

A Case Study of the Design and Implementation of an Online Program for Divorced or
Separated Men

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Abstract

Online programs have been found to be effective at providing parent education. However, less is known about how to maximize the effectiveness of online programs for divorced parents, especially fathers. Some of these programs have been transferred from a face-to-face format to an online environment but little is known about how to make adaptations that maximize recruitment, relevance, participant engagement and effectiveness. Using a case study approach, this study examines the development and implementation of a new online program designed to meet the specific learning needs of divorced or separated fathers. Based on a sample of 39 fathers, the study provides a detailed description of the conceptualization, design, and implementation of the educational content and online platform for new online program called *Apart, Not Broken*. The study provided an initial in-depth understanding of some of the factors that promoted or hindered engagement in this online program for divorced or separated fathers and identified recruitment strategies that can be effective in getting fathers to online programs. In addition the study identified some of the ways that online programs need to deviate from traditional face-to-face programs in terms of design, structure and delivery. Engaging fathers in online programs requires staying current with the latest technologies, paying attention to the online habits of participants, and regularly adapting the program to participants' needs.

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I also want to thank the men who contributed to the conceptualization, design, and implementation of the *Apart, Not Broken*. Six fathers participated in interviews that were combined into 24 short vignettes that enhanced the written content by providing real life examples, challenges, insights, and recommendations to fathers. You brought “realness” to the content, and participating fathers found that extremely relevant and useful. In addition, I would like to thank the fathers who participated in this program. Not only did I learn more about what men need during this important transition, you taught me to have another level of compassion for fathers.

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Chapter I: Introduction

“When you first go through it, a divorce, you just want a decent, non-cliché resource that helps you focus on your kids.... even if it wasn’t a great marriage. The analogy is like your body has a tumor and it has come into symbiosis with it. It has blood vessels going through it. It is doing something that is influencing your body and to take it out takes time and patience. You know you need to get rid of it or it is going to kill you. But, it is still part of you. When you take that away, even if it wasn’t a healthy thing and you know you are going to have a better life without it, it can still take a long time to recover. You may have to sit in a hospital bed for weeks. It is during that time that guys will look for resources that make them feel like they are still sane; that they are still worthwhile.” (A father of two, who had been divorced 6-12 month and had less than 50% parenting time).

The primary aim of this case study is to examine the design and implementation of an online program, *Apart, Not Broken*, that was developed to help fathers adjust and parent after divorce or separation. Divorce is one of the most challenging events that can happen in a father’s life. Even though fathers are becoming more involved in parenting (Lamb, 2010), mothers are still awarded custody 82% of the time (Grall, 2007). This results in fathers having greatly reduced access, which influences their ability to be involved in their child’s life in meaningful ways. Overtime, this can have a negative impact on their ability to have a longstanding relationship with their child (Ahrons, 2007). Being able to establish a father-child relationship after divorce or separation has positive implications for both the well-being of fathers and children (Fabricius, Braver, Diaz, & Schenck, 2010). Decades of research illustrate that developing this kind of relationship involves having regular contact and quality interactions, establishing new post-divorce fathering roles (Olmstead, Futris, & Pasley, 2009, Stone, 2006), maintaining engagement (Cheadle, Amato, & King, 2010), and strengthening their communication with their children (Brown, 2008; Yarosh, Chew, & Abowd, 2009).

Accomplishing this is often difficult but it can be made easier when fathers have access to programs that can support them in making these adjustments.

Online learning environments offer a promising new direction for the delivery of divorce education programs. There is limited knowledge on the implementation of online learning programs for parents, especially for a target population as specific as divorced or separated fathers. However, there are a growing number of practitioners and scholars who are beginning to examine some of the possible benefits of online program delivery. Benefits include the potential to be more cost-efficiency, accessible (Nord, 2011), flexible (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011), and to provide opportunities for ongoing learning and community building (Brook & Oliver, 2003; Carlen & Jobling, 2005). Attempts to deliver online learning programs to parents have typically involved simply transferring an existing face-to-face program to the online environment. When it comes to online divorce programs more specifically, they are usually delivered to both parents together, and focus on the negative effects of parental conflict on children and characteristics of quality co-parenting (Adamson & Pasley, 2006). Drawing on many of the new digital communication technologies that are now available, the online program *Apart, Not Broken* was developed to meet the specific learning needs of divorced and separated fathers.

Using a descriptive case study design, this study adds to the knowledge of what contributes to effective online program delivery by documenting and describing the process of developing and implementing an online program for divorced or separated fathers. This study utilized a variety of data sources to better understand the characteristics of participating fathers, factors that promoted or hindered their engagement, strategies for recruiting and maintaining

engagement, and the fathers' actual use of the program. Data collected throughout this study was also used to make modifications to the program in an iterative process of program improvement.

In the following chapters, I provide a review of the literature on divorce and its implications, existing programs for divorced families, and current knowledge of online learning environments and their potential for delivering programs to divorced and separated fathers. Next, I provide a description of the case study design and research questions addressed in the current research. This is followed by a detailed description of the conceptualization, design, and implementation of the educational content and online platform for *Apart, Not Broken*. Results provide an initial in-depth understanding of the specific factors that promote or hinder engagement in an online program for divorced or separated fathers by examining the characteristics of fathers, the educational content and the implementation context, strategies for recruiting and engaging fathers, and the ways in which fathers used *Apart, Not Broken*. Recommendations, implications, and lessons learned are presented to inform future online program delivery, especially as it relates to divorced or separated fathers.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Divorce and its Implications

Divorce is a major life event that can impact both parents' relationship with their child (Amato & Booth, 1996). It is defined as the dissolution of marriage and involves a complex set of experiences that result in the redefinition of the family unit. Recent national statistics indicate that roughly 36% of marriages ended in divorce in 2011 (CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, n.d.) and approximately 40% of children live in a divorced home by the age of 16 (Fabricius, et al., 2010). Since mothers are awarded primary custody about 82% of the time (Grall, 2007), custody arrangements often introduce physical and emotional barriers between fathers and their children (Bokker, Farley, & Bailey, 2006). The inability to frequently engage in their child's life in meaningful ways can impact the well-being of children (Ahrons, 2007) and fathers themselves (Bokker et al., 2006).

The well-being of children. Since today's fathers spend more time with their children than they have in previous generations, children may respond even more adversely to sudden reductions in father-child contact after divorce. In addition, a father's contact with his children tends to decline with time, making it important to reach fathers and establish contact schedules early (Peters & Ehrenberg, 2008). Combined with evidence that interventions are more effective in the first six months of divorce (Arbuthnot, Poole, & Gordon, 1996), this may be a particularly effective time to implement an intervention for divorced or separated fathers.

Children under the age of six may be at a greater risk for anxiety following divorce due to underdeveloped cognitive skills that make it difficult for them to understand the loss of contact with one parent, or foresee when that parent will return again (see Rogers, 2004 for review of this topic). Adolescents appear to recover faster from the initial distress of separation, especially

when the division reduces conflict in the home. However, King and Sobolewski (2006) posit that older adolescents may be more susceptible to the negative effects of divorce due to increased vulnerability to other types of risk-taking behavior and delinquency. Given this, younger adolescents may be especially responsive to interventions targeting adjustment and well-being after divorce.

While multiple factors contribute to the well-being of children whose parents divorce or separate, one of the best predictors is maintaining good parent-child relationships and quality parenting. This involves (1) reducing conflict between parents (Ahrons, 2007; Fabricius, & Luecken, 2007; Hawthorne & Lennings, 2008; Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003; Sandler, Miles, Cookston, & Braver, 2008), (2) sustaining psychological well-being and quality parenting in residential parents (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001; Cavanagh, 2008; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Sandler, et al., 2008), and (3) maintaining good parent-child relationships and quality parenting in nonresidential parents (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Carlson, 2006; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; King & Sobolewski, 2006). A focus on effective parenting can make fathers one of the primary support systems for their children after divorce.

The well-being of fathers. Fathers who divorce or separate from their partners are also vulnerable to negative outcomes. They include: (1) reduced psychological well-being, lower levels of happiness, more psychological distress and poorer self-concepts; (2) more health problems and greater risk of mortality; (3) greater social isolation; (4) lower standard of living and greater economic hardship; (5) increased parental role strain, and (6) greater difficulties relating to and raising their children (Portnoy, 2006). In addition, divorced men are also more prone to excessive alcohol use (Barrett, Greenwood, & Ross, 2003; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006) and depression (Zhang & Hayward, 2006). These findings suggest that fathers

experiencing divorce or separation could significantly benefit from support and resources that help them more effectively manage the emotional pain and multiple changes associated with divorce.

Programs for divorced parents. Divorce education programs are a particular type of parent education program. These programs gained popularity in the 1970's in an effort to improve co-parenting and reduce the stress of divorce on children (Schramm & McCaulley, 2012). Divorce education programs proliferated during the 1980s and 1990s. By 2002 around 15 states mandated attendance, eight states allowed courts to exercise discretion, and five states granted optional attendance (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). By 2008, 46 states mandated parents attend a parent education course after a parent files for divorce, separation, custody, and/or visitation (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). Today, nearly every state either mandates or has a voluntary divorce education course available to divorcing parents. Divorce education courses are usually a requirement for parents before finalizing the divorce (Bowers, Hardesty & Hughes, 2011). The majority of these face-to-face programs aim to reduce the negative effects of ongoing exposure to parental conflict by educating parents about how to develop cooperative co-parenting relationships that emphasize putting the best interests of the child first.

A growing number of practitioners and scholars have developed programs directed at parents undergoing divorce. Most of these programs are aimed at both mothers and fathers and few have been evaluated. However, to date, there are four programs that have been well evaluated, are considered evidence-based and are the most relevant to the focus of the current project. They are: (1) Children in the Middle (CiM), (2) New Beginnings (NB), (3) Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP), and (4) Dad's for Life (DFL). Dad's for Life (DFL) is the only program specifically targeting fathers. In this section I briefly review these four

evidence-based divorce programs and examine what they can tell us about the goals, strategies, approaches, and evaluation results of effective programs.

Children in the Middle (CIM). One of the most widely used evidence-based programs for parents undergoing divorce is Children in the Middle. It was originally developed as a face-to-face program that targets both parents to reduce interparental conflict and teach strategies for keeping children out of interparental conflict (Arbuthnot et al., 1996). Usually, parents are mandated to attend one or two 90-120 minute sessions covering topics such as domestic violence, working with the other household, adult grief, conflict disengagement, alternative dispute options, as well as understanding child development and meeting children's needs by addressing such topics as stages of development, parenting time, child support, talking to children, child grief, and the benefits of co-parenting (Children in the Middle, 2010). They receive a certificate upon completion. Group discussions, workbook exercises, and role-plays give parents opportunities to practice and apply new skills. Often, family counselors incorporate CiM as part of a 4-10 session treatment plan.

Evaluation findings indicate that participants of CiM reported less anger and more cooperation with their ex-spouses, exposed children to less conflict, and allowed children to spend more time with the other parent than those in the comparison group (Arbuthnot et al., 1996). Further, Arbuthnot and Gordon (1995) found those who participated in CiM within the first three weeks of the original filing date experienced one-fourth fewer relitigation cases as those where delayed participation beyond three weeks. However, those who were delayed and those who did not participate at all did not differ in relitigation rates, suggesting that timing may have implications for the effectiveness of this type of program. The children whose parents received the CiM intervention also report positive results. Specifically, they communicate fewer

feelings of being caught in the middle than those in a randomly assigned control group (Kurkowski, Gordon, & Arbuthnot, 1993).

New Beginnings. New Beginnings works with residential mothers to learn strategies for improving the mother-child relationship, disciplining children, reducing conflict, and promoting contact with nonresidential parents (Wolchik, Sandler, Weiss, & Winslow, 2007; Wolchik, Sandler, Winslow, & Smith-Daniels, 2005). Using the custodial mother as the change agent, each session is composed of a short lecture, skill demonstration, practice time, and follow-up homework focused on modifiable processes identified by research as potential mediators of children's adjustment to divorce (Wolchik et al., 2007; Wolchik et al., 2005). These mediators include improving the mother-child relationship, disciplining children, and reducing conflict and promoting contact with nonresidential parents.

A series of evaluation studies conducted by Wolchik and his colleagues examined the effects of New Beginnings on nearly 500 families (SAMHSA, 2009). In the first randomized clinical trial, mothers with children between eight and 15 years of age reported lower aggression and fewer behavior problems in their children at post-test than mothers from the control group (Wolchik, West, Westover, Sandler, Martin, Lustig, Tein & Fisher, 1993). Mothers also reported better mother-child relationships and more effective discipline. In a second experimental trial, children between 9 to 12 years of age showed lower internalizing and externalizing problems at six-month follow-up (Wolchik, West, Sandler, Tein, Coatsworth, Lengua, Weiss, Anderson, Greene, Griffin & Kendall, 2000). At six year follow-up, adolescents between 15 and 18 years of age showed lower externalizing problems, mental disorder symptoms, and substance use, as well higher grade point averages than the control group (Wolchik et al., 2002). Zhou, Sandler, Millsap, Wolchik, and Dawson-McClure, (2008) examined potential mediators of long-term

effectiveness during adolescence and found that the use of effective discipline immediately after program completion mediated program outcomes at the six-year follow-up.

Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP). A fourth evidence-based program, Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP) is directed at children between kindergarten and eighth grade. The children meet 12-15 times in structured and sequential school-based support groups. The organizational-developmental model of resilience is the theoretical foundation of the program. With a strong focus on providing developmentally appropriate content and identifying modifiable risk and protective factors, the program aims to enhance protection from negative divorce-related experiences and facilitate the child's mastery of healthy developmental milestones. Working directly with children, CODIP uses play (puppets, games, etc.) to provide an environment where children share their experiences, gain support, and learn essential coping skills. Group sessions are co-led by mental health professionals and focus on promoting healthy adjustment to changes in family structure (Pedro-Carroll, 2005).

Eight separate evaluations have found reduced stress and enhanced social, emotional, and school adjustment for children when compared to the control group. Since developing a positive father-child relationship has been linked with similar results, it is important to consider how preventative interventions for fathers can contribute to the overall adjustment of children by providing an environment for shared experiences and ongoing support.

Dad's for Life (DFL). Dad's for Life is an evidence-based program specifically targeted at fathers. It is an eight-week preventative intervention targeting nonresidential fathers and the first to undergo rigorous evaluations and achieve evidence-based program status. The primary goals of the program are to (1) the father-child relationship and (2) the relationship with the ex-spouse (Braver, Griffin, & Cookston, 2005). Intermediate goals include (1) increasing

commitment to the parenting role, (2) expanding and reinforcing parenting skills, (3) developing strategies to minimizing interparental conflict, and (4) restoring a sense of parental control (Braver, et al., 2005; Cookston, Braver, Griffin , Deluse, & Miles, 2007). Fathers also receive two individual sessions designed to assist them in applying material to their individual circumstances and develop strategies to overcome obstacles.

According to Braver and colleagues (2005), the aspects of DFL that address the nonresidential father-child relationship focus on providing factual information on the importance of father involvement and bringing attention to the child's emotional vulnerability and need for paternal support. Moreover, DFL introduces skills that foster authoritative parenting. These primarily consist of improving communication skills, increasing the use of positive reinforcement, and providing noncoercive discipline strategies such as teaching appropriate expectations, enforcing logical consequences, and time-out from reinforcements. These are thought to increase the use of parental warmth and effective limit setting.

Using an experimental field trial, the evaluation showed that fathers experienced (1) greater awareness of their child's emotional vulnerability and need for paternal support, and (2) enhanced authoritative parenting, as demonstrated by increased use of positive reinforcement and other noncoercive discipline strategies. While fathers' perceptions of parenting did not change over time, mothers' perceptions of support increased. Based on their evaluation results, Braver and colleagues (2005) advocate for the continued improvement of existing programs and the development of new programs designed to meet the needs of divorced fathers. They recommend future evaluations focus on understanding how and why such programs work. Moreover, they suggest "successful interventions not only attempt to change fathers, they empower and respect them in order to appeal to them" (Braver, et al., 2005, pg.17).

Online divorce education programs. Most online programs target divorced parents, not fathers in particular. Largely, content is research-based and focuses on the negative effects of parental conflict on children and characteristics of quality co-parenting (Adamson & Pasley, 2006). Bowers and colleagues (2011) review of online divorce education programs uses criteria from previous evaluations of face-to-face programs (e.g., Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLuse, 1996; Geasler & Blaisure, 1998; Hughes, 2008) to categorize six online programs into (1) child-focused content, (2) adult/parent-focused content, and (3) court-focused content. They also consider whether or not programs cover topic areas like co-parenting under special circumstances (domestic violence, substance use, mental illness, military deployment). See Appendix A for detailed list of criteria.

Results indicate that all six programs emphasize child-focused content (e.g., children's response to divorce, impact of "badmouthing" the other parent, strategies to help parents help children deal with divorce) over adult-focused content (e.g., personal adjustment issues, parenting and other relationships, co-parenting) or court-focused content (e.g., legal procedures, custody options, parenting plans, and mediation). This is consistent with the focus of mandatory divorce education to educate parents about protecting their children from the harmful effects of ongoing parental conflict. Information about co-parenting under special circumstances is either limited or non-existent.

In 2009, an online version of the program *Children in Between*, formally known as *Children in the Middle*, was launched. The online version provides an interactive format where parents view short videos, answer questions, and hear expert advice on the common issues leading to interparental conflict. Parents learn skills that can help them more effectively address

these issues such as using “I statements”, active listening, and expressing empathy and sensitivity. To date, there are no evaluation results available for this online program.

Currently, very few programs target fathers, and even fewer online programs are specifically geared toward the needs of divorced fathers. Given the challenges fathers face, it can be difficult to engage them in traditional face-to-face programs. When delivered online, fathers access material through devices like smart phones, tablets, and computers. Online content can be delivered in innovative ways, taking advantage of applications like blogs, wikis, podcasts, and a variety of other multi-media tools (Martin, Balderson, & Morris, 2012; Redecker, 2009; Karrer, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). While use of the Internet to provide evidence-based programs is rare, it may provide a practical way for fathers to have access to the information needed to meet their specific needs after divorce or separation. A better understanding of online learning environments can inform the development of such programs.

Online Learning Environments

One of the most promising new directions for future programs directed at fathers of divorce and separation is the use of online methods. Online programs for fathers have a number of advantages. They include cost-efficiency and on demand accessibility, flexibility, opportunities for ongoing learning, and opportunities for community building. In addition they are much more accessible to busy parents and may be less stigmatizing. Unfortunately, our current knowledge of what contributes to effective online parenting programs for parents of divorce is very limited. Even less is known about programs specifically targeted to fathers. However, there is a growing literature on online learning more generally that can help inform our understanding of effective approaches. In this section I review this literature, with an eye toward what it can tell us about designing and implementing online interventions for fathers.

Rationale for online learning. The last two decades have shown dramatic growth in the use of the Internet to provide learning opportunities. These opportunities include everything from short-term tutorials and practical skill development classes to online school certification and degree programs. Information and communication technologies provide society with a vast array of new communication capabilities. For example, people can communicate in real-time with others in different countries using technologies like instant messaging, voice over IP (VOIP), and video conferencing. Social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allow users from all over the world to stay in contact and communicate on a regular basis.

Moore, et al. (2011) report that researchers and practitioners are often inconsistent in their definition and use of terms related to online learning and that distinguishing among them is important for the evaluation of online learning environments. Online learning refers to any kind of education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the Internet (Watson & Kalmon, 2005). This term is often used interchangeably with virtual learning, cyber learning, and e-learning. Print-based correspondence education, broadcast television or radio, DVDs, and stand-alone educational software that do not have a significant Internet-based instructional component do not qualify as online learning (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010). In this study the term online learning refers to the use of the Internet to deliver online programs.

Online learning takes place within online platforms, which are defined as a “specific type of computer hardware or computer operating system” (“Online Platform,” 2014). A growing body of research suggests the potential online learning has in promoting learning and behavioral change. A meta-analysis of 50 independent research studies that contrasts online learning and face-to-face programs for adults shows that learning outcomes for online programs are

moderately better than when the same material is delivered in face-to-face settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Other studies show that online learning environments can be efficacious in changing knowledge and attitudes about pregnancy, STDs and HIV (Roberto, Zimmerman, Carlyle & Abner, 2007), reducing anxiety and depression in children and adolescents (Calear & Christensen, 2010; Currie, McGrath, & Day, 2010), and promoting smoking cessation in adults (Myung, McDonnell, Kazinets, Seo, & Moskowitz, 2009). Results from a recent randomized control trial of an online version of the evidence-based Triple-P program (Sanders, 2012) show more positive effects on parenting variables for online learners than those in the waitlist control group, with similar effect sizes to those from evaluations of face-to-face programs. Together, these findings suggest that online programs have the potential to meet or exceed learning outcomes of traditional face-to-face programs for other issues facing individuals and families including the challenges faced by divorced or separated fathers and their children.

Advantages to online learning. In addition, there are various advantages to online learning including the cost-efficiency and accessibility, flexibility, opportunities for ongoing learning, and opportunities for community building.

Cost-efficiency and accessibility. Online learning environments have the potential to more efficiently reach a wider audience at a lower cost than traditional face-to-face methods (Nord, 2011). Today, a person can receive education and training anytime and anywhere there is an Internet connection, expanding their access to needed resources, support, and education.

Flexibility. Online learning makes it possible to provide timely assistance to individuals on an as-needed basis. It is self-directed, learner-driven learning (Moore, et al., 2011). People can participate in learning without having to travel to a common location. Having ongoing

access to program material in a self-paced and private environment makes it convenient to access program material, a factor that is important for families that may not otherwise seek help (Glasgow, Vogt, & Boles, 1999; Hourcade & Parette, 2001).

Opportunities for ongoing learning. The ability to provide ongoing access to information in a variety of formats enhances learning. Online learning environments can deliver information much like a book or give direct instruction and performance assessments like a teacher (Nord, 2011). A common theme among online learning programs is the integration of a wide range of media including text, narration, audio, video, and practice exercises that can enhance the delivery of educational material.

Opportunities for community building. Online programs not only offer promise for learning, they have the potential to build community through communication and collaboration (Brook & Oliver, 2003; Carlen & Jobling, 2005). They can provide an avenue for the virtual construction of the social phenomenon of community (Rovai, 2002). The concept of community building is grounded in learning theories that highlight the importance of interaction and the co-construction of knowledge (Dewey, 1929; Vygotsky, 1978). Community building also benefits a person's motivation (Slavin, 1990), achievement (Maxwell, 1998), skill development and overall satisfaction with the learning environment (Brook & Oliver, 2002). Given that people are naturally drawn to groups of individuals who share common interests and values on a topic of personal importance (Carlen & Jobling, 2005), providing a context for divorced or separated fathers to be part of a community could enhance program benefits.

Disadvantages to online learning. There are also some potential disadvantages of online learning including feelings of isolation, lack of classroom interactions, and technical issues.

Isolation. Several researchers have noted that feelings of isolation can hinder individual's participation in online learning (Buzhardt & Heitzman-Powell, 2006; Serhan, 2010). This isolation increases the need for learners to be self-directed. Perry and Pilati's (2011) review of the literature describes the online learning environment as one where students are required to be self-motivated. One study examining student's attitudes toward online learning revealed that the students felt as though they had to take extra responsibility for their own learning (Serhan, 2010). Further, Song, Singleton, Hill and Koh (2004) found that 71 percent of unsatisfied students attributed their dissatisfaction to the lack of community.

Lack of classroom interactions. The online learning environments can also eliminate opportunities for traditional classroom interactions. For example, the online environment reduces opportunities for immediate feedback (Serhan, 2010). Students also report that the inability to observe body language, hear tone of voice, and make eye contact inhibits their ability to connect with classmates and teachers as part of the learning process. Text only interactions that lack human interaction, combined with the absence of non-verbal cues, may lead to misunderstanding of material during online interactions and interfere with participants' ability to clarify material and construct meaning through verbal exchanges and joint problem solving (Curtis & Lawson, 2001; Kelly & Papadopoulos, 2009; Laine, 2003).

Technical Issues. Students report technical issues as a major disadvantage of online learning (Barnard, Osland Paton V & Rose K, 2007; Kelly & Papadopoulos, 2009; Serhan, 2010). Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, and Yeh (2008) examination of the importance of technical quality shows that online learning environments are at a disadvantage when they have poor technical quality, slow response times, or frequent technical difficulties. Moreover, certain cultural groups may be at a disadvantage to using online learning environments. Specifically,

results from a recent study show that participating students' ability to adapt to an online environment and earn strong grades was lower for Black and Hispanic students than White students (Xu & Jagers, 2013). They related their results to a systematic disadvantage in the quality of primary and secondary schooling (DuBrock, 2000; Wiggam, 2004) and the lack of an at-home technological infrastructure that allowed students to be successful in online courses.

Issues and experiences with online learning programs.

Movement from face-to-face to online programs. Over the last decade, face-to-face divorce education programs began including online versions. In their review of six online divorce education programs, Bowers and colleagues (2011) report that the content of online programs mirrors that of the existing face-to-face program. None are completely new, making it difficult to be creative in design and implementation. Methods of instruction are largely limited to text with occasional video examples. Interactions with teachers and peers are limited. It appears that while online programs have the potential to address the common limitations of face-to-face programs, program developers need to take advantage of the innovative strategies an online environment provides.

Ideally, the next generation of online divorce education incorporates different teaching strategies such as teacher led models that provide opportunities for clarification and feedback (Bowers, et al., 2011), or peer support models that make it possible to share experiences and gain emotional support from one another (Dennis, Hodnett, Kenton, Weston, Zupancic, Stewart & Kiss, 2009). Bowers and colleagues (2011) also suggest that online programs for divorced parents include content from parents and children themselves, such as testimonials or illustrations.

Individual learner characteristics.

Gender issues. Considerable research indicates differences between men and women in their use of the Internet, engagement in online learning, and behaviors toward seeking professional help. Compared to women, men are more likely to be “tech savvy”, show an interest in technology, take an informal online class, read online for pleasure (Fallows, 2005) and have broadband in their home (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). In contrast, Radey and Raldolph’s (2009) study of how parents differ in their efforts to learn about parenting suggest that men are 12 times less likely than women to use the Internet for parenting information. Men also appear to lag slightly behind women as “online communicators” (Zichurh & Smith, 2011), using email and social networking sites less frequently to nurture relationships, write to friends and family, share news and worries, or plan events. This is consistent with research suggesting that men may hesitate to seek professional help with difficult life transitions (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005; Pederson & Vogel, 2007). This phenomenon is consistent across issues as diverse as substance abuse, depression, physical disabilities, and stressful life events like divorce (Galdas, et al., 2005).

Personal and demographic characteristics. Research on online programs suggests that personal characteristics can affect engagement. For example, positive perceptions and beliefs about online learning prior to participation can have a positive impact a person’s overall experience (Tsai & Lin, 2004). Individuals are more satisfied with online learning environments when they are familiar with technology (Peng, Tsai, & Wu, 2006), have an interest in the topic (Sun, et al., 2008), feel comfortable using the Internet and other online tools to communicate with others (Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010), are able to direct their own learning (Hartley & Bendixen, 2001; Hsu & Shiue, 2005; Stansfield, McLellan, & Connolly, 2004), can manage their

time (Beaudoin, Kurtz, & Eden, 2009; Hill, 2002; Roper, 2007), and take responsibility for their learning (Hung, et al., 2010).

Various demographic characteristics also relate to engagement in online learning. Age, for example, may play a role. Younger parents and parents with young children report more frequent use of technology (Walker, Dworkin, & Connell, 2011). Earlier research comparing income, ethnicity, and education to use of technology, identified a “digital divide” that makes technology less accessible for women, minority groups, and low-income individuals (Roy, 2004). While it is still likely that those with the most resources will be the first to adopt new technology, more recent research suggests that the greatest growth in technology use is in groups that have historically had less access (Dennis & Ebata, 2005). These groups predominately include individuals who are young, unmarried mothers or less educated parents that are likely to get the greatest benefits from their participation in online parenting programs (Radey & Randolph, 2009; Steimle & Duncan, 2004).

Recruiting the online learner.

Creating visibility. Creating visibility of a new program is one of the greatest challenges. Traditional strategies for creating awareness include advertising through distribution of print brochures, documents, and press releases, or building relationships with stakeholders. Online programs provide unique strategies for building visibility. For example, there is an entire science behind search engine optimization (SEO), which involves linking your web-based content with appropriate key words, using key words in the text of web pages themselves, and cross-linking website content with other websites or content creators (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). Specific marketing techniques and recruitment strategies are described in greater detail below.

Push and pull techniques. Push and pull marketing techniques help to recruit and maintain participation in online learning programs. Push techniques create visibility and loyalty by putting program information and resources in front of individuals with the greatest need (Abdolrasulniq, Collins, Casebeer, Wall, Spettell, Ray, Weissman, & Allison, 2004; Albrecht & Matthews, 2009; Hagel, 2005; Rimlinger, 2011). Examples of push techniques include posters, text messages, email reminders, Facebook posts, and traditional media such as TV and radio. Pull techniques attract individuals to a program with relevant content or an engaging design that gives participants opportunities to learn, innovate, and tailor content to their specific needs (Eysenbach G, 2005; Hagel, 2008; Webb, Joseph, Yardley, & Michie, 2010). For example, the explosion of user-generated content available on the Internet expands information sharing and collaboration, allowing individuals to pull information to them through websites, blogs, wikis, video podcasts like YouTube, and social media sites like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook (Albrecht & Matthews, 2009).

Ideally, both forms of communication are integrated to recruit and maintain participation (Webb, et al., 2010). According to Albrecht and Matthews (2009), push models work best to create visibility in the beginning stages of an online program when resources are scarce (e.g., one person is the source of information) and pull methods are a source of information when the program is well known or there is an abundance of resources. Online learning environments may be a natural place to take advantage of push and pull techniques by providing access to rich information about a specific topic area (Brown & Adler, 2008).

Recruitment strategies. Little is known about fathers' use of online educational programs, but there is evidence that it is difficult to recruit fathers to participate in face-to-face parenting programs designed to strengthen the father-child relationship (Fletcher, Freeman, & Matthey,

2011; Raikes & Bellotti, 2006; Smith, Duggan, Bair-Merritt, & Cox, 2012). A meta-analysis of randomized control trials of the Triple-P Parenting program reported that out of 4959 participants in 21 studies across several countries, only 20% were fathers (Fletcher, et al., 2011). Further, a review of child maltreatment prevention programs showed that father participation was less than 30% (Smith, et al., 2012). Similarly, results of a study of participation rates of African American fathers in Early Head Start programs found that only 30% of nonresident fathers engaged at some level and only 14% at high levels (Raikes & Bellotti, 2006).

In a recent study by Stahlschmidt, Threlfall, Seay, Lewis and Kohl (2013), they identify a number of possible solutions for increasing fathers' participation in parenting programs. Their research with African American fathers and program providers identifies several themes that are important for recruiting fathers. Among these are (1) word-of-mouth marketing, (2) focused advertising efforts, (3) collaborating, and (4) providing incentives. Other studies on recruiting and maintaining father participation in parenting programs find similar themes. For example, Berlyn, Wise and Soriano (2008) identified word-of-mouth marketing as a central strategy, expanding on the importance of using innovative branding and marketing techniques that focus advertisements to the target population. They also stress the importance of collaborating and tapping into existing resources to recruit fathers to programs. The following section provides a more thorough discussion of four of the themes identified including word-of-mouth marketing, focused advertising, collaborating, and incentives.

1. Word-of-mouth marketing: Word-of-mouth marketing can be an effective strategy for enrolling fathers in parenting programs. Interviews with fathers and program providers suggest that fathers like personal introductions to programs (Stahlschmidt, et al., 2013). This is especially effective when the invitation comes from someone they perceive to be like themselves. Berlyn et

al. (2008) identify word-of-mouth-marketing as one of the most effective strategies for recruiting fathers, relating it to the value and respect fathers place on receiving recommendations from those with similar experiences. These results are consistent with implementation science literature that highlights the effectiveness of face-to-face interactions between prior program participants and those suitable for the program (Caspe, Lopez, & Harvard Family R.P, 2006; Spoth, Clair, Greenberg, Redmond, & Shin, 2007; Spoth & Redmond, 1993). Face-to-face interactions may serve as a mediator between interventions and potential participants by familiarizing parents with the content and building trust in the benefits of participation (Axford, Lehtonen, Kaoukji, Tobin, & Berry, 2012; Peters, Calam, & Harrington, 2005; Whittaker & Cowley, 2012).

2. Focused advertising: One of the biggest barriers to participation is lack of knowledge that the program exists. Stahlschmidt and colleagues (2013) report that both fathers and program providers place a great deal of importance on advertisements. Participating fathers want to see advertisements they relate to, including vocabulary that matches their race and ethnicity. For example, creating advertisements for African Americans with African Americans in mind is both eye-catching and conveys a message that their needs are seen and understood. This has the potential to increase trust in the program provider's ability to meet their unique needs.

Similarly, program providers stress the importance of distributing advertising materials in areas that fathers are likely to frequent. Meeting men "on their own turf" makes fathers feel more comfortable and less intimidated to participate (Stahlschmidt, et al., 2013). Berlyn et al. (2008) adds to the conversation on focused advertising, stressing the importance of innovative branding and marketing. Their review of the Engaging Fathers study identifies that male-oriented words in titles and program descriptions are attractive to men. For example, fathers prefer words like

“tools” or “building” to words like “support”. Their evaluation reveals that men want clear and concrete descriptions of the program, including descriptions of how they can benefit from participation.

3. *Collaborating*: Collaborating with community agencies that make contact with fathers on a regular basis can be an effective way to increase participation in parenting programs. According to Stahlschmidt and colleagues (2013), “collaborating with community partners on recruitment efforts is an effective, and in some cases essential, approach for recruiting parents into parenting programs” (pg. 1740). Berlyn and colleagues (2008) suggest networking with a range of organizations including community-based groups, government agencies, workplaces, and schools. They recommend attending other programs, such as mixed parenting groups, and offering separate services to fathers. Because local organizations, including faith-based organizations, have knowledge of their community and its members, this strategy can be especially helpful for generating local interest. In effect, the professionals within organizations serve as stakeholders who share a common goal to reach fathers. Axford and colleagues (2012) expand on the effectiveness of involving stakeholders in recruitment efforts. They caution that stakeholders can be reluctant to make referrals to programs that have a control group out of fear that some are denied services. Further, stakeholders may only be willing to promote programs they believe provide a unique service in their community.

4. *Incentives*: Providing an incentive is another strategy for recruiting fathers to fatherhood programs. For example, fathers are more likely to participate in programs when they have a financial incentive like a gift card (Axford, et al., 2012; Stahlschmidt, et al., 2013). Other researchers suggest that characteristics of the program itself, such as offering free educational resources or making the program available in the comfort of one’s own home, can serve as an

incentive (Crook, Devereaux, Healy, Miller, Njegac, Regan & Wong, 2011). It follows that the ability to complete an online program in the privacy of their own home may be an inherent incentive to participating in online programs.

Participation in online learning. Parents engage in online programs for different purposes and in different ways. While some may engage in a program to gain access to needed information and resources, others may seek support or connection with those who share a similar experience.

Types of participation. Participation can be operationalized as either passive or active. Passive participation involves reading material rather than making comments or participating in discussion forums. It includes browsing websites, visiting but not participating in chat rooms, and reading discussion forums (Butler, Sproull, Kiesler, & Kraut, 2007). According to Bower's and colleagues (2011) review of six online programs for divorced parents, passive participation is common in online parenting programs. In fact, reading material is the most common form of engagement across all six programs. Passive participants are "lurkers" because they look at information without making an individual contribution (Nonnecke & Preece, 2000; Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004; van Uden-Kraan, Drossaert, Taal, Seydel, & van de Laar, 2008).

Active participation involves individuals writing or responding to messages, commenting on articles, posting to discussion forums or chat rooms, and answering questions (Butler, et al., 2007). This type of participation plays an important role in promoting learning by providing a collaborative context for participants to share with others, process information, get feedback, and learn from one another (Hill, 2001; Knowles, 1984; Long, 2004). This could be especially beneficial for divorced or separated men who are looking for guidance in areas such as learning to cook or dating after divorce. Due to the potential value of both forms of participation, this

study will examine the ways in which divorced or separated fathers engage in passive and active participation throughout the program (i.e., page views, posts, comments, and suggestions).

