

BECOMING THE BEST FATHER YOU CAN BE

# STUDY GUIDE

**POPS 101**

The Basic Principles of Healthy Fathering

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
Any male can be a father. But are you the best POPS you can be?.....	2
Why You Matter.....	2
Getting Started.....	3
<b>Lesson 1 – Fathers Matter – What it Means to be a POPS</b> .....	4
Importance of Fathers .....	4
It is important to know and use healthy parenting practices.....	5
Reflection Questions:.....	6
Action Steps: .....	6
<b>Lesson 2: Father as Protector</b> .....	7
Father as the Protector .....	7
Father as Protector .....	8
Defining Family Violence.....	8
<b>Lesson 3: Father as Order Keeper</b> .....	11
The story of the Rhino Killers.....	11
Fathers as Order Keepers.....	12
Preventing Community Violence .....	12
<b>Lesson 4: Father as Provider</b> .....	13
<b>Lesson 5: Father as Stabilizer</b> .....	14
Male Nurturance.....	15
Maintaining Stability .....	16
Fathers' Role as Community Stabilizers .....	17
Action Step.....	17
<b>Lesson 6: Congratulations</b> .....	18
Summary - What you Learned .....	18
What's Next?.....	19



## Introduction

Any male can be a father. But are you the best POPS you can be?

POPS 101 is an introduction to healthy fathering principles. POPS is an acronym that stands for Protector, Order keeper, Provider and Stabilizer.

PROTECTORS - You will learn that mature, responsible males play an indispensable part in making homes, neighborhoods and schools safer places for children.

ORDER KEEPERS – You will come to understand how manly influence calms the unruly tendencies of youth. You will gain an appreciation of your importance as parenting partners – whether or not you share a household with your child.

PROVIDERS – You will receive assurances that you are much more than ATM machines; that responsible fathers contribute many resources, as you are able. These include financial, emotional, spiritual, educational, and other valuable assets.

STABILIZERS - You will gain awareness of your value a stabilizer when you are encouraged, empowered, and engaged in your home and neighborhoods.

POPS 101 is a primer that whets the desire of a father, father to be, father figure, or mentor to learn more.



## Why You Matter

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America – one out of three – live without their biological father in the home. Consequently, there is a “father factor” in nearly all

of the societal ills facing America today. Research shows when a child is raised in a father-absent home he or she is affected in the following ways:

- 4 times greater risk of poverty
- 7 times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- More likely to have behavioral problems
- More likely to face abuse and neglect
- 2 time greater risk of infant mortality
- More likely to abuse drugs and alcohol

Research now proves that fatherhood programs improve outcomes and children:

- Perform better in school, both academically and socially
- Have higher self esteem and lower rates of depression
- Less likely to display aggressive or hyperactive behaviors
- Less likely to engage in high risk behaviors (e.g., drugs, truancy), and
- Boys are more likely to become responsible fathers themselves



## Video Supplement

[Watch - Fatherlessness](#)

## Getting Started

Begin with Lesson 1 to begin understanding your importance in the life of your child, family and community.

Thank you for taking the initiative to be a better father and positive standout in society. We need more fathers like you!

At anytime during this course if you have a question please contact me at email [eli@pastoreli.com](mailto:eli@pastoreli.com) or go to [www.pastoreli.com](http://www.pastoreli.com) for more information and resources.

Let's get started!

## Lesson 1 – Fathers Matter – What it Means to be a POPS

Underlying many of society's most pressing challenges today is the lack of involvement by fathers in their children's lives. The role of the father is distinctly different from that of the mother, but is also important.

**Embracing fathers' significance in the lives of young people is something all society benefits from.**



**Fathers' positive engagement can improve a child's well being whether they live full-time with their children or not.**

### Importance of Fathers

**Fatherhood is a complex and evolving concept, but there are some things we know for sure about its value for kids:**

Fathers make important contributions to their kids' development - and do so in ways that are different from mother's contributions.

- Fathers are more likely to use advanced language around young kids, which promotes vocabulary development.
- Fathers also tend to prioritize rough-and-tumble play, letting kids explore, and playing more than caretaking, which establish independence and positive social skills.
- Positive father engagement has been linked to better outcomes on measures of child well-being, such as cognitive development, educational achievement, self-esteem, and pro-social behavior.

Fathers today are increasingly involved in their children's lives, especially compared to earlier generations.

