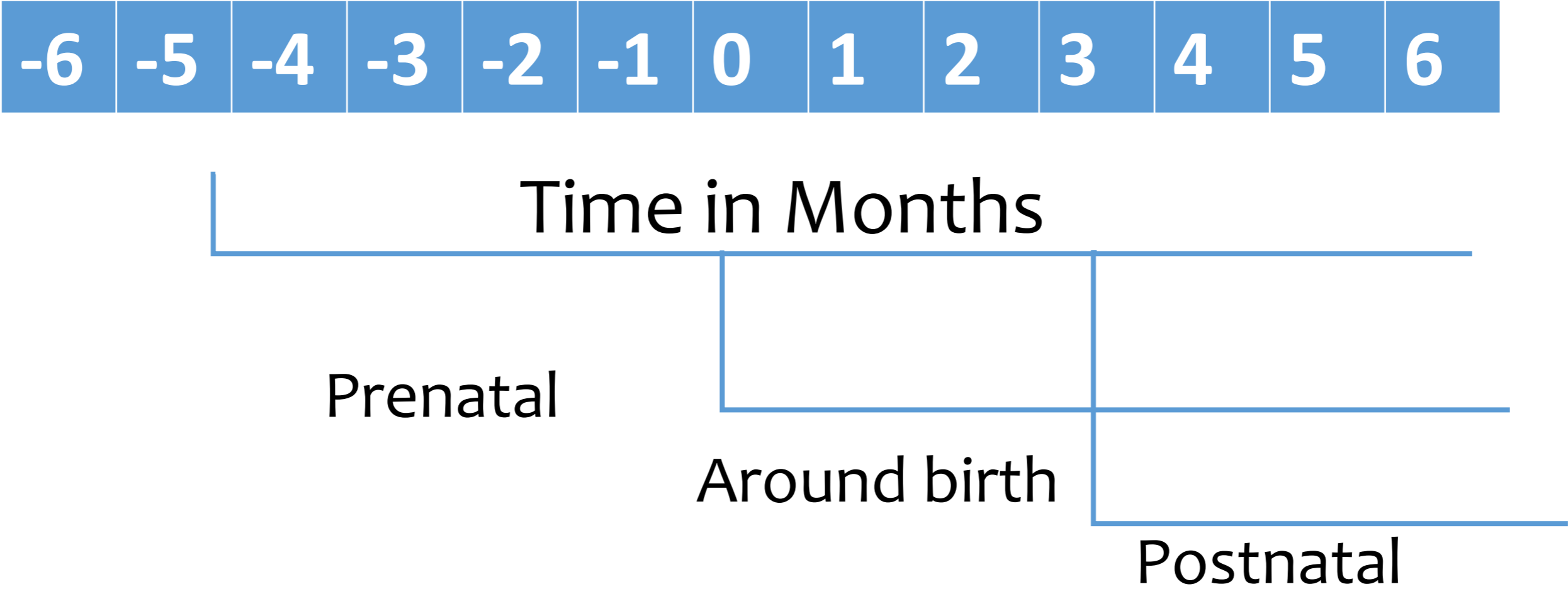
SMS4Families – East Melbourne PHN



SMS4Families works alongside services



Messages fit with Mums &/or Dads journey.



The earlier a parent joins the more info he/she gets

Key Purpose of Messages

- Parent's relationship with...
 - Child
 - Partner
 - Self



Parent-Child Relationship

- *My first poo is going to be black, sticky and look like tar. I'm working on it for you now dad. [*Static Link*]*
- *(or) I'm working on this one for Dad Mum.*



Parenting Partnership

- *Notice something your partner is doing well and tell him/her about it. It is important for him/her to hear this now.*



Example Messages: Self Care

- *Good food, sleep and exercise can really help at this time. If you cant get all of these then try to get what you can. [*Static Link*]*



Messages often address many issues

- *I will cry dad, it's how I communicate. Did you know that my crying will probably peak at about 6 weeks after birth?[*Static Link*]*



Mood Tracker

- How are you coping with...
 - Crying
 - Stress
 - Sleeping
 - Anxiety
 - Attachment
 - Intimacy



Feedback



(M8) “...they sometimes come at that time where I’m really wondering what’s going on, and bang on that message comes.”

(M1) “...he never complained about getting the SMS’s. But he did complain about having to go to the birth classes. And I think that the SMS version is manageable”

(MJ) “There was one that came through about something that dads can do is take the child out for an hour for a walk. And that’ll give them [mum] some space. And I just remember at the time looking at it and feeling validated.”

Feedback - Dads



(D5) '...after getting one of your texts [my wife] went out and got two little books and we sit her here on the lounge with her in the middle and we flick the pages over'

(D3) "Its definitely changed some of the things I do as a person, as a dad and as a husband, So thank you. I have definitely benefited from it."

(D3) "It's easy just to overlook the relationship that you have with your partner and I found that the messages were very helpful in bringing my mind back to that, which is very important."

A dad commented after SMS4dads

- *When other people tell me what to do that doesn't really work for me but when the message came from my baby asking me to read to her, well what could I do?*



SMS4dads Retention

Usually expect paternal participation to start at less than 20% and fall to way below 10% as time goes on.

SMS4dads&mums feasibility = Fathers 92%, mothers 85%

When mum and dad join together = 95%



Key Messages

- Parenting is a transformational journey for mothers and fathers
- Disruption creates opportunity
- An important time for experiences of competence
- A few key issues can guide our work
 - Conflict
 - Trust
 - Support
- The timing and content of SMS4dads/Families is complementary to other services



Acknowledgements

- Richard Fletcher

- Richard is the founder of the Engaging Fathers Project, The Fathers and Families Research Team at the Family Action Centre, and the Chief Investigator on SMS4dads.
 - Richard has contributed knowledge, experience, resources and support to the development of this presentation.

- Jennifer St George

- Jennifer also works with the Fathers and Families Research Team at the FAC.
 - Jennifer has also contributed her knowledge and resources, particularly in the arena of father/child play.

- Charlie Lewis

- Some slides have been adapted to this presentation from Charlie's work