

I was no stranger to support groups. I have suffered from a severe medical condition all my life which has required the support of others who can understand where I am coming from. A fathers support group, however, was something I never expected to be involved in. The idea of a support group for fathers never would have dawned on me. You see, having a child seemed like the ultimate goal of my life. In many ways, I am very domestic. I settled down early, having met a beautiful woman who I wanted to spend my life with. When she became pregnant, we were both overjoyed. Why would anyone need fathers support groups?

It turns out that having a kid isn't exactly like you would expect. Don't get me wrong - I am still happy that I have a child. She is a constant joy to me, and a reminder of the beauty and continuity of life. Nevertheless, sometimes it stresses me out. That is why I go to my fathers support group. It is really good for me to be able to deal with other fathers, sharing our concerns and our understanding about how to raise a child.

Ideally, I would rather go to a parent support group that accepts both fathers and mothers, but nothing like this exists in the area I am living in. I suppose that the advantage of having separate fathers support groups and mothers support groups is that it makes sure that everyone feels comfortable. However strange it may be, some people don't really feel quite as open and comfortable in a mixed gender group. Fathers support groups give these people a chance to feel comfortable with themselves.

Of course, the strength and value of a fathers support group depends on who is involved in it. I have heard of some fathers support groups that are completely filled with some rather angry, militant men. Some of them are nothing more than a guise for equal child custody advocates, people who think that fathers are systematically cheated out of the right to hold custody over their children. In general, however, these types of dads support groups are pretty easy to spot. People with a chip on their shoulder always stand out in a crowd, and once you can spot them, you can stay away from them. What I want in my support group is a nurturing community of loving parents.