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The Parenting Paradigm

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THE PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research is to understand the current and emerging needs of the modern parent across the parenting landscape and identify the gap in information needs.

THE APPROACH:

Three phase research study conducted by The Lab and Nature:

- **Phase 1** - Delving into the hearts and minds of parents through an online community n=30 parents and parents to be.
- **Phase 2** - Capturing sentiment at scale through Lab AI - social intelligence collection social intelligence across social posts and conversation threads.
- **Phase 3** - Validation of hypotheses through a quantitative study surveying n=1,467 parents & parents to be aged 18-64 years, through a 12 minute online survey. Fieldwork was conducted in the first 2 weeks of October 2021.

What we set out to do

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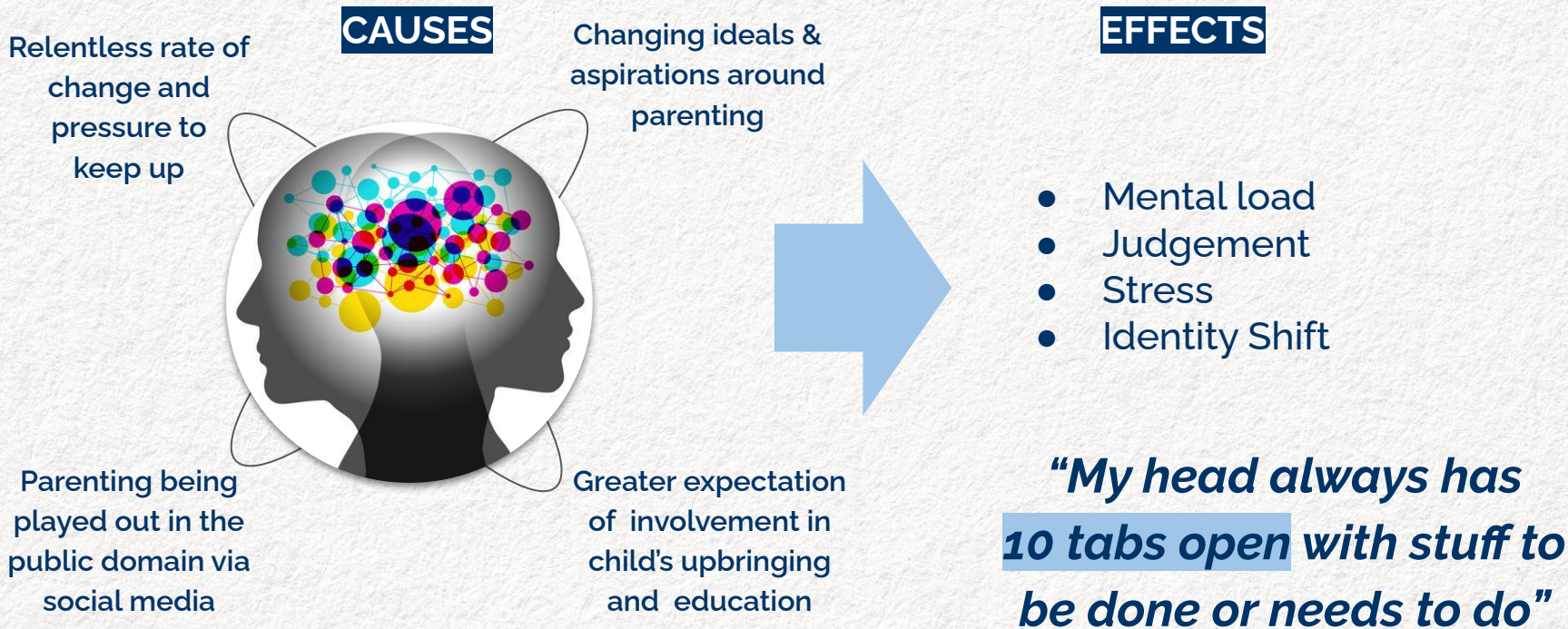
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A close-up photograph of a family. A man with a goatee and a light blue striped shirt is smiling broadly on the left. In the center, a baby with dark hair and eyes is smiling. On the right, a woman with dark hair and glasses is kissing the baby on the cheek. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a staircase.

