

FATHERS MATTER



| 6 FILMS | DISCUSSION GUIDE

Family
Portrait

In
Time

Everything
a Boy Could
Want

Melodi

Airwalker

Manskap

HEARTLINES



Find resources, tips and more
information at

www.fathersmatter.org.za

**FATHERS
MATTER**

is an initiative of

HEARTLINES

THE CENTRE FOR VALUES PROMOTION

www.heartlines.org.za

Do fathers matter in their children's lives?

This question brings up many different answers for all of us, depending on our experience with our father, other father figures in our lives, or our current experience of being a father or mother. Through this discussion guide, based on the Heartlines Fathers Matter film series, we're hoping you'll also be able to say, "Yes, fathers do matter!"

About Fathers Matter

Fathers Matter is a Heartlines initiative to promote the positive and active presence of fathers in children's lives. Men can be physically present, but not there emotionally for their children. They can also be present, but have a negative effect on their children. On the other hand, men can be physically apart from their children, but still be positively and emotionally involved in their lives. Positive, active and involved men are not necessarily biological fathers; they can also be "social fathers" like extended family members, grandfathers, community leaders and other father figures.

Research shows that children who grow up without good male role models are at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence, illness, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, not doing well at school, and negative economic outcomes when they are older.

However, these are risks, not something that will definitely happen. It's never too late for relationships to be built or fixed, and for fathers to have a positive influence in their children's lives – no matter their age.





The films

At the centre of the project are six different films set in various places around South Africa. Each film is a deeply moving and inspiring drama that explores the complexities of fatherhood in South Africa today, where most children grow up in homes without their biological fathers.

Through these films (and the many other resources and tools that Heartlines has developed) we want to:

- Create awareness and start conversations about why a father should be positively involved in his child's life – no matter how old they are.
- Create a supportive environment and share resources that organisations and people can use to promote positive fatherhood.

NB – This material is designed to be used by everyone and is NOT just for men.

Films airing dates (Subject to change)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| • Family Portrait | 17 September |
| • In Time | 24 September |
| • Everything a Boy Could Want | 1 October |
| • Melodi | 8 October |
| • Airwalker | 15 October |
| • Manskap | 22 October |

Where can we watch the films?



You can watch the films in one of the following ways:

1. The first film will premiere on SABC 2 on **17 September 2022** at 8:30pm. The next five films will then be aired at the same time on consecutive Saturdays until **22 October 2022**.
2. Each film will be repeated on SABC 2 on the Thursday following its Saturday premiere.
3. You can also find the films on the SABC's video-on-demand app, **TelkomONE** (you can download it from any app store) – which means you can watch them anytime, anywhere, even after they have aired on TV.
4. If you'd like to organise viewings of the films outside of the airing dates, contact the Heartlines team at fathersmatter@heartlines.org.za



How to use this discussion guide

While there is a synopsis for each film in this guide, your group will benefit the most if everyone watches the film before participating in the discussion.

- Over a six-week period, arrange to meet weekly in small groups to watch and then discuss the films. Ideally, a group should include 6–10 people.
- Appoint a person to lead each group.
- Make sure that each leader has a copy of the discussion guide.
- More copies of the discussion guide can be downloaded at www.fathersmatter.org.za
- Encourage group members to watch the film each week.
- The synopsis should only be read out if there are people who have not watched the film.
- Review the discussion questions for each film. Choose the ones that are most relevant for your context, given the time you have available.
- Read the wrap-up aloud to the group.

For companies interested in engaging their employees around the films, this is a topic which is of universal interest. Running a series of sessions with both men and women is a value-add service to your employees. These sessions could align with your employee wellness programme, or with your employee education and development initiatives. The sessions need not take much time – about one hour each, as the films are 30 minutes long. The films are entertaining, thought-provoking, and could be life changing for those who may be grappling with fatherhood.