Barriers to participation. While information is limited for online programs, research identifies barriers to fathers' participation in face-to-face parenting programs. In a multi-method study of father participation, Shock and Gavazzi (2004) organized potential barriers into four categories: (1) pragmatic or structural program issues (i.e., scheduling and privacy concerns), (2) family demographics (i.e., marital status and family income), (3) father characteristics (i.e., education, past experiences with family-based interventions and services), and (4) father's perceptions (i.e., applicability of program and parenting competency). Divorced fathers were more likely to show lower levels of participation as a result of changes in homes, jobs, and intimate relationships (Shock & Gavazzi, 2004).

Berlyn and colleagues (2008) provide a comprehensive review of the Engaging Fathers Study as part of the National Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS). This study involved seven focus groups with 32 fathers between the ages of 20-62, as well as in-depth interviews with 17 fathers between 2004 and 2008. Results revealed four barriers that impact a father's participation in face-to-face, parenting programs. Consistent with Fletcher, Silberberg and Baxter's (2001) review of the literature on father involvement, Berlyn, et al (2008) found that fathers: (1) hold gender role stereotypes that make them reluctant to seek professional help, (2) lack awareness of available programs, (3) find the culture of available programs to be female oriented, leaving them feeling excluded or alienated, and (4) have difficulty attending programs and services that operate during business hours.

Maintaining engagement in online learning. A consistent theme across the literature is the challenge of maintaining participant engagement in online learning over time. While initial interest may be high, drop-off rates and attrition tend to be equally high (Eysenbach, 2005; Hughes, Bowers, Thomann, Curtiss & Ebata, 2012; Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). Once individuals choose to participate, the online program must be able to engage them sufficiently enough to sustain their participation and achieve the intended learning outcomes. Evidence suggests that online learners struggle to complete programs when they lack clarity with regards to program expectations or underestimate the amount of time required to participate among other competing responsibilities in their life (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

While the online environment itself needs to have quality content that is interactive and engaging, three factors are linked to maintaining participation in online programs: (1) features of the online platform; (2) regular site activity; and (3) multiple forms of communication to continually engage participants.

Features of the online platform. Features of the online platform and the tools and mechanisms available for delivering program content affect engagement in online learning. Some of the specific features include navigation (Lenert, Stoddard, Deluchhi, Bansod, Skoczen & Perez-Stable, 2003), look and feel (Fogg, Marshall, Laraki, Osipovich, Varma, Fang & Treinen, 2002), quality of content (Christensen & Mackinnon, 2006; Eysenbach, 2005; Song & Hill, 2007), and the ability to integrate a variety of tools such as discussion forums, chat boxes, quizzes, and activities (Aranda, 2011). Even though the online environment has the potential to provide opportunities for community building, participants often report feeling isolated and disconnected (Pigliapoco & Bogliolo, 2008; Tello, 2007; Vonderwell, 2003).

The way in which program content is structured can also impact engagement. A structured format requires participants to complete activities within a specific time frame, while an unstructured format allows participants to explore program content freely and complete activities at their own pace (Brown, Winzelberg, Abascal & Taylor, 2004). One intervention program for parents and adolescent girls with eating disorders offered a structured format to adolescents, but an unstructured format to parents (Brown, et al., 2004). Findings indicated the unstructured format was both convenient and effective in helping parents gain an understanding of how to help with their daughter's disordered eating. About half of the parents logged in and completed the program. Of these, 80% reported reading all the content. In addition to finding it useful and interesting, they enjoyed engaging in discussions with others. Even though only half logged in and completed the entire program, all participating parents showed improvements in their attitudes about behaviors around eating disorders. The evaluators infer that high levels of participation may not be necessary for the program to be helpful. It may be that willingness to participate may be enough to motivate some change by bringing attention to the existence of certain potentially harmful behaviors.

Regular site activity. Regular site activity involves the ongoing posting of content that makes the online learning environment appealing and relevant to the learner (Christensen & Mackinnon, 2006; Song & Hill, 2007). One study comparing “elders” (i.e., people who post) to “lurkers” (i.e., people who view others online activity) define regular site activity as posting several times a week (Preece, et al., 2004). Findings from this study suggest that parents are less inclined to use parenting websites that lack activity because they appear to be “silent communities”.

Regular site activity is more likely to increase participation when it is appealing and relevant to the learner. Song and Hill (2007) suggest that the key to engaging participants is developing a learning environment where individuals are inclined to contribute as a way of directing their own learning. Program providers are responsible for posting appropriate and engaging material, and participants are responsible for identifying online learning environments that meets their needs (Song & Hill, 2007). Under these circumstances, individuals may be more inclined to read and contribute to online environments. This is important because increased dosage, exposure to or participation in online programs, is linked to increased behavior change (Gelatt, Adler-Baeder, & Seeley, 2010).

Multiple forms of communication. Online learning environments have the capacity to engage participants through a variety of communication strategies such as emails, online posts, text messages, or phone calls. Results from Webb, Joseph, Yardley, and Michie's (2010) review of a meta-analysis of 85 studies of Internet-based health interventions showed that using multiple forms of communication can increase engagement and strengthen the likelihood of intended behavior changes. Often, the purpose of the communication is to motivate participants, challenge limiting beliefs, or provide cues for action (Webb, et al., 2010).

In summary, divorce or separation is a stressful event that impacts 36% of marriages, and leaves around 40% of children living in a divorced home by 16 years of age (Fabricius et al., 2010). With fathers taking a more active role in their child's life, they could benefit from support and education to help them with the transition. Some programs already exist, but there are very few targeting fathers. Historically, parenting programs are delivered as face-to-face programs, typically in a group setting. While these programs can be effective in promoting competent parenting practices (Bunting, 2004; Carter, 1996; Small & Mather, 2009), they often require

travel to meet in a common location. This can be costly, time consuming, and inconvenient for parents.

Online programs have several advantages that have a great potential to reach many fathers, including cost-efficiency and accessibility, flexibility, opportunities for ongoing learning, and opportunities for community building. While there is little known about designing effective online programs for divorced fathers, there is a burgeoning literature related to online learning that can provide insight into the design of online programs for divorced or separated fathers. Particular attention to the individual learner characteristics, recruitment strategies, and factors important for maintaining engagement could provide important insights into designing and implementing online programs for divorced or separated fathers.

Chapter III: Research Questions

Evaluating Online Learning Programs

While the potential and growing use of online programs are great, many challenges exist. In particular, the knowledge base regarding effective designs and implementation strategies remains limited. This is even more acute when it comes to programs targeted at parents in general, and fathers in particular. Nord (2011) proposed one of the first conceptual frameworks to focus and guide the research and evaluation of online programs. According to Nord, four major components require attention. These include:

- 1) **Program Description:** The program description provides a depiction of the online program including the nature and breadth of the program, its key components, delivery mechanisms, and learner assessment procedures. It answers the question, “What is the program”?
- 2) **Implementation Context:** Important to the implementation context is an understanding of the online environment and the process of implementation including those responsible for implementation, the infrastructure, roles and skills needed for implementation, and features within the implementation context that affect participation.
- 3) **Utilization:** Utilization involves all aspects related to participation and use of the program such as who uses the program, the extent of use by various individuals and groups, components that are accessed, when and how learners engage, and tools and strategies that affect use.
- 4) **Outcomes:** Tracking outcomes for individual learners, organizations and other users are important for online program delivery. No known or agreed upon outcome measures exist given the diversity of online programs. Identifying appropriate outcome measures depends upon having a clear understanding of the program, the context in which it is delivered, and its stage of development.

Following Nord, the purpose of the present study was to provide an initial in-depth understanding of the design and implementation of an online program for fathers intended to help them adjust and parent after divorce or separation. A case study methodology was used to describe and explore the design, implementation and utilization of the program. Understanding

the implementation process is a preliminary step to later summative evaluation assessing the impact of program outcomes. This study focused on the design of the online platform, the characteristics of the educational content, the implementation of the online program, strategies for recruiting and maintaining participants, individual characteristics of fathers, and the actual use of the program. Program outcomes were not examined, due to the early stage of the program. These factors were clustered into the following research questions:

Question 1. What are the characteristics of fathers who choose to participate in an online program directed at helping them adjust and parent after divorce or separation?

Research suggests that individual characteristics affect whether a man will participate in online learning or not; less is known about characteristics of divorced or separated men and online learning.

Question 2. What aspects of an online program promote or hinder the engagement of divorced or separated men?

Implementation of an online program requires choosing an online platform and making decisions about the delivery of program content. This study seeks to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the delivery platform and program content that either promote or hinder program engagement.

Question 3. What are some effective strategies for reaching divorced or separated fathers?

Reaching the intended audience is a significant issue in online learning. This research proposes to evaluate the use of a variety of strategies to create awareness and promote enrollment into a new online program for divorced or separated fathers.

Question 4. How do divorced or separated fathers use online materials for learning?

Research documents a variety of factors that can impact levels of participation in online learning environments. However, little is known about how divorced or separated fathers use online learning environments, or what affects their participation. This study seeks to identify and describe specific levels of program engagement.

Question 5. How can interventionists sustain engagement in online programs?

Maintaining long-term participation in online programs is one of the biggest challenges for interventionists. The current research explores factors that facilitate or inhibit ongoing participation in this program.

Table 1

Relationship Between Research Questions and Chapter Where Results Can be Found

Nord's Conceptual Framework	Research Question	Chapter
Program Description	# 2	Chapter V: Program Description
Implementation Context	# 3	Chapter V: Program Description
Utilization	# 1, 4, 5	Chapter VI: Results
Outcomes	Not appropriate given the stage of the program	

Chapter IV: Methods

Research Design

Based on the research questions and the developmental nature of the program to be studied, a case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003, 2006) was chosen as most appropriate. According to Yin (2003), a case study provides an in-depth, empirical examination of a contemporary phenomenon, or a “case”, within in a real world context. This design is especially useful under the following four conditions: (1) the focus of the study is to answer *how* and *why* questions, (2) the behavior of those in the study cannot be manipulated, (3) the researcher is interested in the contextual conditions because they are thought to be relevant to the phenomenon under study, or (4) the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear (Yin, 2003).

The case in this research was the program, *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create*. Using this approach, the researcher sought to understand the process of designing and implementing a new online program for divorced or separated fathers. In particular, the researcher selected a descriptive case study in order to “describe a phenomenon (the “case”) in its real-world context” (Yin, 2003, p. 238). Because little is known about the delivery of an online program for divorced or separated fathers, the study sought to document and describe the nuances of program design and implementation. By choosing an inductive, in-depth approach, the researcher could examine program design decisions and factors influencing the design of such programs and participants’ engagement in online learning. Findings from this case study will inform researchers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of online programs, especially as related to divorced or separated men.

Case study researchers collect a variety of materials that together build an understanding of the phenomenon under study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Creswell (1994) describes this process as an inquiry through which to build a complex, holistic picture of a social or human occurrence within a natural setting. Under real world conditions, programs are subject to changes that require a dynamic, process-oriented approach to capture the important operations and impacts (Patton, 2002). The researcher can collect data as changes and developments occur to better understand the phenomenon. Data collected throughout this study was also used to make modifications to the program in an iterative process of program improvement.

Role of the Qualitative Researcher

Qualitative research takes place in natural settings, where the researcher enters the ongoing worlds of people and encounters their experiences first hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Emerson, 2001; Yin, 2003). The qualitative researcher considers the process of collecting rich data over extended periods of time a major strength, as it allows the researcher time to become immersed in the culture where data can be collected from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 1994). According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), the qualitative researcher is considered an insider in the data collection process, and may be a participant in the activity under study. This is in contrast to the quantitative researcher who usually remains outside the study, with minimal interaction with or influence on the situation.

In this study, the researcher conceived, designed, and implemented *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect & Create*. Conceptualization involved immersing herself in the literature to identify the primary factors impacting men's adjustment after divorce or separation, strengthening the post divorce/separation father-child relationship, as well as researching online program delivery methods, interactive tools, and platform options. Designing the program

involved writing program content, interviewing men about their experiences and needs, consulting with web developers, and transferring and transforming written material and videos into the online platform. Finally, implementation involved recruiting participants, delivering the program, monitoring program delivery, generating ongoing content, and responding to discussion forum comments, questions, and other issues as they arose. The researcher engaged in an iterative program development process that involved ongoing evaluation to continuously inform the design and implementation of the program.

Target Population

The program was originally conceived to serve nonresident fathers with at least one child between 10 and 14 years of age for whom the father did not have primary custody. A nonresident father was defined as any father who had custody of his child at least 50% of the time. The researcher chose to focus on fathers with children in this age group because existing literature suggests that these children are likely to: (1) want a closer, regular relationship with their father than their older adolescent counterparts, (2) experience problems with marital transitions and separation from their fathers, and (3) have at least some experience using digital technology.

The original design also targeted fathers in the first six months of divorce or separation. It is within this time frame that adjustment may be most difficult for men, and educational programs for parents experiencing divorce had been found to be most effective (Arbuthnot, Poole, & Gordon, 1996). Finally, the target population also had to be conversant in English, have computer and high speed Internet access, and not have primary custody.

The original intention to target fathers meeting the above criteria proved unattainable. The reasons for this, as well as how the target criteria changed are discussed in Chapter V. A

description of the 39 fathers who actually enrolled in the program, is presented in the Results Chapter.

Credibility and Trustworthiness of Data Sources

A key feature of case study research is the inclusion of multiple data sources. Using data from various sources enhances credibility and trustworthiness (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003) and facilitates the convergence of data to provide a greater understanding of the case. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that when conducting research of any kind, the basic issue under question is “*What is trustworthiness?*”

“How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?” (p. 290)

Quantitative and qualitative researchers have taken different approaches to answering the question of trustworthiness, largely because the assumptions of the two paradigms are quite different. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four aspects of research that are basic to understanding trustworthiness.

1. Truth value: How can one establish confidence in the truth of an inquiry for the participating subjects, within the given context?
2. Applicability: How can one determine if the findings of an inquiry are applicable to other subjects or in other contexts?
3. Consistency: How can one establish whether findings from an inquiry are replicable with the same (similar) respondents, in the same (similar) context?
4. Neutrality: How can one establish the degree to which findings are determined by respondents and conditions of inquiry, as opposed to biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?

While these points are applicable to both quantitative and qualitative paradigms, each has different terminology to explain their approach (Table 2).

Table 2

Issues of Trustworthiness in Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Trustworthiness		
	a. <u>Quantitative Paradigm</u>	b. <u>Qualitative Paradigm</u>
True Value	Internal Validity	Credibility
Applicability	External Validity	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

For the present study the researcher strove to build the trustworthiness of her data by examining and recording the multiple, ever-changing realities of participating fathers, rather than relying on the reality of a single father to understand fathers' experiences with the program. The researcher also provided a rigorous description of the research context, central assumptions, changes in the study, and findings and interpretation. This gives a foundation for replicating the program. Finally, the researcher took the ever-changing context into account by focusing on describing the changes that took place in the research setting.

Data Sources

For this study, 12 different sources of data were used. They include both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection (Table 3). Each data source is explained in greater detail below.

Table 3***Sources of Data***

Quantitative Data Sources
• Eligibility Survey • Consent & Background Questionnaire: Demographics and divorce specifics • Log Records of father's online participation • Logs of Newsletter Opens • Logs of Active Discussion Forum Posts • Logs of Passive Discussion Forum Views • Logs of Active Chat Posts • Logs of Passive Chat Views • Records of Direct Contact with Researcher
Qualitative Data Sources
• Observational Field Notes • Unstructured Interviews with fathers • End of Session Questionnaire: Open-ended questions about each session

Quantitative data. This study utilized three sources of quantitative data, all collected online: (1) The Eligibility Survey, (2) The Consent & Background Questionnaire, and (3) Log Records of father's online participation in the program.

Eligibility survey. Participation in *Apart, Not Broken* was advertised as a study. The purpose of the eligibility survey was to determine father's fit for participating in the program. This was the first survey that fathers completed online after consenting to participate in the study. Their choice to complete the questionnaire after reading the informed consent indicated they read the information and agreed to participate. The information in the eligibility survey contributed to understanding of the individual characteristics of participating fathers. The 9-item questionnaire collected the following information (See Appendix B for the Eligibility Survey):

- Contact information (i.e. name, state, and email address)
- Best number to be reached
- Time since divorce
- Presence of at least one child under 18

- The nature of their custody arrangements
- Fluency in English
- Access to the Internet on a 7 item Likert scale from none to daily
- Name and contact information for their ex-partner (optional)
- How they heard about the program

Consent and Background Questionnaire. After finishing the eligibility survey, fathers consented to participate in the study and then completed a 31- item background questionnaire. The purpose of the background questionnaire was to collect demographic data, as well as data on a number of factors that had been identified in the research as having an impact on the post-divorce, father-child relationship, such as time since divorce and custody arrangements. In addition, the background questionnaire had questions related to the father's ability to participate in the program, such as access to the Internet. The Consent and Background Questionnaire is found in Appendix C. Key information that was collected included:

- Demographic characteristics (e.g., age, ethnicity, education level, and income level)
- Gender related characteristics (e.g., familiarity with computers, frequency of accessing the Internet, use of computers and other communication devices like tablets and smart phones, reasons for using computer),
- Divorce-related characteristics (e.g., time since divorce, type of custody, perceived level of adjustment, perceived level of child's adjustment, relationship with ex-partner, and initiator of the divorce or separation).

Both the Eligibility Survey and Consent and Background Questionnaire were completed online prior to program participation and linked to the participant's unique identification number (their zip code and birthdate).

Log Records. Online log records stored detailed information about the father's actual use of the educational content, discussion forum, chat room, and newsletter campaign. The online platform's administrative interface allowed for real-time access to fathers use of the 12-session content as well as their passive and active participation in the discussion forum and chat room.

Three email newsletter campaign lists were established, including: (1) enrolled fathers, (2) fathers with incomplete registrations, and (3) experts who could share the program with professional in their network (attorneys, mediators, therapists, life coaches, etc.). A record of the newsletters that fathers opened was automatically generated by the email campaign database. Online tracking of newsletters opened by fathers contributed to an understanding of how fathers used educational materials. Records of newsletters opened by fathers with incomplete registrations could be linked to whether they completed their registration after receiving the newsletter. Finally, tracking of newsletters opened by professionals contributed to an understanding of reach. This could contribute to building program visibility.

Qualitative data. Qualitative data came from three sources: (1) Observational field notes, (2) Post-program participant interviews, and (3) End of session feedback surveys. Each is explained below.

Observational field notes. When collecting observational field notes, the researcher becomes the medium through which research is conducted (Lofland, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). The purpose of collecting field notes in qualitative research is to witness how the individuals under study perceive, feel, and act in order to understand their perceptions, feelings, and behaviors more fully.

Field notes of the researcher's first-hand experiences and direct contact with fathers, as well as observations, challenges, and lessons learned were recorded throughout the course of the study. These field notes were used to make modifications to the program as the program evolved and provided a better understanding of the (1) characteristics of the fathers, program content, and implementation context; (2) use of the program; and (3) strategies for recruiting and maintaining engagement in the program. The researcher took field notes after individual interactions with a

participant, as well as documented insights, observation, and lessons learned throughout the program implementation period. These were systematically documented in a Microsoft Word file in order to facilitate analysis.

Participant Interviews. The purpose of the qualitative interview is to learn about the other person's perspective, with the assumption that their perspective is meaningful, knowable, and made explicit (Patton, 2002). For the purpose of this study, the goal of the interview was to hear directly from fathers' about their insights, perceptions, and experiences with the online program.

Using a semi-structured protocol (See Appendix D), the researcher covered a set of key questions with each father and probed as appropriate to clarify points and gather additional detail. Questions were aimed at learning what motivated them to enroll in the program, their impressions of the program content and the implementation platform, factors that facilitated or hindered their engagement, and their recommendations for program improvement.

Purposeful sampling places an emphasis on in-depth understanding, versus probability sampling that has generalization as its purpose (Patton, 2002). For the interviews, the sampling frame included all enrolled fathers at the end of the study period. All enrolled fathers were asked to participate in the 30-45 minute interview through an email invitation with at least one follow-up. Effort was made to personalize the invitation and encourage fathers to participate. Eight fathers accepted the invitation. The interviews were recorded in Audionote, an online notepad and voice recording software that allows for simultaneous note taking and recording. Interviews were transcribed and coded for themes related to the participant characteristics, program content, implementation context, reasons for enrolling and engaging in the program, and factors facilitating or hindering participation.

End of session surveys. The purpose of the 5-question end of session survey was two-fold. First, it collected information about father's interactions with their child over the previous week, both with and without the use of technology. This was intended to measure changes in father-child interactions throughout their participation in the program. Second, the end of session questionnaire collected feedback from fathers about the content of each session through two open-ended questions: (1) What did you like most about this session? and (2) How might this session be improved? Answers to these two questions were aligned with participants to provide insight into their experience with individual sessions.

Data Management

Because case study designs generate large amounts of data from various sources, the researcher must be disciplined and systematic in organizing data in an ongoing way throughout the study. Quantitative survey data (i.e., Eligibility survey, Consent & Background Questionnaire) were collected in Qualtrics survey software and imported into SPSS for management and analysis. Answers to the two formative, open-ended questions on the end-of-session questionnaire were collected and imported into Microsoft Excel in two formats: by question and by individual participant.

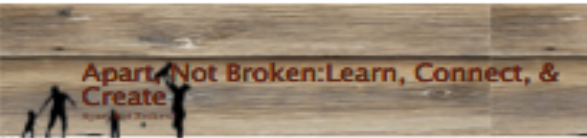
Online records of participation in the program were collected within the online portal. The portal is designed to save each login according to the individual's identification number and a time stamp of when the participant logged in and all subsequent activity during that session. The online portal related all activity on the site to the identification number, allowing the researcher to connect online records of how participating fathers used the various online program features (i.e., program sessions, chat, discussion forum). Online records of newsletters opened

were collected through MailChimp's newsletter campaign tracking system and linked to participant's email address.

Chapter V: Program Description

This chapter describes the online program, *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create* (www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com) that was designed and implemented as part of the current project. It is a free online, multi-media educational program for divorced or separated fathers who have a child that is 18 years of age or younger. This chapter details “what the program is” (Nord, 2011) including its components and structure. In order to expand the knowledge base about online program development, particular attention is given to the decisions the researcher made during the design and implementation. As a new program, targeting a new audience, with no predecessors or models to follow, the researcher engaged in an iterative process of program development. This allowed the program to evolve and be modified as insights were gained about what was working, and what was not. This chapter presents these insights and the modifications made during a formative process of program design and implementation. Results and lessons learned can be found in Chapters VI and VII.

This program is unique in targeting fathers. It is believed to be the first online learning program designed to meet the relationship building needs of nonresidential fathers and their children. It is expected that the lessons learned will be of interest and directly applicable to others developing online programs and/or educating fathers as parents. Figure 1 depicts the homepage of *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create*.



[You are not logged in. Login](#)

APART, NOT BROKEN: Learn, Connect, & Create
Research and Tools for Fathers

RELATED SITES
[Program Updates and Blog](#)
[Parenting Teens Blog](#)

Register Here

[View A Detailed Description of the Program Content](#)

Are you a divorced or separated father? *Do you want to:*

Move past fear, pain, & guilt? Create the life you want with your child? Manage your relationship with your ex-partner? Contribute to other men? Be the creator of your future? Contribute to ground breaking research that will help other fathers?

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR THE PROGRAM!

Apert, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create gives fathers a place to:

- Learn:** Hear fathers' real experiences and insights. Have access to information and recommendations that can make a measurable difference in adjusting and parenting after separation or divorce.
- Connect:** Join an online community of fathers. Learn to use creative strategies to connect with your child and manage your relationship with your ex-partner.
- Create:** Feel powerful in your ability to be the dad YOU want to be. Create the relationship YOU want with your child by building on your existing strengths, starting new traditions, and creating lasting memories.

This program is equipped with:

- Videos reflecting the real life experiences of other divorced fathers.
- A discussion forum for you to connect and share with other fathers.
- Online tools for sharing photos, calendars, communicating & more.
- Current and concise information about divorce & parenting after divorce.
- Engaging activities for you to enjoy with your child, and
- Additional resources for you to build your own parenting toolkit.

This innovative, multi-media program is:

- **Free:** The Change!
- **Confidential:** Private, online support education program
- **Efficient:** Brief, 12-week series of ~30 minute sessions
- **Flexible:** Spend as much time as you want on the aspects that fit your needs
- **Convenient:** Available 24/7, worldwide, anywhere with an Internet connection
- **Engaging:** Starts when you register!

This program is being evaluated through the University of Wisconsin, Madison as part of an doctoral program. Please click on the link below to get more information or sign up. Once you fill out the registration form you will be asked to:

1. Respond to the informed consent form and brief survey.
Receipt of your consent form indicates that you read the consent form and are agreeing to participate in the program.
2. Complete the pre-program survey. You will be asked to complete this survey again at the end of the program.

Thank you for your interest! We look forward to having you as a part of *Apert, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, and Create!*

Please click here to register for the program. If you are already registered, you can [Click Here to Login](#)

Shelly D. Walker © 2010. All Rights Reserved

You are not logged in. ([Login](#))

Free

Figure 1. Homepage for Apart, Not Broken.

Implementation Context

Several features make *Apart, Not Broken* different from other online educational programs and influenced decisions concerning the program's design and implementation. Two of these include the role of the program developer and the environment in which the program was implemented. They are discussed here to provide greater clarity about the particularities of the context that influenced program development. Research indicates the critical importance of the implementation context on program success.

The program developer's role. The developer of the program was a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who used this case study as the focus of her dissertation research. These roles placed particular expectations on the program design process. The researcher was under direct supervision of her academic committee and the expectations of the Internal Review Board (IRB). This impacted decisions, especially those related to protecting the confidentiality of fathers, requesting consent from mothers and assent from children, and maintaining the integrity of the program as approved by the IRB and her academic committee.

Between April 2009 and January 2011, the researcher developed the formal research proposal. Following approval of her committee, the current study engaged in some aspect of IRB review between June 2011 and April 2013. During that time, a variety of issues required IRB approval including: (1) responding to the perceived risk of delivering an online program to fathers and children, (2) requesting the ex-partner's approval, (3) completing the 12-session educational curriculum, (4) switching to a new online platform after the original platform was discontinued, (5) changing recruitment requirements, and (6) moving from a summative to

formative study design. Addressing these issues required several iterations of the IRB application, causing delays in both the onset and progression of the study.

The implementation environment. Many online educational programs are implemented and backed by the full support of an organization. This often includes the organizations resources, credibility, infrastructure, managerial and technological support, and defined educational and training expectations. In contrast, *Apart, Not Broken* was implemented by an individual. The researcher was able to draw on the reputation of the university and her academic committee, but did not have the staff and financial resources that are typical of someone working through a university. As an independent educator, the researcher was solely responsible for managing the design, recruitment, and implementation issues that occurred. This affected the number of resources available for developing and marketing the program, the speed at which work was completed, and the technology solutions available for program implementation. With limited financial resources, assistance from technologists and marketing experts were dependent upon their willingness to donate their time and services or charge nominal fees.

Timeline of Program Design and Implementation

Developing the content for *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create* began in July 2011 with the program being released for use in November 2012. Data collection for the purposes of this research ended at the end of October 2013. Table 4 summarizes the timeline of major activities that took place over the course of the design, implementation, and evaluation of this project. While the items are listed chronologically, many activities were happening simultaneously and/or continued over various periods of time. Activities and the ongoing decisions relative to design and implementation are described in more detail later.

Table 4

Design and Implementation Timeline

July 2011 - April 2012	• Determine program goals and learning objectives • Determine how content will be structured • Develop educational content • Develop educational tools: Interview divorced fathers and create video vignettes; create parenting tools
Feb 2012 – March 2012	Research and select the online platform
March 2012 – Nov 2012	• Design online platform • Explore and decide on multi-media tools to use • Load educational content onto platform • Write orientation and instructions for using the platform
Nov 2012	Release program
Dec 2012 – Oct 2013	• Build visibility: Create marketing materials
Nov 2012 – Oct 2013	• Recruit fathers
Dec 2012 – Oct 2013	• Maintain engagement
Dec 2012 – Oct 2013	• Continue to build content and add material
End of Oct 2013	• End data collection for the current study

Program Components: Educational Content and Online Platform

Apart, Not Broken consists of two components: (1) the educational content and (2) the online platform for program delivery. While the two components are discussed separately, decisions and developments regarding both occurred simultaneously. Often, “program” is thought of as the educational content. It is the purposeful integration of the educational content into an online platform that distinguishes this program.

Educational content.

Theoretical foundation. Amato's (2000) *Divorce-Stress Adjustment Perspective* was used to provide the theoretical foundation for the creation of the new online program because of its focus on the father's adjustment and the importance of maintaining the father-child relationship. According to this perspective, the loss of contact between children and fathers is a principal mediator linking divorce with problematic child and parent outcomes (Amato, 2000; Amato & Dorius, 2010).

This theory is based on the idea that divorce is not a discrete event but a process beginning while the couple is still together and ending long after the divorce is legal (Amato, 2000). The uncoupling process is usually instigated by feelings of estrangement and loss in the hope for a mutually supportive, rewarding, lifelong relationship together. During this process, the separating couple may go through periods of renegotiating their relationship, avoiding or ignoring their problems, and/or seeking professional help. When children are involved, fathers are left learning to establish a new life for themselves while managing custody arrangements that impact their ability to childrear.

Research documents that there is a great deal of diversity in the severity and duration of maladjustment following divorce (Amato, 2000; Amato & Dorius, 2010). More specifically, researchers emphasize that a child's adjustment to divorce greatly depends on the parent's ability to adjust and minimize interparental conflict (Coltrane, 2008; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; Sandler, et. al., 2008), establish effective residential parenting (Coltrane, 2008; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Sandler, et al., 2008), and maintain the non-residential parent-child relationship (Amato & Dorius, 2010; Carlson, 2006; Fabricius, & Luecken, 2007).

Moderators make up an important component of the divorce-stress-adjustment model by introducing variability in the way in which divorce-related factors are connected to personal outcomes (Amato, 2000). These factors influence the extent to which individuals experience negative emotional, behavioral, or health outcomes following divorce (Amato, 2000; Booth & Amato, 1991). When present, protective factors can weaken the link between divorce-related events and stress. The current program sought to strengthen the relationship between fathers and children by giving fathers access to information, resources, and support for adjusting and parenting after their divorce or separation.

The crisis and chronic strain models. There are two models embedded in the divorce-stress-adjustment theory, the *crisis model* and the *chronic strain model*, both of which have implications for the well-being of parents and children. The *crisis model* typically takes place in the initial stage of divorce and may include high levels of tension resulting in instant or long-term problems for both parents and children (Coltrane, 2008). This program addressed factors that could influence adjustment, such as a father's perception of the divorce (i.e., crisis versus new opportunity), access to personal resources (i.e., self-efficacy, coping skills, and social support networks), approaches for reducing conflict with the ex-spouse (Amato, 2000; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006; Williams, 2003; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006), and strategies for staying engaged in his child's life (Amato & Dorius, 2010). According to this theory, successful adjustment is believed to occur when a father is functioning well within his new roles and he has developed a new identity and lifestyle that is not tied to his former marriage (Amato, 2000; Kitson, 1992).

The *chronic-stress model* considers the implications of persistent strain from factors such as economic hardship, loneliness, and parenting responsibilities that leave a parent with sole

responsibility for parenting or lack of contact with children (Amato, 2000). While the majority of individuals eventually return to their pre-divorce level of functioning after the initial period of disruption, the presence of persistent strain can result in greater declines in the well-being of parents and children, and increased difficulty returning to a pre-divorce level of functioning.

This program addressed factors that had the potential to reduce chronic stress by helping father adjust and establish effective parenting after divorce or separation, such as staying engaged, communicating effectively, and focusing on a long-term father-child relationship. Addressing these issues has the potential to reduce negative impacts on both the well-being of children (Ahrons, 2007) and the fathers themselves (Bokker, et al., 2006).

Literature supporting adjustment and parenting after divorce. The following review of the literature informed the development of *Apart, Not Broken*. Drawing on research related to factors important to assisting fathers in adjusting and parenting after divorce or separation, the program focuses on increasing the quantity and quality of father-child interactions, developing role clarity, improving parental satisfaction, teaching effective parenting practices, strengthening communication, and maintaining the father-child relationship.

Quantity and quality of interactions. While frequency of contact creates opportunities for quality father-child relationship (Leon, 2003; Whiteside & Becker, 2000), it may not be enough by itself. Developing a quality relationship involves engaging in quality interactions, rich with opportunities for fathers to participate in a broad range of activities that allow them to monitor, teach, and communicate with their children (Cashmore, Parkinson, & Taylor, 2008; King, Harris, & Heard, 2004; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean & Hofferth, 2001). This program was designed to provide fathers with information and strategies to strengthen the quality of their interactions with their children.

Role clarity. Stone (2006) identified role clarity as the most influential factor in determining father-child relationship quality. Helping fathers to transition, adjust, and re-define their role can be critical, as it is linked to the child's ability to adjust (Greif & Kristell, 2010) and long-term implications for father-children relationships after divorce (Peters & Ehrenberg, 2008). Stone (2006) found that fathers had higher quality relationships when the boundaries of their role were clear. Without clear boundaries, fathers expressed being unsure of how to identify with and perform their role when engaging with children. One factor making it difficult for nonresidential fathers to identify their role is that society does not provide a clear picture of what this role should look like (Greif & Kristell, 2010). This is compounded by the emotional response of men who report feeling increasingly stressed, anxious, socially isolated, and rootless as they try to define and reestablish the father-child relationship (Greif & Kristell, 2010). Developing clear expectations and boundaries may assist fathers in navigating their ambiguity. In addition to ambiguity, many fathers describe their role as less manageable and more complex (Seltzer and Brandreth, 1995; Yarosh et al., 2009). This seems logical, considering many fathers must learn how to manage new parenting responsibilities rather than sharing them with a partner. Having to restructure the parent-child relationship within limitations of time and location can also add to feelings of loss, deprivation, and frustration (Wallerstein, Corbin, & Lewis, 1988). Because a father's effort to develop role clarity is thought to involve both gaining an understanding of how he can be engaged in his child's life, as well as being satisfied with his involvement with his children (Leite & McKenry, 2002; Wilson, 2006), the current program included material on how fathers can manage their emotional response to divorce, establish boundaries, and set new goals for moving forward.

Developing arrangements for verbal and physical interactions with the child are an important part of understanding how fathers can be engaged in their child's life (Peters & Ehrenberg, 2008; Wilson, 2006). Fathers perform a variety of roles, including providing for, teaching (direct instruction, role modeling, and mentoring), protecting, disciplining, caretaking, supporting, and acting as a co-parent (Olmstead, et al., 2009, Stone, 2006). Each of these is further classified as *affective and instrumental* roles. Affective roles are an important aspect to the father-child relationship as they demonstrate teaching through example, expressing love and affection openly, and being encouraging and supportive (Pasley & Braver, 2004; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988; Yarosh et al., 2009). Interactive play may be one of the unique ways in which fathers often engage in an affective role with children (Stone, 2006). Instrumental roles involve assisting with day-to-day parenting tasks that help to provide for, discipline, and teach their children (Yarosh, et al., 2009). Fathers' engagement in extracurricular activities and assistance with homework are a couple of the ways they can play an instrumental role in their child's life. The current program was designed to help fathers to further establish their instrumental, affective, and co-parenting roles.

Parental satisfaction. Parental satisfaction is tied to how content fathers are with their newly defined roles. Divorced fathers can experience feelings of loss, isolation, and exclusion from their children, which contributes to a sense of confusion and a decline in parental satisfaction (McHenry, Price, Fine, & Serovich, 1992). Adjusting to the divorce involves learning new ways to have an influence or control over how their child is raised (Braver, Wolchick, Sandler, Sheets, Fogas, & Bay, 1993; McHenry, et al., 1992). Fathers tend to stay more involved (Braver, et al., 1992), and communicate more frequently (Dreman & Shemi, 2004), when they feel as though they continue to have influence in their child's life. Research

also suggests that fathers experience more parental satisfaction when their ex-spouse allows for frequent interactions (Bouchard, Lee, Asgary, & Pelletier, 2007). Studies show that participation in post-divorce parent education programs can have a positive influence on parental satisfaction (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1997; Douglas, 2004; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). In addition to a focus on co-parenting, *Apart, Not Broken* provided fathers with strategies for working through feelings of loss, isolation, and exclusion from their children.