The Parenting Landscape

Everything has changed, but nothing has changed



The need to set a good example puts a new pressure on parents

A life of high expectations

- Parents put high demands on themselves to be the role model they know their children need
- Especially in modelling values – honesty, respect, compassion, love, empathy, patience..
- They put themselves under pressure to be better people everyday for the sake of their kids
- However this comes with a heavy emotional toll – constantly questioning themselves and feeling guilty when they are less than perfect

Taking the pressure off parents is a role that we can play; through permission to be themselves; reflecting their challenges and struggles; and helping with the feeling of isolation and loneliness

"Growing up I had an absent Father & quite a non loving Mother, so I value showing my son love & all that entails ... I build his confidence up & tell him how he can do & be anything he wants. I value honesty, integrity, compassion & empathy & doing the right thing even when no one is looking. I instill all these things in Mason through daily conversations & actions."



Now is the time to put parents front & centre



“Bearing so much responsibility is cognitively straining, leading to ‘permanent low grade anxiety & stress.’”

Justin Coulson

Parent and child maturation journeys are fundamentally intertwined

Age of kids

0-2 yrs

2-5 yrs

6-8 yrs

9-12 yrs



Caregiver

Needs for protection and safety are paramount

More practical skills and learning required



Magician

Bringing the wonder of the world to life

Accelerating learning in fundamentals of communication

Seeing the world again through fresh eyes.
Reimagining a future



Hero

Flexing and adapting

Learning mental and physical resilience

Truly starting to understand the meaning of the 'role model'

Building self esteem in them and myself



Sage

Strength required to instil values

Requirement to be my best self

Being matched intellectually

Dominant parenting archetype

Which underpins a critical pivot in parenting needs as kids reach mid-primary school

Age of kids

0-2 yrs

2-5 yrs

6-8 yrs

9-12 yrs



1 aspiration
for their
children



**Adapting parenting styles as kids get older is a key transition point (towards later primary age)
Where the consequences of a lack of common values and beliefs become much more serious**

There is a need for orientation as parents grapple with inherent tensions to relieve pain and create gains

LESS CONTROL

Spend more quality time together

Be in the moment

Just let them be kids

Allow their values to develop

Worry less



MORE CONTROL

Keep to routines and structures

Plan ahead

Nurture and curate their pathway

Instill strong beliefs

Keep them safe

With so much change around us, parents are asking essential questions about the most relevant ways of parenting fit for the modern world

It takes a village, but which one?

AGE APPROPRIATE SUPPORT NETWORKS

As their child evolves so do the parents

Their needs and pathways are intertwined

The support groups and networks morph and change to ensure that they are getting the best and most relevant advice

Acting as a signpost to networks and groups is another key role we can play; often parents don't know what the next horizon of groups and peers looks like after the initial support after birth has faded.

"My community has definitely gone through many changes as my child aged - use to be very involved in playgroups, programs and community centre supports and groups when he was young and for years now I've added sporting environments to my community networks as my son loves sport."



"I feel all these connections gave me and my son the support we needed at that time and as he ages my community changes again"

Greater expectations are being placed on dads

Half of dads want to be different to their own parents

Many dads recall growing up with extended family members playing an active role in their lives - either living with them, or having supportive family members constantly around.

The societal shift away from community style parenting without extended support, places greater pressure on both parents, and raises the expectation that dads must be more hands on and involved in the lives of their kids.

