

Helping New Moms & Dads Build *Happy Families*

By Greg Bishop & Chuck Ault, *Boot Camp for New Dads* & *Dads Adventure*

A Note from Greg Bishop

When I started *Boot Camp for New Dads*, I thought that after 10 years we would be doing *Boot Camp for New Moms & Dads*, as in together. By then we would have helped bring dads up a level to where they could get on the same page with mom in forming their new family.

Two decades later, it's starting to happen, and we look forward to partnering with ICEA to make it happen. We took our first step in 1990 when ICEA member Debbie Nielsen had the guts to let me start a dads' workshop where women over 2' weren't allowed, and so we very much look forward to continuing to work with the ICEA on behalf of new moms and dads and their babies.

When new moms and dads understand and appreciate each other, they work together, do a better job for their baby, and are happier. This is a great way to build a new family, the basic building block of humanity.

Unfortunately, this is not the norm. Many relationships suffer when a new baby arrives, and the tough, formative first months as a family are like going backpacking for the first time with no planning. Once you get tired, you start arguing over which direction to go, who is carrying their share, and who forgot what, and when a little rain sends a stream through your tent in the middle of the night because you didn't cut a trench around it, well, you're not happy campers!

Mom focuses on "her" baby and has little energy for dad. She falls into a hormone-driven trap where she pushes dad away and then becomes angry that he's not doing his share. Dad feels left out and confused. This is not a

constructive mode for their formative months as a family.

Our motto since beginning our *Boot Camp for New Dads* has been to equip dads-to-be to "hit the ground crawling!" when their new baby arrives. Now we are expanding our mission to equipping new moms and dads to work together effectively—essentially, to get them on the same page before their baby arrives.

Our *New Moms Hearts & Minds Project* is our first step, and we also are working to open *Boot Camp for New Moms*. Our objective is to give both moms and dads the information they need to support each other effectively when they are becoming parents. When couples start out working together, it establishes a real and enduring partnership, both mom and dad get more balance in their lives, and their baby gets a stronger and happier family. Nothing but good can come from this mother-father collaboration.

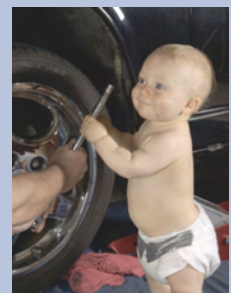
The New Moms Hearts & Minds Project

We've been on a mission to strengthen fatherhood for two decades. Our veteran dads have always advised dads-to-be that supporting mom should be a core objective, so teaching them

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What Moms-To-Be Need To Know About New Dads

1. You have broad support; a dad-to-be has you.
2. Back. Away. From. The baby.
3. Assume he will do his part, and he will.
4. Men thrive on respect, confidence, and love.
5. Babies thrive on the difference dads bring.
6. His confidence will build; his instincts will kick in.
7. It's not about sex; it's about love.
8. OK – it's partly about sex.
9. If he brings his child into this world, you get balance in yours.
10. When do you start? When the test turns positive.



“This has taught me, talking today, that I need to practice on encouraging him and think before I say things.” (looks at her baby) “Otherwise we’re going to end up alone.” (laughs)

—New mom with 8-month old

how became a major priority. It also became clear that while mom was the only real support a man has as he becomes a dad, nobody was teaching her how.

To us guys, this was a problem that needed to be fixed, so we came up with the *New Moms Hearts & Minds Project*. The deal is that “if dad keeps her heart, he’ll be there so mom can keep her mind.” The project website, NewMomsProject.org, is getting the word out to moms-to-be on how to bring out the best in dad. A downloadable *What a Mom-to-be Should Know About a New Dad* (first presented at the 2009 ICEA National Conference), is available to moms-to-be, along with other information for moms and project news.

