

Reading Comprehension Part 2

Read the following text, then choose the answers to questions 6–10.

Fatherhood Today

MODERN men see fatherhood as their biggest life-changing experience and desperately want to be 'hands on' during their partner's pregnancy and the upbringing of their child. The days of fatherhood being limited to discipline and breadwinning look to be long gone, as a third of today's dads say they would even consider leaving work to take on the role of full-time father. But despite being anxious about the birth of their child, men are more worried about money than losing their freedom.

The results of Pregnancy & Births magazine's annual fatherhood survey, reveal the respect with which many men now regard the role of fatherhood. More than 2,000 couples across the UK who were expecting their first child were asked about their feelings. According to 98% of the fathers-to-be, they believe fatherhood will make them happy and 90% say it is their biggest life-changing event ever'. It seems that men are taking child-rearing seriously, wanting to be 'hands on' both before and after the birth. Nine out of ten dads-to-be attend scans and check-ups; only 2% of the men surveyed would not be at the birth because they "could not face it". Eight out of 10 women say their partner is more caring during the pregnancy and 83% of men would rather stay in with their partner than go out with friends. 72% of men say they will take two weeks' leave. A further 77% say they wish they could have more time off to bond with their baby.

However, more than half of the men questioned still think that the mother should take time off work if the child is ill, but 39% said they would share it. Modern fathers-to-be are also more likely to do chores compared to decades ago: almost half of them do more housework, 41% do more meal preparation and a third go shopping more. The role of

child rearing has changed dramatically over the past 50 years and more men would consider leaving work to raise their child. A third of the men surveyed say they would be prepared to be a full-time stay-at-home dad, another third would like to work part-time while the rest wish to continue with work.

Dr. Maureen Marks, a specialist psychiatrist on fathers and their changing roles, does not believe the survey sample is wide enough. But she agrees that men's parental roles have changed dramatically. Dr. Marks, a senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, said, "Generally speaking, men are more able to be involved. As women are working more, they are not totally dependent on their husbands for money, so the roles are less rigid." She believes that, although the roles have been modified, biological differences are important. "Women are the ones who carry the child and many breast-feed. In those early days, however involved the father is, they miss that connection," she said. However, men make up for this when the child is old enough to be played with. "Men are much more active when playing with their children and encourage their sociability, but when children need comforting or soothing they tend to go to their mother."

Tom Beardshaw, from the charity Fathers Direct, believes these results confirm society's changing views on fatherhood. He said, "this confirms the equal opportunities research which shocked a lot of people by how much fathers want to get involved. There are historical changes such as women working more, and also positive male role models, such as George Clooney, who show that being a proud father is not an unmanly attribute to have."

Now decide which is the correct answer (a, b or c) to the items 6–10 and mark your answers on the answer sheet.

6 A number of modern fathers

- a** are willing to give up their careers to be a stay-at-home parent.
- b** think fatherhood provides discipline in their lives.
- c** would feel afraid of not being able to raise a child.

7 According to the article, a majority of men today

- a** still do not want to attend the birth of their children.
- b** take an active part in pre-natal care.
- c** wish they could afford to have leave when a child is born.

8 If a child were ill, most of the men questioned said

- a** either partner could stay with the child.
- b** the mother should take time off work.
- c** they would stay off work themselves.

9 Dr. Marks comments that

- a** both parents need to take equal time with their new-born baby.
- b** children don't care which parent is around when they are upset.
- c** traditional roles for parenting have changed.

10 Tom Beardshaw points out that

- a** famous people are often poor examples of fatherhood.
- b** society still thinks that a positive attitude to fatherhood is a sign of weakness.
- c** the results of this survey were unexpected.