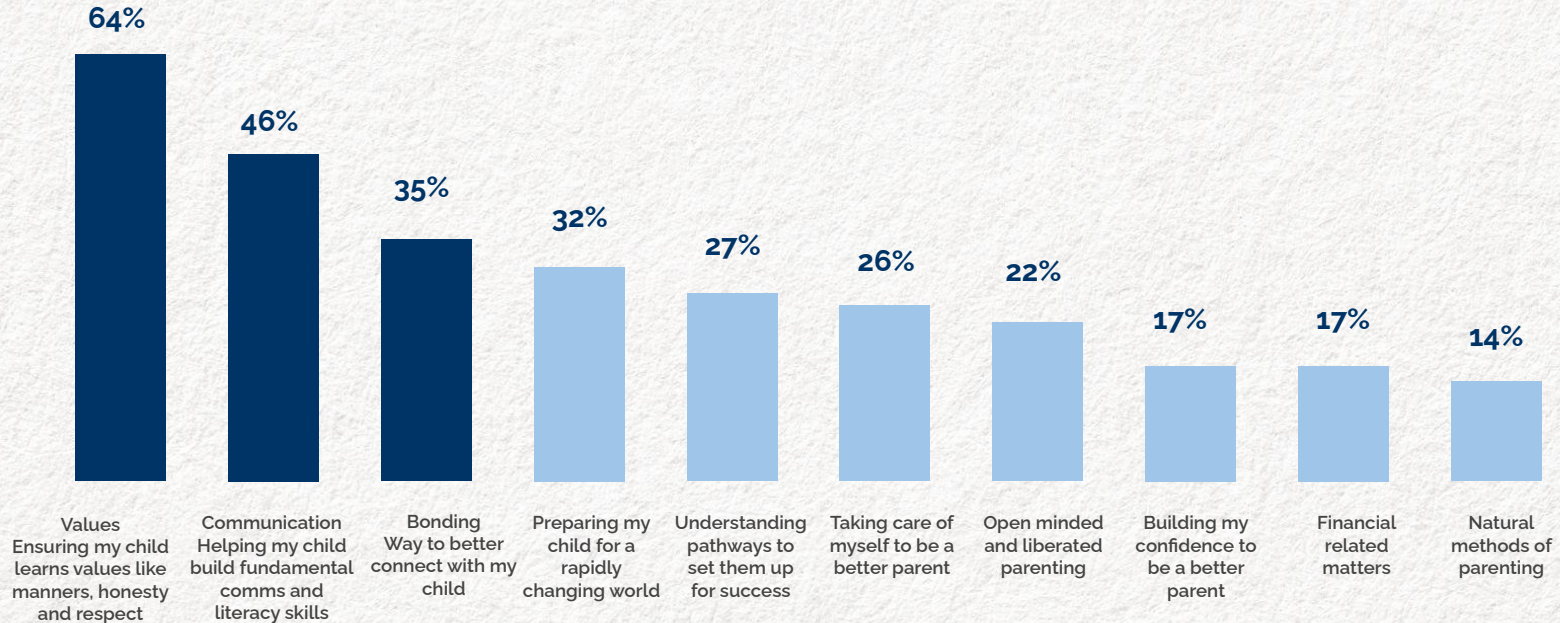
"It's certainly different, I felt growing up in the 90s my father worked, and my mother was more hands on in raising the kids. This has certainly changed now, and I feel it's expected that the father takes on more responsibility, not just go to work to provide. I have no issues being very hands on with raising [child], especially whilst I am on parental leave. It's important that I change nappies, and do story time, feeds etc..."





Where do parents need support?

The softer (but definitely harder!) stuff is most important to parents



Why is the soft stuff so important?



VALUES FUTURE PROOF US

Parents want to **instil principles in their kids that will serve them well in the future**, and help them integrate into Australian society.

They want to know how to approach this **at every stage of the parenting journey** – getting it right from day one and setting their kids up for success.

Critical to this are the values of **empathy and honesty**, which are complicated and build slowly over time.



CONVERSATION MATTERS

Parents recognise that as children get older, **good communication is a fundamental pillar** of a balanced and supportive family.

Many parents struggle to find a **consistent language** and communication style to build effective, nurturing, empowering and collaborative dialogue.

They are also acutely aware that their children have **missed out on building social skills** over the last year, so potentially their communication may be delayed.



TOGETHERNESS REDEFINED

The notion of 'family togetherness' has been redefined by the pandemic. We have been **physically together, but emotionally distant**.

Parents are **craving new ways** to inspire true togetherness and connection, to reset and heal.

They want to **break down the divides between children and parents and build lasting friendships** with their children. They want to strengthen bonds so that they last a lifetime, and are fearful of losing that special connection.

Play is in the spotlight for parents, as a way in for bonding and quality time

AMPLIFICATION OF DIGITAL PLAY

- + Devices have been a lifesaver during Covid, but many parents are now struggling with creating boundaries again.
- + Looking to implement broader rituals around play that can offer the same level of engagement fun and reward.
- + However also leaning in to the benefits of digital in absorbed learning.

IMAGINATIVE PLAY

- + Whilst digital play became the lifesaver, so much time to fill required new playtime rituals, routines and ideas
- + Parents got creative and found fun ways in
- + Unstructured play and imaginative made up games took centre stage and created shared memories

PLAY AS A RELEASE

- + Parents look to playtime as their own method of release.
- + An opportunity to inhabit a childlike state, and to be 'on a level' with my child.
- + These moments are special, raw and real and help create greater reflection and empathy between parent and child

Consider the opportunities for **PLAY** for parents looking to bond and connect. Showing both the benefits for the child, but also for the parent to unwind, relax and create potent new rituals and memories

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Which parents need the most help?