- Fatherhood and fathering is central to many men's lives, though these experiences are increasingly diverse.
- Today's U.S. fathers take care of their children more than most fathers did a generation ago.
- Father-child interactions range from soothing infants and toddlers to participating in activities that stimulate their children's development, such as reading and telling stories and helping with homework.
- They also provide emotional support and guidance to their adolescents.



**Video Supplement** [Watch "One Daughter's Essay - Growing Up without a Dad"](#)

It is important to know and use healthy parenting practices

**A dad engaged in healthy fathering:**

1. **Reads, talks and sings to his child daily, beginning day one and supports his child's mother in breastfeeding and changing diapers**
2. **Nurtures and financially supports his child**
3. **Eats well, exercises and teaches his child nutrition and healthy activities**
4. **Talks to his child about healthy sexuality, appropriate touch and healthy relationships**
5. **Promotes and role models nonviolence and respect for others**
6. **Knows his child's friends and activities**
7. **Listens to his child**
8. **Cooperatively parents with his child's mother and other caregivers**
9. **Nurtures his own spiritual health and supports his child's search for spiritual guidance and meaning**
10. **Is actively involved in his child's education which can include;**
  - Supports homework completion
  - Sets up homework routine and doesn't hover during homework time
  - Reviews good study habits and focuses on healthy habits
  - Figures out what the sticking point is and communicates with the teacher

### Reflection Questions:

1. Why is it important for a father to be present and participating in parenting?
2. What healthy parenting practices do you need to work harder on?

### Action Steps:

1. Talk with and read to your child **EVERY DAY**. Start Today!
2. Download the attached "10 Healthy Parenting Practices" and refer to it daily.



[Video Supplement](#)   [Watch: "What Does it Mean to Be a Dad?" - The Fatherhood Project](#)

*References: Healthy Parenting Practices is adapted from "What is a Healthy Father," by Healthy Fathering Collaborative of Greater Cleveland.*

[https://www.neofathering.net/healthy\\_father.asp](https://www.neofathering.net/healthy_father.asp)



## Lesson 2: Father as Protector

Review from Lesson 1: Which facts impacted you the most concerning the importance of fathers in the life of their child?

What is a POPS?

The acronym stands for:

**P** - Protector **O** - Order taker **P** - Provider **S** - Stabilizers

### Father as the Protector

Mature, responsible males play an indispensable part in making home, neighborhood, and school safe places for children.

### What Masai Warriors Teach Us

*(Adapted by Pat Hoertdoerfer from an excerpt of a speech by Rev. Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill. From REACH February 1999 - <http://archive.uua.org/re/reach/teaching/masai.html>)*



*Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting that passed between Masai warriors was "Kasserian Ingera," one would always say to another. It means, "And how are the children?"*

*It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well-being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, "All the children are well." Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place.*

*That Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles for existence do not preclude proper caring for their young. I wonder if every adult among us, parent and non-parent alike felt an equal weight for the daily care and protection of all the children of the community, in our town, in our state in our country . . .*

*I wonder if we could truly say without any hesitation, "The children are well, yes, all the children are well." What would it be like if the minister began every worship service by asking the question, "And how*



*are the children?' If every town leader had to answer the question at the beginning of every meeting, "And how are the children? Are they well? Wouldn't it be interesting to hear their answers?"*

**How are the children? The children are not well when they experience family and community violence.**

## Father as Protector

The father as Protector helps identify and neutralize all internal and external threats to your child's and family's well being. This includes having regular "safety huddles" about :

1. Chemical, fires, electrical
2. "Stranger Danger"
3. Appropriate touching
4. On-line predators
5. Bullying

**The father's role in promoting safety in the neighborhood.**

- Present and involved fathers reduce the likelihood of danger in the neighborhood
- High-crime neighborhoods are characterized by high concentration of families abandoned by fathers
- Fathers who want their neighborhood to be safe places must commit to being present and vigilant.



## Defining Family Violence

Family violence (also named domestic abuse or domestic violence) is a pattern of behavior which involves violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation.

## **10 Million children are exposed to family violence every year!**

### **Effects of violence**

What are some effects on children of family and/or community violence?