A word of encouragement from us

Some of the content may trigger a range of responses from viewers. At the end of each section, we recommend a list of resources and organisations that can offer additional support to members in your group.

We'd love to hear your feedback on how the sessions go! Chat to us on any of our social media channels listed at the end of the guide.



Family Portrait

Film synopsis

Ayize is a struggling artist who becomes a new father when his girlfriend Nomvula has a baby. He is devoted to both her and their baby girl, Zenzile. But he must prove to his rather terrifying and tough mother-in-law Cecelia that he is good enough to be a good dad, even though he can't provide financially. Can he gain Cecelia's trust and support even though he doesn't have a steady job?

Family Portrait explores how important a father is in the first 1000 days of a child's life – and the obstacles that sometimes come in the form of family and society.



Discuss

1. What did you enjoy most or least about the film? Which characters stood out for you, surprised you or upset you?
2. How did Ayize feel about being a father of a newborn baby? Do you think he made enough effort to learn what to do as a father?
3. Many people, including the nurse and Nomvula's mom, Cecelia, did not think Ayize should have so much access to the baby. Do you agree or disagree – and why?
4. What did Cecelia, Nomvula's mother, think about Ayize? What do you think of her response to him?
5. Why did Nomvula feel that it was important for Ayize to have contact with the baby in her first 1000 days?
6. Do you agree with Bra Vusi (Ayize's father) when he said that the only important thing is a father's ability to provide? Why or why not?
7. What's one thing you'd like to do or a conversation you'd like to have after watching this film?

Wrap-up

To be read out to the group

In this film we see how Ayize tried to be an involved, caring father to his baby, even though he struggled to earn money or provide for his child financially.

Although he didn't have good practical skills as a father in the beginning (he didn't know how to feed Zenzile, change her nappy, etc.) he was willing to try and to learn. In the end he became quite good at being an involved father. Even though in some cultures we say childcare is more a mother's role than a father's, Ayize was prepared to do what he believed was best for his child.

Despite opposition and scorn from Nomvula's mother, Cecelia, he kept trying and eventually built trust. Both he and Nomvula realised how important a father's presence is, right from the start of a child's life. Research confirms this too. By helping care for Zenzile, Ayize also gave Nomvula practical support by freeing up her time.

Children grow up with a distinct advantage when they have a father who is involved in their lives, especially in the first three years. Both men and women can learn how to care for children. Skills in parenting build confidence and women should encourage fathers to play a positive role in children's lives.

Next step

If you're a father, WhatsApp **"Hi"** to **060 058 2107** and find tips and advice for dads of young children.





In Time

Film synopsis

Lerumo is a migrant miner, working on the gold mines far from his wife Amanda and daughter Bokamoso. But he is a loving father who spares nothing to show up for his child. When his daughter is offered an opportunity to race in front of top university recruiters for an athletics scholarship, he is determined to do anything he can to be on the sidelines cheering her on. But many obstacles threaten to throw him off track. Can he make it in time?

This film explores how a father who is far away from his children can still be present in their lives through perseverance and determination.



Discuss

1. What stood out for you in this film? Which characters stood out for you and why?
2. Lerumo has a very special relationship with his daughter, Bokamoso. What do you think of their relationship and how do you think they were able to stay in touch when Lerumo worked so far away?
3. Felix tells Lerumo: *"Trust me, you are doing enough."* Do you agree that Lerumo was doing enough as a father?
4. What do you think about the foreman's words to Lerumo:
"We have no control over the fathers we had, but we can have control over the fathers we become."
5. What do you think of Bokamoso's words to Lerumo:
"You were here. Your voice was in my head all the time. Your love was enough. Dad... you have been there for me all along, your voice I've felt within me, always guiding me, encouraging me, supporting me."
6. What's one thing you feel encouraged to think about or do after watching this film?

Wrap-up

To be read out to the group

A physically absent father can still be present for his children, no matter how far away he is.