Four dimensions that help us differentiate between parents...



STRESS AND MENTAL LOAD

The **#1 source of frustration** amongst parents is the daily mental load and ongoing responsibilities (23%)

This is more prevalent amongst: Mums (30%), young parents 18-29 (33%), single parents (30%), stay at home parents (33%), parent of tweens (27%)*



CONFIDENCE IN PARENTING STYLE

79% aspire to **adapt or change** their current parenting style

1 in 3 often **feel unsure about their parenting abilities** and need help and reassurance

Desire to change their parenting style is higher amongst: young parents 18-29 (87%), dads 18-39 (82%), single parents (83%), monthly visitors of parenting websites (86%)



KEEPING AHEAD OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS

71% of parents agree "Kids are growing up much faster than ever and it is hard to keep up"

This is more prevalent amongst: mums (76%), Parents of tweens (74%), mums of boys (77%) and pragmatic parents (74%).



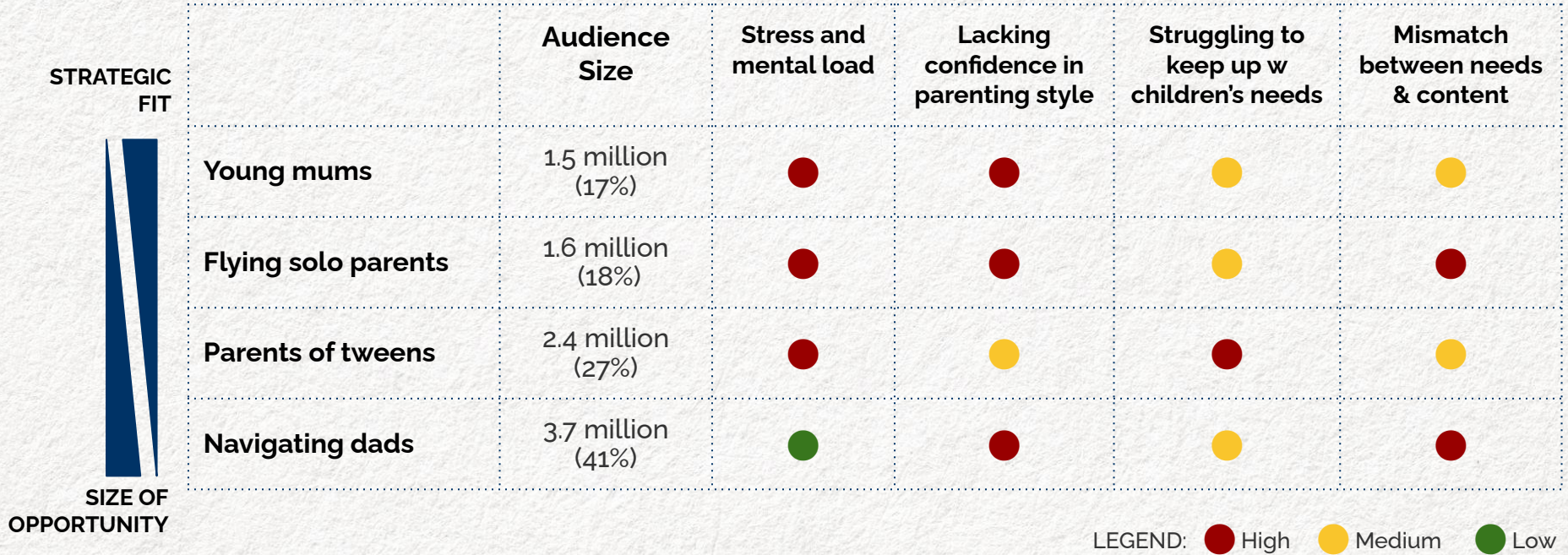
CONTENT THAT MEETS THEIR NEEDS

45% of parents experience some difficulty in finding useful parenting info & advice

The main reason for the difficulty is that they don't know where to look (54%).

