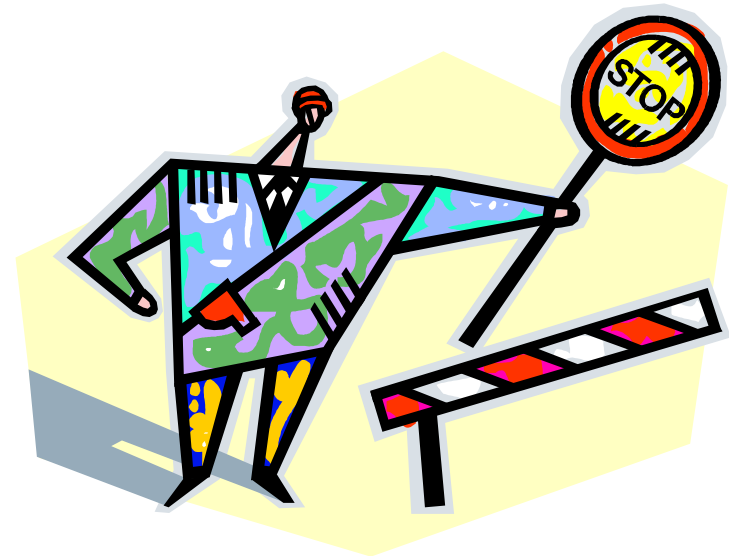


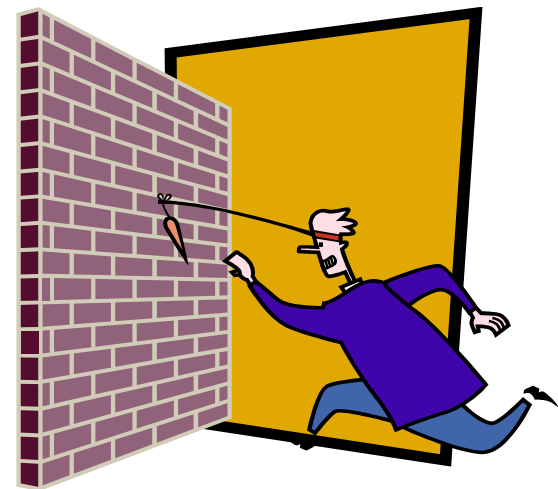
Engaging Fathers in Home Visits

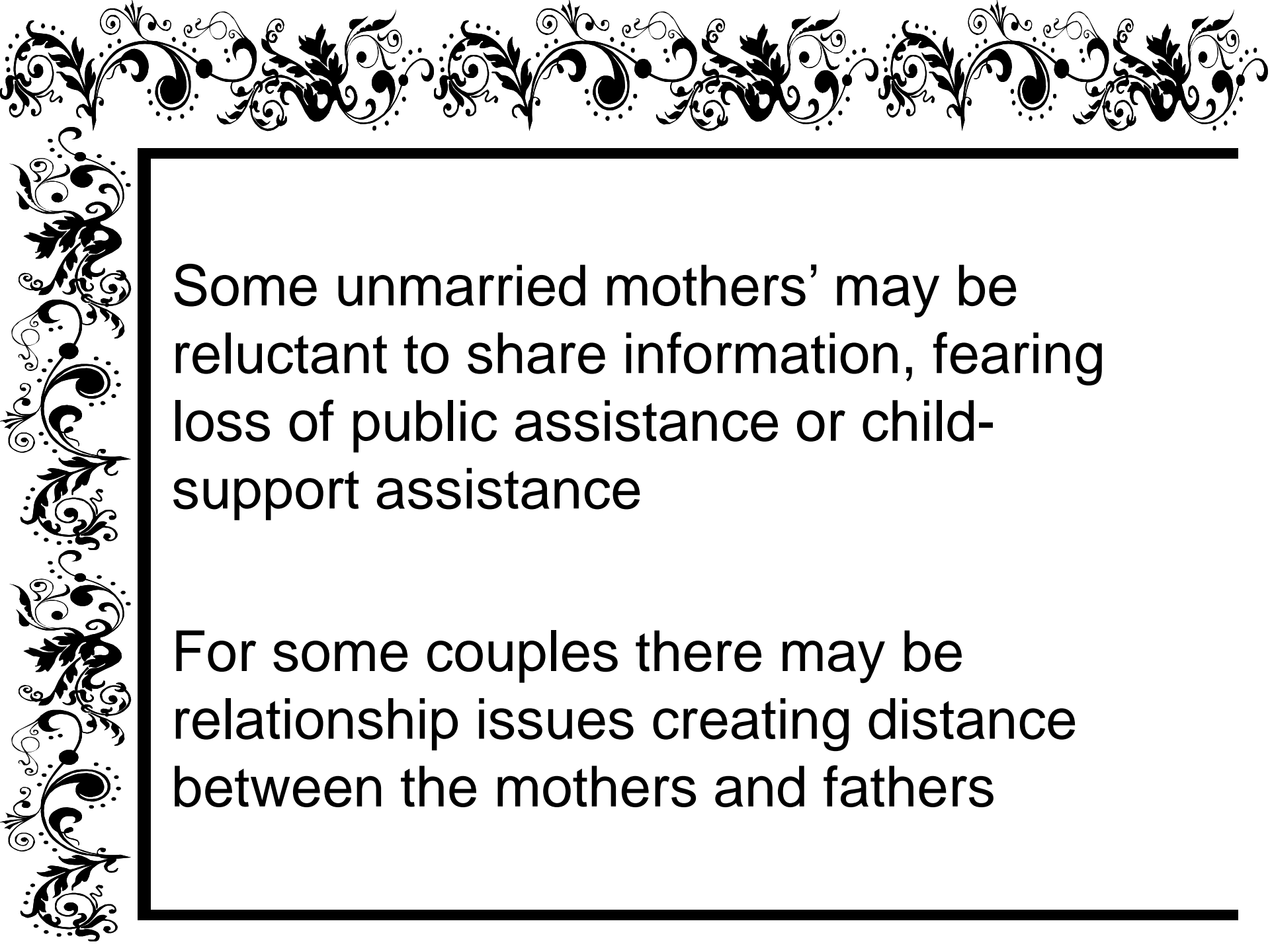


Fathers are often more reluctant than mothers to fully participate in home visits. This tends to be true across a wide range of cultures, income levels, educational backgrounds and neighborhoods.



