

James Patterson

THE

#1 DAD

BOOK

BE THE BEST DAD

YOU CAN BE—

IN 1 HOUR!

“HILARIOUS AND SHARP... EVERYTHING (AND MORE) ABOUT BEING A DAD.” —RON HOWARD

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LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

The Most
Important
Thing You'll
Ever Do
Is Be
the Best Dad
You Can Be

Hey, dad.

(Or soon-to-be dad.)

I get it.

You're busy as a beaver in flood times. Busy as popcorn in a skillet.

You're distracted.

You're under pressures people don't always understand.

You don't have time for... well, lots of things you'd like to have time for.

You're frustrated at times.

Just the other day, you couldn't find the car keys, or your wallet, or the TV remote.

Or all of the above.

Occasionally, you can be a knucklehead.

That's okay.

This batshit crazy world isn't making things any easier.

It's like the title of that old show from Broadway: *Stop the World—I Want to Get Off*.

You can't get off this not-so-merry-go-round, though.

But you do love your kids (or kid) more than anything.

You want them to have really good lives.

You're doing the best you can.

But you know what? *You can do better*.

Yeah, you can.

These pages can help.

It'll be quick... and mostly painless.

And it *will* make you a better dad.

Even if just two, or three, or five of these ideas work for you.

You'll be a better dad. Maybe a whole lot better.

And that'll be a good thing for everybody you care about.

Especially your kids.

I did the homework, so you don't have to do as much. I talked to lots of experts, and lots of dads, and lots of experts who are also dads. I read

everything I could. Then I wrote and rewrote this book.

The pro-football coach Bill Parcells once said, “You are what your record says you are.”

Your kids are *your* record.

So, turn the page, dad.

You’re in.

You just made a big commitment.

One hour.

Operating
Instructions
(For This Book,
Not Your Kids).

Don't be afraid to mark up these pages with a sawed-off pencil or a pen subversively leaking ink.

Or use crayons. Or colored pencils. Go wild. Underline or highlight anything that makes sense to you.

This is going to work, big guy.

It's like a writer friend of mine told me, "Once a really good idea gets inside your head, it's impossible to get it out."

And there are some good ideas here, I promise!

Put a big fat check mark next to the ones that sound right to you—those are the things you *know* you can do to get better as a pop.

On the flip side, some of these tips might feel all wrong to you. Or to your partner. They might even seem stupid. Or simplistic. Or too politically correct. Or too politically incorrect.

Cross out anything and everything you *don't* agree with! Be aggressive with those ~~cross-outs~~!

The job here—success—is to get better. Just making this one-hour commitment is a good start.

When you think about it, becoming a better dad is like anything else you've learned to get better at. You've probably figured out how to get better at some sport. Maybe you've learned to cook. Or at least grill. You've learned how to get better at your job.

You practiced. You concentrated. And you got better. Maybe a lot better.

So, you've done this before.

The ESPN host Dick Schaap said there were only two kinds of teams.

The ones filled with people trying to make the world dumber. And the ones filled with people trying to smarten it up.

Be a smarten-upper.

You can even make up dumb words like *smarten-upper*.



“I realized what fatherhood really meant when our first child, our son, was born and he was unable to breathe.

I felt a surge of anguish and terror and grief because it was so wrong that he would have never been fully alive before he could simply disappear.

That’s something like the awakening I think every father feels at some time in his life. Our son recovered, grew up, and he’s an absolutely great guy.”

—BILL, JOURNALIST; ONE DAUGHTER, ONE SON

Here's to
New Dads—
and Old Vets

Maybe you're a newbie. Or maybe you're becoming a dad again. Whatever kind of dad you are, congrats! You're part of a sacred brotherhood. And a fatherhood. A very long line of dads. At times, that can be very comforting.

You're not alone.

First, you need to know this: After the baby is born, everybody will be mostly fussing over mom and the baby, not you. That's natural. It's totally fair.

Pregnancy is an unbelievably tough gig. You have no idea. Me neither. And babies have their own adorable ways of demanding attention.

But what about the dad?

After the baby comes, dads need some hugs too. Dads need the occasional "attaboy."

Because pregnancy is hard for the dad too.

There, I said it. Out loud.

Mom, if you're reading this, go ahead and throw this very nice book (that you probably bought) at the nearest wall.

But show dad some compassion. He's not as smart as you.

And everything just changed for him too.



“Like so much between fathers
and sons, playing catch was tender
and tense at the same time.”

—DONALD HALL, POET; ONE DAUGHTER, ONE SON

Name Calling

Okay, so what are you going to name your new human? That's a very good topic for your babymoon. (Some couples take a trip before the baby is born. It's called a babymoon. Didn't take one myself, but it sounds like a cool idea.)

This is one of your first dad jobs. And it's a big one. Talk it over with your partner. Sleep on it. And don't take it lightly.

Here's a tip from a wise, helpful person: Before your baby is born, practice calling out the names you like at the dinner table a few dozen times. At the top of your lungs.

Which names sound best?

Which names are easiest to pronounce?

Which names get old really fast?

Remember, whatever name you choose, you're going to be calling it out many thousands of times over the next eighteen years. Make sure it rolls off your tongue.

Don't saddle your kid with a name that seems funny, or cute, or clever in the moment. Remember, it's not your name. It's the name your kid has to live with. Every day. For the rest of his or her life.

And not to get morbid, but someday it will be etched on a tombstone. *Here lies Mildred.* Or Ethel. Or Dick. Or Danger. Yes, some parents have named their child Danger.

Of course, that's not to say that kids can't make good with an unusual name.

Elvis made it work somehow.

So did Eldrick—though he's better known as Tiger.

Hopefully, so will Apple, a girl named after a very delicious fruit by her movie-star mom, Gwyneth Paltrow, and rock-star dad, Chris Martin.

My wife's dad's name was *Orville Berthold Solie*.

He decided he wanted to be called O.B.

Smart man.

O.B. became a very, very good dad.

He named his baby girl *Susan*.



“What brings us together is our love of music. I’m from Jamaica, and we love hip-hop. Sometimes my daughter and I will go out on our own ‘date’ and that’s when we talk about *everything*. At dinner, I’m not Daddy. I’m her friend. Sometimes she says... ‘Forget you’re my dad... We’re going to talk like friends.’ Becoming a dad taught me what love is. I never really knew anything about love until I became a dad.”

—GESLEY, RESTAURANT MANAGER; ONE DAUGHTER