This is more prevalent amongst: parents of children 0-2 (50%), young dads (53%), Single parents (49%), parents who are unemployed (52%)

We have identified four groups of parents with the biggest 'unmet needs'



Young Mums

"I feel like my life purely revolves around kids now; their routine, their wellbeing etc while mine tends to take a backseat in terms of priorities... I do sometimes feel like I'm purely surviving rather than striving in my career however understand that this is short term...I still don't always feel like I have that balance right"

"I'm not sure how I would describe my parenting style. Being my first child, I guess I'm sort of just winging it and learning as I go... I've done a lot of my own research with reading books, watching videos, listening to people who can give me some advice... I think, as [child] gets older....it's easier to implement..."

Young Mums - navigating the unknown and looking for a roadmap

WHO ARE THEY?



Female (100%)
Age 18-29 (100%)
Live w partner & kids 61%, single parent 34%



Tertiary education (53%)
Employed or business owner (61%)
HHI <\$100k (58%)



1 child in HH (59%)
Have kids 0-2 (37%), kids 3-5 (19%), kids 6-8 (10%), kids 9-12 (8%).



Main Goal: To raise a happy, healthy, and confident child(ren) (28% v. 31%)



#1 Source of Frustration: The daily mental load / ongoing responsibilities of being a parent (33% v. 23%)

WHAT IS THEIR PARENTING APPROACH?

PARENTING STYLE

Current: Pragmatic Parents (62%)
Aspire to: Be more free-range (31%) or more controlling (20%)

PARENTING ABILITIES



KIDS GROWING UP FASTER...



PRIORITISATION OF NEEDS



KNOWLEDGE & OPINIONS



WHERE ARE THEIR NEEDS NOT BEING MET THROUGH CONTENT?

UNMET NEEDS BUT LOWER WTP
Creating emotional connections
Teaching social skills

UNMET NEEDS AND HIGH WTP
Avoiding mental burnout
Develop self-regulation skills

NEEDS ALREADY FULFILLED

MET NEEDS BUT HIGH WTP
Teaching children responsibility + independence

Why is it difficult to find info & advice?



About 2 in 5 young mums say 'I struggle to know whose parenting advice to listen to' (v. 28% total)

Usage of parenting websites is significantly *less likely* for younger mums (45%)

Flying Solo Parent

“Don't stress the small stuff. You know, make sure your kids are okay, but you don't have to helicopter parent them. You don't need to be there at every stuff that they do. Let them fall. Let them be okay with losing. These are valuable lessons”



Flying Solo Parent - actively seeking advice to build confidence and manage the load alone

WHO ARE THEY?



Female 81% / Male 17%
Age 18-39 (70%)
Live in non cap city (35%)



No tertiary education (54%)
Home Duties (31%), Unemployed (15%)
HHI <\$100k (77%)



One child (44%)
Have kids 0-2 (29%), kids 3-5 (36%),
kids 6-8 (30%), kids 9-12 (44%).



Main Goal: To raise happy, healthy,
confident children (30%)

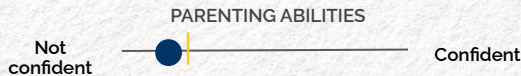


#1 Source of Frustration: Daily mental
load and ongoing responsibilities (30% v.
23%)

WHAT IS THEIR PARENTING APPROACH?

PARENTING STYLE

Current: Free range (20% vs. 17%)
Aspire to: Be more pragmatic (21% v. 18%),
83% would like to change their parenting style



WHERE ARE THEIR NEEDS NOT BEING MET THROUGH CONTENT?

<p>UNMET NEEDS BUT LOWER WTP Stop children from lying, being dishonest Teach children to respect others</p>	<p>UNMET NEEDS AND HIGH WTP Improving relationship with children Building children's self-confidence</p>
<p>NEEDS ALREADY FULFILLED</p>	<p>MET NEEDS BUT HIGH WTP Helping children establish & communicate healthy boundaries/assertiveness</p>

Why is it difficult to find info & advice?



51% 'I don't know where to look'

1 in 2 single parents visit a parenting website at least monthly

Parents of Tweens

"My daughter is 11 years old, so it just kind of things to prepare for, how best to handle this pre stage of teenage hood articles from mothers.

What worked, What didn't work... Internet bullying, um, vaping, substance abuse, Internet abuse - things like that would really interest me."

Parents of Tweens - rolling with the changes but not finding what they need

WHO ARE THEY?