- If hurt by violence, a child may have to cope with physical or medical problems
- A child may also have mental health problems, including PTSD
- Studies have found signs of PTSD in babies and young children

Preventing Family Violence

1. **Learn and use good communication skills**
2. **Learn and use conflict resolution strategies**
3. **Effective Emotional Management**
4. **Be observant, vigilant, and present in the home or neighborhood**
5. **Utilize available community resources and networks.**

Watch for Signs of Bullying

Bullying is defined as:

- Unwanted aggressive behavior
- Observed or perceived power imbalance; and
- Repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition

Two modes of bullying include:

1. Direct - bullying that occurs in the presence of a targeted youth
2. Indirect - bullying not directly communicated to a targeted youth such as spreading rumors

Four types of bullying included broad categories of:

1. Physical, verbal, relational - efforts to harm the reputation or relationships of the targeted youth
2. Damage to property
3. Cyberbullying - involves primarily verbal aggression (e.g., threatening or harassing electronic communications) and relational aggression (e.g., spreading rumors electronically)
4. Cyberbullying can also involve property damage resulting from electronic attacks that lead to the modification, dissemination, damage, or destruction of a youth's privately stored electronic information.

What to do if your child is being bullied at school

Contact the :

- Teacher
- School counselor
- School Principal
- School superintendent
- State Department of Education

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/get-help-now/index.html>

Review

- Violence has no place in the family
- I am my family's protector
- I am my child's protector

Action

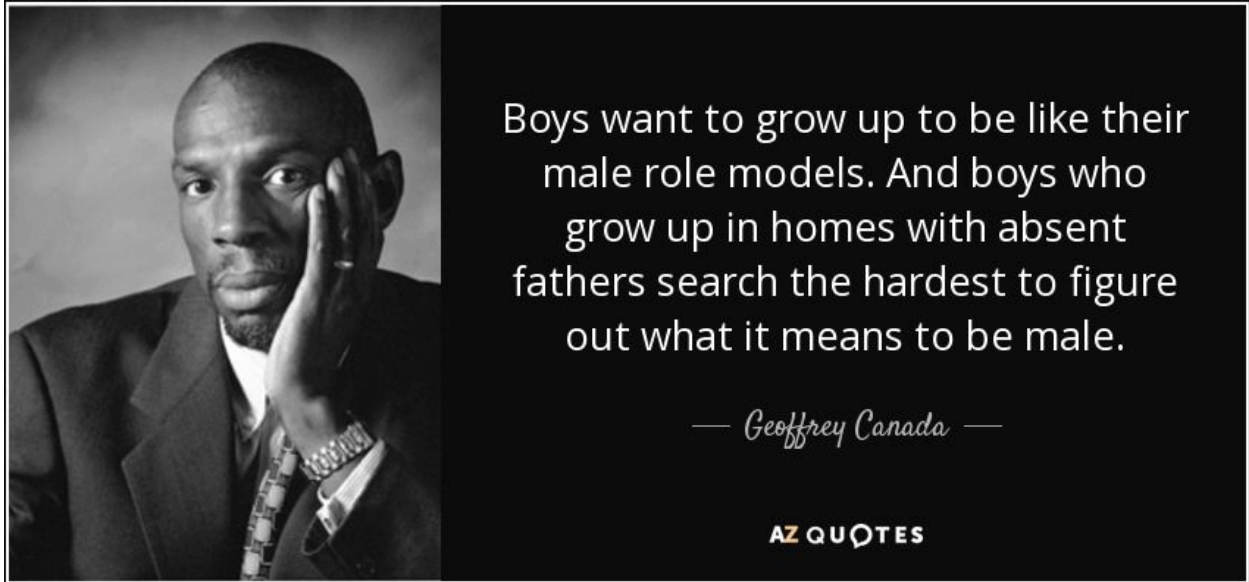
Commit to one thing you will do over the next two months to prevent family violence and to promote the safety of children in the home and school.



[Video Supplement](#) [Watch: "Kids Perspective on Dads" - The Fatherhood Project](#)

## Lesson 3: Father as Order Keeper

Mature, manly influence calms the unruly tendencies of younger males.



The following true story about elephants illustrates a very important fact about human males.

