

# FATHERS-TO-BE HANDBOOK

A Road Map for the  
Transition to Fatherhood

Patrick M. Houser



Creative Life Systems Ltd  
Kent England

Dedicated To All Families

# Contents

Preface	9
Introduction	15
Fathers Make A World Of Difference	
1. A Road Map For Fathers	21
2. Fathering Throughout Time	29
3. Freeing The Father - Preparation	39
4. Beginning The Journey - Pregnancy	59
5. Gifts For The Mother And Child	81
6. Preparing For Birth	97
7. Empowered Birth	105
8. Fathering In Early Infancy	127
Afterward	147
Acknowledgements	154
References, Resources & More Sources	156

## Preface

I came of age in the 1960's in the United States. Although my family was traditional, I was blessed with a high level of curiosity at a time of great social change. I asked why and why not, how and how come, and who says so? I took the road less travelled. After university, I explored for several years throughout the US and Mexico. In a way, I have always continued the spirit of my journey that began back then. I have lived in various regions and countries. I have lived in England since 1998.

Until I was ten I grew up on a 200 acre farm in Ohio. I was the third of what would become a family of six children. We lived on a hill in a large, brick farmhouse with a white fence around it. There was a stream below for fishing and getting wet. We were surrounded by woods and paddocks, wild life and farm animals. There were fields and barns to explore and play in. The setting was idyllic and liberating.

When my time came to become a father it was the mid-seventies. I was twenty-eight and living in very rural Missouri. My then wife, Kathryn, and I planned a homebirth. We enrolled the services of an experienced and big hearted midwife, the wonderfully named Mau Blossom. I was an eager and willing participant in every aspect of the pregnancy and birth. We prepared ourselves, as best we knew how, and anticipated the arrival of our child. Until my participation at the birth of my first child none of the men in my family had attended one.

Kathryn's labour was a long 36 hours. The birth of our son, Anandas, did not follow the plan we had imagined. The delivery was intense and there were complications. It was distressing.

The emotional impact that the birth had on us was significant. We wondered if there was more to the process of birth than we were aware of which could have had an effect on the result. We had already learned that what we thought about life could have an effect on our daily experience of it. However, we had not yet made the connection as to how birth could be similarly affected. We also sensed that our physical and emotional experience was not an isolated one. We knew there was more to learn.

In the years that followed I made an extensive and wide-ranging enquiry. Through self-

exploration and the study of birth and birth psychology I learned much about myself, birth and our society.

I found that very little real attention was being paid to this most fundamental, yet influential, of human events. Birth has been treated as something to get through or over and acknowledged primarily on a physical level. The actual human experience we are each having has been largely ignored.

In October 1980, this time after a ninety minute labour, Kathryn gave birth to our second son Jeremy, in water and into my hands at home. This was the first waterbirth in the United States.

Second births are often easier and have shorter labours. However, we were moved by the contrast of our personal experience of this birth compared to the first one. In the lead-up to Jeremy's birth we focused considerable attention on our inner preparation. We felt this supported our experience and the outcome considerably.

We had also opened the doorway to a gentler and more physically supportive method of birthing by incorporating water into the delivery. What had begun as an urge to create a more supportive and welcoming environment for our baby, later became part of a pioneering

initiative to improve birth internationally.

I have attended numerous births over the years and counselled parents and others to explore their own experiences and beliefs. Although I have had other interests and careers, a reoccurring theme in my life has been to support greater awareness about birthing our children and our families.

Towards this end, I have co-founded a registered charity (The SOURCE Foundation International) to expand education and understanding into this field. And now, together with my colleague Elmer Postle, I work specifically with fathers and family oriented organisations through our initiative, Fathers-To-Be. Our work is based on many of the principles in this book.

I came to fathering with wide-eyed innocence. I have been disappointed and felt helpless on occasion. I have tried to run away at times. I also feel blessed beyond words for the gifts my children have bestowed on me by their presence and their love. I have found that my early commitment and involvement cemented our bond in a way that has consistently shown the way through to loving.