This story shows that even though Lerumo was working far away from his daughter Bokamoso, he made every effort to keep the relationship strong. Lerumo wanted to be involved in his child's life. He coached her in running and stayed in regular contact with her. He constantly spoke to her and encouraged her.

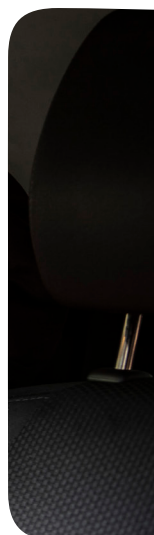
Lerumo saw his responsibility as a father as being more than just providing money.

He wanted the very best for Bokamoso and made sure that she knew he was always thinking about her, even if he couldn't always be there. Even when a father lives far away from his child, there are ways he can still be involved in their lives and reassure them of his love. Through his actions and words, and by being consistent, Lerumo helped Bokamoso know that she was secure in his love – and this helped shape her identity in a powerful way.

Next step

Check out the additional resources section at the end of this guide to find organisations that help and guide fathers, and consider joining one of them.





Everything a Boy Could Want

Film synopsis

Martin is a rich businessman who financially provides everything his family needs. But he is emotionally cruel, impossible to please and hardly ever there for his son, Lester. Lester has everything money can buy, except what he longs for the most – the love and approval of his father. When Martin insists that his son go to boarding school so he can follow in his father's rugby footsteps, they are forced to take a tense road trip together that threatens to break them apart forever.

This film considers whether material provision is enough to support the well-being of children.



Discuss

1. What stood out for you in this film? Which character could you most relate to?
2. Do you think Martin was justified in wanting Lester to be as good at rugby as he was?
3. Do many fathers expect their children to fulfil dreams they have for them?
4. What do you think about Lester's relationship with his father – and Arno's relationship with his father?
5. Martin felt that his most important task as a father was to provide financially for his family. Do you agree – why or why not?
6. Do you think Martin's behaviour and attitude towards Lester were affected by his own father experience? Why?
7. What do you think Martin learnt about his son – and himself – on the road trip?

Wrap-up

To be read out to the group

From his own experience of growing up in a home where money was tight, Martin made the mistake of thinking that his only job was to provide a comfortable life for his wife and children. This left Lester feeling unsupported, unloved and misunderstood.

To provide for his family, Martin focused his attention on succeeding at work and didn't take an interest in the things that Lester was interested in. Many fathers today make the same mistake. Some also try and find the affirmation they are longing for through work, and justify it as part of being a father who provides financially. Money doesn't buy love and respect.

Lester had his own interests and felt that he was not a good rugby player, unlike his dad. Martin needed to find out what Lester's interests and passions were, and to support and encourage him to follow his own dreams.

Fathers need to make sure they are spending quality time with their children. If their own fathers were absent or destructive, it is important to find new positive role models or examples.

Next step

On the fathersmatter.org.za site, we have articles and stories about how to spend meaningful time with your child, even when funds are low.





Melodi

Film synopsis

Melodi is a successful banker who was raised by a loving single mother, Sesi. She is about to be married to Liyanda. Wedding plans are underway and lobola negotiations are about to start. But all this brings back old wounds and deep feelings of abandonment. Why did her father, Mojalefa, abandon her as a baby? Melodi decides to deal with the pain of her past by searching for a father she never knew, before making a commitment of her own. Will this journey bring her healing?

This film unpacks the tension and pain of growing up without a father and how connecting with your story can be an important step in dealing with the pain.



Discuss

1. What stood out for you in the film? Which of the characters could you most identify with?
2. How was Melodi's life affected by her father not being around? Why do you think she tried to find out where her father was?
3. Sesi was not impressed by Melodi wanting to find her father. What do you think of her response?
4. What do you think of the choices Mojalefa made, both with his previous family and his current family?
5. How do you think Unathi (Mojalefa's wife) felt when she discovered that Mojalefa had a grown-up daughter? What do you think of her response to Melodi?
6. How do you think the meeting between Melodi and her father affected everyone, including Melodi, Mojalefa, Unathi and Sesi?
7. Having seen this film, what's one conversation you'd like to have – and with whom?

