

GLOBAL DAD SURVEY 2020

**Considerations
and opportunities
for dads**



**SUIT TIE
STROLLER**

CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

For dads

The lockdown experience turned the world upside down in an unprecedented way, altering our very way of life. Managing through the pandemic meant changing how we run our lives and making decisions based on needs rather than norms. This impacted how we prioritised and distributed paid and unpaid work within the home.

As the world resets, many systems, patterns and norms are being challenged for the first time. How can you take advantage of this unique opportunity to shape the life you want for you and your family? There is no better time to act!

A framework for change

Change doesn't just happen by itself. Nor does it happen over night. Lasting change requires:

- an awareness of what needs to change and why
- a deep desire for the change and a commitment by all involved to see it through
- an understanding of how things will be different from the previous way of doing things, including changes to priorities, actions, decision-making, behaviours and interactions
- practicing doing things the new way consistently
- acknowledging, reinforcing and rewarding all involved for continuing to implement new ways of doing things.

Change is usually incremental, but understanding what the new ideal looks like for your family can enable you to start working together to get there. Lasting change requires a clear vision for a better way of life and a steadfast resolve to get there.



Before launching into what your ideal future looks like, start by understanding your current state.

Consider your previous **family set up before COVID**, how it functioned and the basis for why things were the way they were. As appropriate for your situation, discuss the following with your partner and / or whole family:

- How caring responsibilities were previously allocated for your family and what the benefits were
- How income was generated and why (e.g. future earning potential, family tradition, best fit of skills / personality, individual priorities, social norms etc.)
- How and why domestic tasks were allocated
- How the mental load was managed. Mental load is the day-to-day planning and resolving of current and future family needs. If you have a partner, a good starting point can be to both write down what you perceive as the mental load for the next six months.

Once you have carefully considered each point above, reflect on how well this structure was working. How did you and your partner / spouse / family feel about this set up? If nothing had changed:

- What were the likely ramifications for your relationships with your family members?
- What were the ramifications for your career(s) and ability to provide in the future?

Consider the foundational values you hold for your family (on which you consciously and subconsciously) make decisions, such as health, relationships, financial prosperity, family etc. How has your set up reflected those values historically? What has been the impact when those values are or aren't aligned with your lived reality?



Family considerations

Everyone in your family will have unique perspectives about what the lockdown experience has been. They will have different insights on what they loved or disliked, what they learned and the things they want to continue.

To continue developing the vision of your ideal family set up, move to reflecting and discussing what has changed over this recent period:

- Talk with your family (including children) about what they valued from the lockdown experience and what everyone's ideal new norm would look like if there were no previous givens
- Prioritise your family's ideals and consider the changes and trade offs required to implement them
- Shape and document your new goals and intentions at a high level. This may be as simple as "Eat a meal together every day", without getting into the specific solution that might enable that
- Document the core values that your ideal norm is based on with examples of what that means, e.g. *Health - putting our health above external commitments, staying home when we are sick (including actually taking sick days) and saying no to activities that take away from our physical and mental health*
- Display your outline of your ideal new norm somewhere visible to your family to maintain accountability. Start assessing your progress frequently and consult your family values when making family decisions.
- Assess your progress each week and celebrate even the small wins and milestones you achieve together as you implement and maintain your new norm.



Work considerations

Does your ideal new norm involve requesting a change to your current (or pre COVID-19) work arrangement? If so:

- **Understand the different types of flexible working arrangements** available to work out what will best suit you, the work you do and your organisation.
- **Explain to your managers and teams** how important flexibility, connectedness with family and mental wellbeing has become to you during this period. Voicing it makes it safe for others to do so and helps you re-enter the workplace with a new level of authenticity.
- **Articulate what you want and why.** Make sure you can detail what you need, why you need it and the business impact to implement. Check if your request fits within existing workplace policies, or whether policy changes will need to be made in order to implement. Also consider if your required arrangements are formal (permanent) or informal (ad hoc).
- **Find examples of leaders in your organisation** (or network) who are leading the way in creating inclusive, supportive and trusting environments for people to express their concerns and ideas for more effective ways of working. Role model what you say and do and hold others accountable to do the same.
- **Learn about workplaces that are leading the way in flexible working** and supporting parents of all genders. Understand examples of what "good" can look like. Where possible, model your own ideal arrangements from best practice and use that model as part of your rationale for your request to change your working arrangement.
- **Plan how you will approach your workplace.** Just like a job interview, plan out different scenarios for your conversation and prepare answers for each to give you confidence for having the conversation. For more tips on having the conversation with your workplace, refer to <https://www.suittiestroller.com/having-the-conversation>
- **Support the education of employers, where possible, so they see the benefits of being open to new ways of working.** Don't forget organisations want to keep high performing employees and ensure they are engaged. In periods of economic downturn, when monetary rewards may diminish, raise awareness of what other non-monetary benefits you and other fathers may value in the meantime.



Yourself

- **Know you are not alone** in your challenges and desires to find the right balance, connect and play an active role in your home life.
- **Connect with and support others** by opening up conversations with dads of all ages. Needs and desires can change at different stages of fatherhood as well. Even if you don't personally want to change your circumstances, be an ally of those who do. Look for ways to connect and support other dads in your workplace and community (e.g. join or start a dads/parents group) and counteract bias around men's involvement with kids and family.
- **Open up conversations with mums** on how they have found this time ways we can leverage opportunities together as a parenting community.
- **Recognise that the changes you want to make will go against some people's conscious and unconscious views of what it means to be a "man", to be "successful", and to be "committed to a career".** These people ... might even be you. This can lead to inaction or feeling judged. Be prepared for this, know you can't change everyone's mind, but don't let it stop you designing the best life for you and your family. Always seek to understand and empower others, even if you hold different views.
- **Many people have experienced mental health challenges as a result of the isolation period.** Are you suffering or have you suffered from anxiety about the future or other issues related to your wellbeing? Consider seeking the support of a trained professional to help you think through your next steps and how to best care for your mental health.



ABOUT SUIT TIE STROLLER

When Blake became a father he quickly realised how inherently biased society is against dads playing an active caring role. This led him to found Suit Tie Stroller, a social initiative empowering working dads to be actively involved parents and advocating for policies to better support modern families and workplaces.

THE AUTHORS



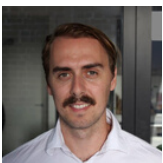
Blake Woodward is the founder of Suit Tie Stroller and a father of two. He has over 12 years experience working as a management consultant for Big 4 consultancy firms, advising governments and corporates on organisational change, workforce planning, people strategy, organisational culture and employee engagement.



Roseanna Leddy is a business executive who has a background leading corporate strategy, sales teams and diversity and inclusion work. Today she spends most of her time working with male CEOs to step up beside women to create a gender equal world.



Sumathi Murthy is a mum to two boys, a collaboration consultant and photographer. She is passionate about supporting dads as she believes by doing this we help mums, families and our communities.



Paul Liddell is a father of two who designs his way through the day creating apps and visual design. He is the design guy for all things Suit Tie Stroller. Paul has enjoyed two periods of parental leave and is passionate about promoting the benefits of his experience to new dads.

CONTACT US

If you would like to get in touch with Suit Tie Stroller, please email us at suittiestroller@gmail.com or visit the website at www.suittiestroller.com



SUIT TIE STROLLER