For childbirth instructors, we have prepared “teaching tips,” along with a “What a Mom-to-be Should Know About a New Dad” PDF that you can hand out to your couples. Please also

“I don’t remember thinking about him [my husband]. I never asked him how he was doing. It didn’t occur to me. I feel kind of bad now that I think about it.”

—New mom with 6-month old

visit NewMomsProject.org, and add your thoughts on what new moms should know about how to bring out the best in new dads.

Boot Camp for New Moms

We have been asked “Why isn’t there a *Boot Camp for New Moms?*” since we started. In the spirit of helping new parent couples get on the same page as early as possible, now there is.

Boot Camp for New Dads has synthesized its two decades of daddy knowledge, and the information flowing from our network of new mothers to create *Boot Camp for New Moms*. This workshop is similar in format and structure to the original *Boot Camp for New Dads* and aims to help new mothers acquire practical early-parenting skills, navigate the psycho/social changes of motherhood, and understand the perspective of new dads.

In this three-hour session, “veteran” new mothers and their babies, along with a facilitator, help illuminate the important issues, joys, and challenges that will soon be experienced by the moms-to-be taking the class. The development of this exciting new workshop is being informed by the wonderful folks at ICEA and our long-time partner and pilot site in Merced, California.

Partnering with ICEA

Since ICEA is thinking and moving beyond labor and birth, partnering to equip moms and dads to work together once the baby comes home is a natural. And for us, after enjoying ICEA’s support for over a decade, it is as natural as brothers and sisters coming together.

As our organizations confront the challenges to helping parents build strong, happy families, we find ourselves working together more and more to bring moms and dads together. This includes the *Dads Adventure* newsletter series with CBE teaching tips for your fathers-to-be, our downloadable PDF “What New Moms Should Know About New Dads” for your mothers-to-be, and the beginnings of collaboration on the *New Moms Hearts & Minds Project* and *Boot Camp for New Moms*.

We are looking forward to doing much more!

“The penalty moms pay for being top parent: loneliness, anger, feeling over-burdened and resentful, are as bad as dad’s price: alienation, feeling incompetent, like a spare part, an optional extra, dissatisfied.”

*—Adrienne Burgess from England’s
Fatherhood Institute*

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To be added to the *Dads Adventure* email newsletter list for Childbirth Educators, please email Alison@Dadsadventure.com with your contact information.

Please visit Newmomsproject.org and leave a comment on one of the Top Ten pages to help further the conversation.

References

'Hit the Ground Crawling is the name England's fatherhood institute is using for boot camp for new dads, since boot camp does not translate.

Greg Bishop, brother of 12 and father of four, is the founder and Head Coach of Boot Camp for New Dads. Started in 1990 to provide men with a little orienta-

tion before their first baby came, it has grown to over 260 programs nationally and is expanding internationally. Called a "nursery in a locker room" due to its "no women over 2 feet tall allowed" approach, Boot Camp has been featured on NBC, ABC, CBS, and a host of other media. He has spoken to the National Governors' Task Force, presented at the National Fatherhood Initiative's Annual National Summit on Fatherhood, and is frequently asked to present his approach to bringing out the best in new dads. Greg holds an MBA from Stanford University and is CEO of Traumacare of America, which develops and supports trauma centers. He is the author of Crash Course for New Dads: Tools, Checklists & Cheat Sheets and Hit the Ground Crawling: Lessons from 150,000 New Fathers, available from DadsAdventure.com

Chuck Ault – the proud father of two daughters, has been Director of Fatherhood Programs for Exempla Healthcare in Denver, Colorado, for 13 years and has personally prepared more men to be fathers in Boot Camp for New Dads workshop than any other. He has been the Director of Training for Boot Camp for New Dads for nine years and recently trained practitioners in Nova Scotia to start Canada's first Boot Camp for New Dads program. Chuck holds a Master's Degree in Family Studies and is a Certified Family Life Educator. As an educator and advocate, he is dedicated to helping men celebrate the triumphs and embrace the challenges of new parenthood.