### The story of the Rhino Killers

*It was reported in February 2000 that aggressive young orphaned elephants are reported to have killed 36 rhinos, including rare black ones, in a game park in eastern South Africa. According to conservationists, the young elephants have been provoking confrontation with the rhinos since they were introduced at the game park.*

*The elephants were orphaned when their parents were culled in the early 1990's in an effort to control the elephant population in Kruger National Park. As the elephants matured, so they have become more aggressive. Attacks on rhinos have been growing over the past two years, with 13 killed, including two black rhino, in the last five months of 1999, South African newspapers report.*

*A park ranger said he had witnessed an elephant knocking a rhino over, trampling it and driving a tusk through its chest. Conservation vet Dave Cooper said, "There was a spate of killings, and it was if they were purposeful. The rhinos were ripped to pieces." He said that elephants and rhino routinely clash in nature, "but this sort of behavior, when elephants actively go out and chase rhino, is totally abnormal."*

*Fellow conservationist Tony Conway said similarly aggressive behavior had also been seen in Pilanesberg National Park in Northwest Provicne - another home for Kruger Park orphaned elephants. However, the killings at Pilanesberg stopped when six adult elephant bulls were introduced to the park. The young ones' behavior patterns returned to normal under their influence.*

*Why would the young elephants kill rhinos? Well, like human juvenile delinquents, they had grown up without role models.*

*"I think everyone needs a role model, and these elephants that left the hert had no role model and no idea of what appropriate elephant behavior was," stated Gus Van Dyk, Pilanesberg Park's field ecologist. CBS news*

[http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-3475\\_162-226894.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-3475_162-226894.html)



**Video Supplement** [Watch: The Importance of Fathers" - Correctional Officer Calvin Williams](#)

### Fathers as Order Keepers

1. Mature, responsible males are vital to the well being of families, neighborhoods, schools and every aspect of life
2. It indeed "takes a village to raise a child."
3. Men and fathers are an essential part of the village.

List the ways you can help keep order in:

Your home \_\_\_\_\_

Your community \_\_\_\_\_

Your schools \_\_\_\_\_

### Preventing Community Violence

Here are some techniques that help prevent community violence:

1. Get involved and be present
2. Model peacemaking at home with your children and their mother
3. Build relationships with your neighbors
4. Watch who comes into and what is going on in your neighborhood
5. Develop relationships with local law enforcement agencies and school staff
6. Note and report all suspicious activities in your neighborhood and school
7. Take pride in your community

## Lesson 4: Father as Provider

As a father you are much more than a paycheck! Responsible fathers contribute many resources for children as they are able. Healthy fathering includes providing for children in several important ways other than financial.

- **Emotional and spiritual health** - provide male nurturance, emotional security, spiritual leadership, etc. Provide positive role modeling
- **Educational** - be (with the mother) your child's first teachers. Providing support, encouragement, accountability, rewards, etc. Provide role modeling.
- **Recreational and physical health** - encourage physical play and exercise; participation in sports, etc.. Also regulate time spent with computer, phones and other digital devices and provide role modeling.



Need help? Here is where you can find resources

- **Familial, Social and Civic** - utilize your grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. as additional resource persons; sense of belonging , heritage, legacy to carry forth, etc. Model healthy social relationship building and civic responsibility
- **Financial** - provide financial support. Teach and model financial responsibility (budgeting)
- **Hidden Resources** - you bring much to the table - share your time, talents, ingenuity and experiences with your child(ren). You are one of your child's biggest resources!

Healthy Fathering Practice Action Step

Commit to one thing you will do over the next two months to be a better provider for your children. Use the attached daily list to remind yourself of the many things you can do to provide and encourage your child(ren).



[Video Supplement Watch: 8 Things Every Dad Should Teach His Son](#)

## Lesson 5: Father as Stabilizer

As men are encouraged, empowered, and engaged in families and communities, they bring stability. Children are better when both parents are committed to their well-being over the long haul

**The following is from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study Fact sheet:**

- Despite their high hopes, most parental relationships do not last, and as a result many children experience high levels of instability
- Only 35% of unmarried couples are still living together five years after the birth of their child, and less than half of the 35% are married
- Couples that were cohabitating at birth are more likely to be together than couples in "visiting unions."
- Just over 50% of cohabitating couples are married or cohabitating five years after the birth.
- Once their relationship with the baby's father ends, many unmarried mothers form new partnerships and many have children with those new partners
- Nearly 40% of all unmarried mothers experience at least one new partnership, and about 14% have a child with a new partner, adding to the potential instability and complexity of these families.

The proof of a healthy and happy community is seen by the stability of its families. If families are unstable the community is unstable. If families are stable, that is safe, secure, happy and healthy, the community is generally stable.