Parenting practices. Personal attitudes and beliefs about parenting can influence the roles fathers assume, and how they are implemented. While parenting beliefs include the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge of various aspects of parenting, child-rearing attitudes are the thoughts that predispose a father to act positively or negatively toward his children (Grusec, 2006). When fathers experience divorce, they form attitudes and beliefs about themselves, their children, and the father-child relationship. Whether these are positive or negative can form the basis for the father's post-divorce behavior. Further, it is well established that attitudes and beliefs about parenting inform the adoption of individual parenting styles (Lee, Daniels, & Kissinger, 2006).

Researchers link the use of certain parenting styles and actual parenting behavior (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Lee, et al., 2006). While parenting styles are conceptualized as beliefs and attitudes providing the context for parenting behavior, parenting practices are the specific, goal directed behaviors through which a father performs parental duties (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Thus, it is important for fathers to consider how their beliefs and attitudes influence their parenting and set goals for performing their role as a father. A meta-analysis of 63 studies showed that authoritative parenting practices (i.e. limit setting, instrumental assistance, and talking about problems) is tied to divorced fathers' feelings of emotional closeness with their children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). *Apart, Not Broken*

provided fathers with tools for assessing their own parenting style and considering ways in which to practice authoritative parenting.

Communication. Communication is the process by which fathers and children share aspects of themselves, develop increased awareness, understanding, and closeness through the exchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Researchers emphasize that father-child communication involves the father's ability to relate to the child through verbal and nonverbal messages, touch, and listening, with the goal of strengthening trust and understanding (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997; Nydegger & Mitteness, 1991). The distancing that takes place as a result of divorce can strain the relationship and the father's ability to make these kinds of connections. Learning about healthy communication, understanding the barriers, and developing strategies for effective communication can help the nonresidential father execute his role as a parent and manage some of the inevitable changes that occur.

Barriers to father-child communication after divorce may differ for fathers and children, but together have a strong influence on the father-child relationship. Yarosh's (2008) qualitative study highlights communication barriers from both the father and the child's perspective. On the one hand, fathers in Yarosh's study found it difficult to interact with children without interrupting the flow at the other household. They struggled to extract deep and meaningful interactions and communicate about the child's homework and extracurricular activities. On the other hand, children reported struggling to manage affection between the two households, create a private space to communicate, and share thoughts spontaneously. Both fathers and children found it difficult to assure joint access to technological resources, use audio-only communication (i.e. phones) as their primary mode of communication, and maintain shared routines. In light of this, *Apart, Not Broken* emphasized the importance of effective communication and encouraged

fathers to explore and implement new communication strategies to strengthen the father-child relationship.

Maintaining the father-child relationship. Fathers are more likely to engage in a long-term relationship with their children when they are given opportunities to take an active role throughout their children's lives. More specifically, taking an active role has been linked with an increased satisfaction and identity investment (i.e. efforts toward and investment in being a good father) in their long-term role as a father (Henley & Pasley, 2005). Consequently, the current program taught fathers about the importance of maintaining a long-term relationship with their children by acknowledging the past, accepting the present, and helping them create new rituals and routines for the future.

Target audience. While Apart, not Broken was originally designed to address the learning needs of fathers with children 10 - 14 years of age in the first six months of divorce or separation, difficulties recruiting resulted in offering the program to fathers with children between 8 and 16 years of age who were in the first two years of separation. This was based on research suggesting that the first two years are a time when the greatest amount of adjustment is likely to occur for fathers and children (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). Continued difficulties in recruitment resulted in offering the program to fathers with a child that was 18 years of age or younger, with no limitations in time since divorce or separation.

Program goals and learning objectives. Following standard practice in curriculum design, the researcher identified broad goals and more specific learning objectives to help clarify desired outcomes and guide the selection of the educational content. Four primary goals were identified that align with the theoretical foundation and research supporting post divorce father-child relationships. These include: (1) Improve adjustment to divorce or separation; (2) Help

fathers gain role clarity and establish effective parenting practices; (3) Enhance father-child communication; and 4) Increase strategies for maintaining a healthy father-child relationship. Besides reflecting the Amato (2000) *Divorce-Stress Adjustment Perspective*, the program goals represent fundamental aspects of the father-child relationship as they contribute to the amount of contact (McKenry, Price, & Fine, 1992; Yarosh, 2008; Yarosh, et al., 2009) and the quality of father-child interactions (Stone, 2006; Yarosh, 2008; Yarosh, et al., 2009).

More specific learning objectives were also identified. Besides helping to further define content to incorporate, these served as variables to include in the participant assessment tools. The learning objectives of the program include: (1) more frequent interactions between fathers and their child; (2) enhanced father satisfaction; (3) greater father use of effective parenting practices; (4) strengthened communication between fathers and their children; (5) increased emotional closeness to their child; (6) greater confidence in their role as a father; (7) enhanced father support networks, and (8) increased knowledge about how to build a better relationship with their child.

Structure of the educational content. To provide structure and organization for the educational content, the researcher used the 4 programs goals as the organizing frame. For each goal, a set of sessions covered the essential topics related to the goal. Each session was divided into three sections in sequence: (1) What You Can Expect: On Your Mark, (2) What It Means: Get Set, and (3) What You Can Do About It: Go. Table 5 provides an overview of how the course content was organized. These are further discussed below.

Table 1

Structure of the Educational Content: Goals, Sessions, and Sections

Goal	Sessions	Sections
1. Adjusting to Divorce or Separation	1. Parting	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	2. The Crux of Separation or Divorce	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	3. Reinventing Yourself	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
2. Understanding and Redefining Your Role as a Father	4. Active Parenting: Providing, Disciplining & Teaching	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	5. Expressive Parenting: Supporting, Caretaking and Protecting	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	6. Cooperative Parenting: Co-Parenting	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go

3. Communication & Relationship Building	7. The YOU in Communication	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	8. Foundations of Relatedness	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	9. Listening	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
4. Maintaining Your Relationship	10. Owning Up & Cleaning Up: When Things Don't Go As Planned	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
	11. Creating the Relationship You Want With Your Child Over Time	What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go
		What You Can Expect: On Your Mark
		What It Means: Get Set
		What You Can Do About It: Go

Program implementation procedures. The actual delivery of the program content commenced immediately after fathers registered for the program and completed the online consent form and questionnaires. It followed the following sequence:

Immediately after registration, fathers received:

- A welcome email (Figure 2) confirming registration, providing login information, and giving fathers a brief overview of the program structure.
- Two documents attached to the welcome email, including:
 - 1) A document entitled, “*10 Steps for Navigating This Multi-Media Program*” with guided instructions for logging in, navigating the site and using the multi-media tools and program features, (See Appendix E) and
 - 2) A document entitled, “*How to Get the Most Out of Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create*” gives more specific descriptions and instructions for using the available features including online videos, PDFs, and multimedia tools. (See Appendix F)

Hi [Name],

Welcome to Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create!

Your program starts today!

Your username and password are listed below. Save this email in case you need to retrieve it at a later date. Your username is the same as the ID you created in the surveys - zip code, birthdate [note - that it is month, date, year]. The password was randomly created to protect your confidentiality.

URL: www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com

Username: 6532912141980

Password: N;ne!90R

There are two documents attached:

- (1) 10 Steps to Navigating This Multi-Media Website
- (2) "How to Use This Program"

This program is designed for you to move through at your own pace, preferably in order. You will see all 12 sessions on the main page. Simply click on the yellow hand to progress through each of the sessions. At the end of each session, click on the link "Return to Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect Create" to return to the course home page and view another session.

Every week, I post a new blog entry on the www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com/newsletter website, as well as related questions in the discussion forum. This is a great place to reflect on the article, ask questions, or simply share your experiences with other fathers. Feel free to start your own discussion if you would like!

Remember, by completing the program and related surveys, you will receive a \$25.00 Amazon gift card, and be entered into a raffle for an iPad.

Please let me know if you have ANY questions as you move through your program.

Thank you and I will see you online!

Shelly

Figure 2. Program Welcome Email.

Before fathers began the course, they were given an introduction to the program and an opportunity to become familiar with the online platform. These introductory steps provided fathers with:

- An overview of the program goals and educational content,
- Suggestions on how to practice using the multi-media tools,
- *A Parenting Tool: Share a Music Video* which served an opening activity and a simple way for fathers to connect with their child,

- An activity that illustrated how to select a song on YouTube and share the link with their child,
- Instructions on how fathers can ask their child to send them a YouTube video in return,
- A prompt to continue to the next step of the program.

Sessions. The program sessions were the primary source of the core educational content.

Based on the divorce research, each session covered a particular topic that was relevant and appropriate for achieving the four goals of the program. Program content reflected many of the criteria Bowers and colleagues (2011) identified in their evaluation of 6 online programs for divorced parents. Appendix G illustrates how the content of *Apart, Not Broken* maps onto these criteria. In addition, Appendix H provides a more detailed description of the content covered in each session.

Goal 1 – Sessions 1-3: Adjusting to Divorce or Separation. The purpose of these sessions was to help fathers understand the divorce process and the effect of this process on them and their children. In the first three sessions, fathers were taught the characteristics of each stage of divorce, considered how these characteristics applied to their personal experience, and prepared for stages they had not yet encountered. The content also addressed the effects of divorce on children. Emphasis was placed on the positive outcomes that come from maintaining a post-divorce, father-child relationship. Session 3, in particular, focused on how to manage the variety of changes fathers experience and tried to empower them to be engaged in productive action toward a long-term relationship with their children.

Goal 2 - Sessions 4-6: Understanding and Redefining Yourself. These sessions were intended to help fathers establish clarity in their role as a father and learn strategies for effective parenting. These sessions began by helping fathers develop an understanding of how the roles they assume can impact their relationship. The focus was on being involved in the active, affective and co-parenting aspects of parenting. Fathers were educated about how they could

serve as providers, teachers, mentors, role models, protectors, disciplinarians, and supporters. The program offered fathers several creative ways to fulfill aspects of the fathering role in a manner that best fit their personal situation.

Goal 3 - Session 7-10: Communication and relationship building. The purpose of these four sessions was to help fathers recognize the barriers to communication and identify and develop strategies that promote more effective communication. Program content gave fathers an opportunity to learn and apply specific communication techniques such as active listening, being sensitive to others feelings, using “I” statements, and being self-aware. Fathers were taught specific ways to use communication skills for engaging in various aspects of their child’s life, such as school and extracurricular activities.

Goal 4 - Session 11: Maintaining a lasting relationship. The final goal focused on helping fathers develop and maintain a long-term relationship with their child. The focus was on helping fathers recognize their relationship with their child as something that occurs on a continuum involving the past, present, and future. The session taught fathers strategies for embracing the memories of the past and creating a future with their child.

Sections. Each session was divided into three sections that followed a sequential order. The purpose was to provide the participant with a consistent format for navigating through the program, and the researcher with a structure for organizing the content. These sections provided immediate reinforcement and the opportunity for application, both of which are principles of effective adult learning. All eleven sessions were divided into the following three sections:

- (1) *What You Can Expect: On Your Mark* included specific evidence-based information about the topic. It was designed to help fathers gain knowledge and clarity, while normalizing their experience.

- (2) *What It Means: Get Set* addressed the impact of changes on their life and the benefit of applying program information to themselves and their relationship with their child.
- (3) *What You Can Do About It: Go* section provided concrete strategies for fathers to apply the information learned in the first two sections. This included: (a) a new parenting tool, (b) a related activity, (c) other options: ways to apply information, with or without technology, and (d) additional considerations: things to take into account moving forward.

Educational tools. Recent research stresses the need to capitalize on the unique characteristics of the online environment to create a dynamic and interactive learning experience. Early online educational programs have been faulted for merely converting a face-to-face program to an online version. As a new program, with no precedent, the researcher took the opportunity to create original material that could be delivered in innovative ways online.

Video vignettes of divorced fathers. As part of the program design process, the researcher identified six African American, White, and Latino fathers to be interviewed in order to provide diverse perspectives on their experiences with divorce or separation. These men were recruited through personal connections and referrals from other fathers. It was felt that such personal video commentaries would help fathers' normalize their own experiences and enhance the written content by providing real life examples, challenges, insights, and recommendations. Sections of the videotaped interviews were reduced into 24 short vignettes of 2-4 minutes in length. These were linked to appropriate places in the curriculum to reinforce the text.

Parenting tools and related activities. As described above, the last section of each session contained a *parenting tool and related activity*. Parenting tools were available as downloadable PDFs. These provided a concrete way for fathers to apply information from the current session. Sessions often referred back to earlier parenting tools, making the relevance and application of program content additive throughout the program. Table 6 summarizes the 12 parenting tools and related activities that were created for online learning.

Table 6

Parenting Tools and Related Activities

Session	Parenting Tool	Related Activity
Orientation	Share a Music Video	Fathers and children exchange YouTube videos.
1	Gloria Wilcox's Feeling Wheel	Fathers use the feeling wheel to match a negative feeling with a positive feeling, and then identify new actions to take in an area desiring improvement.
2	Personal Goals Worksheet	Fathers describe at least one goal, identify what it takes to achieve it, list resources and potential obstacles, and consider ways to overcome obstacles.
3	Understanding Your Child's Adjustment to Divorce	Fathers apply information to their child, matching their child's developmental age with common characteristics of adjustment. They can also reflect on other stages to better understand adjustment.
4	Parenting Styles Tip Sheet	Fathers complete a survey to identify their parenting style, relate their style to the tip sheet, and identify 2 ways to move toward authoritative parenting.
5	Being Expressive When Talking About Divorce	Fathers see expressive responses to a variety of topics, such as understanding their child's response to divorce. They create their own responses to these topics and then apply the concept to the other issue they are facing.
6	Be the Ex-Ample	Fathers consider they can only be responsible for their own behavior. They reflect on their relationship with their ex-partner, and ask themselves (1) What it is like right now, (2) What would I like it to be like, and (3) What is one action I can take?
7	The Voice In My Head Said....	Fathers talk with their child for 5 minutes and then write down what they are saying to themselves. They use this to identify how their thoughts impact their actions, and consider how changing their thoughts could help them see new actions.
8	100 Conversation Starters	Fathers use conversation starters to increase and deepen interactions with their child.
9	The Empty Cup Exercise	Fathers practice listening skills by letting their child say everything there is to say about a given situation. They are encouraged to avoid interruptions, judgments, or corrections.
10	Scripts for Challenging Conversations	Fathers are given 2 different scripts for talking through conflict, and apply a specific situation to each script for practice.
11	Family Timeline	Fathers receive instructions for creating a timeline of their life with their child. They are encouraged to include memories, photos, accomplishments, interests, traditions, and events (i.e., holidays, activities, places they have gone, etc.)

PDFs and outside links. Supplemental materials were provided as PDFs (Portable Document Format) that could be readily viewed by fathers, printed, or electronically transmitted. In addition to the parenting tools being available as PDFs, Table 7 lists supplement material created by the researcher for *Apart, Not Broken*. (See Appendix I for example book list). In addition, links to reputable outside resources were interspersed throughout the program, providing fathers with additional information if they chose to expand their understanding of a given topic.

Table 7

Downloadable PDFs

Session	PDFs
1 – Parting	100 Books on Divorce
4 – Active Parenting	Understanding Your Parenting Style
6 – Co-parenting	Cooperative and Parallel Parenting
	Co-Parenting Do's & Don'ts
8 – Foundations of Relatedness	Would You Rather?

Learner assessment. Part of any sound educational program is assessing learning outcomes. Online environments increase the challenge for interventionists seeking to accurately assess changes in learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors. The researcher designed and tested three self-assessment tools in *Apart, Not Broken*.

(1) *The Adjustment Survey* was made available at the beginning of Session 2. This self-administered survey addressed several learning objectives related to adjusting to divorce. Designed by the researcher, this survey was based on research classifying separation into three phases: early, middle, and late separation (Gray, 1996). *Parting*, the *crux*, and *reinvention* corresponded with these phases. The purpose of the survey was to help fathers realize where they were along a continuum of stages in the divorce process.

1. Stage 1, Parting - This stage involves helping fathers accept that their partnership is over and deal with a range of feelings that accompany this transition.
2. Stage 2, The Crux - This stage marks the movement from initial acceptance to facing realities, managing feelings, and dealing with many changes.
3. Stage 3, Reinvention - This stage involves accepting the changes that have taken place and reinventing one's life.

Fathers completed the 9-item survey and automatically received their score and feedback with a brief description of their current stage. Information in sessions 2-4 was designed to help them better understand themselves and implement strategies to move toward greater adjustment (See Appendix J for a copy of the Adjustment Survey).

(2) The *Parenting Style Survey* was located at the end of Session 5: Active Parenting. Made available by Comprehensive Psychology, an organization that provides evidence-based psychological assessment services (<http://www.comprehensivepsychology.com.au>), the survey assisted fathers in identifying their dominant parenting style: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting. It was related to learning objectives of *enhanced parenting practices* that were covered in sessions 4-6. With the assessment information in hand, fathers were encouraged to identify at least 2 areas in which they could improve their parenting, using information provided in the sessions. See Appendix K for the complete survey.

(3) *End-of-session assessment*. The end-of-session assessment was a five-question survey available to fathers at the end of each of the 12 program sessions. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: it allowed fathers to reflect on their own learning and it provided feedback for improving the program (See Appendix L for end-of-session survey).

Online platform. The second component of *Apart, Not Broken* was the online platform. The platform is the delivery mechanism for the educational content. It is a programmable system that can be customized by developers and adapted to meet the needs and niches of the program's

users. The researcher engaged in a thorough process of selecting from three possible platforms for the delivery of *Apart, not Broken*. The seven features that guided platform selection included: (1) security, (2) control of content, (3) cost-effectiveness, (4) development options, (5) navigation, (6) integration of multi-media tools, and (7) attractiveness. The researcher's context (discussed earlier) played a major role in the selection process, particularly in regards to cost and development potential.

Security. Given that the program was being implemented through a university requiring IRB approval, one of the primary considerations was program security. The selected platform was protected using industry best practices for security and encryption (Luminita, 2011). After consenting to participate in the study, fathers had access to the program by entering their unique 13-digit username (consisting of their study ID - zip code and birthdate combined), and a randomly assigned password. Their username served as their screen name and study identification number. In this way, the father's identity was kept private throughout their participation.

Control of content delivery. The initial design was based on the weekly release of educational content. The chosen platform allowed the researcher to schedule the release of content. However, this selection criterion became less important when it was found that the fathers did not like the structured release of content. In response, the researcher intentionally switched to an unstructured format. This meant that all sessions were available at the same time and fathers could navigate to whatever session they desired based on the topic of interest. This form of content delivery allowed for self-paced and self-directed participation by users. Fathers could navigate through each session on their own schedule and return to a previously viewed session at any time.

Cost-effectiveness. Because the researcher had limited funding, it was important that the platform be easy to develop and maintain. The selected platform, Moodle, is a free open-source platform that allows users to customize the online platform to fit program needs. A variety of themes are available free of cost, with the option to further develop existing templates. Free online tutorials and technical support make it possible for the researcher to get information and solve development issues without paying for services.

Development options. The researcher identified Moodle as having numerous development options. This means that a variety of the desired features were already available as part of existing templates. When a desirable feature is not part of a template, it could be easily integrated. This allowed the instructor to design and develop the online platform to include the educational content, videos, and interactive and multi-media tools without having to hire a web developer. After choosing a predesigned template, selecting desired features, and adding additional links to multi-media tools, the researcher uploaded content into blocks that made up the online platform (See figure 3 for a visual of the welcome page of the online program).

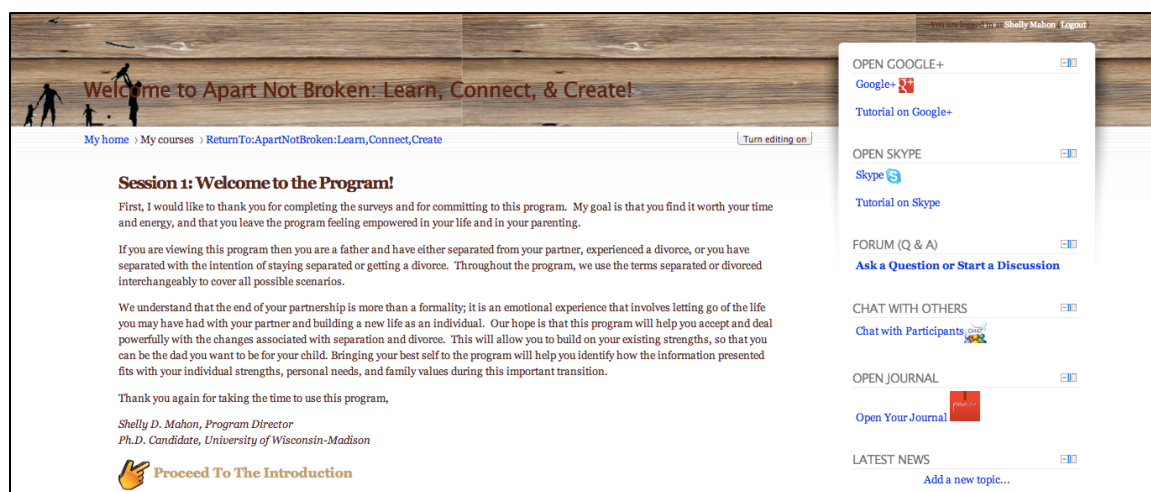


Figure 3. Online Platform.

Navigation. Online navigation is an important aspect of engaging participants in online learning programs (Lenert, et al., 2003). It was assumed that the program would attract fathers with a range of technical abilities. Thus, the platform needed to be straightforward enough to meet the technical skills of all fathers. The selected platform is recognized for helping educators create quality online instruction and providing students with an interface that is “very intuitive and allows for easy navigation” (Brandl, 2005, pg. 17).

Several prompts were included to help fathers navigate the program: written cues, icons/symbols and a table of contents. The following screen shot of the *Introduction to Goal 2: Adjusting to Divorce or Separation* (Figure 4), illustrates these navigational options. Toward the bottom of the page, the first hand signal takes fathers to the adjustment survey, and the second hand symbol takes them to the next section of the program. For every session, fathers could follow the hand signals at the bottom of the page to progress through all sections of the current session. Fathers could also progress through a session by following the cue with the name of the next section in the bottom right-hand corner. Clicking *Return to the Main Course Page* took fathers back to the home page where they could scroll down and select a different session. Finally, a table of contents on the far right-hand side of the screen allows fathers to go directly to a session of choice without having to scroll down the page.

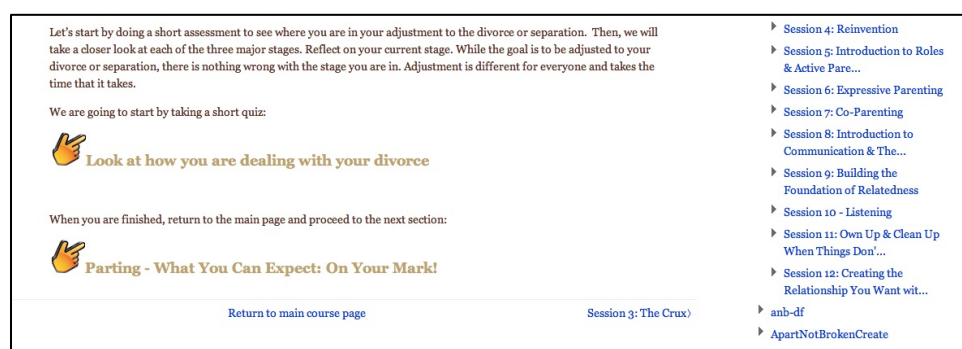


Figure 4. Navigation Options.

Integration of interactive and multi-media tools. The inclusion of interactive and multi-media tools was related to the original purpose of the program: to strengthen the father-child relationship after divorce or separation. Technology provided options for fathers to interact with their child, regardless of physical distance. The selected platform needed to offer a variety of easy-to-use multi media tools to facilitate learning, sharing and application of content either as built in features or easy links to outside tools such as Skype or Google that provides a cost-effective way to integrate additional tools. Table 8 shows the tools that were included in the program:

Table 8

Description of Multi-media Tools

Multi-Media Tool	Description
Google Account	Incorporates email, calendar, chat, video chat, and photo and document sharing. Google Plus is Google's version of a social networking site.
Skype	Provided an option to chat or video chat
Awww Whiteboard	Gave fathers a way to interact with their child (<i>e.g., creating pictures together or working on math homework</i>)
Penzu Online Journal	Gaves fathers a place to write about themselves, process their divorce, and reflect on the program content.
Chat	Allowed for asynchronous communication with other participants inside the program
The Discussion Forum	Gave men a place to interact with one another, reflect on the educational content, share their personal experiences, and provide support and feedback to one another. The forum was only visible to the researcher and enrolled fathers.

Fathers could connect to all multi-media tools except the discussion forum by clicking on the tool in the white navigation box on the right side of the screen (See Figure 5). The chat feature was available inside the *Apart, Not Broken* classroom and all other multi-media tools linking to the specific tool inside a new web browser outside the platform. Linking to a new web

browser outside the platform, also called decoupling, can feel disjointed and make them less intuitive and convenient to use.

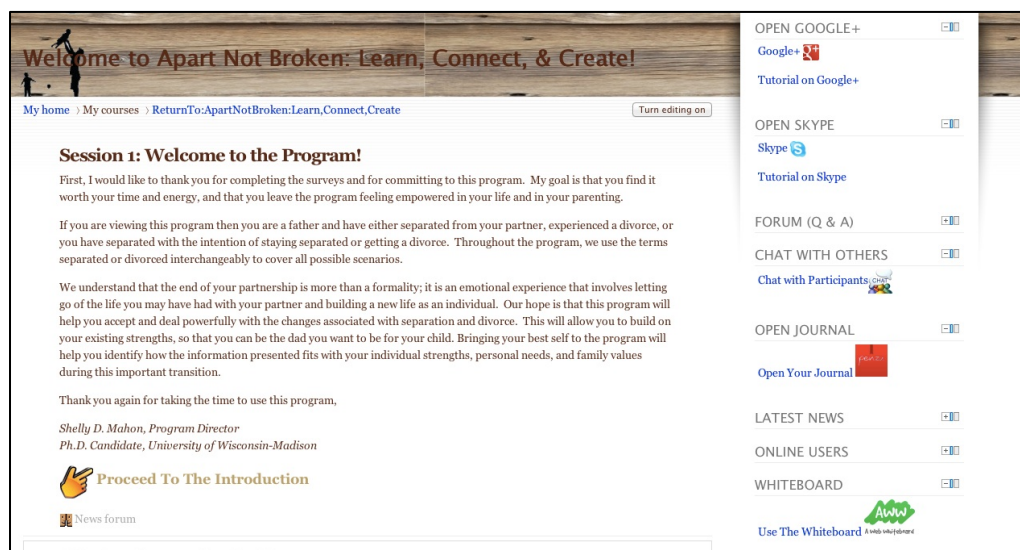


Figure 5. Navigation of Multi-media Tools.

The discussion forum was established as its own “class” inside Moodle, and accessible by the link directly under the program link on the homepage (See Figure 6).

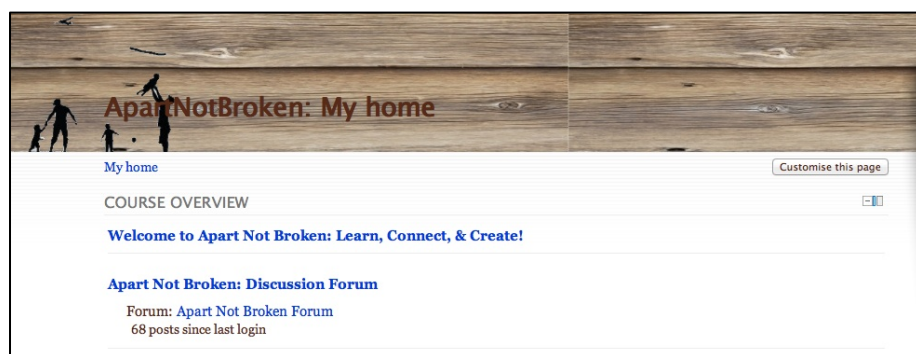


Figure 6. Navigation to Discussion Forum.

The number under the link to the discussion forum told fathers the number of discussion forum posts since their last login. Clicking on the discussion forum navigated fathers to a list of

all discussion threads. Fathers had options to add a new thread, view an existing thread, or comment on an existing discussion. The program was seeded with 12 discussion threads matching the 12 sessions of educational content. Adding new threads throughout the implementation of the program resulted in a total of 27 threads by the end of the study period. The idea was to engage enrolled fathers in conversations with one another. Throughout the study period the researcher posted new discussion threads, responded to comments from fathers, and encouraged men to contribute to the forum.

Attractiveness. Because look and feel impacts the user's experience (Fogg, et al., 2002), attractiveness was a key selection criterion. Attractiveness relates to visual appeal, layout of online features, and presentation of information. However, design has a cost, so the chosen platform had to include templates that were attractive enough without necessitating additional development costs.

Visually, three-quarters of the page displayed the online sessions in a linear manner, allowing fathers to scroll down the page and choose their session. Once they chose a session, they were inside that session and the other sessions were no longer visible. Figure 7 shows how *Session 5: Introduction to Roles and Active Parenting* was directly under *Session 4: Reinvention* on the main page of *Apart, Not Broken*. The layout of online features was also displayed in a linear format on the right side of the main page, as shown in Figure 5: Navigation of Multi-media Tools.

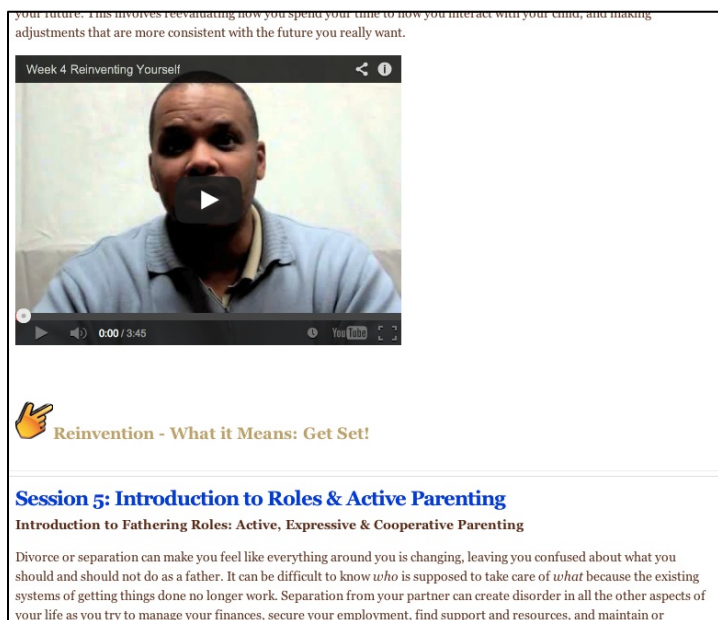


Figure 7. Visual Layout of the Online Platform.

Research suggests the importance of length, format, and language for online learning.

Apart, Not Broken incorporated a mix of presentation styles:

- Short sessions, with text ranging from ½ page to 1½ page.
- Direct, concise writing style.
- Mix of written text, bullet points, embedded pictures and videos.
- Use of examples and scenarios that were expected to resonate with men, such as music and sports metaphors.

Building Program Visibility, Recruiting Participants and Maintaining Engagement.

A major issue discussed in the literature is the difficulty of attracting participants to an online learning program and then maintaining their engagement. This was expected to be particularly difficult given the target audience, divorced or separated men. One of the research questions purposefully addressed this issue. The following section describes the various actions and strategies tested over the one-year implementation period with insights and observations provided. This issue is further examined in the Results chapter (VI).

Building visibility. From November 2012 to February 2013, the researcher began to build program visibility by developing the program description and an “ask”, as well as promotional marketing material. An “ask” is a technique for inviting people to join the program or asking them to share the program with their clients. The program description was written to speak directly to divorced or separated fathers, highlighting the program features and benefits of participation. It ends with asking fathers to register. The researcher consulted with a marketing expert to create the program description and “ask” (See Figure 8):



Figure 8. Marketing Flyers for Fathers.

The Program description and *ask* provides the springboard for the development of the program's marketing material. The marketing packet consisted of:

- A trifold brochure that could be distributed or placed in commonly visited areas (See figure 8).
- A news release to share with local press and include in newsletters.
- One marketing flyer for fathers (Figure 8) and one marketing flyer for professionals - These could be emailed, distributed, and hung in offices or other buildings around the community.
- Two short descriptions (See Figure 11) about the program that were suitable for posting in an email, on a website, or through social media sites.
- Three "memes" (See Figure 10) – photographs with a short snappy message and the URL for the registration website. Memes could be printed as postcards and posters, posted to websites and shared through email and social media sites.
- 3 flyers with information about *Apart, Not Broken*, and tear-offs with the site URL and QR code (See Figure 13).
- One promotional PowerPoint that described the program to local businesses, organizations, and individual professionals (See Appendix M).

Apart, Not Broken

Learn. Connect. Create.

A Free, Online Multimedia Program
for Divorced Dads



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Are you a Father going through a Divorce or Separation?

Apart, Not Broken gives fathers the opportunity to:

- Learn...**
Hear other fathers' real experiences and insights. Receive information and recommendations that can make a measurable difference in adjusting and parenting after separation or divorce.
- Connect...**
Join an online community of fathers. Learn to use creative strategies to connect with your child and manage your relationship with your ex-partner.
- Create...**
Feel powerful in your ability to be the dad YOU want to be. Create the relationship YOU want with your child by building on existing strengths, starting new traditions and creating lasting memories.



Shelly Mahon - Program Director
I'm a Human Development & Family Studies doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Your participation will support ground-breaking research and other fathers enrolled in the program.

I invite you to embrace this journey, invest in yourself, and begin creating the future you want with your child.

Thank you for considering my program!

THIS FREE PROGRAM OFFERS:

- Videos reflecting the real life experiences of other divorced fathers
- A discussion forum for you to connect and share with other fathers
- Online tools for sharing photos, calendars, communicating & more
- Current and concise information about divorce & parenting after divorce
- Engaging activities for you to enjoy with your child
- Additional resources for you to build your own parenting toolbox

Apart, Not Broken is for divorced or separated fathers who have a child that is 18 or younger.

Program Details:

- **Free:** No cost
- **Confidential:** Private, online support education program
- **Efficient:** 12 self-paced sessions of ~30 minute each
- **Flexible:** Spend as much time as you want on the aspects that fit your needs
- **Convenient:** Available 24/7, worldwide, anywhere with an Internet connection
- **Ongoing:** Starts when you register!

iPad Raffle for Participation & Amazon Gift Card for Completion!

Sign-up today at: www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com or call 608.770.1342
This program is being evaluated through the University of Wisconsin - Madison

Figure 9. Marketing Flyer for Fathers.

These materials were used to recruit men to the program. They were also available on the program web site: <http://divorceddadinstitute.com/newsletter/share-this-program/>, making them readily accessible for download, print, or hard copy requests.



Figure 10. Memes.

Recruiting fathers to participate. Research documents the challenges of creating visibility and attracting participants to a new program, particularly a new online learning program. The researcher quickly learned that recruitment is not a single event, but an ongoing process that demanded attention over the entire course of implementation. Based on the research and noted challenges around recruiting participants, and in particular, fathers, to online learning, the researcher developed and continued to develop and test a variety of procedures to create awareness about the program and attract fathers to engage (See Table 9). These recruitment strategies are discussed in the following section.

Table 1

Timeline of Recruitment Activities

Activity	Date	Technique
Word of Mouth Marketing		
• Invitations/referrals	Nov 2012 – Oct. 2013	Pull
Focused Advertising		
Print		
• Distributing pull-tab flyers	Dec 2013	Push
• Disseminating marketing packets	Nov 2012 – Oct. 2013	Push
Press		
• Contacting local media sources	Jan – Feb 2013	Push
Email		
• Emailing Cooperative Extension agents	Nov 2012 & June 2013	Push
• Advertising on local and national organizations and listserves	Nov 2012 – Oct 2013	Push
• Advertising in emailed newsletters	Jan & Feb 2013	Push
• Emailing Administrators of fatherhood sites	April 2013	Push
• Distributing MailChimp email newsletter campaign	July 2012 - Oct 2013	Push
Website Management		
• Building & maintaining Wordpress news site	Nov 2012 – Oct 2013	Pull
• Blogging on news site	Dec 2012 – Oct 2013	Pull
• Cross posting blogs on news site to parenting teens site	Dec 2012 – Oct 2013	Pull
• Cross posting blog with program discussion forum	July 2012 – Oct 2013	Push
Social Media		
• Posting to social media sites	Nov 2012 – Oct 2013	Push

Uploading two video blogs on YouTube	Dec 2012	Push
Face-to-Face - Presenting program to a dozen attorneys, mediators, and counselors for a law office in MN - Managing a booth - Presenting a Webinar on Communicating for Therapist Express	Sept 2012 May 2012 Oct 2013	Push Push Pull
Collaboration		
Email Featuring experts in newsletters	Sept 2013 - Oct 2013	Pull
Website Management Generating blog shares	April 2013 – Oct 2013	Pull
Social Media Connecting with professionals through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn	Nov 2012 – Oct 2013	Pull
Face-to-Face - Contacting local courts for public divorce records - Meeting with divorce educator with the state of CO - Developing a series of three webinars	Jan – Feb 2013 May 2013 Oct 2013	Push Push Push
Incentives		
Providing a \$25.00 Amazon card and raffle entry for an iPad	March 2013	Push

Word of mouth marketing. Word-of-mouth marketing (WOM) is an oral or written communication that includes a personal invitation or recommendation to enroll in the program (Stahlschmidt, et al., 2013). In the context of *Apart, Not Broken*, WOM includes personal invitations from the researcher, recommendations from satisfied fathers, or referrals from other individuals who work directly with divorced or separated fathers (i.e., attorneys, counselors, mediators, family members, and friends).