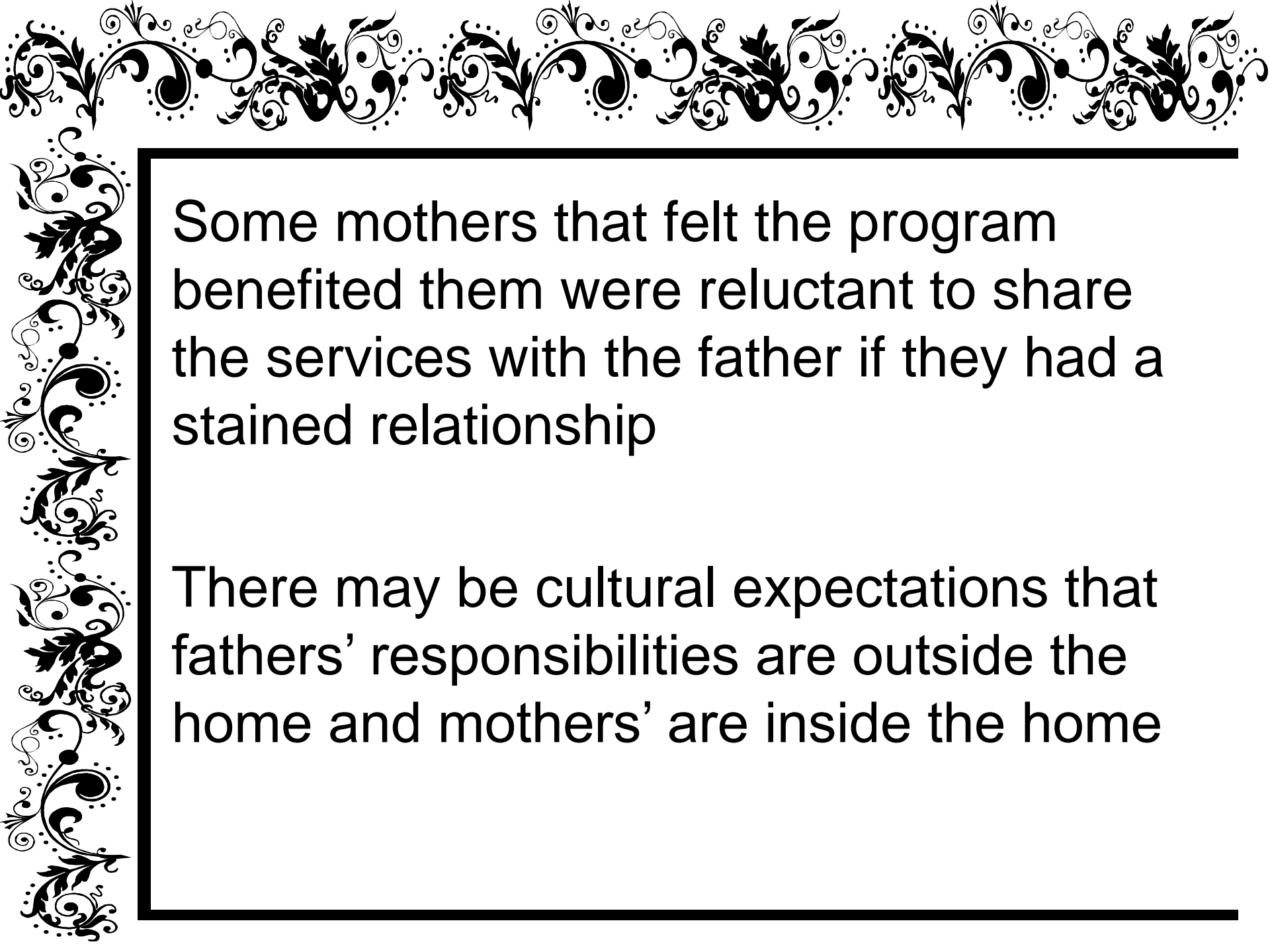
In order to engage fathers and men in families more fully, it is important to address some common barriers or misconceptions that typically limit father involvement. What limits do you think might impact fathers?



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Some unmarried mothers' may be reluctant to share information, fearing loss of public assistance or child-support assistance

For some couples there may be relationship issues creating distance between the mothers and fathers

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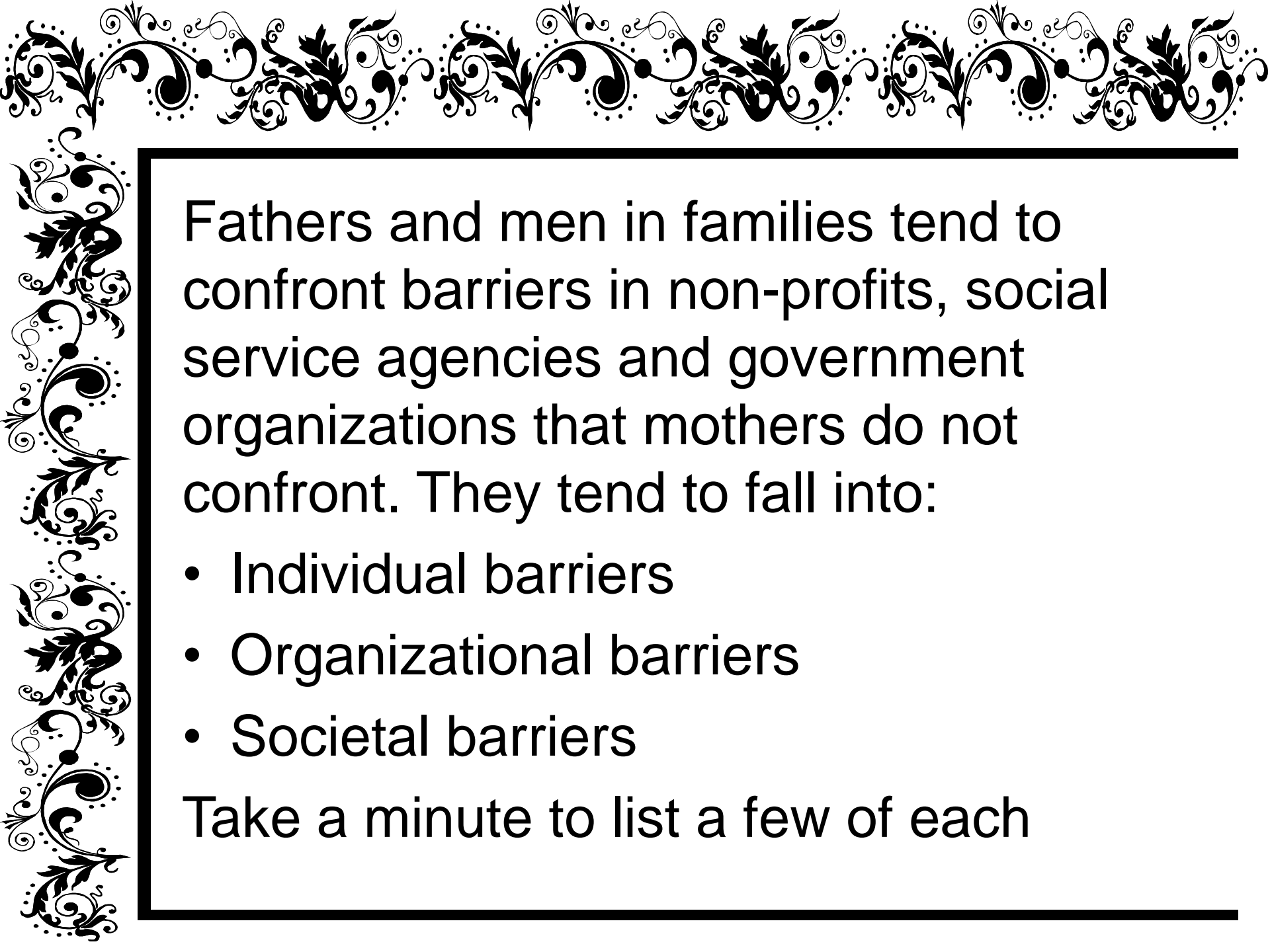
Some mothers that felt the program benefited them were reluctant to share the services with the father if they had a stained relationship