[Video Supplement](#) [Watch: "What This Fatherless Son Wants His Father to Know" - Oprah's Lifeclass](#)

### **Actions that Reduce Stability in the Family**

- Arguing and fighting
- Constant moving
- Constant changing of schools
- Parents constantly changing of mates
- The presence and use of drugs and alcohol
- Failure to follow through on promises

### **Actions that Build Stability in the Family:**

- Consistent . . . .
- Public and private lives - modeling the behavior you desire to see



- Structures around daily activities
- Consistent discipline policies and actions



Stability rest squarely on fathers taking care of their responsibilities. This simply means doing what is required without failure or excuse and refusing to shift blame to anyone else.

- Being dependable
- Being trustworthy

Family and community stability is built upon committed men and fathers that want to:

- Be Protectors
- Be Order Keepers
- Be Providers
- Be Stabilizers
- Be good role models
- Better Ourselves

## Male Nurturance

Male nurturance builds family and community stability

Just like a fish needs water, so do families need nurturing positivity from the mother and father. All of us in general, and children in particular crave consistent positive affirmation.

So what does being nurturance look like?

- Regularly telling your child you love them
- Doing things that encourage and build your child
- Being generous with "attaboys" and "attagirls"
- Consistently setting aside one-on-one time for each child
- Supporting your child's interest and activities
- Acknowledging when you are wrong

### Maintaining Stability

Relationships changes cause instability. During the five years following the birth, unmarried mothers experience lower income growth and worse health trajectories than married mothers. Unmarried mothers who end their unions with the biological father also experience more mental health problems.

That said, married mothers who subsequently divorce experience the steepest income declines and the sharpest increases in mental health problems.

Father involvement declines over time

By age five, only 50% of non-resident fathers have seen their child in the past month. While formal child support from non-resident fathers increases over time, informal cash support and in-kind support (such as buying toys or clothes) declines.

By committing to your child for life regardless of the success of your relationship with the mother, you insure that your child will have some stability.



[Video Supplement](#)  
[LifeClass](#)

[Watch: "Why This Father Says He Walked Away from His Family" - Oprah](#)

## Fathers' Role as Community Stabilizers

The key parts of a stable community include:

- Strong schools
- Good employment
- Good housing
- Thriving businesses
- Good services
- Good parks & recreation
- Adequate entertainment
- Strong family community

**The biggest key to a stable community is active, loving, committed, engaged and involved mature men and fathers.**

### Action Step

**Commit to one thing you will do in the next two months to be your child's stabilizer.**

**I will \_\_\_\_\_.**

## Lesson 6: Congratulations

### Summary - What you Learned

As you learned through this course, everyone can be a father but it takes a dedicated, responsible and committed person to become a real POPS.

Becoming the father your child(ren) need is the most important role you have. Not only are you providing for the many needs of your child(ren) but you are also building your legacy and improving society by raising well adjusted and caring individuals. Through the information you studied in this course you can now apply these skills to your family and begin making a positive difference in the lives of your family and the community.



[Video Supplement Watch " Ways a Father's Absence Can Impact a Woman's Life" - Oprah's Lifeclass](#)

Be proud of you accomplishment of this course and your commitment to be a real POPS.

Here are the key points you reviewed during the course. Use this information and the handouts provided to continually remind yourself of your newly learned skills and apply them everyday.

#### **Lesson 1: Fathers Matter**

Why is it important for a father to be present and participating in parenting?

What healthy parenting practices do you need to work harder on?

#### **Lesson 2: Fathers as Protector**

Why violence has no place in the family

How to become my family's protector

How to become my child's protector

#### **Lesson 3: Father as Order Keeper**

How without engaged and committed fathers, keeping order is nearly impossible

How your presences makes a difference!

#### **Lesson 4: Fathers as Providers**

What it means to be your family's provider

The many different ways a father provides beyond financial

#### **Lesson 5: Father as Stabilizer**

Understanding how being a good father requires time

To be effective you must prioritize healthy fathering

Importance of balancing work and family obligations so as not to cheat your children out of precious time with you.

**Good luck in your journey of bring a real POPS. If you want more information or training you can go to [www.pastoreli.com](http://www.pastoreli.com) for more information and resources.**

Feel free to download the certificate provided with this course and display it proudly. You deserve it for your commitment and dedication in becoming the protector, order keeper, provider and stabilizer for your family. You are now a real POPS!



[Video Supplement](#) [Watch: "Most Important Job: Being a Dad" - Barack Obama](#)

## What's Next?

If you are interested in learning more and discovering how your role as a father is based on scripture you may be interested in taking the [Father Love course](#). Go to [www.pastoreli.com](http://www.pastoreli.com) for more information and learn how to register.