A main assumption of WOM is that program visibility will increase as people share the program with others. Another assumption is that satisfied fathers will share positive experiences with the program with other divorced or separated fathers. This technique is known to be one of the most effective forms of marketing, with the goal of creating a ripple effect where more and more people learn about, participate, and talk about the program.

Focused advertising. Focused advertising involves the dissemination of information about the program through a variety of marketing materials geared toward potential fathers, professionals and organizations that have direct contact with fathers. Focused advertisements took a variety of forms including print, press, email, website management, and live presentations. Each is described in greater detail below.

Print. Roughly 200 pull-tab flyers containing a meme with a catchy phrase, registration URL, and QR code (Figure 11) were posted in local businesses and organizations around Boulder, CO. This included restaurants and bars, grocery stores, coffee shops, offices (i.e., therapist, doctors offices, etc.), bulletin boards at the courthouse, and additional public places with space to hang flyers.

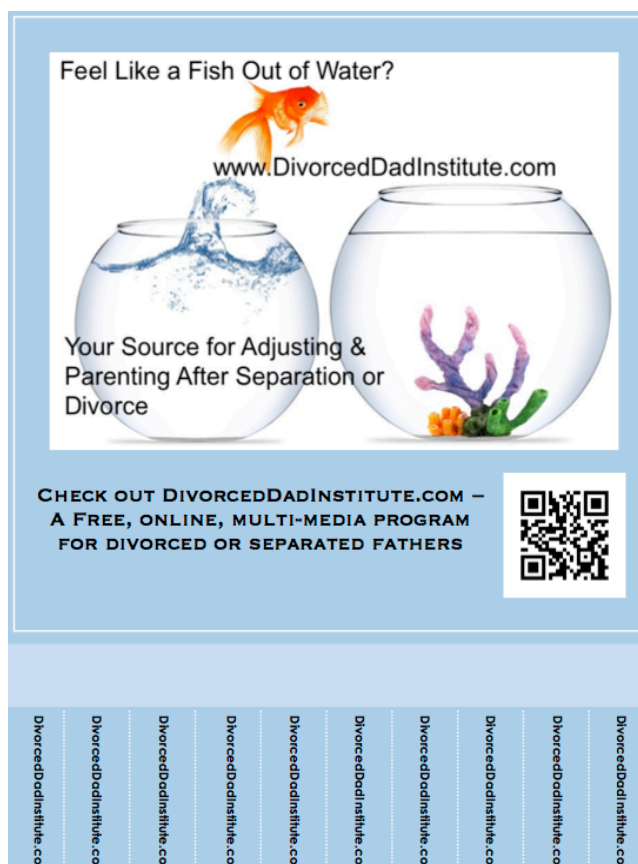


Figure 11. Memes with Tabs.

Print material was also available as a promotional marketing packet (See description on pg. 74). Individuals could contact the researcher for hard copies, or print their own copies from the program newsletter site at www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com/newsletter.

Press. The researcher attempted to contact local papers via online application, personal emails, and phone calls. Both efforts to reach local papers and outreach to a personal referral with the 9News Health Fair in Denver resulted in no response (See Figure 12).

News Release

[DATE]

New Online program Uses Technology to Help Fathers Adjust and Parent after Divorce or Separation

Divorce can be one of the most challenging transitions a father experiences in his lifetime. He will encounter personal changes, as well as adjustments in his relationship with his ex-partner and his children. "It is important to remember that all relationships change over time, irrespective of whether or not a couple chooses to stay together. Divorce simply adds additional factors that can impact a father's access to and interactions with his children. All fathers, regardless of their existing relationship with their children, can benefit from having new information, support, and resources during this transition," says Shelly Mahon, director and creator of a new, free online program called *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect & Create*, developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Support groups and programs for divorced fathers, when available, have traditionally been offered in person. However, face to face programs for fathers are quite rare. Even when they are available, they are not usually very convenient for most fathers. With the growing availability of computers, cell phones, and other multi-media devices, online programs offer a great new opportunity to provide education and support to fathers in the privacy and convenience of their own homes.

"Let's face it, men are often at a disadvantage to receiving the support or services that they need after divorce or separation" says Mahon. "Not only are men less likely to reach out and ask for help than are women, they find it difficult to attend in-person meetings due to long work hours and other extenuating circumstances. Many of the men I've interviewed expressed a desire to appear strong and "cool" in the midst of their divorce. For this reason, men may be uncomfortable attending face to face programs. Online programs like *Apart, Not Broken* offer a great opportunity for fathers because of their convenience and anonymity."

There is a growing body of research that suggests that the use of digital technology like computers and smartphones can help fathers and their children develop stronger relationships and stay more connected on a day-to-day basis.

Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create provides fathers with a place to learn from the real experiences of other fathers and get up-to-date information about divorce and parenting after divorce. If you know of someone who might be interested in participating in this free program, please visit the homepage at www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com or contact Shelly D. Mahon at mdmahon@wisc.edu. Because the University of Wisconsin-Madison is formally evaluating the program, participants will be asked to complete a pre and post survey regarding their experience with the program. ***Those who complete the program will receive a certificate of completion, a \$25.00 Amazon gift card, and be entered to win an iPad.***

Figure 12 .News Release.

Email.

1) *Listserves and newsletters.* Using email marketing, short descriptions of the program with registration and contact information, went to the listserves of several local and national organizations and (See Figure 13). The first attempt to reach fathers was through Extension Family Living Agents and 4-H Youth Development Educators in Wisconsin. Later in the program, a second attempt was made through the national listserve used by the Extension Professionals and Child Development Specialists. Several of the extension departments shared

the program description on their department websites.

Short Description 1:

Are you a father that has experienced a divorce or separation?

If you are interested in being part of an online education and support community during this important life transition, check out *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create* at www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com. This 12 series program has up-to-date information, online tools, engaging activities, and additional multi-media resources that can make a measurable difference in your ability to adjust to your divorce or separation and be the dad YOU want to be!

Short Description 2:

Divorced or Separated Fathers

Do you want to move past fear, pain, & guilt? Would you like to create the life you want with your child? Need help managing your relationship with your ex-partner? Want to contribute to other men and be the creator of your own future? Check out *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create*, a free online, multi-media program developed through the University of Wisconsin-Madison, at www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com. This program will give you a place to hear other fathers' real life experiences and insights, receive information and recommendations that can make a measurable difference in adjusting and parenting after separation or divorce, and learn creative strategies to connect with your child and have a cooperative relationship with your ex-partner. The program covers areas such as adjusting to your new life, cleaning up the past and creating your future, building relationships and communicating well with others, and being the parent YOU want to be. For more information, or to sign up, go to www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com. You can also get more information or sign up for our newsletter at www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com/newsletter.

Figure 13 .Short Descriptions.

Locally, a description was posted in two consecutive newsletters for the Parent Engagement Network (PEN), a nonprofit organization serving all families in the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) and to the listserve for the Colorado chapter of the Association for Family and Conciliation Courts (CO AFCC). In Wisconsin, a listserve of 20 county Extension agents offering face-to-face workshops for divorcing parents on co-parenting after divorce received information about the program. On a national level, the National Parent Education Network (NPEN) posted a program description to their listserve. Several other national organizations were unresponsive to requests to post information on their site or share it with their listserve.

2) *Popular websites serving fathers.* Program information was also emailed to several administrators of websites and blogs serving men. The administrator of approximately 50 Meetup Groups for divorced or separated fathers, single fathers, and blended families received a personal email message introducing the program and requesting a follow-up phone call. The same process was used to reach the administrator of approximately a dozen “daddy” blogs.

3) *Newsletter email campaign.* Throughout the implementation of the program, the researcher continued to add to and develop three Mailchimp newsletter campaigns targeting: (1) enrolled fathers, (2) fathers with incomplete registrations, and (3) experts who could share the program with professionals in their network. The purpose differed for each. For enrolled fathers, the goal was to provide updates and prompt additional engagement. Particular attention went to encouraging men to contribute to the discussion forum. Fathers who did not complete their registration process received information as an example of program content and a prompt to complete their registration. Reaching out to collaborators provided additional information about the program and gave them content to share with the clients, social media sites, and extended networks. For all three groups, the purpose was to increase visibility, grow registrations, and prompt engagement. See Figure 14 for an example. The newsletter changed and evolved from a stand-alone blog post to a more inclusive newsletter containing:

- An introduction to the most recent blog post with a link to the remainder of the article
- Additional tips and other considerations related to the blog post
- Featured resources or related books
- Featured professionals
- Prompts to use the program and contribute to the discussion forum (for those enrolled in the program).

Blog articles written between July 11, 2013 and October 10, 2013 (See Table 10) were included in the newsletter campaign.

Join our online community, or share this program with fathers who have experienced divorce or separation




[Follow on Facebook](#)
[Follow on Twitter](#)
[Forward to a Friend](#)

This Week's Blog:
Dating After Divorce: 5 Things to Consider

Going through a divorce puts you and your ex-partner back in the dating world. This can be both scary and exciting, maybe even at the same time! It is important to remember that while the divorce itself can make you single, it doesn't necessarily make you ready to date.

You may be struggling to accept the divorce or eager to meet new people. You may like the space or yearn for companionship. You may want to try new things or spend time with someone who likes to do the things you used to do. There are a lot of different paths to new relationships and it is up to you to find the path that works for you.

[Read Entire Article](#)

Please join us for our upcoming FREE webinar for men: A conversation about dating after divorce with Coach Heidi Krantz



Book Recommendations:

Check out these two GREAT books by author Claudia Perez, Ph.D.



"The Willingwishes" is a story that explores & illustrates the feelings of fear & anxiety that many children experience when their parents argue too much & for too long.

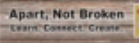


"Love Me" is a story that reminds parents to respect & honor their children, every day & in every way, to love unconditionally & see each child as unique & special regardless of what life throws your way.

Link: <http://www.love-me-book.com>
Meaningful books for children
"Love Me" & "The Willingwishes"

www.talk2.com
Text to Connect.....
www.claudiaperezphd.com

Love With a Plan




Monday, October 28, 2013

7:00 PM - 8:15 PM EDT

REGISTER NOW

Join us for a FREE Webinar for Men on October 28

Coach Heidi Krantz's signature system for successfully navigating the dating world offers a blue print for finding love that has proven to have real practical value for many men and women. Create your very own plan for the love that you seek and learn effective strategies to implement it! Approach dating with brand new clarity to enhance your success and make better choices!

System Requirements

PC-based attendees
Required: Windows 8, 7, Vista, XP or 2003 Server

Mobile-based attendees
Required: Mac OS 8, 10.5 or newer
Mobile attendees
Required: iPhone®, iPad®, Android™ phone or Android tablet

Reserve your Webinar seat now at:
<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/443485210>

If you are in our program Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create
[Contribute to Our Discussion Forum](#)

If you are not in the program, consider making a comment on our blog



1. What are your experiences with dating after divorce/separation?
2. How do you know when you are ready to date?
3. How do you set clear boundaries and expectations with women?
4. When and how do you introduce someone to the children?

Top 4 Reasons to Participate in the Forum:

1. The forum is a place to vent and get tips and ideas from other fathers.
2. You can build a sense of community and normalcy - You don't have to do this alone.
3. The more you participate, the more others fathers will.
4. You can read and re-read whenever you need.

[Follow on Twitter](#) | [Friend on Facebook](#) | [Forward to a Friend](#)

Copyright © 2013 Apart, Not Broken. All rights reserved. Thank you for your time!

Our email address is:
apartnotbroken@gmail.com

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)

Figure 14. Apart, Not Broken Newsletter.

Website management. Website management includes all activities related to the development and execution of the different aspects of the online environment, including hosting, website design, content creation, and search engine optimization (SEO). It also involves addressing the necessary tasks for making critical updates and enhancing required features. Increasing complexity of online environments make it challenging for single individuals or

organizations to manage all of these aspects on their own. This often results in hiring website management outsourcing (WMO) companies that can more efficiently manage those performing multiple tasks at the same time. Throughout the course of implementation of *Apart, Not Broken*, the researcher independently managed all tasks.

1) *Wordpress news site*. Part of the design and implementation of *Apart, Not Broken*, was building and maintaining a Wordpress news site located at www.Divorceddadinstitute.com/newsletter. The purpose of the news site was to create online visibility, provide detailed information about the program, and share marketing material.

Created in December 2012, the site had six tabs encompassing the following:

- Home page: A welcome message from the author, and general program description with the opportunity to register, and a blog roll,
- Table of contents: A description of the three section format (What to Expect, What it Means, What You Can Do About It), followed by a one or two sentence description of each of the 12 sessions,
- Ways to share this program: A listing of each of the promotional materials with hyperlinks to downloadable PDFs,
- Program details: A brief version of the program description,
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): A compilation of commonly asked questions received from fathers and practitioners,
- Hear from or contact the author: A longer welcome message and contact information.

2) *Blogging*. The researcher wrote a total of 23 blog posts beginning in December of 2012 (see Table 10 for a list of topics). Blogging provided quality content designed to bring interested individuals to the site. In an effort to increase search engine optimization, appropriate key word terms were associated with each blog. Content of the blogs either supplemented the existing program content, or provided additional information that was not covered in the 12 sessions. While blogs were typically released bi-weekly or weekly, none were produced in May or June of 2012 because the researcher engaged in networking on LinkedIn and developing the newsletter campaign that began in July.

3) *Cross posting blog articles.* Cross posting can increase traffic between websites, helping them achieve higher rankings in search engines. Beginning in July 2013, the newsletter campaigns (discussed on pg. 83) included an introductory paragraph taken from the most recent blog, with a link to read the entire article. In addition, each blog post was associated with a new discussion thread on the program website. Enrolled fathers received a series of three to five related questions to prompt engagement in the forum. Finally, some blog posts were cross-posted to the researcher's existing parenting teen blog (www.shellydmahon.wordpress.com), including *A New Online Program for Fathers of Divorce or Separation* and *Private Family Video Website*. With over 1,200 followers, the purpose was to advertise the program among a group of existing followers.

Table 10

Blog Title and Corresponding Date

Blog Title	Date
1. A New Online Program for Fathers of Divorce or Separation	Dec 3, 2013
2. An Interview from a Divorced Dad	Dec 11, 2012
3. Sharing Children Over the Holiday	Dec 22, 2012
4. Men Often Become Better Fathers after Divorce	Dec 27, 2012
5. Technology Can Improve the Process & Outcomes of Divorce or Separation	Jan 6, 2013
6. The importance of Forgiveness	Jan 16, 2013
7. Ward Clever of the Modern Father	Feb 25, 2013
8. Love With a Plan	March 1, 2013
9. Family is Family, Regardless of Family Structure	March 19, 2013
10. Private Family Video Website *	April 5, 2013
11. Letting Go of Ego: Hanging Onto Family.... The Whole Family *	April 15, 2013
12. A Man's Experience with Divorce: A Little Compassion Goes a Long Way	April 22, 2013
13. How the 4 th of July Can Prepare You For Other Holidays	July 11, 2013
14. What Does It Take to Be a Great Dad?	July 17, 2013
15. What Does It Mean to Be a Hero?	Aug 1, 2013
16. Five Strategies for Coping With Change	Aug 8, 2013
17. Want a Great Relationship With You Child? Communicate.	Aug 15, 2013
18. How Does Anger Impact You Relationships? What Can You Do About It?	Aug 22, 2013
19. Six Things to Consider When Exchanging Your Child	Aug 30, 2013
20. The Devil's in the Details: Five Details That Can Help You Grow Through Your Divorce	Sept 5, 2013
21. What Can You Gain From Community? Reflections from the 100-Year Flood	Sept 18, 2013
22. How Do We Mend Trust After Divorce? With Guest Blog from Terry Gaspard *	Sep 27, 2013
23. Dating After Divorce or Separation *	Oct 10, 2013

*Those marked with an * are blog shares from other experts in the field.*

Note: Blog posts 13-23 were also included in the newsletters.

Social media.

1) *Social media sites.* After posting the blog on the Wordpress site, a link with a short description was posted on the *Apart, Not Broken* Facebook page, Twitter, LinkedIn, and 25 LinkedIn Groups related to divorce and parenting. Posting on social media sites was an easy way to broadcast a consistent message about the program and have access to others professionals' networks. People follow social media sites when they find the information valuable and want to be notified of new posts. Experts following social media sites become "influencers" by having the option to share a post with their own followers. This could have a multiplying effect by sharing posts and expanding the researcher's existing reach to these extended network. Throughout the study, the researcher worked to generate quality content that would generate new followers and retain existing ones.

2) *Sharing video blogs.* Two of the video vignettes from the program were also available to the public as video blogs through YouTube. Both videos were also posted on the researchers LinkedIn profile page (see Figure 15). The first video entitled, *Video 1: Intro to a New Online Program for Divorced or Separated Fathers*, was taken from the introduction to the program. The second video entitled, *Video 2: Parting Ways - New Online Program for Divorced or Separated Fathers*, was from *Session 2: Parting – What You Can Expect*. Each of these videos was approximately three minutes long, and served as publically available samples of the program

content.

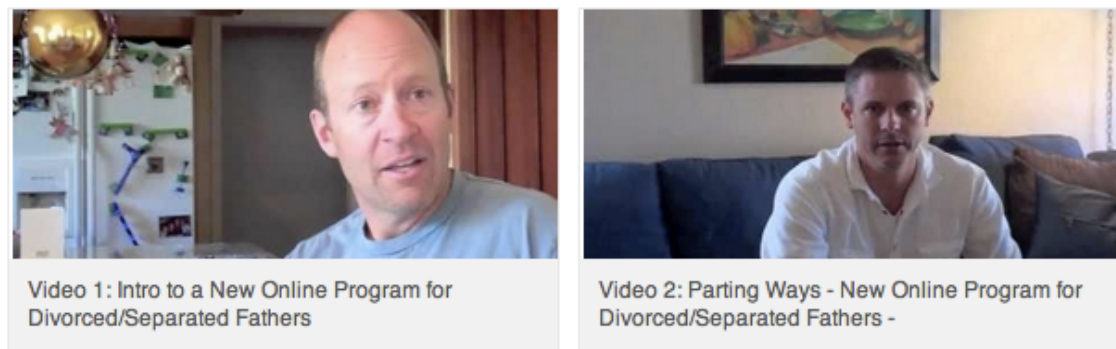


Figure 15. Video Vignettes for LinkedIn.

Face-to-face.

1) *Presentation.* Through a personal connection with a Minnesota attorney, the researcher presented an overview of the program to a group of 12 attorneys, mediators, counselors, and mental health professionals. The presentation involved a PowerPoint demonstration of the programs goals, objectives, target audience, major components, examples of program videos and activities, and a request for attendees to share the program.

2) *Booth.* The researcher also managed a booth at the Parent Engagement Network (PEN) Annual Celebration Luncheon in Boulder, Colorado. Luncheon attendees included local school administrators, counselors, therapists, mental health providers, parents, and volunteers for PEN. The booth contained a visual display of the program, marketing packets, and entry into a drawing for a \$10.00 Amazon card in exchange for their business cards. Business cards provided contact information for the sharing of program updates and newsletters.

3) *Webinar.* The researcher was invited to do a webinar on *Communicating with Your Teen* after a representative from Therapist Express (<http://therapistexpress.com>) saw a blog post on LinkedIn. The invitation was extended after reading a blog post entitled, “*Want a Great*

Relationship with Your Child? Communicate” on LinkedIn. She found the topic area appropriate for their target population, therapists and individuals seeking therapy. Webinars like this provide opportunities for both parties to promote their organization. Webinars were way to offer free content and generate visibility for a program. The goal of the webinar was to build credibility and interest in the program. Specifically, the researcher collaborated with a life coach who specialized in divorce to develop a series of three webinars on dating after divorce or separation. This interview style webinar involved the researcher interviewing the dating expert, and facilitating conversation as attendees sent in questions. While planning for all three webinars took place during the implementation of *Apart, Not Broken*, only the first webinar was delivered during the implementation period. This webinar, entitled *Love with a Plan*, prepared men for the dating world by helping them understand themselves and identify what they wanted in a partner. The other two webinars, “*Internet Dating Success*” and “*Communication Strategies That Work*”, occurred after the implementation period of *Apart Not Broken*.

Collaboration. Collaborating provided access to others’ networks. The researcher’s network was not big enough by itself to generate a sufficient number of registrations. The goal of collaborating was to connect with influential people in the field, who could increase visibility by disseminating the program to their networks. The researcher used a number of strategies to develop collaborations that would link her and her program to other professionals’ networks. These strategies are discussed in greater detail below.

Email. Toward the end of the implementation, the researcher included a featured expert in the emailed newsletter. Of the 12 newsletters, four included a featured expert that shared a blog post, eBook, print book, or family related service. Featured experts had an opportunity to include a picture and brief description of their work, as well as promote a product or service. In

return, featured experts would mention *Apart, Not Broken* on their website or provide a description in their newsletter. By doing this, both parties might have increased visibility and credibility by expanding their network with reputable experts in the field.

Website management. A popular way to collaborate is to participate in blog shares, or feature another experts on a website or in a newsletter. Collaborators were typically found through social media sites, especially LinkedIn. The researcher went through the following steps to identify potential collaborators:

- Identified individuals in a similar field (i.e., attorneys, mediators, coaches, therapists, etc.)
- Followed experts on social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn)
- Extended invitations to connect by phone and discuss background, expertise, and interest in collaborating with one another
- Made offers to collaborate and agree on type of collaboration (blog share or featured experts/resources on websites or newsletters)
- Developed relationships by generating and sharing one another's content (i.e., reposting, liking, commenting).

Social media. During the course of implementation, social media was used to build networks to create collaborative relationships with influencers in the field. Social networking sites grew to include: (1) *Apart, Not Broken* Facebook page = 100 followers, (2) LinkedIn = 535, and (3) Twitter = 635. The focus was to connect with those who had a large network and a consistent social media presence on sites. Anyone who liked or commented on a post from *Apart, Not Broken* received an invitation to connect because they demonstrated interest in the content. Being connected, individuals automatically received updates of new content.

Face-to-face. Several attempts were made to collaborate with Boulder County Court because they had access to fathers in the target population, as well as court records that could potentially be used to identify fathers who could benefit from the *Apart, Not Broken*. The researcher attempted to collaborate with the court in three ways: (1) accessing public divorce

records, (2) networking with the court appointed Family Interventionist, and (3) consulting with an existing parent educator from the local court. Individual counties store public records of all fathers experiencing divorce in a given geographic area.

Summary. This chapter presented a detailed description of the design, promotion and delivery of *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create* (www.DivorcedDadInstitute.com), an online, multi-media educational program. Grounded in Amato's (2000) Divorce-Stress Adjustment Perspective, the program utilized an online platform to deliver educational content that was designed to increase the quantity and quality interactions, develop role clarity, improve parental satisfaction, teach effective parenting practices, strengthen communication, and maintain the father-child relationship.

The researcher played multiple roles in the design, recruitment, and implementation of the program. Research and theory on both the divorce experience and effective online learning and recruitment were used to guide the program's design and implementation. Several strategies were implemented to address the challenges associated with recruiting divorced or separated fathers to participate in an online program. Fathers' experiences with the education content and online platform, as well as the effectiveness of various recruitment strategies are reported in the Results chapter.

Chapter VI: Results

This chapter presents the findings from data collected during the design and implementation of *Apart, Not Broken* from July 2011 – October 2013. Data are reported according to the five research questions that were the focus of this case study (see Chapter III). Major attention is paid to what promoted or hindered participation in the online learning program, the reasons for this, and the lessons learned that can inform the design and implementation of future online programs targeting divorced or separated fathers. The chapter ends with a section that provides the researcher's insights and findings as a participant in this case study.

Data presented in this chapter come from numerous sources (Table 11). While a total of 52 fathers enrolled in the program, 13 were omitted from the analysis given suspicious intentions and activity, including:

- All registered within a few hours of one another,
- Not one could be reached by phone or email,
- They gave illogical responses to questions on online surveys,
- All completed the 12 program sessions quickly, logging in 2-4 times and taking an average of 30 minutes to complete all 12 sessions,
- They logged into program on the same day and completed the program sessions in the same blocks (i.e., 1-6; 7-12),
- All viewed the discussion forum on the same day, within minutes of one another.

Table 11

Sources of Data

<i>Source</i>	<i>Number of respondents (n)</i>
Quantitative Data	
Eligibility Survey	39
Background Questionnaire: Demographics and divorce specifics	39
Logs of father's online participation	39
Logs of Newsletter Opens	27
Logs of Active Discussion Forum Posts	5
Logs of Passive Discussion Forum Views	13
Logs of Active Chat Posts	1
Logs of Passive Chat Views	6
Records of Learner-Instructor Contact	5
Qualitative Data	
Observational Field Notes	39
Unstructured Interviews with fathers	8
End of Session Questionnaire: Open-ended questions about each session	18

A description of the research population, the 39 men who enrolled in the program, is included in the presentation of findings for Research Question 1. Demographic characteristics of the 8 men who volunteered to be interviewed are presented in Appendix N. In brief, the sample that was interviewed matched the entire group of enrolled men except a larger proportion of the interviewed men had at least a four years or higher educational degree and their average earnings were slightly greater.

Data Analysis

In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis occur concurrently. Data from the various sources are converged, and the researcher goes through a process of constant comparative analysis to make sense of large quantities of data (Emerson, 2001).

Descriptive statistics. Using SPSS, quantitative data collected from the eligibility survey and background questionnaire provided descriptive information about the characteristics of individual fathers and frequencies of father's use of individual aspects of the program features (Research Questions 1 & 4). Log records collected in the online platform and email newsletter campaign management software, were transferred to SPSS. Together, descriptive statistics were used to calculate counts, frequencies, percentages, ranges, and measures of central tendency to develop an overall picture of the characteristics of fathers, and their use of *Apart, Not Broken*.

Content analysis. Participant interviews provided in-depth information about father's experience with the online program sessions and implementation platform (Research question 2), as well as personal insight around the strategies for recruiting and maintaining engagement in online programs (Research Questions 3 and 5). Interviews were coded using standard coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding allowed the researcher to examine the data and condense key points into preliminary codes. Axial coding was used to organize the codes, linking them to key analytic categories. Finally, selective coding involved examining previous codes to identify and select data that supported the conceptual categories that were developed. Information gathered from the interviews was converged with other sources of data, including observational field notes and quantitative data, to gain a better understanding of father's perceptions, feelings, and behaviors as they related to the research questions. This method analysis is inductive, as the researcher examines data and draws new meaning to understand the design and implementation of *Apart, Not Broken*.

Characteristics of Learners (Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of fathers who choose to participate in an online program directed at helping them adjust and parent after divorce or separation?)

While factors such as age, ethnicity and socio-economic status have been shown to relate to individual use of online parenting programs, little is known about the unique characteristics of

men. Data from the eligibility survey and background questionnaire were used to examine key demographic and personal characteristics of participating fathers. Interview data provided additional information on gender-related issues, specifically related to father's use of technology and help-seeking behavior. Since this program was designed for divorced or separated fathers, attention was also paid to divorce-related characteristics, such as time since divorce and parenting time.

Demographic characteristics. The 39 fathers came from 22 different states (Figure 16), confirming the potential of online programs to serve fathers from a broad geographic area. The larger number of fathers from Wisconsin was likely related to the researcher's affiliation with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the distribution of marketing materials to Wisconsin county extension agents. In Minnesota, several registrations stemmed from collaborations with attorneys and therapists, as well as marketing releases to Minnesota extension agents.

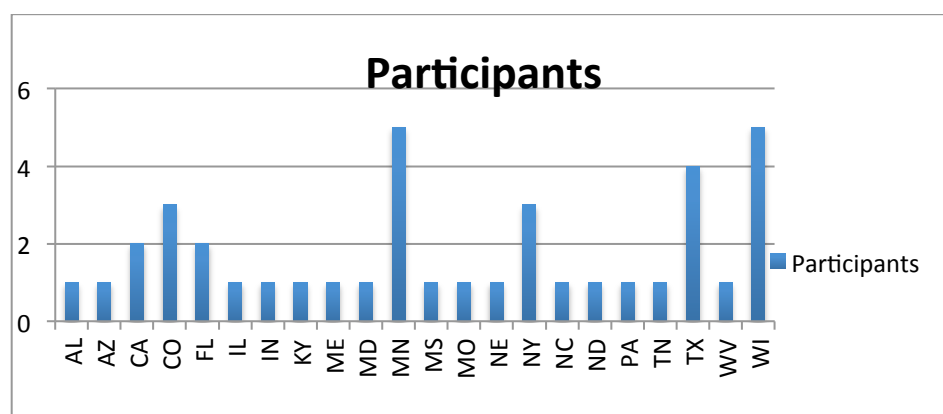


Figure 16. Participants by State (n=39).

Participating fathers were predominately White (88%) and ranged in age from 29 to 60, with 72% falling between 30 and 49 years of age (Table 12). The largest percentage of fathers held a 4-year degree or higher (82%). While the annual income of participating fathers ranged

from less than \$25,000 per year to over \$200,000 per year, the largest percentage of fathers earned between \$50,00 and \$74,999 per year. This is comparable to the national average, with 90% of father headed households with a child under the age of 18 making an average of \$50,000-74,999 per year (<http://www.census.gov/prod/techdoc/cps/cpsmar13.pdf>).

Table 12

Demographic Characteristics of Participating Fathers (n=39)

	N	Percentage
Age		
20-29	1	3
30-39	9	23
40-49	19	49
50-59	8	20
60-69	2	5
Ethnicity		
White	34	87
Hispanic	4	10
African American	1	3
Education		
High School	7	18
2 Year Vocational	4	10
Some College	3	8
4 Year Degree	13	33
Some Graduate	5	13
	7	18
Annual Household		
Less than \$25,000	2	5
\$25,000 – \$49,999	6	15
\$50,000 – \$74,999	10	26
\$75,000 – \$99,999	6	15
\$100,000 –	7	18
\$125,000 –	2	5
\$150,000 –	3	8
More than \$200,000	1	3
Missing	2	5

Gender related characteristics. Existing research identifies a number of factors that differentiate men and women's use of the Internet and interest in online educational programs. This study examined these factors as discussed below. Analysis of data from the background questionnaire and post-program interviews revealed insights to better understand men's ability and willingness to engage in online learning.

Use of the Internet. All of the fathers who participated in *Apart, Not Broken* reported using the Internet on a daily basis. Internet use was a common activity for this group of educated middle class men.

Familiarity with technology. The majority of fathers reported having an understanding of computers. On a five-point Likert scale, 69% of fathers said they had a *complete understanding* of computers, and all fathers reported having at least a *basic knowledge* of computers.

Use of computers. To explore the extent to which fathers might use a computer to engage in online learning, participating fathers were asked to report their computer use during work and personal time over the past week. All but one father in this study used a computer at work and all reported computer use during their personal time. Overall, fathers spent slightly more time on a computer during work hours, and a large percentage (92%) spent 1-30 hours per week of personal time on the computer (See Table 13).

Table 13

Computer Use During Work and Personal Time (n=39)

Time	Hours Per Week							
	None		1-10		11-30		>30	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Work	1	3	7	18	11	28	20	51
Personal	0	0	19	49	17	43	3	8

Use of different technologies. In order to understand the extent that fathers use different technologies as an indicator of how they might best engage with an online program, fathers were asked about how much time they spent on computers and other types of communication devices like tablets and smart phones. Fathers reported using computers more frequently than any other communication device, with almost half of fathers (48%) reporting more than 30 hours a week (See Table 14). Around three-quarters (77%) of fathers reported using a smartphone at some time over the past week. Tablets showed the least frequent use, with 54% reporting that they never used a tablet. Use patterns may be due to whether or not fathers owned a particular device.

Table 14

Use of Communication Devices (n=39)

Device	Hours Per Week							
	None		1-10		11-30		>30	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Computer	5	12	7	17	9	23	19	48
Tablet	22	56	14	36	2	5	1	3
Smartphone	9	23	13	33	12	30	5	13

Help-seeking behavior. Six of the eight interviewed fathers offered insights about factors that might hinder or encourage fathers to seek help adjusting to divorce or separation. Some of the common barriers mentioned by fathers included:

- Being exposed to very little modeling from other men in their life.
- Feeling uncomfortable asking for help.
- Needing validation from other men.
- Lacking knowledge about how to access mental health services.
- Having a distant, analytical approach to managing their emotions.

The following quotes provide illustration:

“ We need other men to validate that it is normal and ok to get help.”

“Guys have this stigma. We need to be tough. We are going to get through this on our own. We are not going to do stuff that makes us look vulnerable.”

“ We need more guidance on *how* to go about getting more support.”

“I think men can be kind of analytical about the situation and reluctant to look at the emotional part....”

“Guys are less about let’s pull together in a social circle and talk endlessly about how much we don’t like what our ex is doing or how hard it is on us emotionally. We say, let’s go shoot some clay disks or go take a vacation to scuba dive. This is just what I have observed.”

The interviewed fathers also shared insights about themselves that encouraged them to seek help. These included:

- Seeing themselves as different from other men,
- Believing there is a benefit to getting help,
- Wanting to help their child adjust.

“I mean I am a pretty open, touchy, squishy guy. I am a little different than a lot of men....”

“I don’t know anyone going through something like this that has not benefited from getting help.”

“By nature, I am more open, I am really willing and interested to share my experiences. Not every man is going to be as open as I am.”

“I am not afraid or ashamed to tell people about stuff.”

“I have probably talked to 200 psychologists, mental health therapists so that I can understand her and myself better. Now, my main focus is my son I got him into a child psychologist. He enjoys talking to her”

In summary, all participating fathers had access to the Internet, and at least a basic knowledge of computers. All fathers spent some time on the computer, either during work time, personal time, or both. Fathers used computers and smartphones more than tablets, suggesting these might be preferred technologies for accessing online learning.

Finally, these men shared that it can be difficult, but important to ask for help. Their ability to acknowledge this may set them apart from other fathers who were not drawn to enroll in *Apart, Not Broken* or did not choose to be interviewed.

Divorce-related characteristics. Data from the online questionnaires and interviews provided information to examine two characteristics related to adjusting and parenting after divorce or separation: (1) time since divorce and (2) custody arrangement.

Time since divorce. The literature suggests that it is during the first six months of divorce that educational programs for parents experiencing divorce are found to be most effective (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1995; Arbuthnot, et al., 1996). Results showed that fathers beyond the first six months of divorce or separation were interested in participating in a program geared to helping them adjust and parent after divorce. For this research sample, fathers had been divorced or separated for various periods of time; 40% of fathers were divorced or separated for more than two years; only 22% met the initial selection criteria of the program.

Table 15

Time Since Divorce or Separation (n=39)

Time	n	%
Less than 6 months	9	22
6-12 months	6	15
1-2 years	9	23
More than 2 years	15	40
Total	39	100

The interview data provided real-life perspectives from fathers:

“Regardless of how long ago the divorce happened, the program offers an idea or a promise to connect with your kids. I probably came to realize a bit organically that I have a pretty healthy relationship with my kids.”

“I realize that I have a good relationship with my co-parent. Still, there is this

whole network of other folks out there that don't yet and it feels good to connect with them and say, 'oh yeah, ugg, I know' or 'I have been there, don't worry. You'll get through the other side.'

"I have been divorced for years, but still need help dealing with my feelings."

Overall, even fathers who had been divorced for several years, or described themselves as well adjusted, found benefit in the online learning opportunity. Some found information validating, while others enjoyed the opportunity to share experiences and help other men.