There may be cultural expectations that fathers' responsibilities are outside the home and mothers' are inside the home

Men often assume this type of program is not for fathers.

Staff occasionally stereotype fathers, for example, as being only interested in employment assistance.



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Fathers and men in families tend to confront barriers in non-profits, social service agencies and government organizations that mothers do not confront. They tend to fall into:

- Individual barriers
- Organizational barriers
- Societal barriers

Take a minute to list a few of each

When scheduling your home visit, ask if there are times that both parents are available to meet with you. Try to schedule the visit to accommodate both of their schedules.





When you arrive, mention that you have information about resources specifically of interest to fathers and men in families.

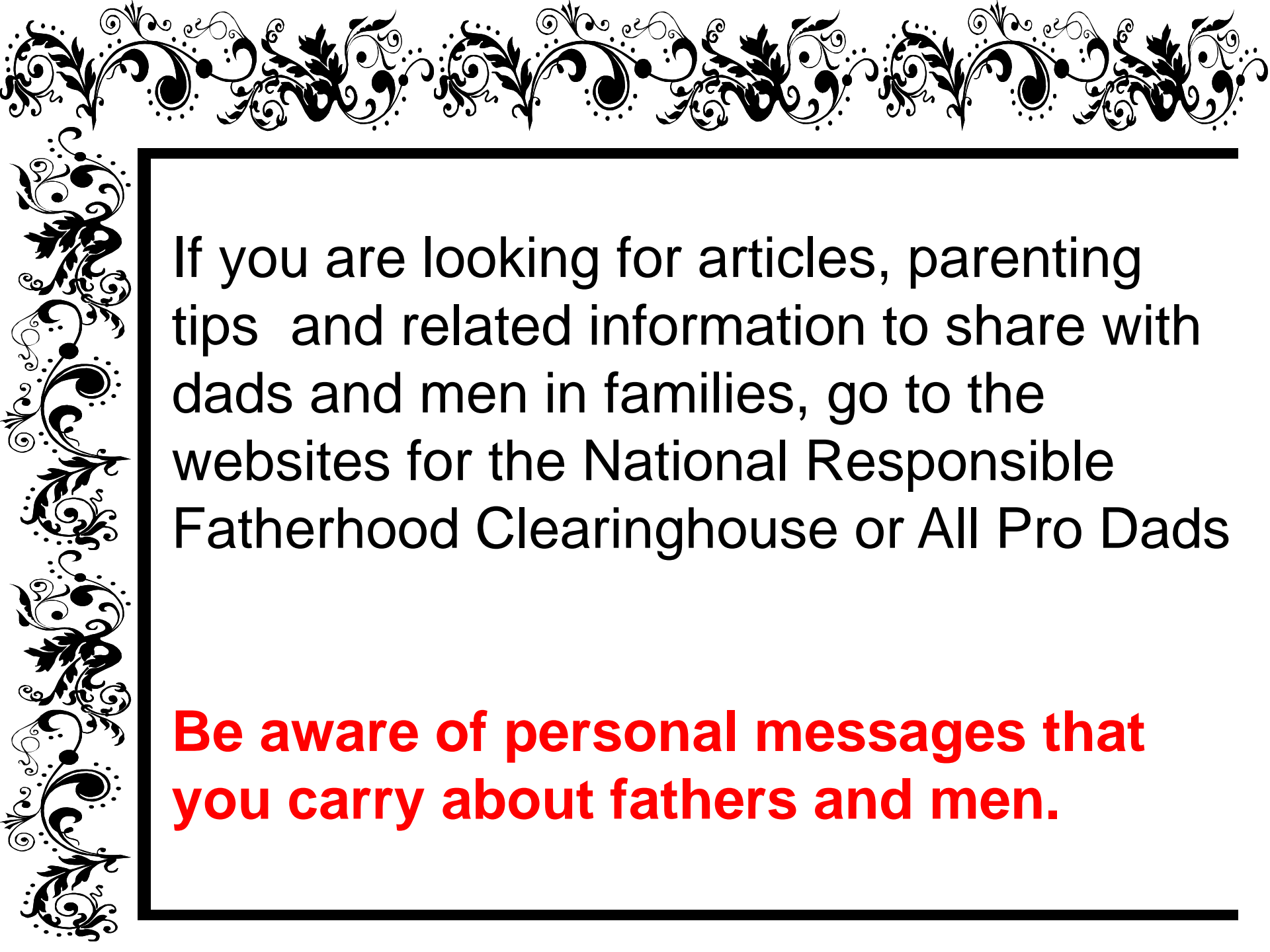
What do you think might be three or four specific resources that your fathers might be in need of accessing?

When meeting the father for the first time, look at him and shake his hand. Tell him that you are glad he is able to be part of the home visit and that you would like to speak to both of the parents during the visit.