Wrap-up

To be read out to the group

In this film we see how Mojalefa chose to walk away from his commitment to his child, Melodi. His absence left a deep gap in her life – causing hurt, emptiness and a wound of rejection.

Regardless of the personal decisions a father makes, his children should always feel sure of his love and concern for them.

We also need to look at Sesi's unwillingness to allow Mojalefa to be involved in Melodi's life because he could not provide for them financially. Some mothers – and stepmothers or new wives – create barriers that prevent fathers from being involved in their children's lives, just as Sesi and Unathi did.

Mothers are encouraged to give responsible fathers access to their children, even if they cannot provide financially. Fathers need to be committed to spending time with their children. They need to find ways and opportunities to love, to play with and to teach their children, and, wherever possible, to put their child's needs before their own.

Next step

If you are dealing with the wound of an absent father, you can find resources at the end of this guide to help you take your next step in dealing with it, or you may want to explore going for counselling.





Airwalker

Film synopsis

Zoë is a gifted young skateboarder whose talent earns her a spot in a promo for her favourite skate park. Her parents, Bridget and Mike, are separated, and their continual fighting affects her deeply. Caught between their lies and constant arguments, a frustrated Zoë lands up in a life-threatening situation. But is this enough to give her parents a reality check?

Airwalker is a powerful exploration of how fighting parents affect a child's well-being and why seeking peace is important.

AIRWALKER

Discuss

1. What did you think about the film? Which character(s) inspired or upset you? Who could you relate to?
2. Why do you think Zoë felt the conflict between her parents was her fault? And why do you think she was so keen to spend weekends with her dad, Mike?
3. Why did Bridget lie to Zoë about Mike not wanting to let Zoë continue skateboarding? How did this affect Zoë?
4. What do you think of the role Rufus played in Zoë's life?
5. There's a scene where Rufus says: *"There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear."* Do you think that Zoë needed more love – or something else?
6. Zoe dealt with her anger and frustration through her passion for skateboarding. What are some harmful – and helpful ways – young people can deal with relational tension?
7. How could Mike and Bridget have worked together better when making decisions for Zoë?

Wrap-up

To be read out to the group

In this film we see the damage that can be caused in a child's life when their parents don't get on with each other or compete for their child's affection. Zoë became angry and lonely because of her parents' conflict. Many young people can identify with this.

Research shows that shared decision-making and good communication between parents is essential for children's well-being.

Just as Mike and Bridget could have also spent more time trying to find out from Zoë what she really needed, parents who are separated also need to try their best not to let their children get in the middle of their own difficult relationship.

It is also important to remember the key role that Rufus played in Zoë's life by listening to her, encouraging her and coaching her. Trustworthy coaches, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, teachers, grandparents and extended family members can play an important role in our children's lives by supporting and encouraging them.

Next step

If you're no longer in a relationship with the mother of your child, and things between you are so strained that they are impacting your child or children, it might help to have family counselling sessions with one of the organisations listed at the end of this discussion guide.



Manskap

Film synopsis

Kyle is a troubled but promising young man, unemployed, fatherless and raised by a single mother. With nothing much to keep him motivated besides his love for cars, Kyle finds himself in the clutches of a powerful local gang leader, Rooi. When another father figure steps in to offer him a new sense of direction, Kyle must make a choice. Can Bra Warren help Kyle find a different path in his life? Does Kyle want it badly enough?

Manskap explores how social fathers can play an important role in the lives of children and young people.