Custody arrangements. Initial recruitment efforts targeted nonresidential fathers with less than 50% custody. However, low enrollment and interest from other fathers across a broad spectrum of custody arrangements led to expanding the recruitment criteria. Interestingly, only 2 of the 39 enrolled fathers classified themselves as noncustodial, the initial recruitment criteria. Fifty percent of fathers either had sole custody, joint physical, or joint physical and legal custody.

Table 16

Custody Arrangements (n=39)

Type of Custody	n	%
Sole	4	10
Joint Physical	7	18
Joint Legal	11	28
Joint Physical and Legal	7	18
Undetermined	8	21
Noncustodial	2	5
Total	39	100

In summary, the custody arrangements of fathers were much more diverse than was initially anticipated, with a higher percentage of men in this program being highly involved in their children's lives. Regardless of custody arrangements, divorced fathers in this program were searching for ways to increase the quality of time they have with their children.

Factors that promoted father's engagement. In this section, findings are presented from the father interviews and end of session surveys to provide insight into their reasons for participating in the program. Four motivators were identified as primary.

1. *Being a good dad.* Seven of the eight fathers interviewed revealed that motivation to be a *good dad* was a major reason for enrolling in the program.

"...this could really be what I need to be a good dad for my kids."

"I need to do something so that when this divorce is finalized, I feel like I have taken ownership, at least over parenting, being a good father after divorce."

The following comments on the end of session survey also illustrate this focus:

"I'm looking for tips on being a better father and ways to support the children through our parenting and guidance."

"...being a good dad is not about my physical location, but the thought I put into creating quality time and experiences that matter."

2. *Difficulties of co-parenting.* Fathers expressed a desire to learn to cooperate, communicate, and protect their children from the conflict associated with co-parenting.

Comments on end of session surveys provide examples:

"I need information on how to have a relationship with the ex that creates a positive influence on the children."

"You have to learn to co-parent and communicate with each other even though there is so much hatred, jealousy, etc."

"I am getting information for me, but wish I could get my ex to understand this concept [co-parenting]!"

Two of the interviewed fathers talked extensively about co-parenting. Selected comments are included below:

"I am not a single dad, I am a single co-parent. When you end your marriage, then its 'Welcome to learning to co-parent!'"

“There is still anger and sadness and all that stuff, and I have just decided to let it go of it I don’t want to carry that stuff. I want to move on. It’s not good for the kids.”

3. *Improving connections.* Several fathers mentioned wanting to have better connections with their children, and many related their ability to build connections to having improved communication. During the interview, one father said,

“I was looking for techniques for staying connected with my kids, you know, staying in communication.”

On the end of session surveys, five fathers identified communication as a primary way of staying connected. The following comments provide illustration:

“The program offers additional ideas to connect with my kids due to the reduced parenting time I have with them.”

“The message of communicating in whatever way works is great. I have my kids every other week and will read to them over the phone most nights when they aren’t with me.”

“I want to really listen and think before I respond. A lot of times you respond and then later think...I should have handled that differently!”

4. *Parenting guidance.* Fathers also talked about needing assistance and tips with their parenting.

“For the last two years, I have been trying to find whatever tools I could to better myself and better my life for my son. I gotta fix myself, get through this and be there for him. That was my motivation.”

“I was going through a process and looking for tid-bits and any information about how best to do things.”

“I needed help framing conversations about the divorce [with my child], especially answering questions about “why did you leave each other.”

In summary, these four motivations suggest aspects to be considered when designing an online educational program that would appeal to men. Being highly motivated to *be a good dad*

may be an overriding quality of divorced or separated fathers who will voluntarily register for an online program.

Factors that hindered engagement. Fathers reported facing a variety of issues that could hinder their engagement in online learning programs. Interview data and discussion forum comments provide illustration.

Realities of the divorce situation. Fathers most frequently mentioned a range of circumstances and challenges that fathers participating in online learning may face.

“I have custody of my girls. I battled for almost 2 years in court to get custody because their mom was getting in trouble. She had two DUI’s in about a month and a couple of detoxes I really had no choice but to try to keep them out of the middle of it She ended up having 5 or 6 over-doses...suicide attempts.”

“There was a lot of busy work that was related to my ex. when you don’t have that person there to sort of take-over, or get things ready for a school activity, or make sure they have lunch.... you fill in all of that.”

“I have been estranged from my children. I think at that point I hadn’t seen them for 2 or 3 months. How do you get through having your child blocked from you for a period of time?”

“My ex and I do not communicate on any level. Within 2 weeks of separation she accused me of molesting my 3-year old daughter. She spent the next several months trying to convince the county DA to file charges and put me in prison. All that in spite of the fact that I passed a polygraph given by a 20-year veteran of the FBI, had never had any accusations before or since, and had a psychosexual evaluation that came back negative. I only get to see my daughter 2 hours a month and only with supervision.”

Emotional strain. Another topic that emerged related to the mental and emotional anxiety of divorce that hinders participation in online learning.

“Engaging in the material reminds me where I am and it kinda becomes tough psychologically to constantly have to do that over and over again.”

“There is a King of the Hill Episode where Hank is talking to someone, and he tells her, just stuff the emotions into your stomach and crunch them really hard and you won’t feel them anymore You just want to move on.”

Time limitations. Fathers expressed feeling pulled by competing demands, and stressed about having *just one more thing* to do.

“I work till 5:00 and then I pick up my daughters at their after school program. By the time we get home, it is close to 5:30. Then there is all the stuff we need to get done: the supper, laundry, dishes, cleaning up, and homework.”

“It can be hard for me to find large blocks of time. This is true in my personal life too. Everything seems to be very interrupted and things start to feel like this is just one more thing that I need to do.”

Being overwhelmed with perceived program expectations. Five of the eight fathers interviewed spoke of buying multiple books, signing up for numerous newsletters, or completing other classes focused on the importance of fathers. This resulted in them feeling overwhelmed and often uninterested in additional writing, journaling, reading and reflection. Fathers also mentioned feeling guilty when they didn’t participate as expected, or felt pressured to participate a certain way.

“I had just gotten done with that other class and felt like now I’m going to be doing one more thing.”

“I went down this rabbit hole when I couldn’t find a song. I kept looking and looking It sort of took me out of the program. I only did one lesson. ”

“It is always staring at me saying ‘When are you going to look at me again?’ I know I will go back some day....”

Taken together, it may be particularly challenging for divorced or separated men to engage when they are relearning how to manage their time, dealing with the circumstances of the divorce, or feeling stressed and emotionally drained.

Summary. The fathers who participated in the program were very tech savvy and spent a great deal of time online. Fathers most frequently accessed online resources via a computer, but they were almost as likely to use smartphones. Many fathers were highly involved in their child’s life and most were motivated to be a “good dad”. Many sought out other resources and programs

such as newsletters, listserves, books, and classes. They expressed having good intentions to engage in the program, but good intentions, motivation, and interest alone did not always necessarily equate to program use.

Many divorced or separated fathers faced unique issues that interfered with their ability to engage in the online program. Men's emotional responses to divorce presented a conundrum. While they recognized the value of getting help, some felt the pressure to live up to male stereotypes and expectations by appearing "tough" and dealing with challenges on their own. Other fathers expressed needing knowledge of how to access resources, as well as validation and permission to be vulnerable. Sometimes, this was coupled by exposure to content that led them to revisit emotionally sensitive issues that could be disempowering. Increased responsibilities and life changes associated with divorce can lead to feeling overwhelmed and challenge time management skills

Characteristics of the Online Program (Research Question 2: What aspects of an online program promote or hinder the engagement of divorced or separated men?)

As presented in Chapter V, the program, *Apart, Not Broken*, consists of two major components: the educational content and the online platform. While the two are integrated in practice, each is discussed separately.

Educational content. The interview data, end of session questionnaires, and observational field notes revealed eight factors about the educational content that affected father's engagement.

1. *Quality.* Fathers equated their use of the program to the quality of the educational content. Quality content was associated with a university sponsorship and comparisons to other valued resources such as books, classes, and/or support groups.

The fact that the current program was based on empirical literature and associated with a respected university added credibility. In the words of one father,

“The first thing that caught my eye was that the program was through UW Madison. UW Madison was a graduate school that I considered. I already had a lot of respect for UW Madison. And it was easy to sign up, and it was free. When I read further, you explain what the site was about, who you were, how the site came to be and what it was a part of. Ok...she’s getting her Ph.D. This is a part of her dissertation, but it’s also a service to the broader community. This is cool. This is like grassroots community activism at its finest.”

Another father spoke highly of the quality of the program content when compared to other resources accessed during his divorce process.

“I think the content was great! I think it was comparable, or better in a lot of ways, than other things I read. It was practical and the exercises were good. I liked the videos of other people who were experiencing the same thing and giving their two cents.”

2. Writing style. Men in the program also commented on the writing style, organization, and conciseness of the material. For example,

“It is “simple, easy to use, and very direct.”

“Your writing style from the program carried over into your discussion posts. Like when you wrote and initiated a discussion.”

“Your writing style had a positive way of explaining how we can make our situations better by anticipating good things instead of dwelling on what isn't working and failure.”

3. Practicality and usefulness. Quality content was practical, integrating exercises that gave fathers new ideas and strategies for dealing with the divorce or separation and interacting with their child. In the words of one father, “It was practical and the exercises were good.”

The majority of the interviewed fathers spoke to the utility of the parenting tools, PDFs, and additional recommendations and links to external services/resources. They not only applied

the parenting tools, but they shared them with other fathers. Tools were thought to be particularly useful when they:

- were unique, simple, and easy for them to apply.
- promoted the development of personal skills.
- gave them new ways to connect with their child.
- provided strategies for identifying and finding alternatives for “raw” and “negative” emotions.
- gave them additional opportunities to further their understanding of the content.

In reference to finding a song for their child, fathers shared:

“Finding favorite songs and doing it right at the beginning was super useful. Those kinds of exercises were different than anything I saw in any other program or book I looked at.”

“There was a video of Will Smith that actually brought tears to my eyes. It gave me an idea of how I might map the material onto my situation.”

“I liked the idea of sending a meaningful song to my boys. I sent them Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen) by Baz Luhrmann.”

The 100 Conversation Starters had 100 question prompts, across a variety of topic areas (e.g., personal preferences, school, friends, and the divorce or separation). Fathers could use these questions to prompt conversations with their child.

“I used that several times in the past month with my son it's neat because he'll ask me back. ‘What's your favorite kind of music dad?’”

While there was some initial hesitation that fathers might not resonate with the “feeling” language of the *Gloria Wilcox's Feeling Wheel*, it was discussed by two of the five interviewees who mentioned parenting tools. According to one father,

“I printed out the Feeling Wheel and put it on the refrigerator Actually, I showed it to our school psychologist where I work. He was like, ‘Can I have a copy of that?’ and I was like, ‘Sure!’”

“[The *Feeling Wheel*] has the really raw emotions in the center and then it branches out like spokes on a wheel. It was like, ‘ok, this is a way to redirect your negative emotion and turn it into something that is more useful to you. a positive way of thinking about the same issue.’”

Fathers also commented on the practicality and usefulness of information on end of session surveys. One father shared:

“The cooperative and parallel parenting sheet puts a big picture in my mind on how each parent should be”

Another shared:

“The parenting style inventory affirmed the importance of being consistency in my child's life, including child support payments.”

Overall, fathers preferred material that was simple and easy to use, as well as strategies that promoted personal growth and helped to connect them with their child meaningful ways.

4. *Reality of the material.* Six of the interviewed fathers commented on the inclusion of videos featuring other dads who were going through similar experiences. The video vignettes brought reality to the written material. In the words of three fathers:

“The videos had other people who were experiencing the same thing and giving their two cents.”

“They [the videos] were insightful I liked the intro videos from fathers expressing feelings that I'm currently dealing with.”

“The interviewee who talked about shaking himself into realizing he could not allow his career to fall victim to what was going on personally. To hear him use the phrase, “.... yeah, my marriage is falling apart, ok I get that” It was useful for me. I found myself saying it silently... “Yes, my marriage is falling apart ... it is ending things will be different moving forward. ”

Men commented on the inclusion of videos on the end of session surveys as being particularly helpful. For example:

“I appreciated the video clips that had men sharing their inner most feelings about divorce.”

“... I enjoyed very much the insights from other men who were willing to publicly explore their journey.”

While the video vignettes were ethnically diverse, two interviewed fathers wanted more diversity, images, stories and representations of fathers who were similar to them. In their words,

“I liked the videos, but didn’t feel personally, visually represented there but, whatever. I am the dad with like 10,000 tattoos so I may not necessarily totally see myself there. Even though there was racial diversity, it didn’t seem like there was income diversity. There was sort of one kind of person. They seemed like sort of “buttoned down guys”.

“I kinda have this thing against clip art, or this ‘generic shattered dad’ whenever possible, use real people something that was actually speaking more to me so, that I was like, oh...I recognize myself in that image.”

While these fathers connected to the style, another father commented that the content was too serious.

“The content was very serious. It is ok to be funny. In a way, you need it to be funny some times. I think you can represent serious, interesting issues, but it can be funny too.

This suggests that some men may resonate with integrating lighter, funnier content throughout the program.

5. *Content is validating.* A number of fathers mentioned the importance of having content that is validating and affirms the positive approaches they are taking.

“When I started that [the program], we were a year and a half past separation But, I went through the early things in the program anyway, and I saw that what I had learned from other sources jived with what you had written in the program.”

“Regardless of how long ago the divorce happened, the content offers an idea or a promise to connect with your kids. I probably came to realize a bit organically that I have a pretty healthy relationship with my kids.”

“Part of what the program has done for me is help me come to the realization that I had always made a point to get along with the girls mom in front of the girls.”

“The session reaffirming some common sense approaches to communicating with my children.”

“.....I have been on track with my kids since my divorce.”

6. *Content matches need.* The level of participation depended on whether or not fathers perceived the information being presented as matching their needs. For example, one father completed the first session of the program and then jumped straight to the session on co-parenting. “Oddly enough I think co-parenting is very challenging and I would almost rather just skip to those sections.” Another father shared the importance of having content that fathers can find what they need, when they need it.

“Part of it is being a curator of sorts. Like, on your page, you put up this thing from Huffington Post, holidays are right around the corner, etc... You can pull all that stuff together because people are busy. You are providing people with one place to go where you have pulled things from other places. Then, they can access the information they need.”

7. *Timing.* Some fathers described finding the program at the right time. “I was looking for ways of finding support. I was looking for techniques for staying connected with my kids, you know, staying in communication.” One father described it as “the perfect thing at the perfect time.”

“There are still a lot of growing pains, for me in particular. This was the perfect thing at the perfect time, to see that there was somebody talking to someone like me.”

Another father shared:

“You gotta catch them [men] before they think that they are ok. When they are willing to be a little more vulnerable, they are looking for resources, before they get distracted and start feeling better and start saying things like, ‘well, I am going to go paint the garage or whatever distraction they come up with.’”

This is consistent with the observational field notes. The four men who joined the program in the initial stages of recruitment were asked to wait for content until there were enough men in the program to randomly assign them to different groups. The program was eventually opened to those men. All four of these men did only a couple of sessions. In a phone

conversation with one of these fathers, he reported, “I couldn’t wait so I joined this other fatherhood program in town.”

8. *Structure of the content delivery.* Engagement in the program also was related to how the program content was delivered. In particular, fathers commented on the division of the sessions into 3 sections: *What to Expect: On Your Mark, What it Means: Get Set, and What you Can Do About It, GO*. One found that this system facilitated use, saying that it provided consistency. “It was simple, easy to use, very direct with session 1, 2, 3.” Another gave this feedback,

“I thought the site was appealing. I thought the layout of the content was great and the way the modules were separated into 3 separate sections was really nice.”

However, another father found it confusing:

“It took me a minute to figure out that every session had this ‘Get Ready, ‘Get Set’, ‘Go’ format. I didn’t realize off the bat that you were not finished with a session until you had done all those parts.”

Embedding video vignettes throughout the program provided examples of men’s experiences as they related to the written content. “I liked the placement of the vignettes. It was embedded with what was written.” Having short sessions with bullet points made it quick and easy to read, without overwhelming fathers. “The format and the length was appropriate. It wasn’t overwhelming.”

Finally, fathers commented on the bulleted list of next steps and recommendations for deeper learning.

“The content had some good information and some good reminders. The next steps to take, or recommendations for deeper reading, gave you other places to get information.”

“I did utilize the resources where you all had links to books and what not.... Some of those resources, I had never heard of before. I would not have known about

them if you had not done the work to put them all together in one spot. It was a lot to sift through sometimes, but I enjoyed it.”

Summary. Having quality, relevant content that was grounded in research promoted father engagement. Fathers not only benefitted from receiving new and innovative strategies for dealing with their situation, but sometimes, the program content helped validate their existing knowledge and confirmed what they already knew. This gave some men the hope and confidence they needed to stay engaged. Timing was important because fathers connected most with material that fit their current circumstances. They preferred content that was simple and easy to apply, and liked being able to connect to information that fit their current circumstances. While having a format that consistently delivered content in three sections across all 12 sessions made the program easy to follow for one, it was confusing for another. Even though fathers received specific instructions of the format, this illustrates the need to be overly clear and possibly provide several descriptions or reminders. The content could be strengthened with the addition of lighter content, and the integration of additional pictures, testimonials, and stories from “real fathers”.

The online platform. Research suggests the important role that the delivery platform plays in online learning in terms of ease of use, look and feel, and integration of multi-media tools among other features. The researcher used six criteria to determine platform choice. Findings and lessons related to each of these criteria add to the knowledge base of online program delivery. From the interviews and survey data, a number of issues emerged that had both positive and negative effects on engagement. These issues relate to security, navigation, look and feel, control of content (i.e., structured vs. unstructured), and the use of multi-media tools.

1. Security. Programs commonly include privacy settings to ensure anonymity to participants. Results from this case study showed an interesting mix of opinions.

Specifically, fathers were given a username that contained their zip code and birthdate to protect their identity. Some preferred this approach, liking the anonymity. Others thought it was a barrier to connecting with other fathers. Security was thought of as a strength of the program because:

- fathers did not have to tell anyone they were getting help,

“There is a stigma of admitting you need help. But, your program is totally anonymous and nobody needs to know that you’re in there.”

“Nobody needs to know they signed up for the program besides themselves. Life is all about choices You gotta make those choices for yourself. I look at it like men need to do what is good for themselves and their children.”

- their participation was not searchable online,

“The only hesitation I had was privacy. The site itself explained how the privacy was set up, and that your name wouldn’t be there The anonymity was a good thing. I would say that if I had not gotten that information up front it may have prohibited me from joining the program because my wife snoops. I am a private person.”

- assigned usernames and passwords were convenient,

“It was one last thing I had to worry about. It was generated. It got sent to me and I could go to my original email without having to remember my login information.”

Conversely, another father spoke of craving *connectivity*. Talking about his experiences and connecting with other fathers was a way to deal with the challenges of divorce or separation.

“When I went through the whole depression thing, I was like, ‘Look, I am not hiding this. I am going to be pretty open about this at work in my personal life. I have talked on college campuses. By nature I am more open, and I am really willing and interested to share my experiences. Not everyone is going to be as open. But, first names would be kinda nice, not numbers. People are longing for connectivity in a lot of ways, and divorce by nature can be very isolating.’”

Ideally, online program providers could provide both privacy and opportunities to connect on a more personal level.

“I think you kind of want it to be like an online dating site where people have the ability to see basic information and send a message, or take it to the next level of

chatting or a discussion forum. But, their identity is protected. It has the ability for people to create a robust profile, but then there are other modes of communication that are pretty vetted so that people feel comfortable reaching out.”

2. Navigation. Navigation within *Apart, Not Broken*, involved two components: moving around the site and tracking progress. By in large, fathers found the site easy to move around. Since 100 percent of fathers reported at least a basic understanding of computers, their ability to move around the site may be related to their overall level of computer competency.

“The program was pretty balanced. For me, I didn’t have a problem with the website, but I am pretty computer savvy.”

“I didn’t feel like the program was clunky or awkward. I felt like everything ran pretty smoothly.”

“From a navigation perspective, I didn’t have any problems with it. I figured out where things were...where the forum was, that sort of things.”

“I think it was easy to use.”

They recommended a more efficient tracking system that would alert them of where to start and gave them progress reports of the sessions they had completed. Having something like a *bookmark* marking sessions as complete would help fathers know where they left off in the program.

“The site was difficult to navigate. It seemed like there were a couple of ways you could end up at your session It would be better if there was something that indicated you had done the session, like a check mark next to it. Then, the next time you logged in you could see all the ones that you had done.”

“The site would let you go back to other sessions. It wouldn’t say, ‘Oh, you did this already’ Plus, you could actually leave one session and go to another without finishing everything from that session. At first, I didn’t realize that.”

One father developed his own strategy for managing session completions:

“For some reason it wouldn’t show up that I had finished a course. I had to write down what course I was at and keeping track on a piece of paper. I don’t know if there is a way you can highlight a section to say when you are done. I kept track of it on my own.”

While this provided a solution for this father, it is likely that the absence of alerts, and prompts left fathers confused and frustrated. This shortcoming could have contributed to the large number of fathers who didn't complete all the sessions.

3. *Look and feel.* The look and feel of the online platform had the potential to promote or hinder program engagement. Findings revealed some positive aspects, in particular:

- The simple format,
- The majority of the page was devoted to program content,
- The placement of links to Skype, Google Plus, an online journal, a whiteboard, and an option to chat with other online participants in the right sidebar.

The simplicity of the design format served as a common denominator for men with a wide range of technical abilities. However, the look and feel of the site may have hindered engagement for fathers with more experience or greater technical skills. More experienced fathers described the platform as plain and outdated. For example, one father who worked in marketing and hosted his own blog described the program this way:

Visually, it felt kind of dated, or it didn't feel "cool" maybe, or like a modern visual experience...navigation-wise and sort of visually. It felt too much like a classroom.

4. *Format of content delivery.* Online content can be delivered using a structured or unstructured format. A structured format requires fathers to complete the program within a specific time frame, while an unstructured format gives them the ability to participate freely and complete the program at their own pace. At program start-up, eight fathers received a structured format of the program before the researcher switched to an unstructured format.

The initial plan was to enroll interested fathers all at once, using a structured format to release weekly content to fathers simultaneously. This format assumed that several fathers would enroll upon release of the program. However, slow recruitment left the first few registered

fathers waiting to receive content. In an effort to maintain their interest, the researcher explored options for releasing content sooner. Since individual registrations would have required tracking when each father was scheduled to receive the next week's material, a cohort model was chosen to release content groups (i.e. two cohorts of four fathers each).

The first cohort of four fathers received content on a weekly basis. The majority of them still expressed wanting greater access to program content, as one father previously stated: "I chose to find a different resource because I had to wait so long". Another father communicated that the structured format left him feeling *on the hook* to complete the week's material.

"The problem with it being released week to week is that you almost feel like you're in school, like you have to be on the hook every week. I get a week behind and all of a sudden I am not interested ... I can't keep up ... I kind of disconnect entirely. If all the material would have been available at once, I probably would have just picked one weekend and gone through the whole thing."

In response to fathers' requests for greater access to content, the second cohort (i.e., four fathers) received three to four sessions at a time. However, this was still not effective at engaging fathers in more sessions. In a phone conversation, one father shared: "I have been divorced for more than 10 years, and I still need help communicating with my ex-wife. I am waiting for the session on co-parenting." Moving to an unstructured format gave fathers unlimited access to program content, a factor that may be a necessary feature given voluntary participation and the individual needs of learners.

Fathers in the unstructured group had access to all 12 sessions at any time. In this way they could consume as much or as little information as they wanted on the topic area of interest to them. During the post-program interviews, several fathers expressed that having access to relevant information was a strength of the unstructured format.

“I could go to information closer to what I was dealing with If there was a barrier to completing a session without completing others, I think the program would be less effective.”

“I preferred being able to go where I wanted to go versus having it piecemealed to me”

Other fathers still wanted some structure within the unstructured format:

“I think fathers should have to go through the entire session once they clicked on it At the very least, it should remind you that you haven’t finished this, this, and this from that session.”

“I think that getting reminders are good, but being able to jump around is probably more likely to pull people in It is good to give people reminders because we’re so busy. The balance is getting information out without being irritating.”

Overall, most fathers preferred an unstructured format that allowed them to move through the program at their own pace and focus on the topics that resonated with their current interests, circumstances, or needs. However, fathers also wanted features that prompted them to use the program, helped them to navigate the site, provided a placeholder, and monitored their participation. This suggests that it is important to find a balance between flexibility and structure during the platform design phase.

5. *Multi-media tools.* One of the criteria in selecting the online platform was to have a mix of multi-media tools available so that fathers would be able to increase their interactions with their children. For the selected platform, the multi-media tools included a chat feature, a discussion forum, an Awww whiteboard, a Penzu online journal, Skype, and a Gmail account with services like email, chat and video chat, photo and document sharing, and Google + (Described in Chapter V, pg. 69).

Except for the online log records of the chat and discussion forum, data of usage for the other multi-media tools was not available. Fathers accessed these other tools through links

outside the online platform. In the interviews, fathers were asked about their use of these other multi-media tools. All eight men reported no use. Several factors related to nonuse became apparent:

- Lack of input from other dads:

“I didn’t use the tools at all. I think you would probably need a certain number of people in the program to make it work.”

- Having existing communication strategies in place:

“I am sure technology can really help facilitate staying in touch, helping with homework, that sort of stuff. But, it is hard when you already have ways to communicate with your child. If you have to use a lot of different online tools, it starts to feel like yet another thing you have to learn or use.”

- Managing barriers in their relationship with the former spouse:

“My wife snoops. I am a private person.”

“I didn’t use any of the tools. When I first separated, I was calling every night, and my wife was virtually not picking up. It’s been that way for a year now. I just don’t have access.”

Given that many of the men in the program had at least 50% custody of their child, it is also possible that the face-to-face time they had for quality interactions negated the need, or urgency, for more interactions through multi-media tools. Two fathers shared stories of quality interactions with their child during parenting time. One father said:

“Some of the best times are not pre-planned or formalized activities, but doing the stupid stuff or sitting around talking to my daughter for an hour while we take the dog for a walk I don’t think I ever did that with my kids before. Now looking back I think, ‘wow, I sort of squandered that time.’”

6. *Learner-instructor interface.* The chat feature and discussion forum were not used as originally planned. While they were both intended to provide fathers with a place to interact with one another, insufficient enrollment impeded this type of communication (More detail on pg. 157). One conversation between the researcher and a participant took place in chat. Further, three

fathers described the discussion forum as a place to get direct feedback or suggestions from the program facilitator/researcher. In this way, the forum became part of the learner-instructor interface. One father talked about the benefits of getting feedback:

“I didn’t really use the discussion forum to talk to anyone but you. I could pretty much say what I wanted, and get it out. You responded pretty quickly and gave good positive feedback. I would get on there and read some of the other stuff that other people would write, just to get their perspective, but I didn’t really talk to anyone else.”

Another father expressed the desire to get feedback from an *expert*:

“I am more likely to use the discussion forum if I found a context that seemed like there was a situation that I needed to deal with and other people were more of an expert. If I could talk to an expert, I might make a note there.”

Even fathers who did not contribute to the discussion forum suggested finding value in the researcher’s feedback.

“I thought the discussion groups would be a good place to bounce things off of other men. I gotta say, I thought that your answers were really helpful. If I had known that you were providing feedback, I probably would have used the forum. I think it would have been a plus for me to have your feedback.”

Providing access to expert advice in a learner-instructor interface appeared to provide value to the discussion forum. While other fathers would contribute on occasion, the researcher’s field notes documented that her efforts to recognize participation and encourage comments from other fathers often resulted in additional responses from the father who originally posted. Often, that father would expand on his situation or express gratitude for the researcher’s acknowledgements and feedback. Interview comments suggested that fathers appreciated having access to the facilitator/researcher and being able to get expert advice.

“I think a moderated discussion forum is better than just dads bouncing things off one another. People want to see information from someone who has your background.”

“The answers you gave in the discussion forum were like, ‘Hey, I get it. Here are a few things you could try.’ For dads who might be insecure about the situation, I think it is really important to hear that from you.”

Summary. Characteristics of the online platform both promoted and hindered engagement. While some fathers liked the added security, others craved connectivity. Navigation was generally easy, but the inability to track progress frustrated some of the fathers. Some men enjoyed the simplicity of the platform, while others felt it was too simple, outdated, or “classroom-like”. Overwhelmingly, fathers liked being able to access information or topics of their choosing, and to do so at their own pace and when needed. Even though fathers did not utilize most of the multimedia tools, they found value in interacting with the researcher in the discussion forum.

Strategies for Reaching Divorced or Separated Fathers. (Research Question 3: What are some effective strategies for reaching divorced or separated fathers?)

Consistent with previous research, reaching men was a challenge for the current program. Insufficient registrations and low levels of participation required the researcher to change selection criteria and implement a variety of push and pull techniques to increase enrollment and enhance participation. This section describes changes in selection criteria, and effectiveness of the various strategies the researcher tried for creating awareness and recruiting fathers into a new online program.

Changes in enrollment criteria. The initial design was to recruit men with a child between 10 and 14 years of age who were in the *first six months* of divorce or separation. It is within this time frame that adjustment may be most difficult for men and educational programs for parents experiencing divorce have been found to be most effective. Between Nov 2012 and March 2013, only eight fathers had registered for the program (See Figure 17). Six of the eight men who registered during this time had been divorced for more than 6 months. For those who

reported, all had at least 50% custody. Consequently, the registration criteria were expanded again to include fathers with a child between 6 and 16 years of age who were in the first two years of divorce or separation. When these changes did not increase registrations, a final expansion was made to include fathers at any stage of the divorce or separation with a child 18 years of age or younger. In the final group of 39 fathers, the largest number had been divorced or separated for 1-2 years (37%), followed by fathers who were divorced or separated for more than two years (31%). Almost 70% of participating fathers did not meet the initial recruitment criteria.

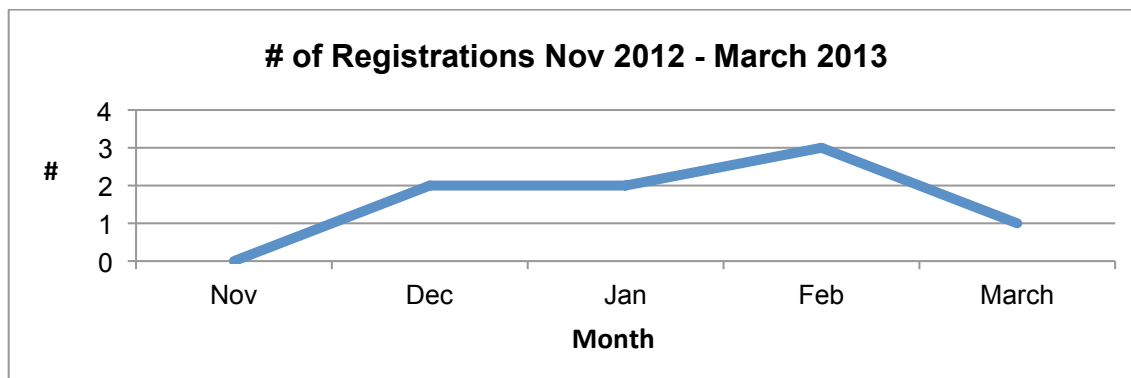


Figure 17. Number of Registered Fathers.

Push and pull techniques for reaching fathers. Throughout the course of implementation, the researcher used a variety of push and pull techniques to reach fathers. Information from the eligibility survey, the interviews, and the researcher's field notes was aligned with the strategies used to reach men in order to indicate which strategies appeared more effective (Table 17). The results are tentative since it was also clear, as documented in the field notes, that various factors made it challenging to identify which strategy led to a particular registration:

- Strategies were implemented concurrently making it difficult to isolate a single approach,
- Strategies built on one another, and eventually led to a registration,
- Information spread organically on the Internet making identification difficult

- Fathers had difficulty remembering how they heard about the program.

Table 17

*Registrations from Recruitment Activities * (n=36)*

Activity	# Registrations	Push	Pull
Word of Mouth Marketing			
Invitation & Referrals	8		x
Focused Advertising			
Print	1	x	
Extension distribution	5	x	
Email	5	x	
Website Management	6		x
Social Media	4		x
Collaborating			
Website Management	7	x	
Total	36	18	18

Recruitment strategies that were tried but that produced no registrations were omitted from the Table 17. These included obtaining mailing addresses from divorce records, local media sources, local and national organizations and listserves, emailed newsletters, cross postings, YouTube video blogs, and live presentations. Those that resulted in registrations are described in greater detail below.

In summary, the recruitment activities that appeared more effective included:

- Word-of-Mouth: Fathers referenced hearing about the program from other fathers, friends, and family members,
- Extension: Emailing program descriptions to Cooperative Extension agents and Extension listserves resulted in the program being posted on several Cooperative Extension Websites.
- Email: Emailing program descriptions to organizations serving fathers (e.g., Meetup groups).
- Website Management: Increasing visibility through online search engines by keeping the program news site up-to-date and posting regular blog articles. Fathers reported finding the program through key word searches online.
- Social Media: Distributing program updates and blog posts on social media sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

- Collaborating: Sharing program materials with experts in the field (i.e., attorneys, therapists, personal coaches, etc.) who could dispense program information to their clientele and social media sites, often in return for posting information about their business on the program website or social media sites.

Two strategies that had great potential to reach fathers were not effective:

(1) collaborating with divorce courts to obtain a mailing list of recently divorced fathers and (2) getting media exposure. Factors that hindered their effectiveness included:

- Steep costs to obtain divorce records,
- Lack of visibility and/or existing reputation of *Apart, Not Broken*,
- Competition with other established programs.

Other strategies may not have been identified as the source of a father's registration, but could have contributed to a father's choice to register (i.e., local and national organizations and listserves, emailed newsletters, cross posting, YouTube video blogs, and live presentations). For example, a father may have identified "online search" as his reason for registering, but during his search he watched a video blog and read on online blog post. Due to the issues listed above, it was challenging to know all the ways in which a single father was exposed to the program.

The researcher documented a variety of lessons learned that provide further insight into specific factors that contributed to reaching divorced or separated fathers.

- Implementing continuous, ongoing recruitment through a variety of sources,
- Advertising to the same sources multiple times,
- Encouraging fathers to share with other fathers,
- Having a message that spoke to fathers, using the words of father's themselves,
- Using a non-judgmental tone (e.g., "Have a *great relationship* with your child" vs. Have a *better relationship* with your child),
- Targeting friends and family members of fathers,
- Expanding professional networks,
- Building relationships with credible sources,
- Establishing online visibility.

Summary. Engaging in a variety of strategies gave the researcher several avenues to reach fathers. While previous research suggests that push techniques are most effective in the

beginning stages of a program because they create visibility by putting information and services in front of people who have a particular need, the results indicate that push and pull techniques were equally effective in reaching divorced or separated fathers. Word-of-mouth marketing (WOM) generated the most registrations as a single strategy (n=8), while focused advertising was most effective as a group of strategies (n=21). Fathers were drawn to advertisements that had a message that spoke to them (“It felt like you were talking directly to me”). A synergetic process occurred where multiple advertisements were pushed out through a variety of mediums that fathers could then access when searching for information. Collaborations with other professionals added to the program’s credibility and gave the researcher greater capacity to reach individuals she would not have reached on her own. Even though individual strategies were implemented as distinct events, they occurred simultaneously and built on one another, contributing to the overall reach during the study period.

Use of the Online Program (Research Question 4: How do divorced or separated fathers use online materials for learning?)

In this section I examine how the fathers enrolled in *Apart, Not Broken* actually engaged with the various components of the program, as well as which factors facilitated or deterred their engagement.

Overview of program features. As described in Chapter V – Program Description, *Apart, Not Broken* was comprised of five features. Each feature represented a way in which fathers could engage in the program. Table 18 provides a summary of the number of participating fathers who engaged in each of the five features. The data come from online log records of father’s participation in program sessions, chat, discussion forum, and newsletters, as well as interviews and field notes of the researcher’s interactions with fathers. Results show that fathers used newsletters more frequently than any other feature (n = 27; 69%), followed by

program sessions (n = 22; 56%). Passive views of the discussion forum were almost three times that of active posts (n = 14; 36% and n = 5; 13%, respectively).