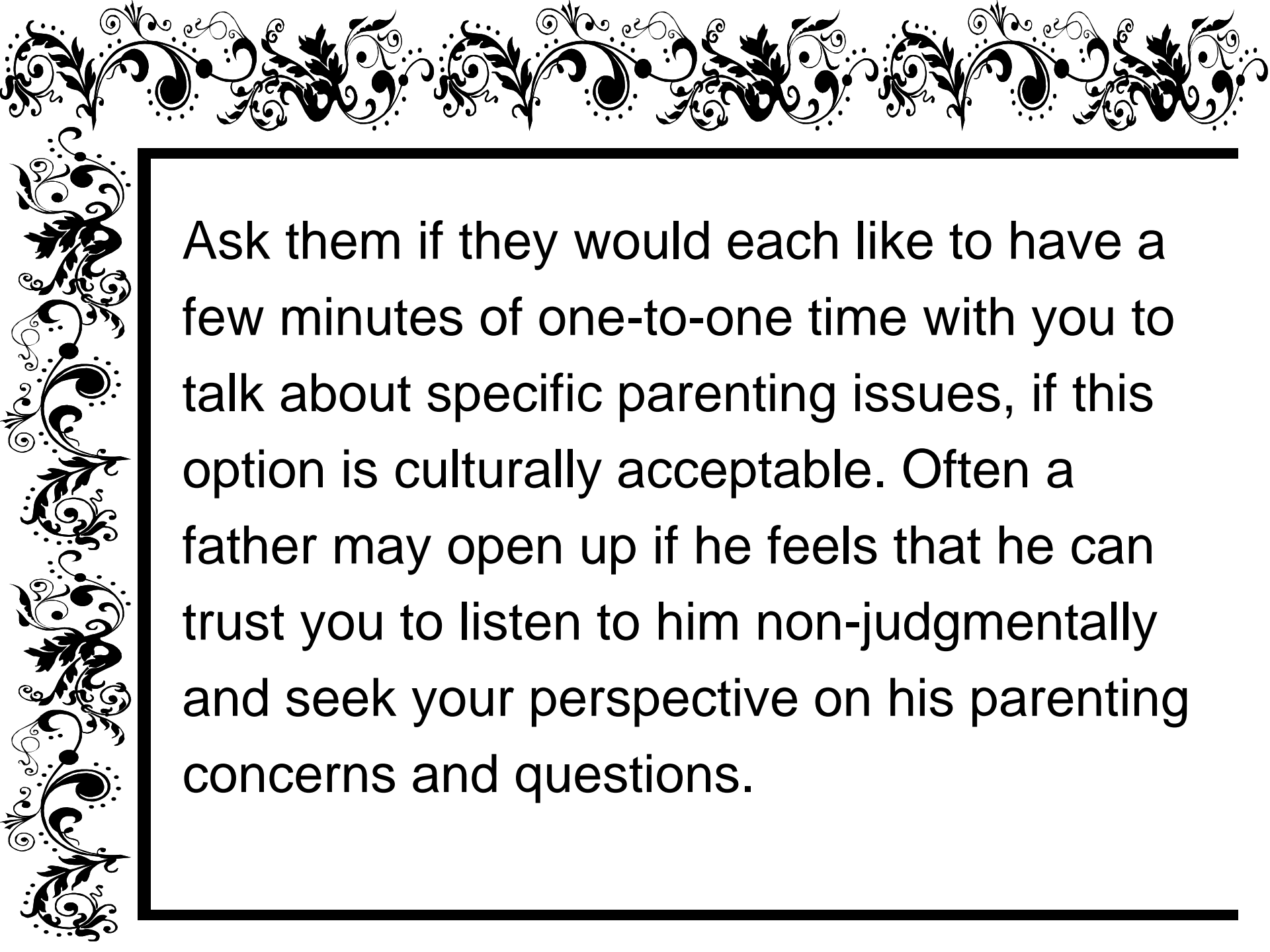
Be certain to bring select materials that are specifically targeted for fathers and men: brochures, flyers, schedules, articles and other material that are clearly of interest to dads and **men in families.**



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If you are looking for articles, parenting tips and related information to share with dads and men in families, go to the websites for the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse or All Pro Dads

Be aware of personal messages that you carry about fathers and men.

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Ask them if they would each like to have a few minutes of one-to-one time with you to talk about specific parenting issues, if this option is culturally acceptable. Often a father may open up if he feels that he can trust you to listen to him non-judgmentally and seek your perspective on his parenting concerns and questions.

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Learning Styles

Ask him how he thinks he best learns new information. How does he prefer to learn new skills? Reading articles or books, taking classes, watching videos, on-line learning, actual hands-on demonstrations, listening to a tape or attending a dads' group? Are there such options available to him?



LEFT-BRAIN meets RIGHT-BRAIN



LEFT-BRAIN Thinking:

Logical, Analytical, Precise, Realistic

Fan of to-do lists

Likes things done in an orderly,
sequential fashion

Makes decisions based on reality

Famous “left brains:”

Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking

**MARK
PIAZZA**

RIGHT-BRAIN Thinking:

Creative, Intuitive, Artistic, Visual

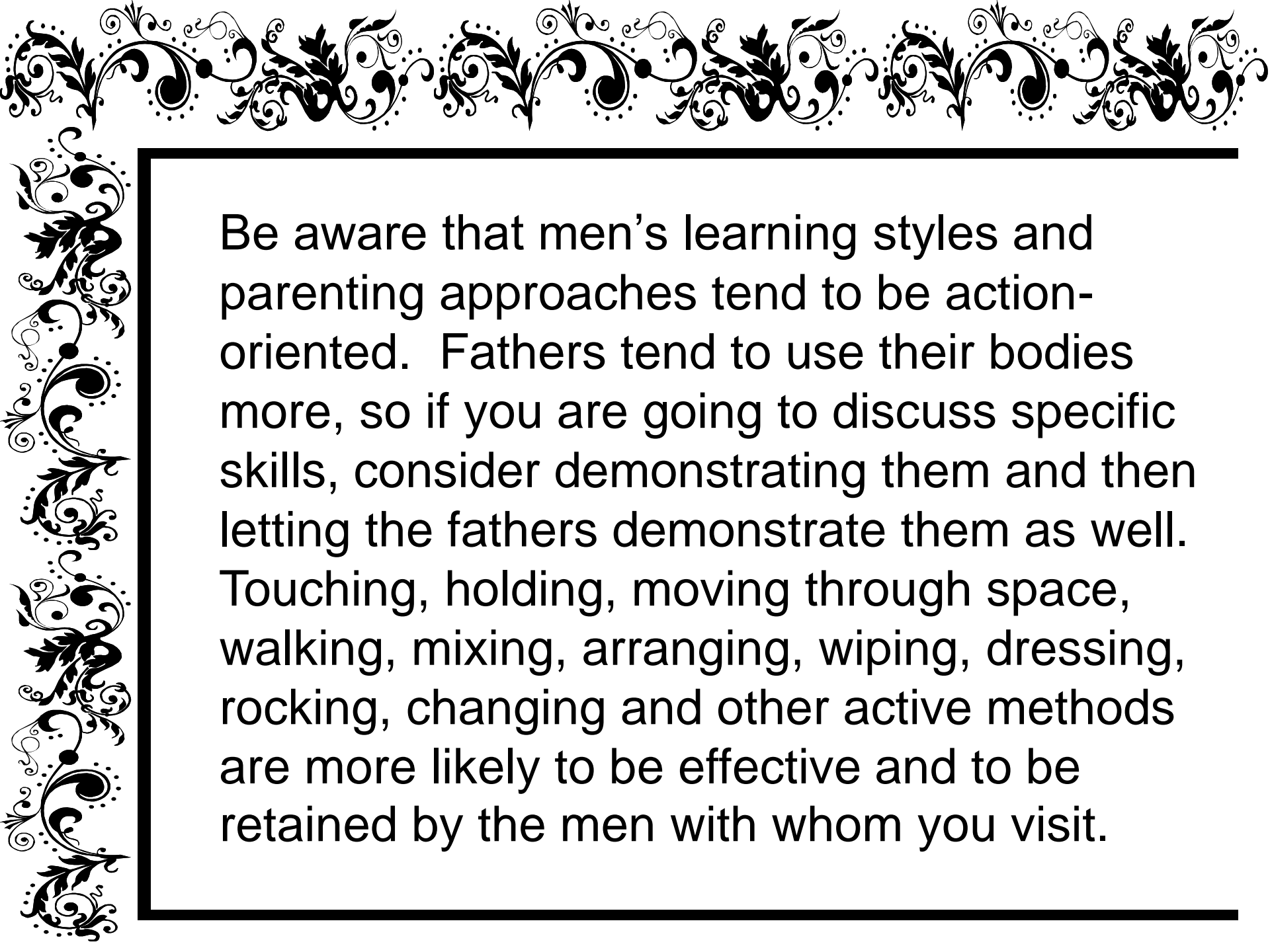
Does not like to follow directions

Able to see the big picture

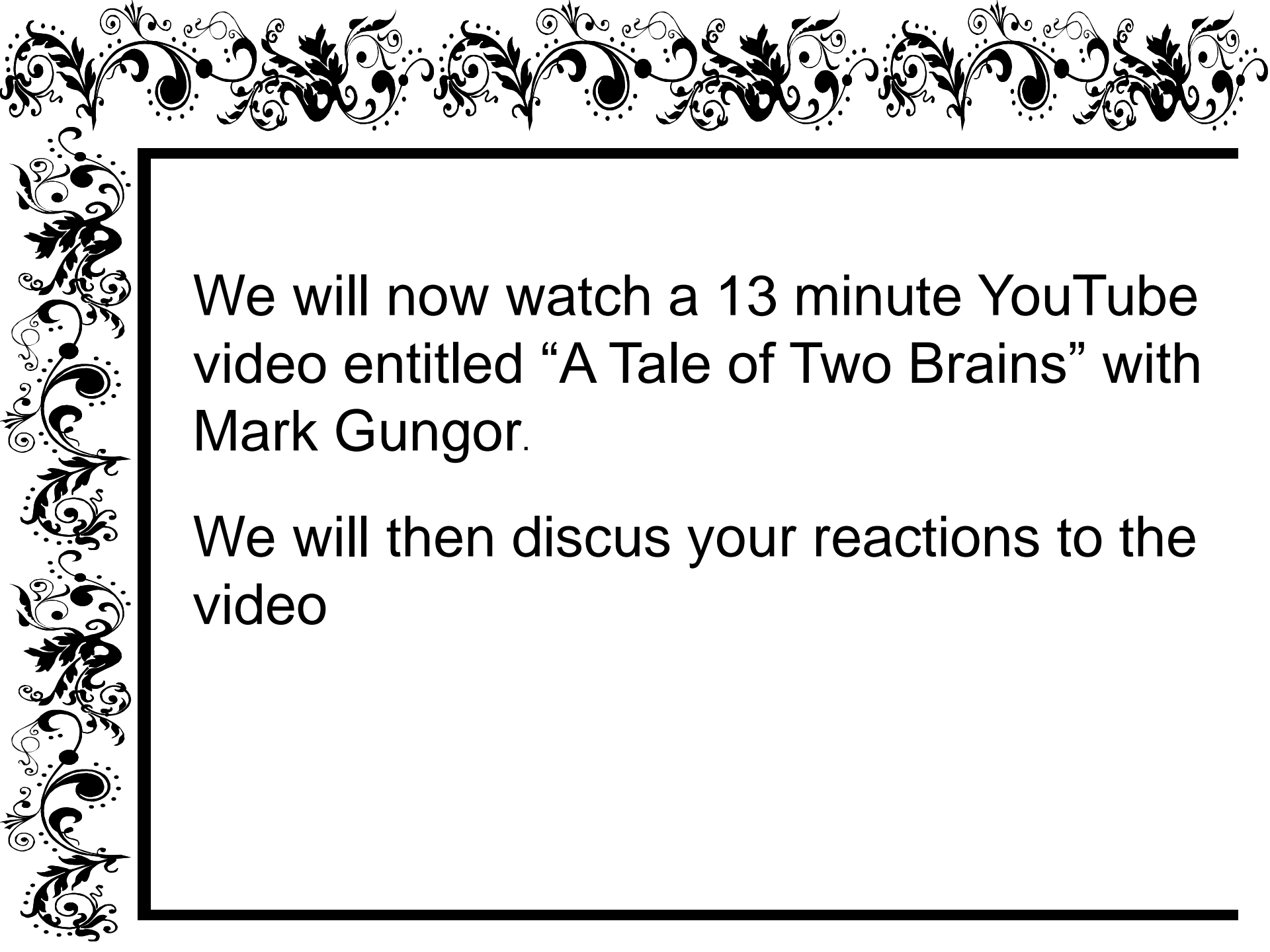
Makes decisions based on
emotion

Famous “right brains:”

