



## 1.6 Emotional Needs Activity & Reflection Questions

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### Emotional Needs Reflection

Take 5 minutes to slowly read through [this list](#) of emotional needs. Next, before writing anything down, take five more minutes to reflect about the lived experiences of fathers you know and work with within the context of their emotional needs. Finally, take some time to write about the following questions

1. How do you think the emotional needs of fathers and father figures affect those around them?
2. How might you attune to and more deeply nurture the emotional needs of father figures in your work?

For questions 1-2, you are invited to submit your perspectives to our collective pool of answers from all practitioners on our Mentimeter link [here](#).

3. Which of the emotional needs do fathers and father figures particularly struggle with?
4. Which emotional needs do fathers and father figures typically have met?
5. What kinds of assumptions do you feel you make about the emotions of fathers and father figures?

### Case Study & Vignette:

Although Felix considered himself to be a good father and lucky enough to have several positive father figures in his life, he often struggled with his relationship with his father-in-law, Mr. Brooks. Both men were African-American, but viewed the role of fatherhood quite differently. Felix finished college, earned a graduate degree and was a clinical social worker working with families and children. Mr. Brooks finished high school, served time in the military and worked various blue collar jobs to support his family. Mr. Brooks was often demanding and difficult when it came to his children. He thought Social Work with children and families was women's work and often teased Felix about it. Felix found it difficult to understand Mr. Brooks and his distant and challenging fathering style.

One day, Mr. Brooks shared that he really appreciated how Felix took care of his daughter and grandchildren. He then went on to share how he wished that he had a father like Felix. Mr.

Brooks' revelation was surprising to Felix as he always thought Mr. Brooks thought his parenting style was "too soft."

Mr. Brooks was the eldest son and the lightest in skin color among his siblings. He was often beaten and mistreated by his dad who also had light skin for a Black man. After Mr. Brooks joined the military and spent some time abroad, his father shared with him that he wished he could have been a better father. During a visit home Mr. Brooks' father shared that he was sorry for mistreating him because of his light skin color. Mr. Brooks' father also had light skin even though his mother and father shared the same dark brown skin color. It was clear but never spoken that Mr. Brooks' father was the biological son of the white man who owned the land his family worked as sharecroppers. Mr. Brooks' grandfather told his son that he really tried to raise him as his own and that the trauma endured by his wife and many other women of the landowner was often too much for many of the men who had to raise children that were clearly a result of their loved one's rape. Mr. Brooks then told Felix that he often wondered how his life would have been different if his family did not have the history that they found too painful to talk about.

Hearing this story changed Felix's view of Mr. Brooks. The frustration and sometimes resentment that he held for his father-in-law was replaced with empathy and compassion.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

- *Consider the ways that family history cannot be separated from psychological and emotional needs. How does Mr. Brooks family history explain some of his behaviors? What emotional needs do you think Mr. Brooks did not receive growing up?*
- *Considering this case study, how might you engage the fathers you work with, gently and compassionately, to talk about their own family histories?*

#### **Resource:**

What Happened to You: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience and Healing  
Flatiron Books, April, 2021

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#### **Resources for Further Exploration**

- [Mental Health of Dads](#)
- [Nurturing dads raise emotionally intelligent kids – helping make society more respectful and equitable](#)
- [It's Time to Support Fathers' Mental Health — Seleni](#)
- [The importance of new fathers' mental health | Mark Williams | TEDxNantymoel](#)
- [We Need To Talk About Dad's Mental Health | Psychology Today](#)
- [Father Attachment, Father Emotion Expression and Children's Attachment to Fathers: The Role of Marital Conflict - PMC](#)
- [Mental Health and the New Father](#)