Table 18

Percentage of Fathers Engaging in Aspects of the Educational Material (n=39)

Program Components	n	Percentage
1. Program sessions	22	56%
2. Passive view of chat	6	15%
Active use of chat	1	2%
3. Passive view of discussion forum	14	36%
Active use of discussion forum	5	13%
4. Newsletter	27	69%
5. Direct contact with researcher	6	15%

* Multi-media tools were not included because they were not tracked by the online platform's 1

Levels of program engagement. The researcher classified fathers into five levels of engagement based on the number of times they opened or engaged with any of the five program features (See Table 19). Levels of engagement ranged from *No Engagement* to *Heavy*

Engagement, and are defined as follows:

- No Engagement: Used none of the program features,
- Minimal Engagement: Used any combination of features 1-5 times,
- Moderate Engagement: Used any combination of features 6-20 times,
- High Engagement: Used all program features, except chat, to engage in 21-40 interactions,
- Heavy engagement: Used all program features, engaging in 41-70 interactions.

Table 19

Levels of Program Engagement (n=39)

Level	n	Percentage
No Engagement	6	15%
Minimal	14	36%
Moderate	14	36%
High	2	5%
Heavy	3	8%

This table shows that six of the enrolled fathers did not engage in any of the five program features and three fathers engaged at some level with all available features. The three fathers that were heavily engaged represented critical cases that could illustrate some of the unique characteristics of fathers participating in online learning environments. Specifics related to how they engaged in each of the program features is included below:

- Overall Participation: Their participation was ongoing, engaging in some aspects of the program from when they enrolled in the program to the end of implementation.
- Program Sessions: The three fathers completed several program sessions - Two fathers completed all sessions; one completed 6 sessions with plans to continue.
- Chat: These fathers accounted for 3 of the 7 chat views (43%), and the only active post to the researcher while she was online.
- Discussion Forum Views: Fathers contributed to 108 of the 768 (14%) of discussion forum views. Views ranged from 27 to 43, with an average of 36. This was compared to other participating fathers whose views ranged from 1-14, with an average of 6.
- Discussion Forum Posts: The three fathers accounted for 18 of the 24 discussion forum posts (79%). Posts ranged from 3 to 8, with a mean of 6.
- Newsletters: All three fathers read newsletters. The number of newsletters read ranged from 2 to 6, with an average of 4.
- Contact with the Researcher: Fathers in this group accounted for 6 of the 12 contacts with the researcher (50%).
- All fathers emailed the researcher, sharing the realities of their divorce and asking for personal guidance.
- One of the fathers was the only program participant to attend the webinar on Dating After Divorce.
- One of the fathers started a fatherhood network and shared his Facebook page with the researcher.

Overall, these three fathers engaged in more program features than the average participant and dominated the comments in the discussion forum. They demonstrated personal

agency in their desire to take advantage of available resources offered through the program, and went beyond the program expectations by initiating conversations with the researcher. One father also started his own fatherhood network and shared it with the researcher.

Combination of program features. More specific patterns also emerged in the combination of features that fathers used throughout implementation (Table 20):

Table 20

Combination of Program Features (n=39)

Method	n	%
Nothing	6	15%
Newsletters Only	8	21%
Session Only	3	8%
Discussion Forum Only	1	3%
Newsletters & Session	5	13%
Sessions & Discussion Forum	2	5%
Newsletters & Discussion Forum	4	10%
Session, Discussion Forum, Newsletter	4	10%
Session, Discussion Forum, Newsletter, Direct Contact	2	5%
Session, Discussion Forum, Newsletter, Direct Contact, Chat	4	10%
Total	39	100%

This table shows that fathers utilized the available program features in a variety of different ways. While some men opened only program sessions, others opened only newsletters. In addition, fathers opened only the newsletter more than any other program feature, or and combination of features (n = 8; 21%), and 69% (n=27) of fathers opened the newsletters. This is almost three times the number of fathers who opened only program session (n = 3; 8%). Further, 51% (n = 20) of fathers engaged in the program sessions, exclusively or as part of their participation. The data shows that there was a preference for some form of written material, whether through the program over other types of program features.

Use of program features. A detailed description of how fathers engaged in each of the five program features is provided below:

Program sessions. Online log records tracked which sessions each participant opened, not whether the father completed the session. Table 21 provides a detailed picture of the number of fathers who opened a particular session. The data shows that a little less than half of the 39 fathers who participated in the program (44%) did not open any of the sessions. Another 20% (n=8) only opened the first session. Only 8% of fathers (n=3) opened all 12 online program sessions.

Table 21

Number of Sessions Completed (n=39)

Session	n	Percentage
0	17	44%
1	8	20%
2	3	8%
3	2	5%
4	3	8%
5	1	2%
6	2	5%
12	3	8%
Total	39	100%

Fathers who completed a portion of the sessions fell into two groups: those who completed early sessions (i.e., sessions 1-2; 1-3; 1-4; 1-5; 1-6) and those that moved around the program (i.e., sessions 1 & 7; 1,3, & 5; 1,2,3 & 5; 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, & 7). For example, one father completed the first session and then skipped to the seventh session on co-parenting because he identified it as an area to improve upon. Using an unstructured format for program delivery allowed him to move ahead to a topic of personal relevance.

“I think people like to skip ahead. I don’t think I have an issue with being expressive with my kids, but I know that co-parenting is more difficult for me. You are never going to meet 100% on anything, but if one thing is at 85% and

the other is at 35%, I would rather work on the one that is at 35% if I had my choice.”

Multi-media tools. Data on the actual use of the multi-media tools (i.e., video chat, Penzu online journal, and Aww whiteboard) was not available because fathers accessed them through links outside of the program. However, all eight of the fathers who were asked about the multi-media tools during interviews reported no use.

Chat: Passive and active. The chat feature allowed fathers who were online at the same time to interact with one another from inside the program. Overwhelmingly, participating fathers did not use the online chat feature. Those who used the chat feature were passive participants, meaning that they opened and viewed the chat feature, but did not actually interact with another father. Of the 39 men enrolled in the program, 33 (85%) did not open chat, 5 (13%) opened it once and 1 father (2%) opened it twice. The only active participation that took place was one interaction between a father and the researcher. Because registration was low, it was uncommon for fathers to be online simultaneously, a requirement for engaging in simultaneous online conversations.

Discussion forum: Passive and active. The program included 12 existing discussion threads matching the session content at the onset of the study. Beginning in June 2013, additional discussion threads were posted to promote engagement (See Table 22 for a list of the discussion threads). The researcher started all but one of the discussion threads. A participating father initiated one of the discussion threads, titled, “Parenting after Depression”.

Table 22

Discussion Forum Topics

	Title
1	Your Separation
2	Dealing With Change
3	Moving On
4	Understanding How Your Child is Dealing With Divorce
5	Staying Connected
6	Your Child
7	Your Ex-Partner
8	Your Role as a Father
9	Your Internal Dialogue
10	Listening
11	Cleaning Things Up
12	Looking Toward the Future
13	Finding the Support You Need
14	How the 4 th of July Can Prepare You for Other Holidays
15	What Does it Take to Be a Great Dad?
16	What Does it Mean to Be a Hero?
17	Five Strategies for Coping with Change
18	How Does Anger Impact Your Relationships? What Can You do About it?
19	6 Things to Consider When Exchanging Your Child
20	The Devil is in the Details: 5 Strategies to Help You Grow Through Your Divorce
21	Want a Great Relationship with Your Child? Communicate!
22	Building Community
23	How do we Mend Trust After Divorce?
24	Dating After Divorce or Separation
25	Parenting with Depression

Fathers engaged in both passive and active forms of participation in the discussion forum.

Passive participation included browsing the forum to read material rather than posting or commenting, whereas active participation included starting or contributing to an individual post.

Sixteen fathers contributed to a total of 262 passive views of the discussion forum across 24 active posts, not including contributions from the researcher. Forum views ranged from 1 to 47, with an average of 16. Five of those fathers were actively engaged in eight of the 24 topics.

Active participation ranged from two to eight posts with a mean of 4.8.

The two most popular discussion threads for both passive and active participation were *Your Separation* (Passive = 55; Active = 8) and *Your Ex-Partner* (Passive = 48; Active = 7).

While the immediate issues men dealt with changed as specific concerns ebbed and flowed in and out of their attention, dealing with the separation and managing their relationship with the ex-partner had a constant presence throughout the program.

Men used the topic *Your Separation* to share the story of their divorce, and what they were dealing with personally. This thread allowed them to articulate what their separation was like for them, what they struggled with most, and what they did to move forward. The following post demonstrates the complexity of issues, and the desire to be heard.

“Hi all. I have just started this whole process. My state doesn't recognize separation, so we have moved straight into divorce proceedings. I am dealing with a fair amount of guilt over choosing this relationship in the first place. She's many years younger than myself. I rushed things. We have two boys: 3 yrs. and 11 months old. I filed for divorce. She's quite bitter. She was awarded both boys and the house after the temporary hearing; not sure what the final decree will look like, or if she will work out a settlement with me before a judge enters a ruling.

I see the boys 4 days, then she has them for 10 days. Not seeing them for such a long stretch is starting to bother me. I agree with the videos...not participating in common daily rituals...just being around to see them doing something...the silence during those 10 days "off"; it's not pleasant. I can also relate to the video where the guy talked about making sure he didn't unplug to the point of losing his job. I've had to work to keep myself focused on meeting my job responsibilities, even though I don't really feel "present" at work most of the time.

I really hate this feeling of being in limbo. I feel as though a final decree would at least allow me the freedom to begin to rebuild. Right now, since I don't know what those terms will be, I'm stuck waiting; and the waiting is a whole separate pain for me.”

Here is another example of man's post to the Discussion forum thread on *Your Separation*. In this post he talks about the extremely difficult relationship he currently has with his former partner and the frustration he is feeling with how he is being treated by the court.

“My ex and I do not communicate on any level. Within 2 weeks of separation she accused me of molesting my 3-year old daughter. She spent the next several months trying to convince the county DA to file charges and put me in prison. All that in spite of the fact that I passed a polygraph given by a 20-year veteran of the FBI, had never had any accusations before or since, and had a psychosexual evaluation that came back negative. I only get to see my daughter 2 hours a month and only with supervision. Our family court systems and our social services systems believe it is better to destroy a parent-child relationship, just in case it might be true, than to properly investigate and get to the truth. What strategies or tools can you possibly suggest that would allow us to communicate and work together?”

Maintaining a relationship with their ex-partner was a constant focus, especially because all the men in the program had a child. Father’s comments showed how much their relationship with their ex-partner permeated the other aspects of their personal life, especially parenting after divorce. Men used this discussion thread to describe their relationship and share ways in which co-parenting was both working and not working. Here is one man’s success story,

“I got an invitation to a Fathers Day BBQ by my ex-partner. It was pretty cool as she invited me and the kids to her apartment this coming Saturday night. I was wondering how Father's Day would work out and I am pleased she is being so cool about it. I think so much of how they treat us is how we treat them. I tried to show a lot of care around Mother's Day. I imagine that had I blown Mother's Day off that it would not be this smooth.”

Impressions of the forum. Of all the features in the program, men were most intrigued by the discussion forum. “The thing I thought would be most useful was contact with other parents in similar situations.” In some cases the idea of a discussion forum may have actually promoted their enrollment in *Apart, Not Broken*. In the words of one father:

“I had the most hope for the discussion forum. I thought, oh, this will be really great! There are going to be other dads out there.”

However, interest in the discussion forum did not necessarily translate into action. According to another father:

“I like the idea of a discussion forum, but I didn’t go into them. I might still. I am more of somebody that will look around them, but not necessarily post.”

“In order for me to use the forum, it would have to be part of the program. Once a week sit down and write a thought or share something. It would have to be kinda pushed on me or strongly encouraged.”

Lack of activity in the forum hindered engagement. Some fathers used the forum initially, but did not return when other fathers did not contribute.

“It was exciting at first. But, I noticed that I came back a few times and I did not see any new comments from other dads. You were pretty good about facilitating, but when I didn’t see anything else for a while, it made me less interested in posting.”

Another father shared:

“To make them effective, there has to have a fair amount of participation. But, you get just a couple people who are online all the time, and other people just do the program and don’t say anything.”

This father went on to acknowledge the challenge of involving men in discussion forums.

“There are very few men that respond to forums. You tend to see one or two, compared to 200 women that are responding to the forum. Even though intuitively you know there has to be more men.”

It is also possible that inexperience or lack of understanding planted seeds of uncertainty and hesitation. For example, fathers were less likely to contribute when they had reservations about what the experience would be like.

“One of the things that I tend to be a little careful of with the parenting groups, in particular father groups, is that they can become an echo chamber of guys drinking margaritas and yelling at the T.V. There wasn’t so much of that on your site, but I have seen that other places. So, I wasn’t really contributing. I was just trying to get ideas.”

Given the need for more activity and their interest in having a connection with a credible moderator, it is possible that scheduling times for facilitated forums would increase participation in the discussion forum.

“I think a moderated discussion forum is better than just dads bouncing things off one another. People want to see information from someone who has your background.”

In summary, there were more passive views of the discussion forum than there were active posts. Discussion forums succumbed to the classic question: what came first, the chicken or the egg? Do visits generate posts, or posts generate visits? While the idea of a discussion forum may promote initial engagement, the attraction appears to dissipate when engagement is low. Generating substantial participation in a discussion forum required regular and ongoing activity from other fathers, or a credible moderator. Without ongoing activity, fathers were less inclined to contribute.

Newsletter. The program included eleven newsletters that were distributed through email between August and October 2013 (See Chapter V, pg. 87 for titles). While newsletters were not part of the original program, they were added to recruit fathers and engage existing participants. Using an email marketing service provider, Mailchimp, the newsletter strategy evolved to include three email distribution lists that delivered content directly to individual email addresses. These included:

- (1) Incomplete Registrations: Fathers who did not complete their registrations (i.e., they started to enroll in the program, but did not complete the surveys) received the newsletter as an example of the content and a prompt to complete the registration process and join the program.
- (2) Collaborators: Professionals who the researcher contacted throughout the implementation process received the newsletter as a way to market the program. They were invited to share the newsletter and ask those in their network to enroll in the program.
- (3) Participating Fathers: Enrolled fathers received the newsletter with a link to the blog, additional information and related resources, and a prompt to participate in the program and contribute to the discussion forum.

The newsletter campaign evolved from being distributed only to fathers with incomplete registrations, to collaborators and participating fathers (See Table 23 for newsletter distribution by group). Fathers with incomplete registrations received a total of 11 newsletters; the first three were only delivered to this group. Distributing the newsletter to this group resulted in 2 of the 18 fathers (11%) completing the registration process and enrolling in the program. On average, the newsletter was opened by 27% of the 18 fathers on this list. Views of a single newsletter ranged from 3 to 27, for a total of 198 overall. One of these two fathers completed all 12 of the program sessions.

Between August 22 and October 10, 2013, the collaborators list grew from 19 to 52 people. This group received a total of eight newsletters that were opened an average of 31% of the time. Total views of individual newsletters ranged from 9 to 17, with a total of 276 views overall. The last four newsletters featured a collaborator who agreed to share the newsletter with their extended network in return for introducing them and their work in the newsletter. While it is unclear if this strategy resulted in registrations directly, it certainly had the potential to increase visibility, which could increase registrations over time.

Participating fathers received a total of six newsletters. They did not receive the first five newsletters, because they were comprised of the blog posts that fathers were already receiving via email as part of the *Apart, Not Broken* news site. After the first five, the newsletters evolved as a strategy to include additional information and resources related to the blog, a featured professional, discussion questions, and an invitation to engage in the online program. On average, 38% of the 39 fathers who were enrolled in the program opened the newsletter. The number of participants viewing a particular newsletter ranged from 12 to 20, with a mean of 15 (See Table 23 for number of individuals viewing newsletters). Neither the total number of times

a single newsletter was opened, nor the total newsletters views overall could be determined because Mailchimp could not separate the 13 participants who were removed from the study.

Table 23

Percentage of Fathers Opening Newsletters by List (n=39)

List	n	# of Newsletters	Opened
Incomplete Registrations	18	11	27%
Collaborators	52	8	31%
Participating Fathers	39	6	38%

Some important findings emerged from the newsletter campaigns.

- Roughly 10% of fathers who did not initially complete their registration did so after receiving the newsletters.
- 69% of participating fathers opened at least one newsletter
- A quarter of participating fathers (26%) consumed program content only through the newsletters. (See Table 24).
- *Child Transitions* was the most popular newsletter, with 75% (n = 20) of the 27 fathers who opened newsletters opening that particular newsletter. This newsletter addressed six things to consider during transition times when they are exchanging their children with their ex-partner (See Table 24 for views per newsletter).
- The overall open rate of newsletter was high, ranging from 29% to 58%, with an average of 42%.

Table 24

Number of Participants Viewing Particular Newsletters (n=27)

Topic Area	Number of Participants
Anger	17
Child Transitions	20
Devil in the Details	16
Building Community	15
Mending Trust	14
Dating	12
Total Views	94

Note: Two fathers did not receive the first newsletter (i.e., Anger) because they were not in the program at the time.

The 27 fathers who opened newsletters were categorized into the following 3 usage groups:

- Some: Fathers who opened 1-2 newsletter,
- Many: Fathers who opened 3-4 newsletters,
- A Lot: Father who opened 5-6 newsletters.

Table 25

Father's Consumption of the Newsletters (n=27)

Category	N	Percentage
Some	11	41%
Many	6	22%
A Lot	10	37%
Total	27	100%

Impressions of the newsletter. Fathers shared their impressions of the newsletter in five of the eight interviews, saying they were convenient, added supplementary content, and gave them additional things to do to help them be a better dad. Two of the eight fathers interviewed revealed that delivering the newsletter straight to their email account was effective and convenient.

“I looked at the newsletters because they sort of landed in my inbox. Life gets busy, but if you drop into my inbox, or if I get a tweet that says, ‘Hey, there is something here for you to look at, I might do it.”

“I tried to keep up with the blogs and newsletters. It was something that was pretty easy to do because it just came to me as an email.”

Two other fathers commented on the fact that the newsletters provided additional content, with quick strategies to use with their child.

“I enjoyed reading the blogs and newsletters. For me, everything that you sent out benefitted me in one way or another. I think it helped me become a more positive person, a more positive dad.”

“Sending out emails and newsletters along the way gave me some quick things to do, some things that I could try.

Two fathers shared that the newsletters encouraged further engagement in the program itself. In the words of one father:

“They were easily consumable. They were one of the things that would keep me coming back to the program.”

Another father stated:

“The newsletter was helpful. Having something come to me kept the whole program on my radar.

Receiving content straight to their email inbox appears to be a key strategy for reaching fathers.

Direct contact with the researcher. Fifteen percent of fathers (n=6) connected directly with the researcher through email, or social media sources such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+. All social media sites were publically available to all participating fathers. All of the fathers who made direct contact with the researcher were men who were classified as heavily engaged in the program (Table 19, pg. 128). At a minimum, all of them engaged in the program sessions, the discussion forum, and newsletters.

While social media sites were initially established to recruit participants to the program, they became another way to communicate with fathers in the program by providing program updates, additional resources, services, and direct feedback. Using social media sites is one strategy for being a curator of information, reposting others blogs, websites, and services. One of the fathers enrolled in *Apart, Not Broken*, attended the webinar hosted by the researcher in October 2013 on *Dating after Divorce or Separation*. All participating fathers were invited to enroll in this webinar, a collaborative effort between the researcher and an expert divorce coach the researcher connected with on LinkedIn. The following email illustrates the kind of issues fathers shared, requesting individual advice and feedback.

I just wanted to drop you a quick line. Here is one of my biggest issues I am dealing with. I have read all about trying to do what is best for my son! I try very hard to do this, but my concern is at what cost to my own well-being? When do I say No to my son's mom? I bring this up because my son's mom worked until about 7:15 last night. When she was done, she wanted to go trick or treating as a family and our son wanted to do this. The entire hour or so my anxiety was through the roof. My therapist tells me I need to set boundaries with her and I try hard to do that. When she comes to my house to pick him up, she will hang out for 20-30 minutes. I have asked her not to do this and it got better and now she has gone back to doing it. I don't ever say anything to her in front of our son because she usually will just get angry and start yelling at me. I know she feels horrible for everything she has done that made me decide to leave her but this is very difficult to deal with at times. I don't want to live like this for the next at least 11 years until he is done with high school. Just looking for advice and suggestions. Thank you!!!

Comments like this required an appropriate response. Online programs could benefit from connecting with a licensed therapist as a partner.

An important aspect of serving fathers through online programs is developing an understanding of how fathers engage in the available program features. The data above demonstrates the importance of quality written material, whether through the online platform or emailed blogs and newsletters. Fathers also accessed different program features, showing that it may be especially important to provide a variety of opportunities to consume program content.

Summary

This chapter presents the findings from data collected over the course of the entire project (July 2011 – October 2013), including the design and implementation of *Apart, Not Broken*. A total of 39 fathers participated, and the results provide a picture of the characteristics of fathers who enrolled in the program, factors related to the educational program and online platform that promoted or hindered engagement, strategies for recruiting and engaging fathers, and an understanding of how fathers used the various aspects of the program. The program was originally conceptualized as 12-program session in the online platform. In actuality, the

“program” was more inclusive, including all of the opportunities for engagement that occurred during the course of implementation. Newsletters were the most common form of content consumption largely because they were short, convenient, and delivered directly through email.

The fathers who participated in this program were different from the anticipated sample, with a large percentage of men being divorced for more than two years and having at least 50% custody. Overwhelmingly, they were tech savvy and interested in being a “good dad”. However, men faced a variety of unique barriers to participation including their willingness or ability to ask for help, their ability to manage the realities of the divorce and extreme circumstances, time limitations, and being overwhelmed with the perceived expectations of the program. Fathers identified eight factors that affected father’s engagement in the educational content. These included quality, writing style, practicality and usefulness, reality of the content, content is validating, content matches need, timing, and the structure of content delivery. Overall, fathers found the education content to be high quality and preferred clear, simple, and applicable activities that gave them new ideas and strategies for dealing with the divorce and interacting with their child. In general, fathers liked the look and feel of the platform and wanted the flexibility to access sessions of their choosing at their own pace. While they felt the platform was easy to navigate, a few participants felt that the simplicity of the design was outdated or “classroom like. Except for the discussion forum, fathers did not utilize the multi-media tools and despite efforts to get them to interact with one another in the discussion forum, participants only used it to interact with the researcher.

Barriers to recruitment instigated design changes, and pushed the researcher to expand networking efforts and be resourceful in creating visibility. Word-of-Mouth marketing was the single most effective strategy, while focused advertising resulted in the most registrations as a

group. Collaborations added to the programs credibility and increased capacity to reach individuals who were not in the researcher's direct network. Even though individual strategies were implemented as distinct events, they occurred simultaneously and built on one another. The following chapter provides a more extensive summary of the findings, in light of the strengths, limitations, and recommendations for practice and future research.

The Researcher's Role in this Qualitative Case Study

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Thus, the researcher is the medium for the generation and interpretation of data, bringing meaning to the social reality under study. In this study, the researcher played a unique role in that she was also the developer of the program, a true 'insider'. As a result, it is important to describe relevant aspects of the researcher's biases, assumptions, expectations, and experiences in the conceptualization, design and implementation of *Apart, Not Broken*. Throughout the course of this case study, personal reactions, reflections, and insights were documented as part of the researcher's field notes.

As the developer of *Apart, Not Broken*, the researcher was a practitioner and invested in the success of the program. The program was designed using existing research, theory and best practices in the field to create as high quality a program as possible. When recruitment was slow or procedures did not flow as expected, the researcher was motivated to try new things, continue to learn and experiment with a variety of different strategies to market the program, serve fathers, and have a positive impact on their ability to adjust and parent after divorce. Earlier investments and the need to implement the program in order to fulfill her degree continued to provide motivation as the researcher tried new things to reach fathers and respond to the needs of existing participants.

Decisions were made from the two different perspectives, the researcher and the practitioner. For example, as the researcher the program was advertised as a “study”, which could have impacted a father’s choice to participate in the program. It also imposed limitations on the researcher’s ability to implement changes that veered too far from the study design, without obtaining approved from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Changes that were approved by the IRB took time and delayed the progression of the study. This was sometimes frustrating to the researcher.

As the practitioner, the researcher was able to alter some of the language to speak more sensitively to fathers. For example, marketing material initially included statements like, “The program is designed to *improve your relationship* with your child.” In response to feedback that this implied their relationship needed improvement, the language was changed to read, “the program is designed to help you *have a great relationship* with your child.”

Especially in the beginning, the researcher struggled with how to market herself. Many practitioners market programs for divorced families by telling their “story” of divorce, whether it is a reflection of themselves or their parents. It was common for fathers to ask the researcher, “*Why are you doing this?*” Engaging in personal reflection resulted in the researcher recognizing that her commitment was to, “*Families that work, regardless of family structure.*” This was communicated on the program’s news site in a section entitled, “*about me*”, which included a picture, a personal introduction, and a short description of her commitment to men having a great life after divorce or separation and children having a relationship with their father.

In a face-to-face program, participants have an opportunity to meet and connect with the instructor in person, while online program providers must rely on virtual introductions. The researcher learned that providing a picture and personal introduction was an important first step

in building trust and rapport with the fathers. Given additional time and resources, a video introduction would be even more personal for fathers who want to “meet” the developer of the program.

Over the course of implementation, the researcher observed nuances in the ways men participated. A constant inquiry was whether or not fathers needed to experience the program in its entirety to benefit from participation. It became evident that fathers were accessing information they needed at a given time. This brings attention to a completely different way to conceptualize voluntary online programs for divorced fathers; serving as a *resource* not a *class*. The researcher noticed a shift from thinking, “The program design isn’t working. Fathers are not using it as it was designed to be used.” to “Fathers benefit from having access to the content they need.” From the latter perspective, the researcher realized it might be better to engage men in the way they were using the program, rather than trying to get them to use the program differently. However, many of her ideas were difficult to implement given limited resources. For example, the researcher thought about enrolling other expert coaches to be available for father’s questions. Toward the end of the program, the researcher implemented a series of three, interview style webinars (i.e., the researcher interviewed an expert). The idea was to record them and begin to build a library of topic based webinars to include in the program.

Throughout implementation, the researcher had interactions with some of the participants in the program and began to develop a greater understanding of their circumstances and realities. She began to know them as individuals with unique interests and needs, something that can be more challenging for the online program provider who do not see their participants regularly. While the research provided a foundation for what men might experience, their willingness to

share, invest, be vulnerable, and ask questions gave the researcher a more compassionate understanding of their experiences as individuals going through a major life transition.

Chapter VII: Discussion and Conclusions

This study utilized a case study to examine the process of designing and implementing a new online program, *Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect Create*, to assist fathers in adjusting and parenting after divorced or separation. Of particular interest were: (1) the characteristics of fathers who chose to participate in the online program, (2) aspects of the online content and implementation platform that promoted or hindered their engagement, (3) effective strategies for reaching divorced or separated fathers, (4) father's actual use of the online program, and (5) recommendations for interventionists to sustain fathers' engagement in online learning environments. The data reported in the previous chapter is examined in light of the early assumptions, key learnings, limitations and recommendations for future directions. This study adds to the field by describing the conceptualization and delivery of a new online program that was designed to meet the specific learning needs of fathers who have experienced a divorce or separation.

Key Learnings

Assumptions. There were several early assumptions that had an impact on the implementation of this program. First, it was assumed that it was best to target nonresidential fathers (i.e., less than 50% parenting time) in the first six months of divorce or separation. Father's psychological adjustment has been shown to improve with the passage of time (Stone, 2002) and research shows that fathers who develop and maintain early contact patterns are more likely to stay connected with their children for many years following divorce (Cheadle, et al., 2010). Interestingly, over half of participating fathers had at least 50% custody and a high percentage had been divorced for more than two years (40%). Only 3 participating fathers met the criteria of being a nonresidential father and only 20% were in the first six months of their

divorce. Given this, time since divorce and custody arrangements may not be the best indicator of fit for a voluntary online program. It is possible that some fathers are not ready to enroll in an online program in the early stages of divorce, when feelings are raw and decisions are still being made about custody. What may matter more is that fathers indicate a desire to be a *good dad*, want to learn how to co-parent more effectively, enhance their relationship with their children, and improve their parenting skills. This is consistent with research suggesting that the way in which men assess and think about themselves as fathers can have an influence on how they parent after divorce or separation (Fox & Bruce, 2001).

Second, it was originally assumed that program content should target fathers of early adolescents between 10 and 14 years of age. According to research, this age group may be especially prone to adjustment problems when separated from their fathers (Hetherington, 1993). Research has also shown that early adolescents are more likely to show interest in maintaining a close, regular relationship with their fathers (Shulman, 2003), increasingly moving toward greater autonomy and independence from parents as they move into later adolescence and early adulthood (De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009). Although the current program initially targeted fathers of children in this age group, early on it became clear that fathers with both younger and older children were equally interested in the program content and that much of the content was relevant to their circumstances. Children of participating fathers ranged from 3 months to 18 years of age, and many fathers often had two or more children of different ages. One of the features of online learning environments is the opportunity for fathers to direct their learning to areas of most importance. By providing information on children of different ages, fathers could access the material that fits their personal circumstances. Future programs might consider that

restricting involvement by age of the child could be too limiting and exclude interested fathers who could benefit from participation.

A third assumption was that program implementation was a linear process of discrete events: design the program, create marketing materials, recruit participants, release the program and engage fathers in program content and activities. It was believed that recruitment activities involved attracting and enrolling participants (Abdolrasulniq, et. al. 2004; Albrecht & Matthews, 2009; Hagel, 2008; Rimlinger, 2011), while engagement activities concerned encouraging ongoing involvement of registered fathers through multiple forms of communication (Abdolrasulniq, et al., 2004; Webb, et al., 2010). In actuality, recruiting and maintaining engagement were iterative, ongoing activities and often interrelated. Strategies to increase visibility and recruit participants were also used to engage fathers in the program content. For example, blog posts and newsletter campaigns strengthened recruitment efforts by increasing program visibility. At the same time, they provided fathers with additional program content and reminded them to engage in program sessions and contribute to the discussion forum. Engaging fathers in an online program was an iterative process involving multiple contacts through a variety of different sources that were accessed by men at various times in the design, recruitment and implementation process. Recruitment for a new online program must begin before its official release and continue throughout the lifetime of the program, using as many sources as possible.

Fourth, it was assumed that an online program would be a natural fit for divorced or separated fathers who may have had limited time and resources to invest in their own adjustment and parenting. Advantages like cost-effectiveness (Nord, 2011), flexibility (Glasgow, Vogt, & Boles, 1999; Hourcade & Parette, 2001; Moore, et al., 2011), and opportunities for continued learning (Nord, 2011) and community building (Brook & Oliver, 2003; Carlen & Jobling, 2005)

were thought to outweigh the potential disadvantages of technical issues (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, and Yeh, 2008; Xu & Jagers, 2013), accessibility, timing and the need for fathers to commit sufficient time to the program. Moreover, the online program was thought to meet some of the potential needs of divorced or separated fathers such as reducing feelings of isolation (Buzhardt & Heitzman-Powell, 2006; Serhan, 2010) and providing opportunities for fathers to interact with others (Kelly & Papadopoulos, 2009; Sarhan, 2010). However, implementing an online program was much more difficult and time consuming than originally anticipated and might not have been as positive an experience as originally anticipated. Not only was it challenging to reach fathers who may already have felt vulnerable and unresolved in the loss of their marriage, it was difficult to meet the specific learning needs and preferences of all enrolled fathers. While online programs may provide the potential for certain advantages, they are not guaranteed. In addition, online program providers are likely to experience a variety of technical issues, especially in the beginning stages of program implementation. More research is needed to better understand how to create an online program that takes full advantage of the strengths and creates a positive learning experience for divorced or separated fathers.

A fifth assumption was that organizing educational content in a standardized order and releasing it on a weekly basis would provide the structure for built-in engagement prompts and adequate dosage. In practice, delivering online parent education was different from traditional approaches to face-to-face parent education. Rather than fathers moving through sessions in order, they preferred an unstructured format that allowed them to move around to topics of personal interest and importance to them at the time. This is consistent with the work of Brown, Winzelberg, Abascal and Taylor (2004) who also found that unstructured formats might be more satisfying and convenient when it comes to delivering parenting information. Interestingly,

Brown and colleagues also found that parents in their study showed increased knowledge even when they did not log in and complete all portions of the program. These results suggest that high levels of participation might not be necessary for an online program to be helpful. It is possible that the father's ability to access information of their choosing is enough to impact change by bringing attention to the factors important to the father-child relationship.

Finally, it was assumed that fathers would use the multi-media tools in the program as a way to interact with their child from a distance. By combining interactive features (i.e., online journal, whiteboard, chat, video chat, and a discussion forum) with suggestions for interacting with their child and engaging in continual learning, fathers would increase their participation in the program and become more engaged in program related activities. Overwhelmingly, fathers reported not using these tools, largely because they already had existing communication strategies in place or because they had enough parenting time that they could engage in face-to-face interactions with their children. Rather than creating new online tools, it may be more efficient and effective to invest in online tools that fathers already use. For example, fathers reported use of technology followed research trends showing increased likelihood of using computers and smartphones to access online information (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Thus, it makes sense to make online program information available through these mediums, or as new technologies emerge, the mediums that parents are most comfortable using.

In summary, it is important for online program providers to be clear about their assumptions. These assumptions underlie the design and implementation of a program. While many of these assumptions are based on research in the field, they can change as the technological environment changes. This is especially true for online programs. Because circumstances often vary, it may be unclear as to whether or not the assumptions are applicable

to a particular context or population. This could be especially so for a new and innovative online program that lacks existing models. Online program providers can benefit by critically looking at their assumptions and continually testing if their assumptions are correct.

Online versus face-to-face environment. Online parent education varies in a variety of ways from the traditional face-to-face environment. Program providers often think of programs in a linear manner, with participants moving through them in a standard order. Even though *Apart, Not Broken* was originally designed this way, it was quickly discovered that this was not how fathers wanted to learn online. In fact, this may not be how parents want to learn, even in face-to-face environments, when left to their own devices.

Designing a new online program requires different resources than a face-to-face program. In the latter, providers develop content, identify a space for program delivery, choose and train an instructor, arrange the physical environment to make it comfortable for the learner, and prepare for known issues like providing child care and transportation assistance (Stahlschmidt, et al., 2013). In contrast, online program providers must make a variety of platform decisions upfront and then be prepared to respond to rapid changes in technology and participant needs. This requires the online program provider to be aware of both the latest technologies, as well as the online tools and applications that parents are currently using. This case study showed that fathers may be less likely to use cutting edge technologies that stray too far from what they are comfortable with, even if those tools provide new or more efficient ways to learn or connect with others. Given this finding was based on a limited sample, additional research is needed to examine the use of a variety of technologies to deliver online program material.

Another difference between the online environment and face-to-face programs is the voluntary nature of online enrollment. Rather than having a captive audience, voluntary

participants choose when and how to utilize the program. An online program can make available a range of information to meet the diverse needs of fathers who are in various stages of divorce. Under these circumstances, voluntary participants may not complete the entire program or participate in the same way, but they may access the information they need when they need it. In fact, the ability to immediately access specific information, could be the very reason that participants were drawn to enroll in the program in the first place.

Unlike face-to-face programs, online programs often involve a degree of anonymity. For this particular case study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) required the researcher to protect the fathers' confidentiality. When this study was first conceptualized, online program delivery was new and the IRB was developing how to handle issues of confidentiality. This case study showed that men's preferences for anonymity varied. While some fathers preferred the security of not using their name, others wanted the option to personalize their profile as a way to connect with other fathers. Future programs may want to consider how they can create options for fathers to choose the degree to which they want to share personal information, while protecting their anonymity.

Finally, the online environment is different than face-to-face programs in that the environment is constantly changing. Rather than delivering a predesigned face-to-face program, effective online program delivery should involve learning from the habits of potential users and adapting the program to fit their needs. Face-to-face programs may experience changes in program content over time, but the delivery mechanism is typically fairly stable. In online program delivery, the program content serves as the backbone, but the way in which it is delivered can be adapted to fit participants use patterns and expressed needs. The online environment becomes a user-generated learning space as participants interact with the content,

instructor and one another (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004). Creating a sustainable online learning environment requires having a dynamic program that is flexible enough to be responsive to the learning needs of fathers and rapidly changing online technologies. Continued research is needed to further examine this idea.

Characteristics of fathers that facilitated or hindered engagement. While this group of 39 fathers was fairly homogeneous in terms of demographic characteristics and their use of technology, their individual motivations and situations differed. Fathers were tech savvy, reporting daily access to the Internet, at least a basic understanding of computers, and a preference for using computers and smartphones. While the data shows interventionists may have more success implementing online program material that is accessible by computer or smartphone, father's use of these devices could be a function of owning them. It is possible that lower tablet use was an artifact of the timing of the study. Recent statistics for tablet use illustrates that Americans over 18 years of age had a major increase from 3% in May 2010 to 34 % in May 2013 (Zickuhr, 2013). Use of various communication devices is likely to continue to change as technology advances, providing another example of the importance of staying current with the latest devices and making content easily available through these means.