Discuss

1. How do you feel about this film? What surprised, upset or shocked you?
2. Why do you think Kyle was tempted to get involved with Rooi and his crew? What other options did he have?
3. What do you think motivated Bra Warren to take an interest in Kyle and to try help him?
4. Rooi could also be considered a father figure to Andrew, Kyle and Keegan. What do you think of the type of father figure Rooi played?
5. There are many complex relationships in this film – Sandra and Rooi; Mrs Williams and Kyle; Andrew and Kyle. Which ones got you thinking?
6. Bra Warren spoke about slaying a “Goliath”. Are there any “Goliaths” in your life or community that you feel challenged to do something about? Who are the “Bra Warrens” who might help you?
7. What do you think of the decision Kyle made in the end? What do you think it cost him to make that decision?

Wrap-up

To be read out to the group

Research shows that over 60% of children in South Africa are growing without their biological father in their home. Social fathers, like trustworthy youth group leaders, teachers, Sunday school teachers, sports coaches, uncles, grandfathers, and older brothers can play a vital role in filling some of the gaps that exist in young lives.

In the film, Bra Warren played an important role in filling the gap in Kyle's life.

We need to consider what role we can play in the lives of children and young people who have no biological fathers.

Many people carry hurt and sad memories because they grew up without a father figure in their home. Maybe we carry feelings of anger and unforgiveness ourselves.

We encourage you to reach out and, if necessary, to find counselling.

Next step

Is there a young person in your life you could encourage or become a mentor to? If you need ideas for what to do with them, you can sign up on our site and browse the free resources we have available.



Additional resources

If you or any of your group members were particularly impacted by one of the discussion topics, we have put together a list of resources and organisations that can offer additional support.

You may also want to recommend further counselling or pastoral support where needed.

Organisation name	What they do	Contact	Website
Fathers In Africa	Offers father-focused support and mentoring programmes for fathers.	Contact Kevin Rutter kevin@fathers.co.za	Website http://fathers.co.za
Izenzo Dad Care	Provides fatherhood training skills.	Contact Mthunzi Qaqana izenzodadcare@gmail.com	Facebook @dadcare
Dad's the Word	Relevant information for new parents.	Contact Ros Vroom ros@dadsttheword.com	Website www.dadsttheword.com
SAVF Famnet	Guide to restoration from father wounds (available online).	Contact Erna Rheeder erheeder@savf.co.za	Website http://justdadit.co.za/the-guide-to-restoration-from-father-pain/
Character Company	Mentorship programme for boys from 5 years old and onwards.	Contact Jaco v Schalkwyk jaco.ch@racter.co.za	Website https://www.thecharactercompany.co.za
Father a Nation	Surrogate fathers and mentorship programme.	Contact Craig Wilkinson craig@fatheranation.co.za	Website www.fatheranation.co.za
Families South Africa	Counselling services relating to marriage, divorce.	Contact famsa@famsawc.org.za	Website https://www.famsawc.org.za
Growing Up Without a Father Foundation	Outreach to prisons, schools and communities.	Contact Charley Pietersen pietersenc@gmail.com	Website https://growingupwithoutafather.org.za
The Mankind Project	Growth and healing retreats for men. Mentorship and training.	Contact Mark Van Der Walt baobabfg@gmail.com	Website https://mankindproject.co.za/live/

National Family Foundation of South Africa	Counselling for families, couples and individuals.	Contact Khanyisa Mothema kteffo@gmail.com	Facebook @ NationalFamilyFoundationOfSA
The Fatherhood Foundation	Fatherhood programmes developed for young adults, couples and single parents. Mentoring for fathers in prison.	Contact Zane Meas zane@ffsa.org.za	Website https://www.ffsa.org.za
South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)	Mental health helplines, support groups and resources.	See website for list of services and contact numbers.	Website: https://www.sadag.org
We're Fathers, We're Parents Forum	Rights awareness and legal guidance for fathers	Contact Tshibuleni Eric Musinyali admin@wfwpf.org.za	Website www.wfwpf.org.za/contact-us/



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