



Dr John Greenall introduces himself as a husband, father to 4 children (between 14 and 2 years). He describes his family life as a lot of fun where home "is never a dull place to be". John is also a paediatrician, where he sees families 'in the raw'. His work spans delivering babies to supporting teenagers who maybe struggling with a multitude of issues.

The delivery... & beyond

Preparations for giving birth and the healthy delivery of the newborn necessarily means focussing attention on the birth mother's well-being and the health of her baby. Dr. John explains how he has become increasingly mindful of the needs of fathers through this process. He recognises that fathers often feel they do not "quite have a voice" in what is typically a predominantly female world. Their sense of powerlessness can be overwhelming, especially when medical intervention is needed. A paediatrician with a front row seat into the lives of different families through life's challenges, John understands the many benefits there are for children who have an engaged father figure in their lives. Such children have a "tremendous advantage" as they navigate life's challenges. The research and statistics back this up. Professionally, John also meets many teenage boys at clinic, who seem to be crying out, "does anyone see me?" ... "is there anyone who can walk alongside me in my confusion?" Yes, children need their mother, but they need father figures as well.

Encouraging dads & father figures

Dr John's heart is to see fathers feel more confident in their role, be more engaged and able to communicate what they are feeling as Dads. He explains that he believes most fathers *want* to do more, to do *their best* for their children. But if they do not know how, or have the confidence, they may begin to question, "is this a role I should play?" John was recently asked by a new dad, "What can I do to be the best dad I can be?" His reply... "Just be... be who you are... be their dad, hold them as they grow up... ask questions... be present... love them... support them..."

Teasing out some unique contributions father figures have to offer...

With the caveat that we are all unique and without wishing to typecast roles, Dr. John offers some thoughts on what father figures bring to the mix that complements that of women. He explains that the intention behind naming these is not to reinforce stereotypes but rather celebrate the vital contribution of dads and father figures.



- Risk
- Excitement
- Competition (can introduce a child to being a good loser)
- Teasing (can help a child to handle criticism)
- Strength and protection

A message for mums and female figures

Growing the confidence of fathers is likely to involve mums, females, practitioners. By noticing the times when we potentially restrict the involvement of father figures or correct them, we risk limiting their involvement. Instead, we might consider how to affirm, support, encourage, empower, and give father figures space to be the best influence they can be as they engage with their children.

It takes a village to raise a child.

This proverb is widely used to emphasise the place of community in sharing the responsibility to raise children well. A whole community will include all kinds of people, including men and father figures.

Dr John sees the importance for men in the community to step up and play an important role in appropriately supporting children in their 'village'.

He describes how his own father gave time to support to a fatherless family when he was young.

He also explains that it is helpful for children to know different types of men. His own children relate differently with a family friend (male), who is a 'tease'. This is different from and supplements the relationship they have with their father.

Dr. John celebrates a group of dads from his church (a 'village') - *Men Behaving Dadly*, - who meet and support one another as fathers and father figures.

Parenting with the future in mind...

Most of us start out as parents hoping our future relationship with our child(ren) will develop into respect and friendship. This process begins at birth. John describes how our role needs to adapt to the different ages. He briefly describes these stages as follows:

- Birth to 5 years. These years are when young children need *loving discipline* from their father figures.
- From 5 to 12 years, children need *gentle training* from their father figures.



Series 2. Episode 9
Turning *Little Stones* show notes.
With Dr John Greenall

Episode 9
**Champion Fathers (&
father figures)**

- Teenagers need a *coach*, a father figure to walking alongside them, who resists telling them what to do.
- Young adulthood is the stage we can enjoy healthy *friendships*.

He encourages us to ask,

"what do I want my relationship with the children to be in the future?"

And reminds us that this involves navigating the earlier years well -whole life parenting.

And finally...

John concludes by saying,

"Being a dad is about going for your child's heart... we want to connect... spend more time with them... we can champion our kids... resist the urge to tell them how stupid they are being... and believe that you are the father they need.

"Give it all you've got and enjoy the ride!"

Dr John Greenall references a few resources he has found helpful:

Everyday Dadding Podcast

Faith in Parents Podcast

The War on Toxic Masculinity by Nancy Pearcey ISBN-13 978-0801075735

Further information, practical guidance and advice are available through,

Turning Little Stones podcasts &

Delving a little Deeper (Set 1 Getting to Know You)

See website www.turninglittlestones.co.uk for details