John F. Kennedy, Leonardo Da Vinci

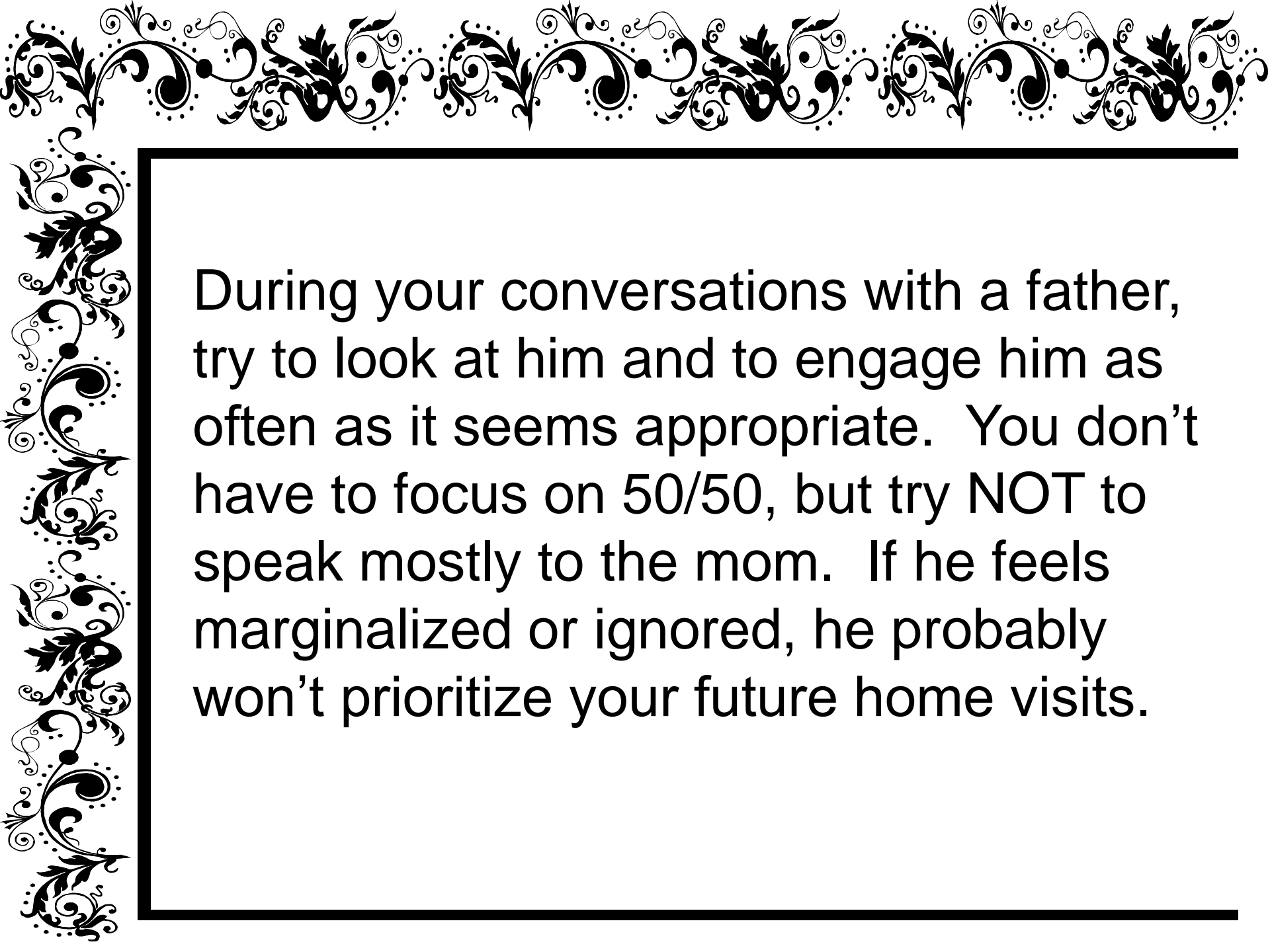
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Be aware that men's learning styles and parenting approaches tend to be action-oriented. Fathers tend to use their bodies more, so if you are going to discuss specific skills, consider demonstrating them and then letting the fathers demonstrate them as well. Touching, holding, moving through space, walking, mixing, arranging, wiping, dressing, rocking, changing and other active methods are more likely to be effective and to be retained by the men with whom you visit.

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We will now watch a 13 minute YouTube video entitled “A Tale of Two Brains” with Mark Gungor.

We will then discuss your reactions to the video

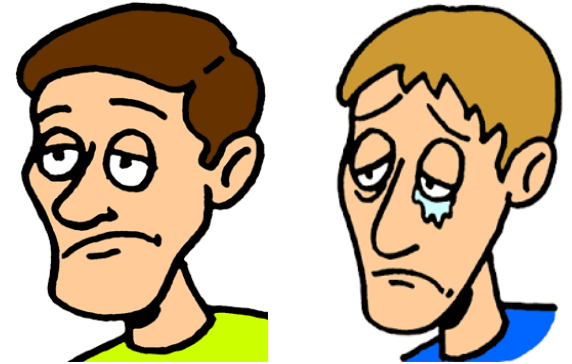
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During your conversations with a father, try to look at him and to engage him as often as it seems appropriate. You don't have to focus on 50/50, but try NOT to speak mostly to the mom. If he feels marginalized or ignored, he probably won't prioritize your future home visits.

When you are speaking with a father, try to sit beside him, shoulder to shoulder, such as on a couch or at a table, as opposed to across from him. Most men are more comfortable with side-by-side conversations than front-to-front approaches.



- Avoid asking a father how he feels about situations or events. Many men are reluctant to go there.



- Ask him “What was that like for you?”
You will generally get better results
with this approach.

- Ask him open ended questions about his child rearing activities around the home.
- How is he involved in the baby's/child's daily routine?
- What skills does he feel confident about? What are his strengths as dad?



Levels of Involvement

Formula
Prep

Getting up in the
night to bring
baby in to be fed

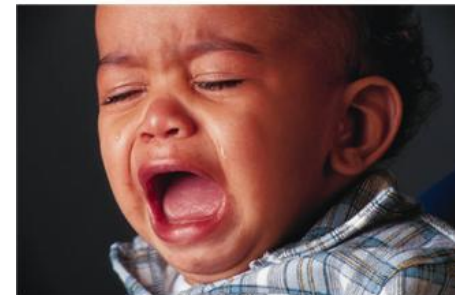
Feeding the
child

Holding
the baby

Bathing
the baby

Changing
diapers or wet
clothing

Playing with
the baby



Levels of Involvement

Rocking baby
to sleep

Reading or
singing to the
baby

Dressing the
child

Calming
the child

Putting the baby
down for a nap

Packing
the diaper
bag

Strapping the
child into the
car seat

Taking the
child on
errands



Suggested Questions

- What is his reaction when he is alone with the child(ren)?



