

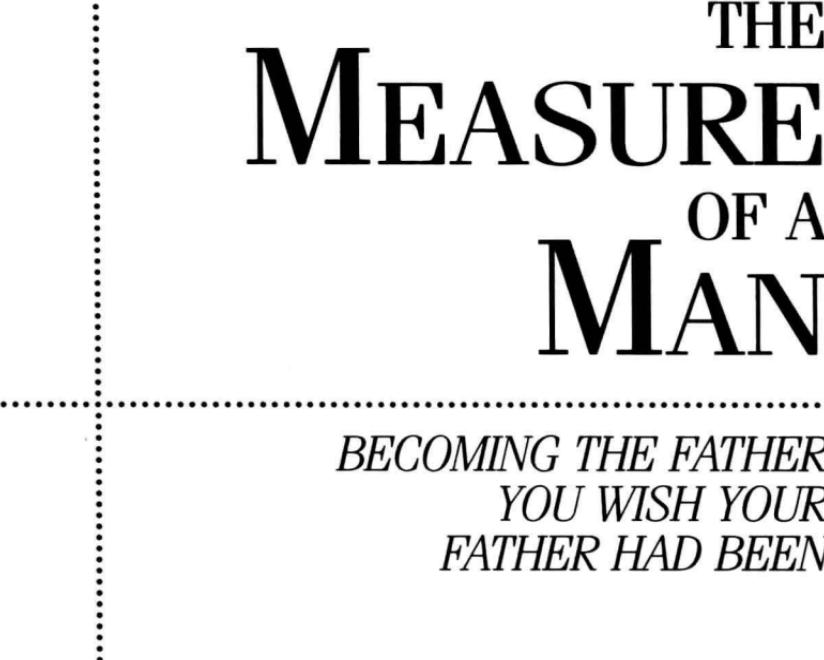
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COMPREHENSIVE...  
Both men and women  
can learn from this work."  
*Publishers Weekly*

# The Measure of a Man

Becoming the Father  
You Wish Your Father  
Had Been

Jerrold Lee  
Shapiro, Ph.D.





THE  
MEASURE  
OF A  
MAN

*BECOMING THE FATHER  
YOU WISH YOUR  
FATHER HAD BEEN*

Jerrold Lee Shapiro, Ph.D.

A PERIGEE BOOK

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"MOVING, INSIGHTFUL AND EMINENTLY PRACTICAL . . . *The Measure of a Man* shows that no one replaces the father. Dr. Shapiro encourages us to see the vital role the involved, caring father has in today's family . . . a milestone—a book for every parent."

—Carl Jones, author, *Mind over Labor*

"A MASTERFUL GUIDE TO FATHERHOOD TODAY that successfully blends Jerrold Shapiro's personal and professional wisdom. I highly recommend it to any man who wants to understand himself and improve his relationship with his own father and children."

—James A. Levine, Director,  
The Fatherhood Project,  
Families and Work Institute

"A VALUABLE ADDITION to the growing stack of literature designed to help men assume a more significant role in the family . . . comprehensive discussions."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"BOTH A GUIDE FOR CONTEMPORARY FATHERS and a detailed meditation on the state of fatherhood today . . . a wealth of specific information on the complexities of being a father in a time of shifting sex roles . . . witty, humane, warm, and wise, and by far the best and most inclusive book we've seen on the subject."

—*Dragonsmoke*

"A VALUABLE STUDY . . . Jerry Shapiro is both a father and a therapist, and he brings his experience and his wisdom into this book. I highly recommend it."

—Asa Baber, "Men" columnist, *Playboy* magazine

*In loving memory  
of Myer Shapiro,  
1917–1994*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I want to express my gratitude to the hundreds of men who willingly and openly talked about their personal experiences of fatherhood and manhood. In addition, my understanding of fathering has been greatly impacted by my clients in individual, couples, family, and group therapy and participants in men's groups, who courageously struggled with these matters with me.

Thanks are also extended to Dr. Rob Bischoff, SYSOP of the electronic bulletin board *Shrinktank* for allowing me access to so many men and women in my role as guest SYSOP of the Men's Conference, and to the many radio talk shows and feature writers who have featured my work on fatherhood, showed excellent journalism and genuine interest. Among these, Larry Kutner of *The*

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I suppose I also ought to thank Samuel Langhorne Clemens, George Santayana, and George Bernard Shaw, whom I always seem to be quoting whenever I believe I have come up with a truly unique perception.