The men in this study confirmed that while fathers often experience several emotional hurdles as a result of divorce, it can be difficult to ask for help. They talked about vacillating between wanting help and needing validation that it was acceptable. They also provided suggestions for how to better engage fathers. Recognizing that most fathers are invested in being a good parent, programs might consider using a more analytical approach to assisting them in managing their emotions, with examples of other fathers who are undergoing similar experiences. This could help men feel less vulnerable and provide models of how to deal with

the feelings associated with divorce. Consistent with previous research that men prefer to be active over spending time alone or talking about their feelings (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976), fathers may also be more receptive to online content that is direct and provides opportunities to them to take immediate actions that make a difference for them and their relationship with their child.

Reaching divorced or separated fathers. This study examined a variety of strategies that were implemented to create visibility and recruit fathers in *Apart, Not Broken*. Reaching divorced men involves developing a consistent message and putting the time into creating high quality advertisements that represent “real fathers.” Fathers in this study reported that providing examples of real dads was normalizing and left them feeling as though someone was talking directly to them. Online programs could reach more fathers by using a variety of multiple media formats such as videos, pictures, testimonials, and stories of men undergoing similar experiences. When doing this it is important to represent both the racial-ethnic diversity as well as the economic diversity of participants.

Presentation is important for engaging fathers in online programs. In the current project, recruitment may have been hindered by the fact that the program was advertised as a study, requiring fathers to progress through a fairly lengthy registration process. This could have been perceived as intimidating or laborious to some fathers. Fathers were also given the option to obtain consent from their former partner and child to communicate online. This was not an option that most of the participating fathers wanted to pursue and it could have deterred some fathers from completing the registration process. Also related to concept of presentation is the idea that first impressions matter. A father’s first experience with the program could influence whether or not he completes registration and subsequently returns. A variety of factors such as

look and feel of the platform, program message, and ease of registration could have an impact. Much like people tend to avoid a business with which they had a bad experience, fathers may be less inclined to use the program if their first experience was less than satisfactory.

Barriers to recruitment instigated design changes and pushed the researcher to focus on increasing visibility. Word-of-Mouth marketing was the most effective single strategy, while advertising was the most effective as a group. The power of word-of-mouth marketing lies in hearing about the program directly from other fathers. Similar to Stahlschmidt and colleagues (2013), participating fathers suggested that this brings legitimacy to the program. While certain strategies were more effective, the researcher observed a synergy between various techniques. Much like Albrecht and Matthews's (2009) study reports, recruitment strategies were implemented as distinct events, but occurred simultaneously and built on one another. The organic way in which information can spread can make tracking the specific way in which fathers heard about the program especially challenging for online program delivery.

Creating visibility and recruiting participants takes time for any program, but it is especially challenging for a new, innovative program with a single implementer. While the researcher was not able to enroll the number of fathers expected at the onset of the study, it is reasonable to believe that continued advertisement and collaboration with professionals would have resulted in increased registrations over time. Ongoing research is needed to fully understand the effectiveness of various recruitment techniques in reaching divorced or separated fathers.

Content characteristics. Following the framework proposed by Bowers et al., (2011) the content of *Apart, Not Broken* contained research-based information concerned with parent and child related issues related to post-divorce. The findings from this study provide some evidence that participants were drawn to the program in part, because the content was research-based,

university supported, and of similar or higher quality of other resources to which they had been exposed.

Online programs need content that is well written, organized, and concise. Fathers preferred clear, simple, and applicable activities that gave them new ideas and strategies for dealing with the divorce and interacting with their child. Further, fathers found information more useful when the material fit with their current life circumstances or validated actions they were already taking. While fathers especially resonated with the realities expressed through the video vignettes of divorced fathers, participants suggested that the program could be improved by including some lighter content that acknowledges the importance of their situation without always focusing on the weight of the realities they are facing. More representation of “real dads” would give them an opportunity to map others’ experiences onto their own life, and offer fresh ideas and provide a sense of hope that this difficult time in their life will eventually pass.

Online programs like this one can be enhanced if program facilitators are responsive to issues that emerge from fathers while the program is ongoing, even though they may not have been anticipated in the original program design. For example, in the current program co-parenting was central to the father’s understanding of other aspects of the program content. While the program had one session specifically designed to address co-parenting issues, it only scratched the surface of what men were dealing with in their relationship with their former spouse. Fathers often interpreted other program information through their changing relationship with their former partner and asked for additional feedback from the researcher. In addition to responding to fathers individually, the researcher created additional content on co-parenting that was disseminated through blog posts and newsletters. One of the most read blog posts related to strategies for exchanging their child at transitions between homes.

This program, and others like it, could benefit from integrating more information on co-parenting. Studies of evidence-based programs targeting divorced families show that some of the most effective programs centered on helping families adjust to divorce, increasing interparental communication and co-parenting, and facilitating the use of effective coping and problem solving skills (SAMHSA, 2009; OJJDP, 2009). A focus on co-parenting is also important because of the negative impact conflictual relationships can have on the father's well-being and their relationship with their child.

Language is another important consideration when creating program content. Early feedback from fathers, marketing professionals, and collaborators brought attention to the importance of language in the tone of the material. Experiencing a divorce is already associated with feelings of failure. Fathers were more receptive to language that had a tone of being a *good dad*, not a "*better dad*". Creating a context where they now have to work on being *better*, or *fixing something* that is broken can be disempowering. Keeping the tone positive puts the focus on building their relationship, taking responsibility, learning new skills and taking care of themselves.

Finally, fathers want expert driven content and feedback. While this was most evident in the father's use of the discussion forum to interact with the researcher rather than other fathers, it was also represented by the fathers' attempts to contact the researcher via email and social media sites for feedback and assistance. Traditionally, interactions with the "instructor" help learners reinforce learning and clarify nebulous points (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004). In an online program, the online instructor has the opportunity to take a facilitator role in which ongoing interaction and feedback can facilitate learning through electronic means such as chat, discussion forums, or email (Kelly, 2009). Researchers have found that learner-instructor interactions are as

important (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996; Jaffee, 1997; Muirhead, 2001), and can be of equal or better quality (Lenhart, Lytle, & Cross, 2001) than interactions in face-to-face settings. Online programs may reach more fathers by providing additional structure and opportunities for these kinds of interactions. Given the limited sample of participating fathers, additional research is needed to investigate the role of learner-instructor interfaces in delivering online programs.

Platform characteristics. In online program delivery, careful attention needs to be paid to the learners' experience with the platform. This is especially important given that such factors as sense of community, ease of use, and usefulness have been tied to the learners' satisfaction with the online learning environment (Tsai, Kim, Liu, Goggins, Kumalasari & Laffey, 2008). One of the challenges is that fathers' preferences are likely to vary. For example, fathers were split between liking and disliking the simplicity of the platform design and sometimes thinking it was outdated or too classroom-like. This points to the importance of finding a balance between having a simple, easy to use design and using the most up-to-date features. Another challenge is that the online program provider is often left to make choices between competing features. For example, there may be a trade-off between creativity and easy navigation. Testing the online platform, and having options and resources to make necessary changes if particular features have a negative impact on participation is critical to developing an online platform that is easy to use, customizable, and allows fathers to access information as they choose.

Results from this study suggested that including an online discussion forum as part of the platform was attractive to fathers, although actual use was limited. The forum likely encountered common problem faced by discussion forums: it takes participation to generate participation. Consistent with previous research, passive views outnumbered active posts in both the discussion forum and chat feature (Preece, et al., 2004). Research also suggests that people who "lurk"

online are still seeking answers to their questions and may not feel a need to post. Future research is needed to see if actual learning occurs.

Data from this study provides some insight into how to engage fathers in discussion forums. First, men may prefer direct feedback and recommendations rather than sharing their private thoughts in a public forum. In addition, fathers who engage in discussion forums may possess unique characteristics compared to those who “lurk”. The three most active fathers in the program contributed to 80% of the discussion forum posts, half of all contacts with the researcher and the only active use of the chat feature. Overall, these fathers demonstrated personal agency in their desire to take advantage of available resources offered through the program and went beyond the program expectations by voicing their concerns and asking for additional information and resources from the researcher. They engaged in the program in an ongoing manner, rather than sporadically, allowing for new content to continually add to their experience and understanding of how to adjust and parent after divorce or separation.

Engaging and maintaining participation. While the current program was originally conceptualized as self-contained, 12-session program to be delivered through an online platform, additional material was developed throughout to engage and maintain participation. For example, the program included the delivery of newsletters to both provide additional content and to remind men to access existing program sessions. In actuality, fathers utilized the newsletters more frequently than any other program feature ($n = 27$; 69%), followed by program sessions ($n = 22$; 56%). This draws attention to the way in which fathers may prefer to access program information and the potential effectiveness of reaching fathers through email, a medium they are likely to frequent several times a day. Especially in the beginning stages of a program, participants may need constant reminders to engage (Hillman, Willis, & Gunawardena, 1994).

Continued engagement can be impacted by the synergy between the educational content and the online platform. A bad experience with either the online platform or the educational content could diminish the father's overall experience with the program. The challenge to program providers is to have program material and an online platform that are simple and easy to use, while at the same time being fun, creative, visually appealing, and "modern". The findings revealed that fathers' impressions of the 12 topic-based sessions were positive. They resonated with direct, concrete, and accessible style in which material was presented. However, the platform required them to log in, click through several webpages, and track their own progress. This made access and navigation of the online platform inconvenient and cumbersome. Reducing or eliminating some of these steps would likely increase enrollment and ongoing engagement. In addition, it may be useful for online program providers to provide bookmarks, and status bars for fathers to track their progress in the program.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations related to the sample of 39 fathers who participated in this program. First, participating fathers were a self-selected sample of men who were fairly homogenous in that they were predominately White, college educated, middle class males who were in their 30's and 40's. In addition, these fathers may have been more motivated than other fathers to be involved in their children's lives. Furthermore, because the sample size was small, it was difficult for fathers to interact in the online platform in the way it was initially designed. For example, discussion forums rely on large numbers of participants to generate conversations. Continued research is needed to understand the nuances of implementing a program like *Apart, Not Broken* with a broader cross-section of fathers.

Related to the fact that this was a *research study*, there were a number of limitations due to the formalities of conducting research through a university and its Institutional Review Board (IRB). At the conception of this study, online programs were new to the IRB and they had not developed standardized procedures for how to handle online program delivery or online data collection. This created significant hurdles as the researcher managed the changing nature of the online program. Each revision of the program and study had to be cleared through the IRB, impacting the researcher's ability to proceed in a timely way. This was a reflection of the IRB's lack of understanding around the dynamic nature of an online program at the time.

A final set of limitations was related to constraints associated with the program designer and researcher. As the sole implementer, she did not have a large amount of resources at her disposal. While the researcher had the backing from the University of Wisconsin - Madison, she did not have the infrastructure to support the ever-changing online environment. Therefore, the design and implementation of the program was limited by what she was capable of doing independently. The researcher's personal investment in the program led to a variety of changes as she worked to enroll and engage fathers throughout the course of implementation. While this may have resulted in some bias in the analysis of the program, it also provided opportunities for unique insights and understanding that would not have been available to an outside researcher who had not *lived* the realities of designing and implementing this program. A high functioning program needs financial and human capital to develop, implement, and maintain the program. Lack of capital made it difficult for the researcher to more effectively provide technical support, respond to design issues, create content, and market the program.

Recommendations for Future Directions

The findings from this study have implications for developing, implementing and

evaluating online programs for parents in general, and for divorced and separated fathers in particular. Future research on online program delivery to divorced or separated fathers should combine qualitative and quantitative methods to focus on process issues as well as outcomes in order to improve program design, content, delivery, marketability and sustainability. Case studies, such as used in this study, will help illuminate what works and doesn't work in different contexts. Additional research could address the components identified in the Nord (2011) evaluation framework, determine what is missing and build a comprehensive framework to ensure that online programming reaches its potential. In particular, it is recommended that the field of online programming engage in more outcome evaluations, using mixed methods, to document cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiencies. Additional research can inform the effectiveness of online programs for divorced or separated fathers by measuring their impact on outcomes variables such as changes in adjustment, improved emotional health of fathers, more frequent interactions between fathers and their child, enhanced parenting skills, improved relations with their ex-partner, greater satisfaction as a father, reduced stress, and improvements in the father-child relationship.

One of the biggest challenges of this study was around recruiting divorced or separated fathers to participate. Results from this case study suggest that reaching fathers involves developing a well thought out marketing plan and implementing it in advance of program release. It also is important to remember that recruitment is an ongoing, iterative process that continues throughout the life of the program. Additional research is needed to further examine and compare ways in which online programs market and attract fathers to their sites.

The findings from this study suggest that fathers want program materials that are well written, professional looking, and carry a positive tone to which fathers can relate. Online

program providers can play an important role by being a conduit for linking fathers to quality information and resources. For example, providing links to blog articles, reputable websites, newly released books, and upcoming webinars can help to streamline information for fathers and give them access to resources they may not have had otherwise. Fathers also desire easy accessibility through different mechanisms (i.e., smartphone, tablets, etc.) are also demanded. Continued attention needs to be paid to developments and innovations in the technologies that fathers prefer. Using the latest technologies and multiple delivery mechanisms can also serve as a way to keep users coming back to the program site and increase engagement.

The findings from this case study suggest that participants value platform designs that contain options, personalization and self-direction (Ausburn, 2011). Navigation and accessibility of the online platform were the biggest challenges, suggesting that online program providers need to pay particular attention to making the platform easy to use, with bookmarks and status bars that communicate progress to participating fathers. Conducting usability studies to access issues like navigation and accessibility can inform online program delivery.

While the many “buttons and whistles” that are available within an online platform may potentially enhance learning and interaction, attention needs to be paid to what is likely to work with which group of participants. Discussion forums require a critical mass of participants who are making regular contributions and may be ill-advised for men who are not comfortable sharing their feelings publically. The benefits and costs of using any of the many available media tools need to be fully explored and tested. Just because a feature is available and has a high learning potential does not mean participants will use it. Further research is needed to better understand under what conditions and with which men different media tools are most appropriate and desirable.

Results from this study suggest that providing ongoing content and multiple reminders to engage can help attract and maintain fathers' involvement. Future program providers could benefit by taking advantage of the numerous avenues available to reach fathers, posting content updates and program reminders to Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, websites, and email addresses. These sites can be used to post brief excerpts of program content with links to the full content on the program site. Moreover, because online program providers do not see the fathers in person, they could benefit from conducting check-ins to determine progress, barriers, and needs along the way. The online environment is not a static system, but a dynamic interface that has the capacity to grow and change to better meet the needs of fathers. The developmental nature of an online program invites program providers to innovate and make modifications as they identify the online habits and learning needs of participating fathers.

As one of the first examinations of a new online program for divorced or separated men, this study provides evidence of some of the unique issues and experiences that can either promote or hinder men's engagement in online learning environments. Identifying and understanding these issues is an important step in creating an environment that "*meets fathers where they are*" as they manage the personal impact of divorce. Online program providers need to stay informed of changes in technology so that they can adapt the learning environment as technologies continue to evolve. Online programs have the capacity to be a valuable and accessible resource for men experiencing divorce. Rather than a one-time class, the educational content serves as an informational resource that can be searchable, accessed at any time, from anywhere, changed, and adapted to meet the changing circumstances and learning needs of fathers during a major life transition.

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Appendix A

Bower's Content Criteria

Criteria	Topic
Child-Focused Content	
<i>Child-Focused</i>	Children's response to divorce
	Different reactions and needs of children at different ages
	Different reactions and needs of children at different ages
	Typical post-divorce reactions of children
	Warning signs of adjustment issues for children
	Psychological adjustment tasks of children
	Impact of parent(s) on child development
	Impact on children of "badmouthing" other parent
	Strategies to help parents help children deal with divorce
Parent-Focused Content	
<i>Personal adult/adjustment issues</i>	Grief/loss
	Emotional aspects
	Anger
	Former spouse issues
	Guilt
	Stress
	Self care and/or support systems
<i>Coping with change</i>	Divorce adjustment
	Handling change/coping
	New relationships
	Grandparents
	Financial impact
	Social impact
<i>Parenting and other relationships</i>	General parenting skills (e.g., structures, rules, warmth,
	New partner and children issues
	Dating
	Sex/Cohabitation
	Remarriage
	Blended families

<i>Parental conflict</i>	Benefits of parental cooperation versus cost of conflict
	Impact of parental conflict on children
	Strategies to reduce conflict
	Strategies that escalate conflict
<i>Communication as co-parents</i>	Respecting and supporting co-parent's role
	Respecting extended family relationships
	Putting children in the middle
	Decision making
	Transitions and routines
	Managing emotions
Court-Focused Content	
	Legal procedures for divorce with children
	Legal representation
	Review of the law
	Guardian ad litem
	Best interests of the child
	Custody evaluation
	Mediation purpose
	Mediation general process
	Mediation value/effectiveness
	Custody options
	Parenting plans (purpose, value, process)
	Child support
	Financial obligations
Parenting Under Special Conditions (i.e., Domestic Violence)	
	General education content on DV Safety of children
	Strategies for co-parenting when there is DV
	Additional resources provided

Appendix B

Eligibility Survey

Welcome to your online community, **Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create!**

When a father goes through a divorce or separation, the typical experiences of being a parent are compounded by the unique experiences of being a parent of divorce. In addition to connecting you with other fathers, this program is rich with information, resources, and strategies for adjusting and parenting after divorce or separation. Thank you for investing in yourself and your child!

Please take a moment to tell us a little about yourself. All responses will remain confidential.

Please enter your survey ID. This is made up of your five digit zip code AND your date of birth.

Zip Code

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

1. Your Contact Information:

First and Last Name

State of Residence

Email Address

2. Please provide the best number(s) to reach you:

Home

Work

Mobile

3. How long have you been divorced or separated with the intent of getting a divorce?

Less than 6 Months

6-12 Months

1-2 Years

4. Do you have a child that is 18 years old or younger?

Yes

No

5. Would you say that you **do not** have primary custody? (i.e. anything less than 50% parenting time)

Yes

No

6. This program is in English. Are you fluent in English?

Yes

No

7. How often do you usually have access to the Internet?

Daily

2-3 Times a Month

2-3 Times a Week

Once a Month

Once a Week

8. Since the program has information about how to interact with your child online, we would like to inform the mother of your participation, and get her consent and the child's assent to communicate this way. However, this is NOT a requirement. ***You CAN still participate*** if you would prefer that we NOT contact her. If you are comfortable with us contacting your ex-partner, please provide her information below. Email is our preferred contact.

Name

Address

Address 2

City

State

Zip Code

Email Address

9. How did you hear about Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, Create?

Appendix C

Consent & Background Questionnaire

Please Enter Your Survey ID. This is made up of your 5-digit zip code, followed by your date of birth. (For example 8022802121970):

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON **Research Participant Information and Consent Form**

Title of the Study: Examining the Effectiveness of a Web-Based Intervention for Divorced or Separated Fathers

Principal Investigator: Stephen Small (phone: 608-263-5688) (email: sasmall@wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Shelly Mahon (phone: 608-770-1342)

What is this project about?

The purpose of this project is to explore the use of an online program to help fathers adjust and parent after divorce or separation. We are looking for fathers who have a child under the age of 18, and who (1) are divorced or separated, (2) do not have primary custody (i.e. parenting time is anything less than 50% of the time), (3) are conversant in English, and (4) have access to the Internet. It is preferred that fathers have their former partner or spouse's support and approval, as well as their child's agreement to use technology to interact. A lack of support does not prevent fathers from participating in the educational component of the study.

What will my participation involve?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will receive 12 sessions of educational material. Each session will have educational materials, related activities, suggestions for using technology to interact with a child, and access to a discussion forum where fathers can interact with other fathers. You will continue to have access to the full online program for an additional six-month period.

You will be asked to complete a registration form and an online survey prior to the onset of the study, as well as a final survey at the completion of the study. It will take approximately 30 minutes each time you complete the online survey, for a total of about 1 hour. Because the program facilitators want to gain a better understanding of the issues that fathers discuss online, posts made in the discussion forum will be recorded for later analysis. Online comments will be kept confidential and won't be identifiable by name.

What are the benefits to me and my child?

There is no guaranteed direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, participating fathers may gain (1) a better understanding of the actions they can take to adjust and parent after divorce or separation, (2) increased social support by connecting with other

fathers, (3) greater knowledge of effective parenting and communication practices, (4) access to helpful parenting resources, and (5) new ideas for how to use technology to stay connected to their child.

What is the risk to me?

There is little risk to you for participating in this study. Electronic data will be protect by saving it on a computer that has the appropriate security safeguards including password protection, unique identification of users, industry standard encryption, up-to-date anti-virus controls, and firewall configuration. Only the researchers will have access to the data.

It is also possible that you recognize a need for additional assistance, such as a more intensive parenting program or professional help after reading material on the program website or discussing issues with other fathers. For this reason, a list of referral services will be provided to all participating fathers.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

While the researcher will protect the data collected, there is no guarantee that the communication you have with your child will be held confidential. No identifying names will be used in any written materials or reports.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time. All information collected will be used solely for the purposes of this study. If you have questions about this project, you can contact the Student Researcher, Shelly Mahon at 608-770-1342 or mdmahon@wisc.edu, or the Principal Investigator Stephen Small at 608-263-5688 or sasmall@wisc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Wisconsin Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

What do I do next if I want to participate in this project?

If you agree to participate in this project you will be asked to click on the link below and complete the registration. In this survey, you will create a username that serves as our way of identifying you and the only link between you and the information you provide. While it is not required and we will not collect any information from your child or his or her mother, we ask that you provide us with an email address for the child's mother. This will only be used to ask for her support and gain permission for your child to interact with you online. All other information provided will be combined with the responses of other participating fathers, and only the group findings will be reported.

Receipt of your registration form will indicate that you have read the above information and are agreeing to participate. You can print a copy of the above information to keep for your own records. Following this form, you will be asked to complete a background questionnaire and a

pre-program survey. A link to the pre-program questionnaire is included at the end of this survey.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to sharing this program with you.

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of, the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Yes

No

Background Questionnaire

The following questions are designed to gather information about your separation/divorce. While you may have other children that benefit from this program, we ask that you answer any questions about children with one child under the age of 18 in mind. Thanks again for completing this survey.

1. What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Remarried

2. Throughout the course of your relationship with your spouse and beyond, how long did you live in each of the following living situations? Please give your answer to the closest year and month. Leave blank if it is not applicable to your situation.

- ☐ Lived together but not married _____
- ☐ Married _____
- ☐ Separated _____
- ☐ Divorced _____
- ☐ Remarried _____
- ☐ Living with a new partner _____

3. If you are remarried or living with another partner, how many additional children do you have with this person?

New partner
New Spouse

4. Who initiated the separation/divorce?

- ☐ I did (The Father)
- ☐ My ex did (The Mother)
- ☐ It was mutually

5. How would you describe your current relationship with your ex spouse/partner?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very Poor

6. As of now, how well would you say you have adjusted to the separation/divorce?

- ☐ Extremely Well
☐ Well
☐ Fair
☐ Poor
☐ Very Poor

7. Please tell us about ALL the children you had with your ex-partner/ex-spouse.

	Gender		Age						
	Male	Female	Less than 1	1-3	3-5	6-9	10-14	15-18	Older than 18
Child 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. What kind of child custody arrangement do you have?

- ☐ Sole
☐ Joint Physical
☐ Joint Legal
☐ Noncustody
☐ Other _____

9. How many days per month would you estimate the target child is in your custody?

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ 1 | ☐ 6 | ☐ 11 |
| ☐ 2 | ☐ 7 | ☐ 12 |
| ☐ 3 | ☐ 8 | ☐ 13 |
| ☐ 4 | ☐ 9 | ☐ 14 |
| ☐ 5 | ☐ 10 | ☐ 15 or more |

10. How satisfied are you with the court ordered or written agreements about parenting time?

- ☐ Very Satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat Dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very Dissatisfied
- ☐ N/A

11. What was the age of the target child at the time of separation?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Less than 1 | ☐ 5 | ☐ 10 | ☐ 15 |
| ☐ 1 | ☐ 6 | ☐ 11 | ☐ 16 |
| ☐ 2 | ☐ 7 | ☐ 12 | ☐ 17 |
| ☐ 3 | ☐ 8 | ☐ 13 | ☐ 18 |
| ☐ 4 | ☐ 9 | ☐ 14 | |

12. How would you say the target child has adjusted to the separation/divorce?

- ☐ Extremely Well
- ☐ Well
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poorly
- ☐ Very Poorly

13. Where do you currently live?

City
State
Country

14. About how many miles would you estimate you live from the target child?

15. How frequently were you ordered to pay child-support?

- ☐ Bi-Weekly
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Bi-Monthly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Bi-Annually
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Not Ordered

16. Amount of child support ordered?

17. Date of last child support payment?

18. Please tell us a little about your use of technology. What type of operating system do you use?

- ☐ Mac OS 9
- ☐ Mac OS X
- ☐ Windows 98
- ☐ Windows 2000
- ☐ Windows ME
- ☐ Windows XP
- ☐ Windows 7
- ☐ Windows Vista
- ☐ Other

19. Where do you expect to gain access to the Internet MOST OF THE TIME?

- ☐ Home
- ☐ Office
- ☐ Coffee Shop
- ☐ Library
- ☐ Other _____

20. Which statement most accurately reflects your understanding of computers?

- ☐ I don't know how to turn on my computer
- ☐ I can turn on a computer, but I have trouble with most almost everything else
- ☐ I know the basics of how to use my computer
- ☐ I understand how to use most of my software, and have little trouble learning new software
- ☐ I completely understand my computer software and hardware

21. In an average week, about how many hours do you use a computer for:

	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	30 or more	None
Work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal Reasons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. Does your child have access to a computer in the home of his/her mother/your ex-partner?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

23. Does your child own his/her own computer?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

24. In what part of the house is your child's computer located?

	Dad's House	Mom's House
Child's Bedroom	☐	☐
Living/Family Room	☐	☐
Kitchen	☐	☐
Office	☐	☐
Parent's Bedroom	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐

25. About how many hours a week do you use the following equipment?

	None	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	More Than 30
Desktop Computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Laptop Computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tablet (e.g. iPad or Android)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Smartphone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. What is your birth date?

Month
Date
Year

27. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Less than a high school diploma
☐ High school diploma
☐ Two Year Vocational Degree
☐ Some four-year College
☐ Four year college degree
☐ Some graduate school
☐ Graduate or professional degree

28. What is your usual occupation or trade?

29. In a typical week, how many hours do you usually work?

- ☐ 1-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ More than 60
- ☐ None

30. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ White (European American)
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other/Mixed (Please Describe) _____

31. Total household income

- ☐ Less than 25,000 (1)
- ☐ 25,000 - 49,999 (2)
- ☐ 50,000- 74,999 (3)
- ☐ 75,000-99,000 (4)
- ☐ 100,000-124,999 (5)
- ☐ 125,000-149,999 (6)
- ☐ 150,000-200,000 (7)
- ☐ More Than 200,000 (8)

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

1. What drew you to enroll in this program?
2. Once you were in the program, what encouraged you to participate
 - Thoughts on the material (presentation style, format, amount of information, videos, activities, and references/recommendations?)
 - Thoughts on the platform (function, usability, layout, look and feel, multi-media tools)
 - For both: strengths/weaknesses
 - Or discouraged you from participating?
3. What did you think about the discussion forum?
4. Share your thoughts on the blogs and newsletters.
5. What recommendations would you make for program improvement?
6. Anything else you would like to share with me about the program or your participation in the program?

Appendix E

10 Steps for Navigating This Multi-Media Program

Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create! 10 Steps for Navigating This Multi-Media Website

1. Go to <http://www.divorceddadinstitute.com/login/index.php> and log in to the site. (Alternatively, log in from the homepage, www.divorceddadinstitute.com, by clicking on the login button located either in the farthest upper right hand corner or the yellow box at the bottom of the page). Ignore the account setup information on the right hand side. You are already registered.
2. Bookmark <http://www.divorceddadinstitute.com/login/index.php> for easier access.
3. Enter the username and password assigned and sent to you via email in the “Returning to This Website” Section on the left side of the page. Check “remember username” box.
4. After log in, you will be directed to the home page. Click the blue text, *Welcome to Apart Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create*, to enter your program. Click the blue text, *Discussion Forum*, to participate in the forum. Both are located on the left side of the home page.
5. You are now inside the program! The first session includes a welcome message and introduction. We encourage you to set up any online tools you would like to use throughout the program at the very beginning. Move through at your own pace, preferably in order. You will see all 12 sessions on the main page. Simply click on the yellow hand to progress through each of the sessions. At the end of each session, click on the link "Return to Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect Create" to return to the course home page and view another session.
6. Several online tools are available in the white box on the right side of the page. This box will be visible anytime you are in the program, allowing you to use online tools as you choose. When available, tutorials are located directly under the tool itself.
7. Watch the videos by clicking the red arrow in the center of the video box. Change the video to “full screen” by selecting the four-cornered square in the bottom right hand corner of the video. Return to the original size by pressing “esc”.
8. Download the PDF’s located throughout the program by clicking **Download!**
9. The following symbol  is located at the bottom of each page. This symbol navigates you to the next section or activity in that particular session. Go to your home page to move on to another session.
10. You will find a brief, 5-question feedback survey at the end of each session. Fathers who complete all session and the associated feedback surveys will be entered to win an iPad. Those who complete the program and related surveys will receive a \$25.00 Amazon card.

Please do not hesitate to email me at mdmahon@wisc.edu if you have *ANY* questions,

Shelly D. Mahon

Appendix F

How to Get the Most Out of Apart, Not Broken: Learn, Connect, & Create!

This multimedia program has the following features:

1. Video Segments: Hear dads' real experiences adjusting and parenting after separation or divorce. Listen for their personal challenges, insights, and recommendations. Not only will you see that you are not alone, you will have access to new ideas that may help you deal with our own circumstances.

2. Chat & Discussion Forum:

Chat: Click on Chat With Participants next to the chat symbol in the white box on the right side of the page. This will allow you to chat with fathers who are online at the same time. You will find a heading “Online Users” directly under Chat With Participants. This will tell you who is logged in at the time.

Discussion Forum: Your discussion forum will show up in a separate section from the home page of Apart, Not Broken. Clicking on this link will take you a number of discussion threads. Use this area to start a discussion, or make comments to existing discussions. The discussion forum is only visible to the Program Director and other fathers enrolled in the program. The program director will contribute to discussions.

3. Online Tools: We recommend and provide links to the following tools because they are well tested, supported, and high functioning. Feel free to continue using other tools if you already have ones that work for you!

Google Account: Email, Document Sharing, & Calendar If you do not have one already, set up a Gmail account by going to accounts.google.com and clicking on the red Create New Account button in the upper right hand corner. Follow their instructions. Once you have set up your account, the navigation bar at the top of the page has options for Mail (to send emails), Drive (to share documents, like Word and PowerPoint), and Calendar (to plan and share events).

Google +: Chat, Video Chat, & Photo Sharing: Once you have a Gmail account, you have the option to set up a Google+ account. In the upper left hand corner of Google's navigation bar is a +[followed by your username]. Simply click there to begin setting up your Google+ account. Note: View a tutorial by going to <http://www.google.com/intl/en/+/learnmore/> or clicking on the tutorial under Google + in the online tools portion of the program itself. The tutorial has information on how to use Google+ on a supported computer or mobile device. Download it and set it up according to their instructions. There will be exercises later in the program that allow you to become more familiar with this tool if you choose.

Chat & Video Chat Skype: You may prefer to use Skype to chat or video chat. You can set up a Skype account by following the instructions at Skype.com. A tutorial is also available in the online tool under Skype or by going directly to <https://support.skype.com/en/userguides>. Again, the tutorial will show you how to use Google+ on a supported computer or mobile device. Download it and set it up according to their instructions. There will be exercises later in the program that allow you to become more familiar with this tool if you choose.

Whiteboard Awww: The link to the whiteboard is located at the top of the Online Tools box. Clicking on the link will allow you to use the whiteboard on you own, or invite others to join you. To invite someone, simply click on the menu button on the left side of the whiteboard and selecting “invite”. They will give you a URL that you can share with the person you want to invite to your whiteboard. You will be able to be on the same whiteboard together.

Journal Penzu: Your journal is located directly under the whiteboard. Click on the link next to the red Penzu symbol to open your online journal. You will be asked to provide your name, email address and password. Once that is finished, you will have access to your online journal anytime you click on the link. Nobody else will have access; your journal is completely private.

4. Information: You have access to 12 session of new, concrete, and actionable content. Each session is divided into 3 sections:

What You Can Expect: On Your Mark! This section addresses how things change after separation or divorce.

What You Need to Know: Get Set! This section will highlight the implications of those changes.

What You Can Do: Go! This section will help you take action. This will include a new parenting tool, activity, option for using technology, and some additional considerations and suggestions.

When you log in to your program, you will see the first section “What You Can Expect” of the first session. At the end of each page, you will be prompted to continue to the next section. Once a session is open, it will remain open. While the content is delivered in a particular order, you are free to move through at your own pace.

5. Tools and Related Activities:

Parenting Tools: Each session is equipped with a new parenting tool designed to help you understand yourself, guide you through your experience, or give you information, ideas, and strategies for parenting, communicating, and interacting with your ex-partner. Experiment with them and see what works for you and your family.

Activities: Activities are included to help make learning more personal. You can use these activities to apply what you are getting from the readings.

Options: For Using Technology: Each session gives you a variety of ways to apply what you read to your interactions with your child. Options for using technology will be available, but your actual use depends on you and your individual circumstances. Alternatives for having similar interactions without technology are also included.

Additional Considerations: Each session ends with other ways you can get information or expanding on what you have learned.

There is a brief 5-question feedback survey at the end of each session. All fathers who complete the entire program, including the brief feedback surveys, will be entered to win an iPad. Father's who complete the post-program survey at the end of the program will also receive an Amazon gift card of \$25.00.

Appendix G

Alignment of Apart, Not Broken with Bower's Content Criteria

Table 26

Alignment with Bower's and Colleagues Content Criteria

Content Area	Topic	Present
Child-Focused Content		
Child-Focused	Children's response to divorce	X
	Different reactions and needs of children at different ages	X
	Different reactions and needs of children at different ages	X
	Typical post divorce reactions of children	X
	Warning signs of adjustment issues for children	
	Psychological adjustment tasks of children	X
	Impact of parent(s) on child development	X
	Impact on children of "badmouthing" other parent	X
	Strategies to help parents help children deal with divorce	X
Adult/Parent-Focused Content		
Personal adult/adjustment issues	Grief/loss	X
	Emotional aspects	X
	Anger	X
	Former spouse issues	X
	Guilt	X
	Stress	X
	Self care and/or support systems	X
Coping with change	Divorce adjustment	X
	Handling change/coping	X
	New relationships	X
	Grandparents	
	Financial impact	X
	Social impact	X
Parenting and	General parenting skills (e.g., structures, rules, warmth, etc . . .)	X

<i>other relationships</i>	New partner and children issues	X
	Dating	X
	Sex/Cohabitation	
	Remarriage	
	Blended families	
<i>Parental conflict</i>	Benefits of parental cooperation versus cost of conflict	X
	Impact of parental conflict on children	X
	Strategies to reduce conflict	X
	Strategies that escalate conflict	X
<i>Communication as co-parents</i>	Respecting and supporting co-parent's role	X
	Respecting extended family relationships	X
	Putting children in the middle	X
	Decision making	X
	Transitions and routines	X
	Managing emotions	X

Appendix H

Detailed Description of Program Content for Apart, Not Broken

Introduction: The introduction provides fathers with an opportunity to become familiar with the online platform. Specifically, the introduction:

- Provides a description of the program layout,
- Gives instructions for setting up the multi-media tools,
- Suggests fathers practice using the online tools,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Share a Music Video*,
- Has instructions for an activity that involves selecting a song on YouTube, and sharing the link or embed code with their child,
- Encourages fathers to ask their child to send them a YouTube video in return.

Goal 1 – Sessions 1-3: *Adjusting to divorce or separation*. These sessions help fathers understand the divorce process and the effect of this process on them and their children. Fathers learn the characteristics of each stage, consider how these characteristics apply to their personal experience, and prepare for stages they have not yet encountered. Sessions related to this goal also address the effects of divorce on children, with an emphasis on the positive outcomes associated with maintaining a post-divorce, father-child relationship. Session help fathers manage the variety of changes they experience and empowers them to be engaged in productive action toward a long-term relationship with their children.