- Are there significant differences between how he parents their child and the mother parents their child?

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Suggested Questions

- How does he handle stressful times with the child? Crying, colic, running around, saying “no”, arguing, temper tantrums, making messes, etc.?
- How do they, as a couple, handle stressful times?

Suggested Questions

- What resources does he have to provide back up when he feels stressed?



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- What resources do they have to provide back up when they feel stressed?

- What skills would he like to improve or get some help with?
- What skills would he like both of them to improve or get some help with?
- What tasks is he comfortable sharing with the child's mother?



- What tasks does mom feel uncomfortable with him performing?
- What tasks does he wish the mother let him perform more?
- What future does he see for his baby/child?
- What resources would he like to see available for him to be the best dad that he can be? That they can be?



Make your own observations about each of the items listed above. See for yourself his personal comfort level and his skill level in his interactions with the baby/children. But remember, Dads do not “mother” their children. They “father” their children.



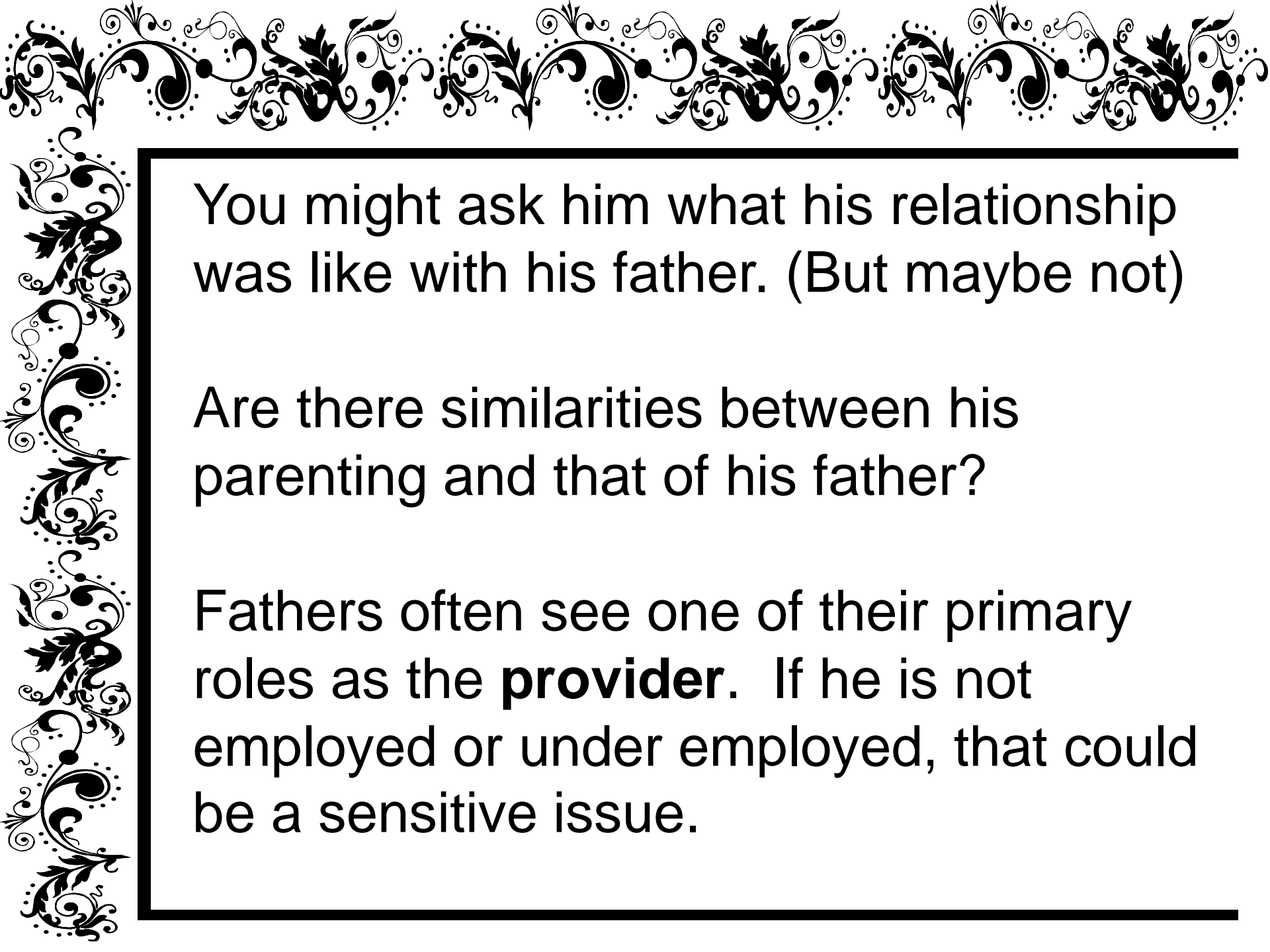
During your visit, look for situations where the baby or child responds positively to the father's interactions, such as turning the infant's head, raising their hands toward daddy or smiling when he enters the room or picks up the child. Point this out to the father as important.



Ask him if he was able to be present at his baby's birth. This is often a very transforming moment for most fathers.

- What was that experience like?
- How has this changed him?



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You might ask him what his relationship was like with his father. (But maybe not)

Are there similarities between his parenting and that of his father?

Fathers often see one of their primary roles as the **provider**. If he is not employed or under employed, that could be a sensitive issue.

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Look for potential areas of assistance or intervention.

Furthering his education

Indicators of depression or anxiety

History of past abuse, neglect or long-term instability

Need for financial numeracy

Interest in family planning

Issues around sobriety/staying clean

Fathers typically see one of their primary roles as that of **protector** of the family. So talk about how he might offer a sense of safety or security for the children in the home. This often gives them a sense of purpose in their interactions with their children.



Safety Suggestions

- Is their household safe for their toddler or a child who is starting to crawl?
- Do the electric outlets close to the floor have cover plates?
- Are the slats in the baby crib no wider than 4 inches apart?
- Are nukes and pacifiers free of long cords that could strangle a child?



- Are the bottles, cans and other containers under the kitchen sink free of dangerous or toxic ingredients?
- Are low level furniture items (coffee tables, end tables) free of sharp or pointed edges that could hurt a falling or teething toddler?
- Are book cases and entertainment centers secured to the walls so that climbing child cannot tip them over?



As children grow older, fathers see their protector role change to reflect that.