I have learned that the experiences children are having during pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to who they will become

emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually. I have also developed a deep understanding and appreciation for the experience mothers and fathers are having during this transition time.

Fathers today are taking part in the family in more ways than ever before. Consequently, society has a unique opportunity. Fathers can speak for this and future generations through their loving participation, with their children and in their family. This book gives a voice to my experiences, discoveries and visions for the future.



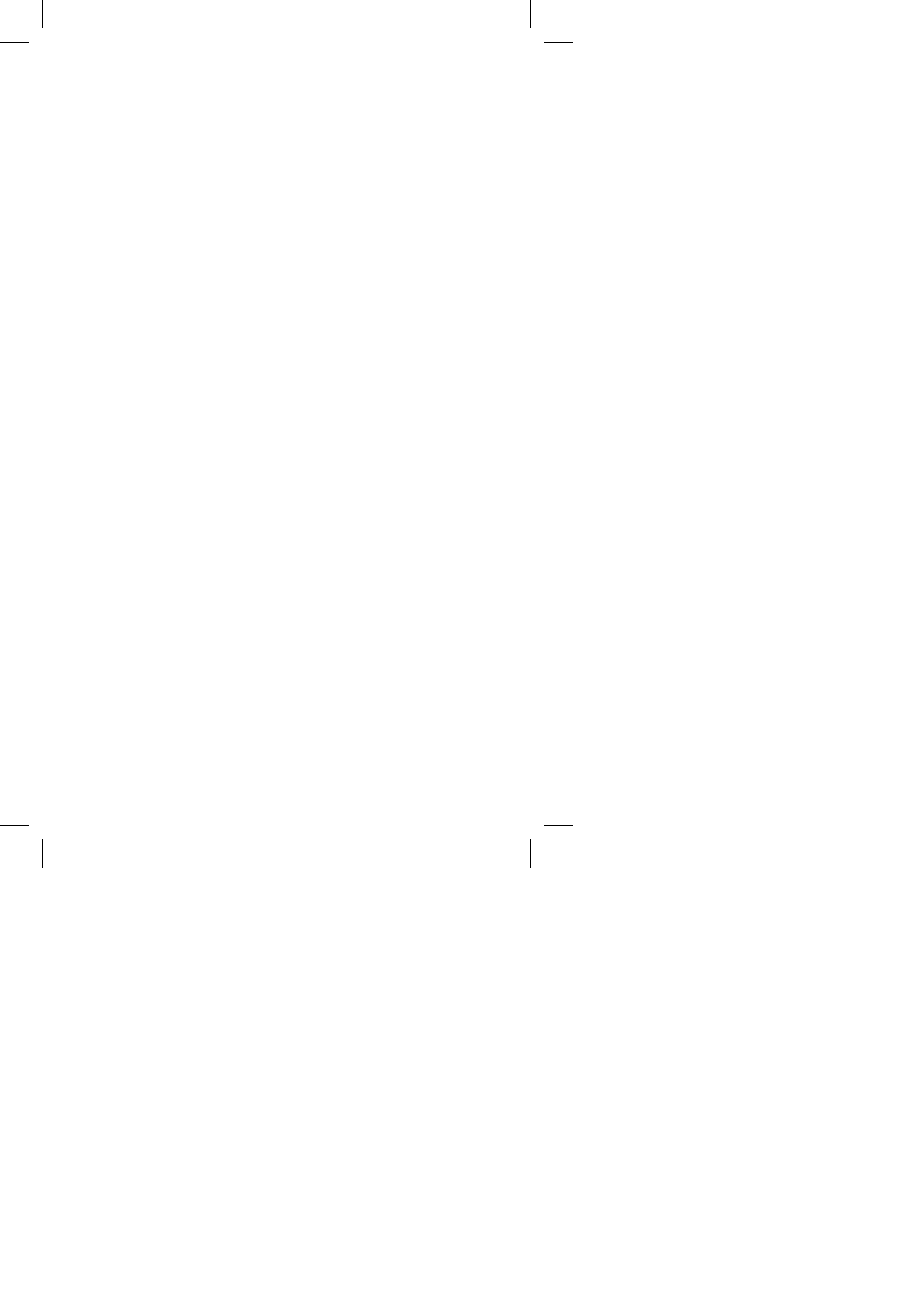


## Introduction

### Fathers Make A World Of Difference

*“Of all nature’s gifts to the human race,  
what is sweeter to a man than his children?”*

*Cicero*



A new father has arrived.

For millennia birth has been almost exclusively the domain of women; men had a different more distant role to play. For the first time in our history most fathers are participating in the birth of their children. They are also expanding their involvement in the modern family. Fathers today face new challenges because of this. The information, ideas and tools provided in this handbook can assist expectant and new dads in their transition to fatherhood.

You will discover

- Techniques for reducing stress during pregnancy and birth.
- Modern ways to protect and provide for your family.
- Information on how to participate more effectively during the pregnancy.
- Ideas regarding contributing to your child's wellbeing, even now.
- Guidance for bringing a calm and useful presence to your partner's labour and to the birth of your child.
- How to take part in building strong and loving foundations for your child which will augment their entire lifetime.

The result is that you will be better prepared to participate in the most joyful, satisfying and empowering time of your life.

### Help with all those questions

Once a woman reveals her pregnancy to her partner, and reality dawns for the man, virtually all fathers-to-be will ponder the same thing:

*“She is having a baby.  
What am I supposed to be doing?”*

This book will help you to resolve this and various other questions like:

- What about sex during pregnancy and the breastfeeding time?
- What is it like to adopt a more nurturing relationship with a child?
- When I think about becoming a father I notice I get anxious. What do I do?
- My father was not so great. How can I be a different kind of father?
- How am I going to be remembered as a father? Do I have a choice?