Session 1: Parting:

- Provides an introduction to Goal 2 and the three stages of adjustment covered in sessions 2-4,
- Gives a short *Adjustment Quiz* to help father understand where they fit in the three stages of adjustment,
- Helps fathers understand and deal with feelings associated with the first stage of adjustment, such as denial, anger, ambivalence, etc.,
- Normalizes common feeling and provides ways for fathers to deal with these feelings while staying connected to their child,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Gloria Wilcox's Feeling Wheel* for understanding and managing the feelings associated with divorce,
- Has an activity and instructions for applying *Gloria Wilcox's Feeling Wheel* to their life,

- Gives fathers a *Tip Sheet: 100 Books on Divorce for Fathers and Children of All Ages*,
- Provides fathers with a variety of additional ways to use *Gloria Wilcox's Feeling Wheel* and improve interactions with their child, with or without technology.

Session 2: The Crux of Separation or Divorce:

- Provides information on the second stage of adjustment, The Crux – Understanding and Accepting Changes,
- Includes strategies for dealing with multiple the realities and changes in job, economic status, residence, family, friends, and daily schedules,
- Gives fathers ways to talk to their child about the variety of changes and associated feelings,
- Helps them find new ways of working with your ex-partner, while learning to function as an individual,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Personal Goals Worksheet* for identifying goals and making plans to achieve them,
- Gives an activity and instructions for creating a specific goal in at least one area of their life,
- Stresses the importance of establishing new routines and support networks,
- Provides a variety of additional ways to manage changes, find support, and reestablish themselves, with or without technology.

Session 3: Reinventing Yourself:

- Gives information on the third stage of divorce, Reinvention - Regaining a New Sense of Power and Control for the Future,
- Provides strategies for fathers to evaluate how they manage their time and interact with their child,
- Stresses the importance of taking actions that are consistent with the future they want with their child,
- Emphasizes the importance of the co-parent relationship, and provides resources for reducing conflict, setting up parenting plans, and cooperating with their ex-partner (i.e., hyperlinks to Up-to-Parents and Our Family Wizard),
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Understanding Your Child's Adjustment to Divorce* for relating how children of different ages respond to divorce,
- Provides suggestions for using previous parenting tools, *The Feeling Wheel* and *The Goals Worksheet*, to facilitate adjustment,
- Recommends that fathers add to resources, acknowledge accomplishments, reward themselves, and replace old father-child interaction patterns with new ones that align with their new identity as a divorced father,
- Provides additional suggestions for redefining their role, with or without technology.

Goal 2 - Sessions 4-6: Understanding and Redefining Yourself. This goal helps fathers establish clarity and develop effective fathering practices in their role as a father after the divorce. These sessions start by developing an understanding of how the roles they assume can impact their relationship. Fathers learn how they can serve as providers, teachers, mentors, role models, protectors, disciplinarians, and supporters. This program offers fathers several creative ways to fulfill aspects of the fathering role in a manner that best fits their personal situation.

Session 4: Active Parenting: Providing, Disciplining, & Teaching:

- Provides an introduction to Goal 3 and the ways in which they engage in Active, Expressing and Cooperative Parenting covered in sessions 5-7.
- Introduces roles and addresses how roles influence the way they act, what they are committed to, and what they expect from others,
- Introduces active parenting: providing (i.e., assuming economic responsibility), disciplining (i.e., providing boundaries and clear expectations for behavior while ensuring physical and emotional well-being), and teaching (i.e., providing direct instruction, mentoring, or role modeling),
- Provides information on why it is important to be an active father and gives them strategies for engaging in their child's life (i.e., engaging in homework and extracurricular activities),
- Explains that parenting styles are defined by the balance of providing structure and showing warmth and affection, and gives fathers a *Parenting Style Quiz*,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Parenting Style Tip Sheet* with a discussion of the four parenting styles and the benefits of authoritative parenting (i.e., being responsive while setting rules and providing structure).
- Provides an activity for fathers to consider their current parenting style, identify two areas they would like to improve their parenting, and apply the *Personal Goals Worksheet* to achieving these goals,
- Provides additional suggestions for engaging in their child's school, homework, and extracurricular activities, with or without technology.

Session 5: Expressive Parenting: Supporting, Caretaking, and Protecting:

- Offers information on expressive parenting: supporting (i.e., being psychologically and emotionally available for their children), caretaking (i.e., contributing to the management of practical, routine, and day-to-day activities), and protecting (i.e., ensuring the physical and emotional safety of their child),
- Highlights ways to show love and affection, teach through example, and be encouraging and supportive,
- Provides information and strategies for expressive fathering,

- Gives a description of the individual differences in how children adjust to divorce and stresses the importance of meeting them where they are in the process,
- Offers ideas for working with their ex-partner,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Being Expressive When Talking About Divorce*. This gives specific examples of expressive statements related to various issues surrounding divorce, such as assuming blame or introducing a new partner.
- Includes an activity for fathers to create their own expressive statements to the same examples, and/or generate a list of other issues with expressive statements.
- Provides additional suggestions for being expressive, establishing understanding, and developing support, with or without technology.

Session 6: Cooperative Parenting: Co-Parenting

- Provides strategies for putting their child first, regardless of the relationship with their ex-partner,
- Gives information on the importance of not bad-mouthing or undermining the other parent, keeping their child out of the middle of conflict, and avoiding the temptation to use their child as a messenger,
- Informs of the negative impacts of conflict on their child's well-being,
- Provides strategies for reducing inter-parental conflict, communicating, negotiating, and making decisions that support their child's adjustment,
- Focuses on letting go and forgiving, both their ex-partner and themselves,
- Offers ways for fathers to strengthen their personal support network,
- Offers two *Tip Sheets: Cooperative & Parallel Parenting and Interaction Do's & Don'ts*
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Be the Ex-Ample* to assist fathers in being clear about who they want to be for their child, and modeling that behavior,
- Gives an activity for fathers to examine *Being the Ex-Ample* in 12 different areas, such as frequency of communication, schedule changes, and flexibility. Fathers look at: (1) how things are now, (2) what they would like, and (3) actions *they* can take to move toward their ideal,
- Provides additional suggestions for co-parenting and finding support, with or without technology.

Goal 3 - Session 7-10: Communication and relationship building. These sessions focus on recognizing the barriers to communication and identifying and developing strategies that promote more effective communication. Content demonstrates and gives fathers an opportunity to apply specific communication techniques such as active listening, being sensitive to others feelings, using "I" statements, and being self-aware. Fathers learn specific ways to use communication skills for engaging in various aspects of their child's life, such as school and extracurricular activities.

Session 7: The YOU in Communication:

- Explains communication as one of the primary ways in which fathers have a relationship with their children,
- Provides a discussion of verbal and non-verbal communication,
- Gives information about the importance of open communication in creating safe space for their child to try new things, make mistakes and learn from successes and failures,
- Has a focus on self-awareness and intentionality in their communication with their child,
- Demonstrates how their internal dialogue impacts the way they process information, make interpretations, and assign meaning,
- Provides examples of how their internal dialogue translates into the actions they take with their child,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: The Voice in My Head Said.....* for fathers to pay attention to what they tune-in to in a conversation with their child. They consider what the voice in their head said, their interpretation, their actions, and what they would change,
- Gives additional suggestions for communicating with their child, with or without technology.

Session 8: Foundations of Relatedness:

- Addresses the role of building relatedness in their communication with their child,
- Normalizes that relatedness exists in all families, regardless of circumstance like divorce
- Defines relatedness as something that exists in the past, lives in the present, and will continue to exist in the future,
- Gives specific ways to build relatedness, such as sharing interests, memories rituals and traditions, and engaging in school and extracurricular activities,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: 100 Conversation Starters* across 10 topic areas including favorites, beliefs, feelings, school, friends, activities, your child, yourself, family, and the divorce or separations. These range from light-hearted to thought provoking or serious questions,
- Provides instructions for using the *Conversation Starters* to initiate interactions with their child,
- Includes a game called *Would You Rather* that gives fathers another way to use the *Conversation Starters*. For example, *Would You Rather* eat only your favorite dessert or listen to only your favorite song for the rest of your life,
- Gives additional suggestions for building relatedness, with or without technology.

Session 9: Listening:

- Explains active listening as a technique for nurturing their relationship with their child, reducing conflict, strengthening cooperation and promoting understanding,
- Gives fathers steps for being a good listener,
- Provides scenarios when listening is not as effective,

- Stresses the importance of *practicing* good listening and gives a specific format for engaging in active listening that includes paraphrasing, clarifying, responding, and observing body language,
- Gives an explanation of using *I Statements* in such a way that they express a feeling, not a thought or judgment about another person,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: The Empty Cup Exercise* for listening to their child in such a way that the child can “fill up” the cup with all his or her feelings (i.e., anger, fear, sadness, regret, frustration, etc.) about a given situation.
- Provides an activity with instructions for really listening for what the child is trying to communicate,
- Gives a list of coaching questions for initiating more conversation, gaining clarity, and brainstorming solutions. For example, *is there anything else? Would you like to share more? What might we try next?*,
- Gives additional suggestions for listening such as allowing silence and keeping their own feelings separate from their child’s expression.

Session 10: *Owning up & Cleaning Up – When Things Don’t Go As Planned:*

- Acknowledges conflict happens in all relationships. Having a loving relationship with their child is not about being a perfect parent,
- Distinguishes misunderstandings, arguments, and unresolved feelings,
- Provides guidelines for communicating under stress or conflict, such as leaving the past in the past and not taking everything personal,
- Helps fathers *own up* by taking full responsibility for their part in the interaction and avoiding blame,
- Gives fathers strategies to *clean up* negative interactions by saying sorry, being responsible for the impact, and taking new actions to make the situation better,
- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Scripts for Challenging Conversations* with two strategies for dealing with difficult conversations.
- An activity for applying the scripts to a recent argument with their child,
- Additional recommendations for dealing with conflict, with or without technology.

Goal 4 (session 11): *Maintaining a lasting relationship.* The final goal focuses on helping fathers develop and maintain a long-term relationship with their child.

Session 11: *Creating the Relationship You Want With Your Child Over Time*

- Provides a summary of the program,
- Addresses how long-term interactions and continued engagement impact the development of youth and adults,
- Offers strategies for viewing their relationship with their child as something that exists across time, without invalidating the past,
- Introduces the idea of using a *logbook* to record and share information about their child with their ex-partner,

- Includes a *Parenting Tool: Timeline* for linking the past, present, and future aspects of their family together,
- Provides an activity for documenting memories, current events, and future dreams for their relationship.
- Provides instructions and encourages fathers to create a *Google Presentation* of this timeline.
- Gives additional recommendations for maintaining their relationship, with or without technology.

Appendix I

100 Books on Divorce: For Fathers & Children of All Ages

FATHERS

Always Dad: Being a Great Father During and After Divorce

By: Paul Mandelstein Publisher: Nolo Publishing (2006)

Be a Great Dad

By: Kenneth Condrell & Linda Lee Small Publisher: St. Martin's Press (1998)

Beyond Blame: A New Way of Resolving Conflicts in Relationships

By: Jeffrey Kottler Publisher: Jossey-Bass (1994)

Co-Parenting After Divorce: How to Raise Happy, Healthy, Children in Two Home Families

By: Diana Shulm Publisher: Winnspeed Press (1997)

Divorce Happens to the Nicest Kids

By: Michael S. Prokop Publisher: Alegra House Publishers (1986)

Families Apart: Ten Keys to Successful Co-Parenting

By: Melinda Biau Publisher: Perigee (1995)

Fathers' Rights: Hard-Hitting & Fair Advice for Every Father Involved in a Custody Dispute

By: Jeffery Leving & Kenneth Dachman Publisher: Basic Books (1997)

Good Parenting Through Your Divorce: The Essential Guidebook to Helping Your Children Adjust and Thrive

By: Mary Ellen Hannibal Publisher: Marlow & company (2007)

Growing Up With Divorce: Helping Your Child Avoid Immediate and Later Emotional Problems

By: Neil Kalter Publisher: The Free Press (1989)

Helping Children Cope with divorce

By: Edward Teyber Publisher: Jossey Bass (2001)

Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce the Sandcastles Way

By: Gary Neuman Publisher: Random House (1999)

How to Survive the Loss of a Love

By: Peter McWilliams, Harold Bloomfield, and Melba Colgrove Publisher: Prelude Press (1993)

Joint Custody & Shared Parenting

By: Jay Folberg Publisher: Jossey Bass (1991)

Making Divorce Easier on Your Child: 50 Effective Ways to Help Children Adjust

Nicholas Long & Rex L. Forehand Publisher: McGraw Hill (2002)

Marriage, Divorce, and Children's Adjustment

By: Robert Emery Publisher: Sage Publications (1999)

Mom's House, Dad's House: Making Two Homes for Your Child

By: Isolina Ricci Publisher: Simon & Schuster Inc. (1997)

Step Families: Love, Marriage and Parenting in the First Decade

By: James H. Bray Publisher: Boadway Books (1998)

Still a Family: A Guide to Good Parenting Through Divorce

By: Lisa Rene Reynolds, L.R. Publisher: AMOCOM (2009)

Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce

By: Judith S. Wallerstein & Joan B. Kelly Publisher: Basic Books (1996)

The Divorce Book: A Practical and Compassionate Guide

By: Matthew McKay, Richard Goose, & Peter D. Rogers Publisher: New Harbinger Publications (1999)

The Divorced Dad Dilemma: A Father's Guide to Understanding Grieving and Growing Beyond the Losses of Divorce and Developing a Deeper, Ongoing Relationship

By: Gerald Mayer Publisher: Motive Publishing Company (1997)

The Divorced Dad's Survival Book: How to Stay Connected with Your Kids

By: David Knox Publisher: Da Capo Press (2000)

The Good Divorce: Keeping Your Family Together When Your Marriage Comes Apart

By: Constance Ahrons Publisher: Harper Collins (1994)

The 7 Fatal Mistakes Divorced and Separated Parents Make: Strategies for Raising Healthy Children of Divorce and Conflict

By: Shannon R. Rios Publisher: Life Threads Books (2009)

The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce

Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis & Sandra Blakeslee Publisher: Harper Collins (2003)

The Way of the Peaceful Warrior

By: Dan Millman Publisher: Publishers Group West (2000)

What About the Kids: Raising Your Children Before, During, and After Divorce

By: Judith S. Wallerstein & Sandra Blakeslee Publisher: Harper Collins (2003)

Wisdom for Separated Parents: Rearranging Around the Children to Keep Kinship Strong

By: Judy Osbourne Publisher: Praeger (2011)

PRESCHOOLERS**All Families Are Special**

By: Norma Simon Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (2003)

All Kinds of Families

By: Norma Simon Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (1976)

At Daddy's on Saturdays

By: Linda Walvoord Girard Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (1991)

Break-Up: Facing Up to Divorce (Facing Up)

By: Gianni Padoan Publisher: Child's Play International (November 1990)

Dinosaurs Divorce

By: Marc Brown & Laurene Krasny Brown Publisher: Little, Brown & Company (1988)

It's Not Your Fault, KoKo Bear

By: Vicky Lansky Publisher: Book Peddlers (1998)

Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce

By: Cornelia Maude Spelman Publisher: Albert Whitman Prairie Paperback (2001)

Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Anymore

By: Kathy Stinson Publisher: Annick Press (2007)

My Stick Family: Helping Children Cope with Divorce (Let's Talk)

By: Natalie June Publisher: Reilly New Horizon Press (2002)

Speaking of Divorce: How to Talk With Your Kids and Help Them Cope

By: Roberta Beyer & Kent Winchester Publisher: Free Spirit Publishing (2001)

Two Homes

By: Claire Masurel Publisher: Candlewick (2003)

Was it the Chocolate Pudding?

By: Sandra Levins Publisher: American Psychological Association (2005)

What to Tell The Kids About Your Divorce

By: Darlene Werburne Publisher: New Harbinger Publications (1999)

What to Tell Your Kids About Divorce

By: Kathy Ingels Helmond Publisher: Plenum Press (1992)

Children Five to Eight Years Old**Always My Dad**

By: Sharon D. Wyeth & Colon Raul Publisher: Dragonfly (1997)

Daddy's Getting Married (Let's Talk About It Books)

By: Jennifer Moore-Mallinos Publisher: Barron's Educational Series (2006)

Do I Have a Daddy? A Story About a Single-Parent Child

By: Jeanne Warren & Lindsay Morning Publisher: Glory Press (1999)

Fred Stays With Me!

By: Nancy Coffelt Publisher: Little, Brown & Company (2007)

Good-bye, Daddy!

By: Brigitte Weninger Publisher: North-South (1997)

I Don't Want to Talk About It

By: Jeanie Franz Ransom Publisher: Magination Press (2000)

I Live With Daddy

By: Judith Vigna Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (1997)

I Wish I Had My Father

By Norma Simon Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (1983)

It's Not Your Fault Koko Bear: A Read-Together Book for Parents and Young Children During Divorce

By: Vicki Lansky Publisher: Book Peddlers (1997)

Kids' Divorce Workbook: A Practical Guide That Helps Kids Understand Divorce Happens to the Nicest Kids

By: Michael S. Prokop Publisher: Alegria House Publishing (2000)

Let's Talk About It: Divorce (Let's Talk About It)

By: Fred Rogers Publisher: Putnam Juvenile (1998)

Let's Talk About Your Parents' Divorce (The Let's Talk Library)

By: Elizabeth Weitzman Publisher: PowerKids Press (1997)

Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce

By: Cornelia Spelman & Kathy Parkinson Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (1998)

Mommy and Me by Ourselves Again

By: Judith Vigna Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (1987)

My Family is Changing

By: Craig Ashley Hill & Louise Joy Hill Publisher: Trafford Publishing (2007)

My Family's Change: A First Look at Family Breakup

By: Pat Thomas Barron's Publisher: Educational Series (1999)

My Mom and Dad are Getting a Divorce

By: Florence Bienenfeld Publisher: 1st Books Library (2002)

On the Day His Daddy Left

By: Eric J. Adams & Kathleen Adams Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company (March 2003)

Sailing Through the Storm: A Child's Journey Through Divorce

By Edie Julik Publisher: Galde Press, Inc. (1994)

Standing on My Own Two Feet: A Child's Affirmation of Love in the Midst of Divorce By:

Tamara Schmitz Publisher: Price Stern Sloan (2008)

When Mom and Dad Divorce: An Elf-Help Book for Kids (Elf-Help Books for Kids)

By: Emily Menendez-Aponte Publisher: Abbey Press (1999)

When Mom and Dad Separate: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief from Divorce By:

Marge Heegaard Publisher: Woodland Press (1996)

When My Parents Forgot How to Be Friends (Let's Talk About It!)

By: Jennifer Moore-Mallinos Publisher: Barron's Educational Series (2005)

CHILDREN 9-12 YEARS OLD**Amber Brown Goes Fourth**

By: Paula Danziger & Tony Ross Publisher: Putnam Publishing Group (1995)

Blue Sky Butterfly

By: Jean Van Leeuwen Publisher: Dial Books for Young Readers (1996)

Confessions of a Divorced Kid

By: Steve Sullivan Publisher: Motivational Resources (1997)

Dawson's Creek: The Beginning of Everything Else

By: Jennifer Baker Publisher: Archway (1998)

Help! A Girl's Guide to Divorce and Stepfamilies

By: Nancy Holyoke Publisher: American Girl (1999)

How Do I Feel About: My Parents' Divorce

By: Julia Cole Publisher: Cooper Beach Books (1997)

Let's Talk About Your Parents' Divorce (The Let's Talk Library)

By: Elizabeth Weitzman Publisher: PowerKids Press (1997)

Like Jake and Me

By Mavis Jukes Publisher: Yearling (2005)

Meet Julie: An American Girl (American Girls Collection)

By: Megan McDonald Publisher: American Girl (2007)

My Mother Got Married and Other Disasters

By: Barbara Park Publisher: Yearling (1990)

My Parents Are Divorced Too: A Book for Kids by Kids

By Melanie Ford, Steven Ford, Annie Ford, & Jann Blackstone-Ford Publisher: Magination Press (2006)

Sister Split

By: Sally Warner Publisher: American Girl Book Pleasant Company (2001)

The Case of the Scary Divorce

By: Carl Pickhardt & Jeff Fisher Publisher: Magination (1998)

The Divorce Workbook for Children: Help for Kids to Overcome Difficult Family Changes and Grow Up Happy

By: Lisa M. Schab Publisher: Harbinger Publications (2008)

The Bright Side: Surviving Your Parents Divorce

By: Max Sindell Publisher: HCI (2007)

What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce?: A Survival Guide for**Kids.**

By: Kent Winchester & Roberts Breyer Publisher: Free Spirit Publications, Inc. (2001)

Why Do Families Break Up?

By: Jane Bingham Publisher: Raintree Publishing (2005)

TEENS**Another Day**

By: Marilyn Sachs Publisher: Duttin Books (1997)

Dear Mom & Dad - What Kids of Divorce Really Want to Say...

By: Gillian Rothchild Publisher: Pocket Books (1999)

Don't Divorce Your Children - Children and their Parents Talk about Divorce

By: Jennifer Lewis Publisher: Contemporary Books (1999)

It's Not the End of the World

By: Judy Blume Publisher: Bradburry Press, Macmillan Publishing (1972)

Maya's Divided World

By: Gloria Velasquez Publisher: Pinata Books (1995)

Now What Do I Do? A Guide to Help Teenagers with Their Parents' Separation or**Divorce**

By: Lynn Cassella-Kapusinski Publisher: ACTA Publications (2006)

Split: A Graphic Reality Check for Teens Dealing With Divorce (FlipSwitch)

By: Marcus Brotherton Publisher: Multnomah Books (2006)

Split: Stories from a Generation Raised on Divorce

By: Ava Chin Publisher: McGraw Hill (2002)

Stepfamilies: How a New Family Works (Teen Issues)

By: Rachel Gaillard Smook Publisher: Enslow Publishers (2001)

Stepliving for Teens: Getting Along with Stepparents, Parents, and Siblings

By: Dr. Joel D. Block and Dr. Susan S. Bartell Publisher: Price Stern Sloan (2001)

Surviving Divorce: Teens Talk About What Hurts And What Helps

By: Trudi Strain Trueit Publisher: Franklin Watts Publisher (2007)

Teens & Divorce

By: Gail Stewart Publisher: Lucent Books (2000)

The Bright Side: Surviving Your Parents Divorce

By: Max Sindell Publisher: Health Communications, Inc. (2007)

The Divorce Helpbook for Teens

By: Cynthia MacGregor Publisher: Impact Publishers (2004)

The Divorce Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Beyond the Breakup

By: Lisa M. Schab Publisher: Instant Help Books (2008)

The Love They Lost – Living With the Legacy of Our Parents' Divorce

By: Stephanie Staal Publisher: Dell Publishing (2001)

What Children Need to Know When Parents Get Divorced

By: William L. Coleman Publisher: Bethany House (1998)

When Your Parents Split Up: How to Keep Yourself Together

By: Lynn Rosenfield, Alys Swan-Jackson, & Joan Shapiro Publisher: Price Stern Sloan (1998)

Scoring:

- Add up the right hand column to determine whether you are in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd stage of your adjustment. Scores range from 9-27:
 Stage 1: Parting = 9-14. This stage involves accepting that your partnership is over and dealing with a range of feelings.
 Stage 2: The Crux =15-21. This stage marks the movement from initial acceptance to facing realities, managing feelings, and dealing with many changes.
 Stage 3: Reinvention = 22-27. This stage involves accepting the changes that have taken place and reinventing your life.
- Reflect on your score. While the goal is to reach Stage 3 - Reinvention, you have to start by accepting where you are in the process. Adjustment is different for everyone and takes the time that it takes.
- Use the material in weeks 2-4 to help you understand each stage and move toward Stage 3.

Appendix K

Parenting Style Survey

What is My Parenting Style?

On a scale of 1-5, rate yourself on each of the items below (1 = Never and 5 = Always).

Authoritative

No.	Statement	Score
1	I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs:	_____
2	I take my child's wishes into consideration before I ask him/her to do something:	_____
3	I explain to my child how I feel about his/her good/bad behavior:	_____
4	I encourage my child to talk about his/her feelings and problems:	_____
5	I encourage my child to freely "speak his/her mind", even if he/she disagrees with me:	_____
6	I explain the reasons behind my expectations:	_____
7	I provide comfort and understanding when my child is upset:	_____
8	I compliment my child:	_____
9	I consider my child's preferences when I make plans (weekends & holidays)	_____
10	I respect my child's opinion and encourage him/her to express them:	_____
11	I treat my child as an equal member of the family:	_____
12	I provide my child reasons for the expectations I have for him/her:	_____
13	I have warm and intimate times together with my child:	_____

Authoritarian

No.	Statement	Score
1	When my child asks me why he/she has to do something I tell him/her it is because I said so, I am your parent, or because this is what I want:	_____
2	I punish my child by taking privileges away from him/her (e.g., TV, games, hanging out with friends):	_____
3	I yell when I disapprove of my child's behavior:	_____
4	I explode in anger towards my child:	_____
5	I spank my child when I don't like what he/she does or says:	_____
6	I use criticism to make my child improve his/her behavior:	_____
7	I use threats as a form of punishment with little or no justification:	_____
8	I punish my child by withholding emotional expressions (e.g. kisses and cuddles):	_____
9	I openly criticize my child when his/her behavior does not meet my expectations:	_____

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 10 | I find myself struggling to try to change how my child thinks or feels about things: | _____ |
| 11 | I feel the need to point out my child's past behavioral problems to make sure he/she will not do them again: | _____ |
| 12 | I remind my child that I am his/her parent: | _____ |
| 13 | I remind my child of all the things I am doing and I have done for him/her: | _____ |

Permissive

No.	Statement	Score
1	I find it difficult to discipline my child:	_____
2	I give into my child when he/she causes a commotion about something:	_____
3	I spoil my child:	_____
4	I ignore my child's bad behavior:	_____

Now It's Your Turn:

Activity

Complete the Parenting Style Survey. At the end of each section, add up the scores and divide it by the number of questions in that section. This is your total score for each category, and the score you used to rank your preferred style.

Rank the parenting styles from your highest to lowest score on the lines below:

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------------|
| 1) | _____ | Score _____ |
| 2) | _____ | Score _____ |
| 3) | _____ | Score _____ |

Appendix L

End of Session Surveys

Please Enter Your Survey ID. This is made up of your 5-digit zip code, followed by your date of birth. (For example 8022802121970)

What week/session did you just complete?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12

1. What did you like most about this session?

2. When you think about what you gained from this session, how would you respond to the following statements?

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
I am satisfied with the material presented in the program this week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I gained new information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned new strategies for interacting with my child.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I plan to use what I have learned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think what I learned will help me adjust and parent after divorce or separation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. How might this session be improved?

4. Over the last week, how many times have you interacted with your child in the following ways?

	Never	1-2 Times a Week	3-4 Times a Week	5-6 Times a Week	Daily
Talked on the phone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sent a text message on a phone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mailed a card, letter, or postcard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attended an activity or event	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Had a face-to-face visit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Interactions BESIDES the computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. How many times over the last week did you interact with your child using a computer in the following ways?

	Never	1-2 Times a week	3-4 Times a Week	5-6 Times a Week	Daily
Email	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instant Message/Chat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Video Chat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whiteboard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Journal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chat With Another Father in the Program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use the Discussion Forum	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix M

Additional Program Marketing Material

Apart Not Broken

Learn, Connect, & Create!

Committed to Happy & Healthy Families,
Regardless of Family Structure



A FREE, online, multi-media program designed to help dads adjust and parent after divorce or separation

This Program Has...

- ◆ Videos – Hear Dads’ Real Life Experiences
- ◆ Information: Access Accurate & Concise Information
- ◆ Discussion Forum – Connect and Share
- ◆ Online Tools – Use Creative Strategies to Communicate & Stay Connected
- ◆ Activities - Engage in Activities Independently or with Your Child
- ◆ Resources – Build Your Own Parenting Tool Box!

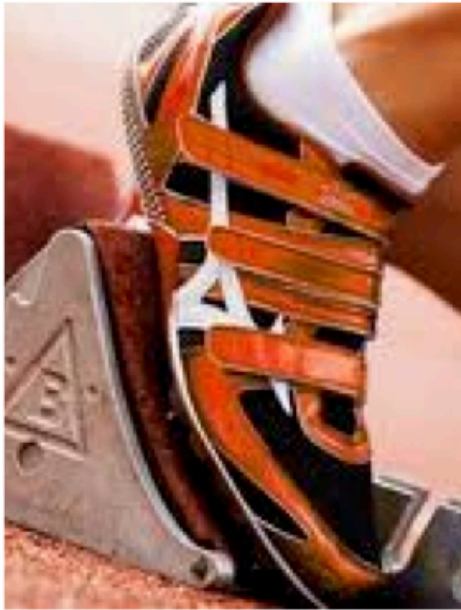


This Program Is...

- ◆ FREE – No Cost
- ◆ Confidential – Online & Private
- ◆ Efficient – 12 self-paced sessions of about 30 minutes each
- ◆ Flexible – Choose when, where and how long you spend on each session
- ◆ Convenient – Available 24-7 anywhere with an Internet Connection
- ◆ Ongoing – Starts when you register!

Organization of the Program

Each session is broken into three sections:



What You Can Expect: *On Your Mark!*

This section will address how things are different after separation or divorce.

What It Means: *Get Set!*

This section will highlight the implications of those changes.

What You Can Do About It: *Go!*

This section will help you take action. This will include a new parenting tool, activity, option for using technology, and some additional considerations and suggestions.

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- 1 – Getting Started: Introduction and Opening Activity:
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- 5 – Active Parenting: Providing, Disciplining, & Teaching
- 6 – Expressive Parenting: Supporting, Caretaking, & Protecting
- 7 – Co-Parenting
- 8 – The YOU in Communication
- 9 – Foundations of Relatedness
- 10 – Listening
- 11 – Owning Up & Cleaning Up When Things Don't Go As Planned
- 12 – Creating the Relationship You Want with Your Child Over Time

Apart, Not Broken
Learn, Connect, & Create

Welcome!

WELCOME TO APART NOT BROKEN: LEARN, CONNECT, & CREATE!

My home > My courses > anbo413 Turn editing on

Session 1: Welcome to the Program!

First, I would like to thank you for completing the surveys and for committing to this program. My goal that you find it worth your time and energy, and that you leave the program feeling empowered in your life and in your parenting.

If you are viewing this program then you are a father and have either separated from your partner, experienced a divorce, or you have separated with the intention of staying separated or getting a divorce. Throughout the program, we use the terms separated or divorced interchangeably to cover all possible scenarios.

We understand that the end of your partnership is more than a formality; it is an emotional experience that involves letting go of the life you may have had with your partner and building a new life as an individual. Our hope is that this program will help you accept and deal powerfully with the changes associated with separation and divorce. This will allow you to build on your existing strengths, so that you can be the dad you want to be for your child. Bringing your best self to the program will help you identify how the information presented fits with your individual strengths, personal needs, and family values during this important transition.

Thank you again for taking the time to use this program,

Shelly D. Mahon, Program Director
Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Proceed To The Introduction

News forum

Links to Online Tools

- Google+ Tutorial on Google+
- OPEN SKYPE
Skype Tutorial on Skype
- FORUM (Q & A)
[Ask a Question or Start a Discussion](#)
- CHAT WITH OTHERS
[Chat with Participants](#)
- OPEN JOURNAL
[Open Your Journal](#)
- LATEST NEWS
[Add a new topic...](#)
(No news has been posted yet)
- UPCOMING EVENTS

Current & Concise Info

climber gets stuck and has to determine the best route forward, regardless of how challenging it seems. You may be feeling like you have hit a crux. If this is the case, you probably view your relationship with your ex-partner as eternally different and are trying to determine the best route forward. You may be past this stage, but can remember feeling like you hit rock bottom. Remember when you are stuck, taking action will help you move forward. Throughout this program, you can use the *Feeling Wheel* from the previous week to help you identify your feeling, look for the positive opposite, and determine a new action that helps you move past it. You can even share this new action with your child.

This stage is full of *realities*. It is during this stage that you begin to realize your relationship with your partner may not have been as happy and fulfilling as you originally thought. Some men say that prior to separation, they felt resigned to the idea that "all relationships are like this and I just have to stick it out." Seeing the flaw in this type of thinking may be particularly difficult. Also, you may have a hard time with self-awareness and self-expression. If this is the case, you may find it challenging to connect with your child in the midst of trying to understand and deal with your own feelings. You may even find yourself pulling away from your child, and other aspects of your life, when you do not feel understood and supported. This is a common strategy when managing and coping with the emotional pain of separation. Many fathers rely on shared activities as a way of relating, and staying connected to their children.

This is also a time when you realize you have to manage all the tasks that you shared during your partnership. When your child is with you, you have to be both "mom" and "dad". Because the separation leaves you feeling responsible for *everything*, you may experience *role overload* and feelings of intense stress as you try to establish a separate household. When your child is not with you, you have to take care of all the domestic tasks such as laundry, cleaning, and cooking. It may be the first time that you have had to do some of these things. This can be especially stressful when it is coupled with working and reestablishing your life. If you have little to no access to your child, you are left trying to find ways to stay connected.

The Crux - What it Means: Get Set!

Click the hand to move on to the next section

Videos

It is common for men to revisit events of the past as they understand and absorb what has happened. As a result, you may be working on continued acceptance of your actions during the relationship and after it ended. It is likely that you have identified some things that you want for your future. While you may continue to feel a degree of sadness or regret for the things you had hoped for in your relationship, this stage introduces opportunities to create possibilities for yourself and your future. This involves reevaluating how you spend your time to how you interact with your child, and making adjustments that are more consistent with the future you really want.



Videos of Real Life Experiences



Reinvention - What it Means: Get Set!

Parenting Tools & Activities

The Crux - What You Can Do About It: Go!

My profile settings

New Parenting Tool: Personal Goals Worksheet

You! Use the worksheet to help you identify a goal and make plans to achieve it. This goal can be anything that is important to you, personally or in your relationship with your child. You can reuse this worksheet to think through as many goals as you would like. There are more specific directions and an example in the activity section.

Goals Worksheet PDF

Your Turn!

Identify at least one area you would like to work on.
Describe the goal. For example: You may want to work out three days a week, read more, learn an instrument, or develop new friendships.
Identify at least three actions you could take to achieve your goal. For example, if your goal is to develop new friendships, you may choose to (1) contact someone you have always wanted to know better, (2) ask that person to have coffee, play basketball, or go to dinner, (3) make a plan to get together again in two weeks.
Identify potential resources. For example, you may identify friends by thinking about people you know from the gym, neighborhood, spiritual group, or your place of employment.
Identify potential obstacles that could get in the way. For example, you may determine that your work schedule gives you very little free time.
Identify how to overcome those obstacles. For example, you may talk to your boss about changing your work schedule so you have more free time on the weekend.
Identify someone who could help you meet this goal. For example, you may ask a co-worker to trade a shift with you so that you can attend a basketball game with a friend.

Each Session Has a New Parenting Tool to Add to Your Toolbox

And an Activity to Take Action!

Program Objectives

- ◆ Increase Parental Involvement
- ◆ Build Effective Parenting Skills
- ◆ Strengthen Communication
- ◆ Build Confidence
- ◆ Strengthen Parental Satisfaction
- ◆ Enhance Emotional Closeness



Evaluation

This Program will be evaluated through the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

- ◆ Pre-post surveys
- ◆ 5-Question Feedback Form at the end of each session
- ◆ Web Analytics

**A Free, Online Multimedia Program
for Divorced Dads**



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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

For More Information

Apart Not Broken: Learn Connect, & Create!

www.divorceddadinstitute.com

www.divorceddadinstitute.com/newsletter

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*A father is the best father he knows
how to be....*

Appendix N

Demographic Characteristics of Interviewed Fathers

Demographic Characteristics of Interviewed Fathers (n=8).

	N	Percentage
Age		
30-39	1	12.5%
40-49	6	75%
50-59	1	12.5%
Ethnicity		
White	7	87.5%
African American	1	12.5%
Education		
2 Year Vocational	1	12.5%
4 Year Degree	3	37.5%
Some Graduate	2	25%
Graduate/Professional	2	25%
Annual Household		
\$25,000 – \$49,999	2	25%
\$50,000 – \$74,999	3	37.5%
\$125,000 – \$149,999	1	12.5%
\$150,000 – \$200,000	2	25%