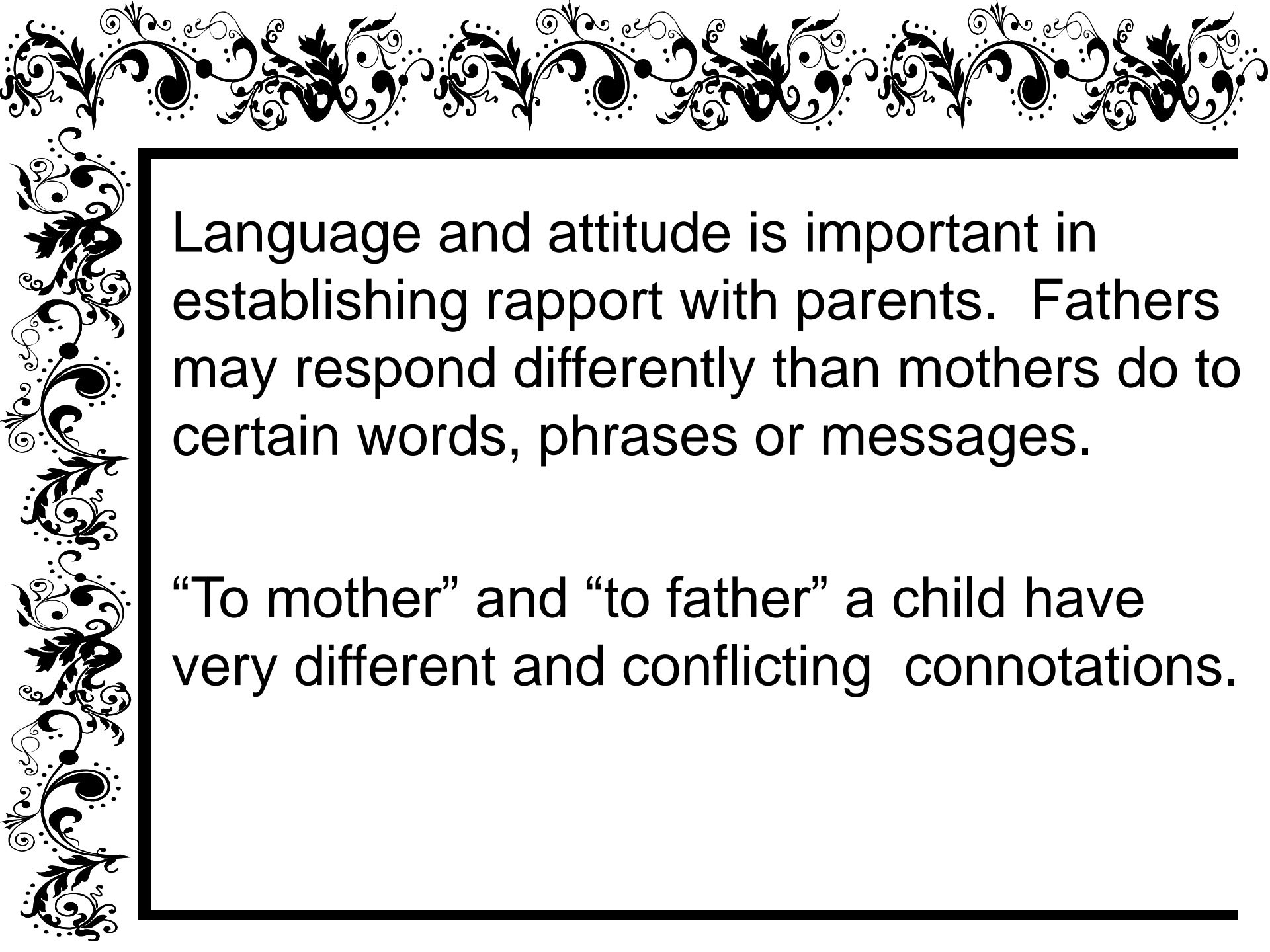
A third primary role that many fathers assume is that of the **disciplinarian**. What is his style and preference in setting limits with his child? How will he help his child learn right from wrong, good from bad?



Attitude & Response

What is his attitude and response when a child is disruptive during the home visit? Does he work with the mother? Does he let her handle the situation or does he handle it? How are healthy limits set?



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Language and attitude is important in establishing rapport with parents. Fathers may respond differently than mothers do to certain words, phrases or messages.

“To mother” and “to father” a child have very different and conflicting connotations.

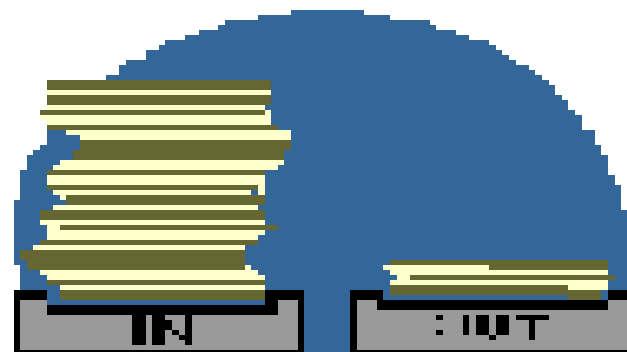
Sports and cars are often stereotypes of what men are comfortable with in beginning conversations with strangers or those in authority. If you are comfortable in using sports analogies applied to parenting, go for it. But if not, avoid going there.



Some fathers may be reluctant to see themselves as a teacher to his child, especially for some low-income men who were not able to finish school, or due to bad experiences. They might associate this with failure, dropping out, or difficult conflicts



Don't let paperwork get in your way.
While this is important for eligibility and documentation purposes, try to spread it over time to allow more interesting and stimulating interactions with your families.



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Conclusion

“There is a hole in the soul of every child in the shape of their father”

“To the world you might be one person, but to one person you might be the world.”

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Conclusion

“My father didn't tell me how to live; he lived, and let me watch him do it.”

~ Clarence Budington Kelland

“Small boys become big men through the influence of big men who care about small boys.” ~ Unknown

Conclusion

My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, "You're tearing up the grass."
"We're not raising grass," Dad would reply.
"We're raising boys."

~Harmon Killebrew



**WE NEED TO TEACH
OUR DAUGHTERS TO
KNOW THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN:**

a man who flatters her and
a man who complements her,

a man who spends money on her
and a man who invests in her

a man who views her as property
and a man who views her properly

a man who lusts after her
and a man who loves her,

a man who believes he's a gift to
women, and a man who believes
she's a gift to him.

And then we need to teach our
sons to be that kind of man.



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