### Opportunity

We will consider conception onward to early infancy through the minds and hearts of the developing baby, the mother and the father. This will provide an understanding of how each family member can be supported, care for each other and receive the most benefit from every phase of this precious time together.

You can awaken your natural fathering instincts as well as acquire the knowledge that will support your development as a father. A central theme in this book is to explore modern possibilities for a father's role in today's family. You do not need to be limited by the stereotypes of what a father used to be or should be. You can decide for yourself.

#### A father's role is important

The nature of a father's involvement, from the start, has significant impact on a child's development in numerous ways. "Where fathers are involved, breastfeeding is more successful, post-natal depression reduced, children are more successful at examinations at 16 and are less likely to have a criminal record at 21."<sup>1</sup> There are volumes of research which confirm:

*Fathers make a world of difference.*

A once in a lifetime opportunity exists, now. Through research in science and psychology, we now know that the baby is having significant and lasting experiences during the pregnancy and birth. They are also aware and making decisions about these experiences. The weight of those decisions can influence a lifetime.

A woman, during this significant and very special time is birthing a child, a family and our society. She needs to be protected and provided for in ways that recognise the impor-

tance of her role.

Men are also having an experience during this time which deserves to be acknowledged and supported. Men's experience is different than women's. Men feel, yet they sense and interpret feelings differently from women. Men also reveal and resolve their feelings in dissimilar ways. Fathers have a particular role to play and they can benefit greatly from specific guidance and support, just like mothers.

This book is to inform but also to stimulate an enquiry. Who are we, how did we come to be this way and what do we, as fathers, really want for ourselves and our families?

The research, tools and exercises herein are designed to help you in resolving concerns or ambivalence you may have surrounding pregnancy, birth and fathering. This will result in less stress for all and increased confidence and enjoyment for you and your partner.

What is provided here can be used as a road map. Like any map, this one will indicate numerous possible routes to use to help you get to where you would like to be, as a father to your children and contributor in your family.