

Work in Progress

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

www.michelecrawford.ca

www.willowhousewellness.com

E-mail to michelecrawford@dccnet.com

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Work in Progress October 2007 Volume II Issue X

Feature Article: The Biology of a Father’s Nurturance of Children

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- 1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

Recent research proposes that a man’s hormones may actually allow him to experience a fuller range of emotion, particularly in his ability to provide nurturing to children, than assumed by stereotypes. In other words, the homo sapien male may be more androgynous than aggressive, in spite of culturally recognized roles.

Like everything else, it all begins with animals. In ninety percent of birds and the majority of fish, fathers care for their young. Mammals are the only major group of vertebrates in which mothers are more

involved. Among mammals, 90% of fathers leave after conception or birth.

For example, when a litter of kittens is born, the father cat is usually absent. Focusing first on the role of hormones on mother cats, we all know stories of an occasional cat who simply abandons her kittens as soon as they emerge.

On the other end of the spectrum, I remember an amazing account of a stray cat who returned six times to carry her babies out of a burning warehouse. By the final trip, her fur was dreadfully scorched and she was barely alive. The good news: firefighters recognized what she had accomplished and took all seven cats to a vet at their own expense... and eventually found them all good homes.

The differences between these female cats can be directly attributed to hormones released by the brain. The same phenomenon takes place in human mothers and new studies brings to light it also occurs to varying degrees in male human beings.

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## 2) Feature Article: The Biology of a Father's Nurturance of Children

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Expecting fathers often experience symptoms similar to pregnant women, such as morning sickness, water retention, food cravings, weight gain, and so on. Until now, these reactions were thought to be psychological. However, some Canadian studies have now identified hormonal changes to be the root cause of these symptoms.

Testosterone levels, (the hormone associated with aggression, territoriality, hunting, etc.), plummet. If bird fathers are given testosterone, they spend more time defending their territory than tending care of offspring. Although testosterone levels return to normal after 4-7 weeks, the very best fathers have already devoted themselves to their parental role.

In addition, fathers have higher levels of estrogen (the female sex hormone), than other men. Prolactin (the hormone associated with promoting lactation in women), rises approximately 20% in expectant fathers. Finally, cortisol (the stress hormone, but also an indicator of a mother's attachment to her baby), increases and dictate a more natural response to a baby's cry in infancy.

The impact of bonding, made more probable by these chemical changes, is designed to last a lifetime. In Canadian culture during the past decade, fathers have taken a greater responsibility in childcare and family relations.

This all translates to evidence that men are biologically prepared for fatherhood more so than previously assumed. These chemical changes create more devoted dads. The best fathers, the best nurturing men, need not to be reliant on testosterone. Other hormones are important to influence men to stay connected to the lives of their children, whether they share a household or not.

A father's presence makes a big difference in a child's longterm development. Children of involved fathers:

- regulate their emotions better;
- have better social skills;
- better success in school;
- fosters self-efficacy;
- provides a significant buffer against depression, conduct problems and substance abuse; and
- possess a more positive worldview and higher self-worth.

Michele Crawford RCC CCC at
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com or
Phone: 604-515-9727
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca

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### 3) About Michele

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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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### 4) Counselling Services

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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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I want to reassure you that your e-mail address will never be shared or sold to anyone else.

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Michele Crawford RCC CCC
Willow House Wellness Ltd.
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com
Phone: 604-515-9727
Fax: 604-515-9728