Finally, and most of all, I give profound thanks to my father, Myer Shapiro, who gave me more than he could know; to my mother, Beatrice, and sister, Linda, for their love; and to Natasha and Gabriel, my children. They had to give up their own time with Daddy so he could write a book on fathering. I will never love anyone the way I love them, nor be so transformed by another presence or being.

## FOREWORD

The labor of love that resulted in *The Measure of a Man* began with my wife's first pregnancy and the birth of our daughter in 1981. It continued and magnified with our son's birth in 1988. Fatherhood has been the single most powerful event in my life. It colors everything I do. My dreams, hopes, and aspirations have been transformed with the existence of my children. As a father I am more connected to mankind, to my own father, and to the future.

As the fascination with these changes took over much of my mental and emotional life, I felt pushed to share my feelings and ideas with other men who were in the same situation and with those who were my seniors.

This book has a very personal basis. However, my personal experience of fatherhood is probably far more fascinating to me than to anyone else. What is important is how my personal understanding matches the way men in general experience this core component of masculine identity. The power of my personal experience led me to explore fathering in scientific and personal ways. This book is an attempt to share that learning.

You will find in this book the combined input and knowledge of hundreds of men. As much as possible, I have provided examples and quotations from the men I interviewed. I am exceptionally grateful to everyone who shared so openly their hopes, dreams,

and fears as fathers. They came from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The information came from several sources: scientific surveys, men's groups, psychotherapy, electronic media, lectures and workshops, literature, and personal experience.

**SURVEYS.** There was an initial comprehensive survey of 227 expectant and recent fathers. The men in that survey roughly matched U.S. census population groups. A second survey followed, in which another eighty men who had been fathers for at least a year were interviewed. The third survey involved 203 couples. These couples had been parents for at least a year. Ten percent had children who had grown and left home. Finally a survey of 90 experienced fathers was completed. These men each had at least one child and had been fathering for at least four years. Each of these survey studies involved a taped, structured interview and completion of questionnaires.

**CLINICAL SOURCES.** Data for the book also came from clinical sources. As a leader of men's groups since the mid 1960s, I have been privy to the rawest expression of the delights and pains of maleness and fatherhood. It was in such groups that I began to understand the fact that fatherhood was a core of masculinity, and the influence of a man's children in his life.

In addition to the men's groups I have been in the private practice of individual, couples, family, and group psychotherapy for over twenty years. In that time I have been able to get to know in very intimate ways scores of single and married men, fathers who were present for their families and those who were absent, single fathers and stepfathers, older fathers and new fathers. In this process I have become aware of the influence of these men in their families and the centrality of their families to their personal lives. Over three hundred of my clients' lives are represented in the work in this book.

**ELECTRONIC MEDIA.** Information on fathering has also come through my computer conversations with hundreds of men and

women on electronic bulletin boards. These BBS's offer people a forum to air their concerns and grievances in a semi-anonymous way. Among the BBS's that I have regularly used to communicate with others and to be able to observe conversations among men and women are Prodigy, America Online, and Shrinktank. I have been the host of the men's conference on the last for over two years.

Telecommunication has played another role in helping me better understand fathers. Since the initial publication of my book *When Men Are Pregnant*, in 1987, I have appeared on over one hundred radio and television programs. Many of these were call-in shows. These forums allowed me an opportunity to talk to scores of people across the country whom I otherwise would not have met.

LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS. In the past several years I have been giving talks and conducting workshops on male psychology, fatherhood, and family issues. At these talks I have been able to hear the concerns and questions of a great number of fathers and mothers and potential parents. I am sure that they have given me as much as I have given them. Ideas, questions, pragmatic solutions to everyday problems, and their life stories have all sharpened my understanding of fathering as it exists in North America today.

THE LITERATURE ON FATHERHOOD. Finally there is a small but growing literature on fathering. I have attempted to give a reasonable summary of my colleagues' work here and to build on it. Their perceptions, research, and conclusions have added immeasurably to my personal understanding of myself, of men, and of fathers.

I feel honored to be privy to the most central aspects of men's lives and feelings about fatherhood. I have endeavored to treat their conversations with the respect and admiration with which I hold them. Because of that, unless men specifically requested that I quote them directly or agreed to be quoted when I asked, no personal identification of any individual is provided. Personal information is disguised to protect confidentiality. Names were changed, and any specific correspondence with an individual is purely coincidental.



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# FATHERING TODAY