



PRESS RELEASE

Friday, July 31, 2020

Movember encourages new dads to get online and connect during isolation

A men's health initiative backed by [Movember](#) and aimed at connecting new dads, is encouraging fathers to get online and join a local '[Dads Group](#)' - particularly now when men are isolated and struggling more than ever before.

Figures recently released by men's health charity Movember, exploring the impact of COVID-19 on social connections, reveals that almost a third (29 per cent) of men surveyed had not checked in with friends or family to find out how they were doing during the crisis, compared with only 16 per cent of women and a third of men felt their relationships with friends and work colleagues had weakened since stay-at-home/physical distancing restrictions had been imposed.

Queensland-based 'Dads Group' founder Tom Docking initially pitched his Dads Group idea to the charity as part of Movember's Social Innovators Challenge.

The aim of the challenge was to support the development of innovative ideas that could increase social connections and feelings of belongingness in men; particularly those at greater risk of social isolation, like new fathers, unemployed and divorced men and men of low-socio economic status.

The challenge came in response to previously funded Movember research through beyondblue, that highlighted the importance of strong social networks to mitigate risk factors of associated with isolation, loneliness, depression, anxiety and suicide.

A 2019 Movember-funded Ipsos MORI survey about new fathers, reinforced the need for dedicated dad's groups. The survey revealed that one in four (26%) of Aussie men felt socially isolated when they first became a father while one in five Australian men (22%) said they had lost touch with close mates after becoming a dad.

Supported by a financial contribution from Movember, 'Dads Group' aims to help hundreds of new fathers across Australia, both in person and online, connect and support each other. The only group of its kind in Australia, 'Dads Group' was developed by Tom and his wife Kate, when the couple found there was a gap in support options for men approaching fatherhood for the first time.

There are now over 100 groups across the country for young and expectant dads.

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"I went looking for support programs for expectant and new dads and there was nothing," he said. "There just didn't seem to be any groups where new dads could get together and hang out."

'Dads Group' has since spread across the country with positive results and engagement. However, the social impact of COVID-19 this year, has disrupted the opportunity for face-to-face meetings in many parts of the country.

"It is concerning because although we have adapted our meetings to a daily online platform, new dads aren't showing up in the numbers we'd expect or hope for."

Tom said new fathers needed the support of other new fathers, to connect around common parenting issues and to discuss their insecurities, fears, stresses and wins, in safe space.

"COVID has made meeting up in person harder, but the daily online group is a fantastic option for dads who are isolated or perhaps can't commit to a meet up because of their situation." Movember's Global Director, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Brendan Maher said, "Many of us have had to re-think how to keep working and stay connected when COVID-19 turned things upside down.

"Dad's Group was no different and quickly moved from face-to-face catch-ups to online forums. We believe it's important for these new dads to keep that connection going where possible. While face-to-face meetings are preferable to many dads, the online group can still provide important social benefits," he said.

Tom said he was keen to see the online member numbers increase.

"We need to get the word out that we are here, and we can help. There are new dads out there that don't know about our group and would really psychologically benefit from being a part of it," he said.

Sunshine Coast University researcher and clinical psychologist Mary Gregory helped compile a study on why we need Dads Group.

The research revealed (33%) of Dad's who were not involved with Dad's Group had no idea where they could go for support while only (3%) of Dad's involved with Dad's Group felt this way. Five times as many dads in the general community (27%) felt they and their family were not at all connected within their community compared with dads who attended DGI events (5%). Most importantly Dads who attend Dad's Group know where they can go to get help (42%) whereas only 20% of dads in the general community knew where to go to get assistance.

Mary said there had been rapid societal changes, from dads not being hugely involved in childcare, to now being expected to do quite a bit.



“A lot of new dads don’t have all the skills they need mainly because their fathers were probably not nearly as involved in raising them as these dads are now,” she said. “New dads are hard to reach and engage with but because of the high rates of mental health problems there needs to be groups which are targeted for support.”

“Tom’s ‘Dads Group’ has a different model that can capture some of those dads we’ve been missing in the past.”

Mary said joining the online ‘Dads Group’ could potentially be as effective as face-to-face groups, for social connection benefits as research is showing that telehealth is as effective as face to face programs. In the future having the flexibility of both online and face to face groups.

How to connect with Dads Group or to find out more:

Go to Dads Group [website](#) / Reach out: info@dadsgroup.org / Join the [Facebook group /Online daily meeting link](#)

Crisis support can be found at Lifeline: (13 11 14 and lifeline.org.au)

CASE STUDY 1: Ronnie Lynch, Ettalong, NSW, AGE 39.

“I’m a new dad, I have a 14-week-old. I didn’t know what to expect coming into fatherhood and supporting my wife through the epic journey she’s had.

“It appeared that there was lots of support for women, because they need it and it’s very important, but I just found that there wasn’t a great deal of anything out there for men, to chat to someone or connect to likeminded people, so I just thought why not Google a dads group in my area and see if there’s anything going on and ‘Dads Group’ popped up.

“I joined the online zoom meeting and it was really good. We just shared some experiences and it’s really non-judgemental and welcoming. It’s just a nice place to be. I just felt really supported from the get-go.

“I feel much less isolated now, especially with what’s going on in the world. You don’t know the connections you might create, the friendships you might make and if you don’t give it a go, you’ll never know, will you? That’s my philosophy, you might as well give it a try.”

CASE STUDY 2: Connor White, Melbourne, Age 21.

“My child Archie is six months old. I work full-time at home at the moment. I guess it was pretty hard becoming a new dad because I lost my own dad in December last year, so it was a bit of a tough time. I think the Dads Group certainly helps, because there’s a lot of advice and no judgement. Tom and the guys are great, they definitely helped me through a lot of stuff I didn’t know about.

“I’m pretty young so I didn’t have anyone around my age who was going through the same thing. I had one friend, but he had his baby a month before mine, so we were both in the dark.

“I was lost for the first couple of months, especially when Covid hit. I wasn’t lonely but I definitely felt isolated from people who I could have talked to about it.

“I love how I can just jump online and have a chat about whatever or some days I might just feel like listening to what other guys are going through – even if it’s not relevant I might still get something out of it, either now or later.



“I guess it was a good time for Covid to happen because I have had a lot more time at home to watch Archie grow up than guys who have had to go to work and missed it all. The group’s helped me be a better dad.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editor: All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from Ipsos MORI. Total sample size was 4,000 men (1,000 in the USA, 1,000 in the UK, 1,000 in Australia, 1,000 in Canada). Fieldwork in was undertaken between 10th and 14th May 2019 (Australia), 7th and 14th May 2019 (UK), 9th and 15th May 2019 (Canada) and 9th and 15th May (USA). The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all men (aged 18 - 75) in each market. The full report can be viewed [here](#)

References

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2020. Population clock.

[www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/1647509ef7e25faaca2568a900154b63?opendocument]. Accessed 24 January 2020.

COVID-19 research: SRC conducted a survey through an online panel with 5,737 people aged 18 or older across the UK, US, Canada and Australia (approximately 1,430 respondents in each country). This included 809 men in the UK, 804 men in the US, 794 men in Canada and 806 men in Australia. Response quotas were set based on age, region and gender and the final data were weighted to reflect the profiles of each country. Fieldwork ran from 22nd April – 4th May 2020.

[Dads Group research report](#)

About Movember

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programmes that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects around the world.

In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives. The charity's vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health. To donate or learn more, please visit Movember.com.