

Stay-at-home dads still face barriers

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Fathers make an important contribution when they stay at home as primary caregiver for their children—but they continue to face major social hurdles and stigmas, according to Flinders University researchers in a new book, *Men Caregiving and the Media: The Dad Dilemma*, which examines why the relationship between caregiving and masculinity is

seldom celebrated.

Dr. Sarah Hunter, from the Caring Futures Institute at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia, says stay-at-home fathers want to talk more about their caring experiences and build their parenting knowledge, but prevailing stigmas limit this activity—and such attitudes need to swiftly change.

Co-author Professor Damien Riggs, a regular contributor to *Psychology Today*, wants to promote positive representations of men who take on the primary caregiving role. He says the new book addresses many of the challenges in the context of how other people think about masculinity and [care work](#).

"We have found that men are still often compelled to justify why they are staying at home," says Dr. Hunter, adding that community perceptions need to change.

"We need to normalise men providing care for their children. We need less 'house husbands,' and more routine, everyday representations of men loving, caring for, and raising their children.

"Normalising men's role as primary caregivers helps to reduce stigma, thus allowing for the development of strategies that seek to engage men as parents.

"It is no longer enough to praise men for taking on what has traditionally been framed as 'women's work.'" Instead, we need to think differently about how we understand care work

"Therefore, we also need to acknowledge that care work is gendered: women do most of the household and childcare labour, and the expectation that women provide such labour for free needs to change."

"It is assumed that fathers want advice and practical guidance on how to be a father—but these assumptions are underpinned by [gender norms](#), and fathers actually also want space to talk and debrief about their own experiences," says Dr. Hunter.

"As a society, we undermine and hold men back in their [caregiving](#) capabilities due to how we view them. Gender norms impact on the support made available to [fathers](#)—so the main takeaway from our workshop is that fathering needs new types of support to be truly effective."

More information: *Men Caregiving and the Media: The Dad Dilemma:* [www.routledge.com/Men-Caregiving-and-the-Media-The-Dad-Dilemma: p/book/9781138316751](http://www.routledge.com/Men-Caregiving-and-the-Media-The-Dad-Dilemma/p/book/9781138316751)

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