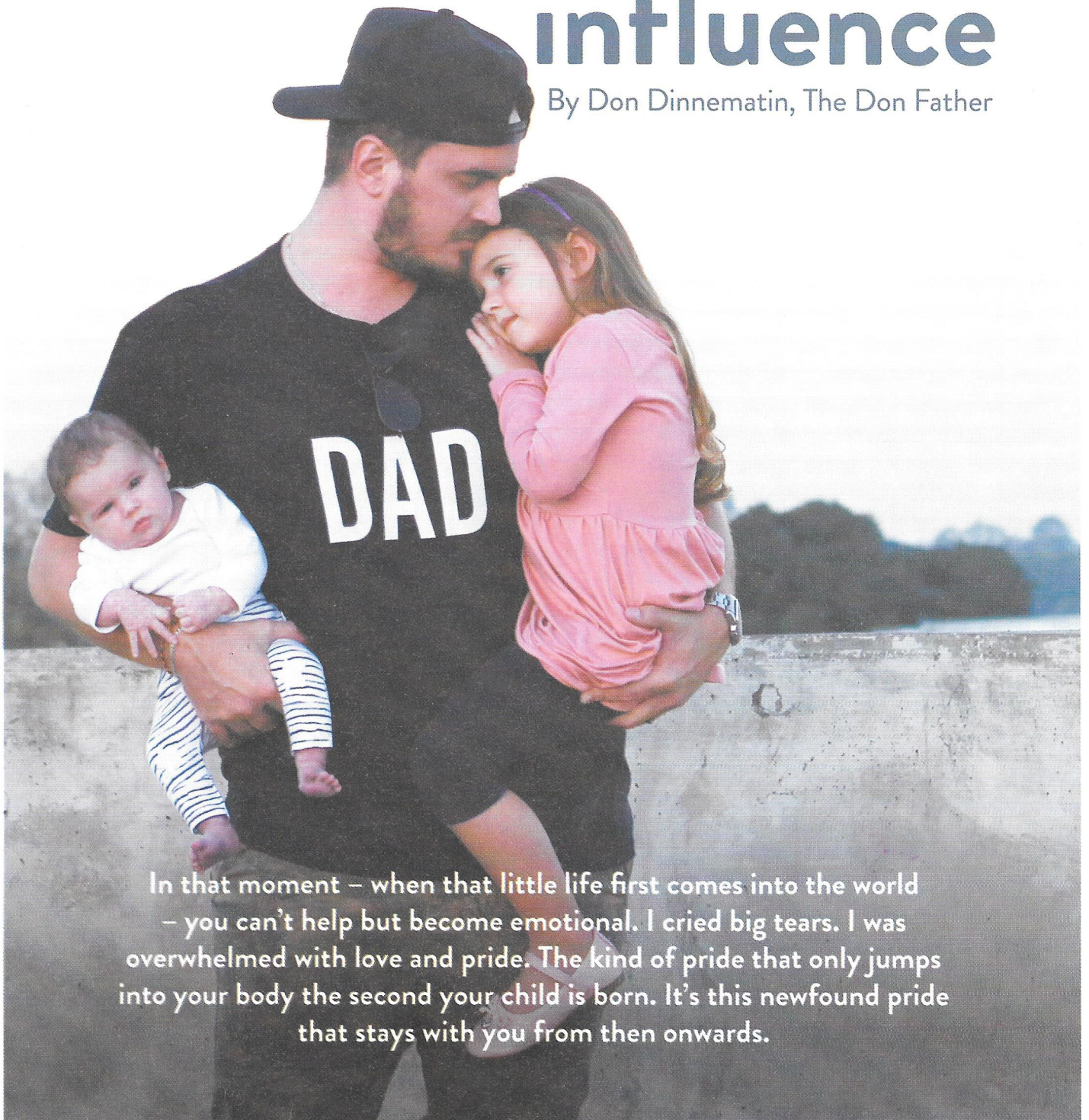


# A father's influence

By Don Dinnematin, The Don Father



In that moment – when that little life first comes into the world – you can't help but become emotional. I cried big tears. I was overwhelmed with love and pride. The kind of pride that only jumps into your body the second your child is born. It's this newfound pride that stays with you from then onwards.





I never knew this feeling existed and I never knew how beautiful it would feel to have this constant feeling of pride. It's empowering, and it's probably one of the best feelings any parent can have.

My wife and I had always known we wanted to be parents, but when we fell pregnant, I often battled with the thought of how I was going to be a good dad. Growing up, my dad was hardly around, and when he was, he wasn't actively present in our lives. I never witnessed what it was like to have a completely dedicated "father" figure around, so I had a lot of questions and doubt. How was I going to become someone, when I didn't understand where to start? It was a tough pill for me to swallow. I often lay awake in bed trying to figure this whole thing out.

My wife helped a great deal with this. She instilled direction, and inspiration into my heart and soul. She helped me realise that I didn't need a male role model to look up to or to learn from. All I needed was to believe in myself and know that we are not always handicapped by our past. I realised that what I went through as a child with my father was a lesson; it taught me how I did not want to father my children. My wife gave me hope and excitement because for the first time I knew exactly how I was going to tackle this role. I became centered into a space that gave me peace with my past and pure joy at what the future held. She believed in

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me and gave me the same confidence to believe in myself.

Dads, you are hugely influential in the eyes of your children. Don't be content with the fact that you're simply a dad. Instead, challenge yourself to become a dad who is a force in the lives of your wife and children. You might think that you have a complete lack of influence in your personal or professional life, but the day you become a father, all of that changes. As far as they are concerned, you are the most influential man in the world. Your role as a father has a huge impact on their entire life. They look up to you and want to make you proud. Make them proud by being 100% present.

The effect you have starts as early as birth. A review of studies by the Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA) shows that babies with more involved fathers are more likely to be emotionally secure, confident in new situations, and eager to explore their surroundings. As they grow, they are more sociable. Toddlers with involved fathers are better problem-solvers and have higher IQs by age 3. They are more ready to start school and can deal with the stress of being away from home all day better than children with less involved fathers.

But how does a father's influence differ from a mother's? Isn't one good parent enough? Fathers encourage competition, independence and achievement. And mothers encourage equity, security and collaboration,

according to Brett Copeland, a clinical psychologist in Tacoma, Washington.

I also respect that certain situations may limit you in terms of how active of a dad you can be, but you don't need to live in the same house to be influential. Also, remember that grandfathers and uncles can also have a significant impact in the lives of your children.

Never forget that it is not only your children who need you, your wife also needs you – more than you realise. Parenting is a partnership, a collaboration that when combined, yields beautiful, life-changing results. Be actively involved with your family. They need you! ■