Female 54% / Male 45%
 Age 35-49 (67%)
 Live w partner & kids 69%, single parent 20%



No tertiary education (38%)
 Employed or business owner (73%)
 HHI <\$100k (45%)



2+ children in HH (81%)
 Parents of girls 65%
 Parents of boys 81%



Main Goal: To raise independent, honest & responsible kids (32% v. 25%)



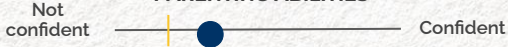
#1 Source of Frustration: Not able to spend as much quality time with their kids as they would like (23% v. 19%)

WHAT IS THEIR PARENTING APPROACH?

PARENTING STYLE

Current: Pragmatic Parents (77%)
 Aspire to: Be more free-range (34%), or are happy with current style (24%)

PARENTING ABILITIES



KIDS GROWING UP FASTER...



PRIORITISATION OF NEEDS



KNOWLEDGE & OPINIONS



WHERE ARE THEIR NEEDS NOT BEING MET THROUGH CONTENT?

<p>UNMET NEEDS BUT LOWER WTP Instilling great family values Help prioritising my time to spend with the kids</p>	<p>UNMET NEEDS AND HIGH WTP Adapting to change Developing self regulation skills</p>
<p>NEEDS ALREADY FULFILLED</p>	<p>MET NEEDS BUT HIGH WTP Dealing w issues arising from tech & protecting mental health</p>

Why is it difficult to find info & advice?



3 in 5 parents of tweens say 'I don't know where to look' (v. 54% total)

Usage of parenting websites is significantly *less likely* for parents of tweens (45%)

Navigating Dads

"(It was) more a case of doubting my ability to read her or do the right thing. It felt like everything I was doing was wrong.."

"Being dad is equal responsibility as mum, I can't leave all to my wife. I've had to step up alongside as we both are in it. Yes, I do feel that I need to do more and keep doing heaps to help my family. I am also trying to balance my life."

Disoriented Dads - breaking the mould and finding their feet.

WHO ARE THEY?



Age 40-54 (39% v. 29%)
Live in cap city (83%)
Live w partner & kids (80%)



Uni degree (51%)
Employed or business owner (89%)
HHI \$150k+ (31%)



Have 2 children (28%)
Have kids 0-2 (31%), kids 3-5 (38%),
kids 6-8 (39%), kids 9-12 (45%).



Main Goal: To raise happy, healthy,
confident children (26%)



#1 Source of Frustration: Not able to
spend as much quality time with their kids
as they would like (26% v. 19%)

WHAT IS THEIR PARENTING APPROACH?

PARENTING STYLE

Current: Pragmatic Parents (75%)
Aspire to: Be more free-range (40%),
81% would like to change their parenting style



WHERE ARE THEIR NEEDS NOT BEING MET THROUGH CONTENT?

UNMET NEEDS BUT LOW WTP
Prevent them from lying or being dishonest
Ensuring kids are true global citizen

UNMET NEEDS AND HIGH WTP
Helping children express how they feel
How to improve literacy skills through play

NEEDS ALREADY FULFILLED

MET NEEDS BUT HIGH WTP
Help children learn skills required for future jobs
How to be emotionally open with family & friends

Why is it difficult to find info & advice?



55% of dads say 'I don't know where to look' (v. 54% total)

Dads are 53% more likely than parents to not trust the parenting information currently available.

Modern Dads are doing things differently

They want to **avoid the disciplinarian parenting style** – 3 in 4 identify as 'firm but fair' and 2 in 5 want to be more 'laid back & let kids be kids'

1 in 3 are carrying the majority of the parenting load,

45% report a 50/50 parenting load share with their partner



Despite being more hands on than before, they still struggle with finding enough quality time with kids.

Their top 3 frustrations are:

1. Don't spend as much time with kids as wanted (48%)
2. Have to divide their time between multiple roles (45%)
3. Not enough quality time (44%)

Navigating dads is a high value audience who are spending money and seeking help

What makes this audience so valuable?...



A large and growing audience

There are **2.8 million dads** with kids under 18 in Australia (up 15% in the last 5 years)

They are **more likely to spend money** than the average Australian

Significant shifts in parent roles, with the **number of stay-at-home dads up 53% in the last 15 years**



They spend on digital entertainment

They **spend more on digital media** than the average Australia

1/3 state that they are **performing work related tasks** when consuming parenting media



They are looking to be educated and build relationships

Dads **seeking out online advice** groups has **grown 50 fold** in the last 5 years

41% state they are looking to **educate themselves** and **build relationships**




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