

# C.S. Lewis & Co. Publicists

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Dear Editor/Producer,

Everyone has an innate need to know who he or she is and where he or she came from. For a young boy, this search usually begins with Dad. When there is no father in the house, it makes the search harder, but not impossible.

Human behavior expert **BYRON RICKS, MA**, grew up without knowing his father. What he learned from this experience, as well as from observing and talking to other fatherless men, is that fatherless boys (and girls) experience an emotional, psychological, and financial disconnect in their lives. As a result, fatherless boys struggle to connect the dots between sex, pregnancy, child rearing, and their responsibility to provide support for their children. They also struggle with issues of self-worth, leadership, and trust.

In his book, *Searching for Dad: Nine Side Effects of Growing Up Fatherless and How to Overcome Them* (Brown Books, 2008), Ricks transforms the moving lessons from his own life into a road map to guide other men who grew up without fathers, fathers looking to reconnect with sons, mothers who are raising fatherless boys, and young men who are presently fatherless.

Nationally known for his motivational trainings at companies such as Samsung, Fannie Mae, Pitney Bowes, and Simon Property Group, Ricks blends riveting stories from his own youth growing up on the West Side of Chicago with insights from his current work and life to bring a unique message of healing and hope to fatherless boys, men, and their families.

Ricks is a charismatic, lively speaker who can bring original, inspiring insights about the importance of fathering to parent, health, business, and Christian audiences.

Please let me know if I can arrange a time for you to interview the author.

Sincerely,

Cathy Lewis

# Filling the Void Left by Absent Fathers

**New book highlights the side effects of growing up fatherless—and how men can learn to overcome them.**

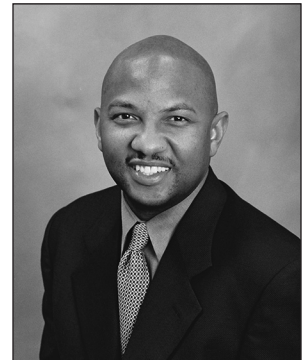
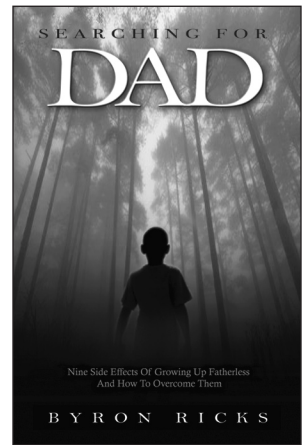
Bring up the topic of growing up fatherless, and men who are normally reserved will begin to talk—a lot. That's because about 1 in 4 boys grew up with a single mother. And nearly half of all men were children of a divorce—where the father may or may not have been present.

Growing up without a father is the subject of a new book by **BYRON RICKS, MA**, a professional speaker and facilitator who is passionate about helping men understand the consequences of having or being an absent father. In his new book, *Searching for Dad* (Brown Books, 2008), Ricks describes his personal experiences and the challenges he faced growing up fatherless. From lessons learned, he offers practical advice on how to identify issues associated with fatherlessness and how to overcome them.

Readers learn:

- Nine side effects of growing up fatherless
- The unique elements of male bonding—and why boys need it
- The far-reaching effects of Angry Mama dramas
- Signs of “father alienation” behavior in boys and men
- How to cope with anger at your father—and get to forgiveness
- The impact of an absent father on a young man's earning power, career, and money management
- How to rebuild self-respect, self-confidence, and a strong sense of identity
- How to have a healthy, joyful, and responsible view of sex if you grew up fatherless

Ricks maintains that the most powerful distinction between being a mature man and a childish male is that men do the right thing by their children. They claim their children and take care of them to the best of their abilities, even in the face of direct opposition. His own arduous but ultimately successful journey from boyhood to manhood provides a model not only for fatherless sons, but also for absentee fathers and single mothers who are trying to do what is best for their sons.



Probably the cruelest side effect of growing up fatherless is that fatherless boys don't value themselves. A fatherless boy's thinking goes something like this: No one abandons anything of real value, so therefore I have no real value. If a young boy doesn't value himself, how can he be expected to understand the contributions he can make in his own life and to those around him?

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# About the Author

**BYRON RICKS, MA**, is an expert in human behavior, and a certified corporate trainer, facilitator, and professional speaker who specializes in helping people increase their levels of self-understanding and workplace performance. He is also the author of a new book, *Searching for Dad* (Brown Books, 2008).

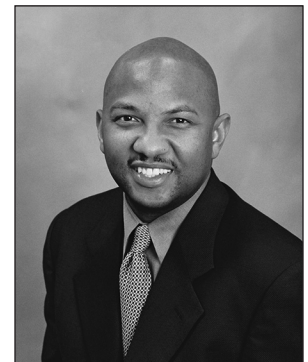
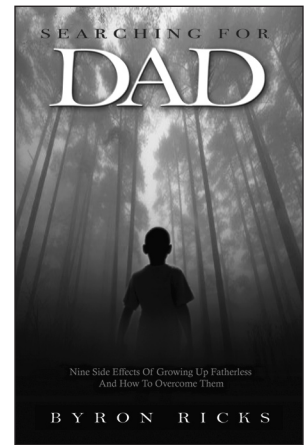
Ricks grew up on the mean streets of West Side Chicago without a father, but with many extended family members and adults in his life—including a strong mother and a range of wonderfully eccentric uncles, aunts, and kindly neighbors. By sharing his stories about the challenges he faced as a fatherless child, the lessons he learned, and the man he has become, Ricks hopes to help fatherless young men become well-rounded adults, inspire absentee fathers to take responsibility for their actions, and encourage single mothers to do what is best for their sons.

President of Byron Ricks Seminars Group located in Plano, Texas, Ricks conducts results-oriented seminars on Critical Thinking, Diversity, Interpersonal Communication Skills, Creating a Positive Work Environment, Team Leadership, and a variety of subjects tailored for professional groups and corporations. Recent clients include Samsung, Pitney Bowes, IRS, Fannie Mae, RTI International, Texas Lottery Commission, AOL Time Warner, FDIC, Administrative Professionals Conference, and Simon Property Group.

His professional background includes positions as public affairs manager for the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and director of administrative services for National University in Irvine, California. He has managed, supervised, and implemented performance management standards; recruited, interviewed and hired staff; and designed and implemented workshops for organizational development.

Ricks is a member of the American Society for Training & Development and an adjunct instructor for the American Management Association and Ziglar Training Systems.

He has served on numerous boards, including First of America Bank Small Business Development Committee, the Board of the Coalition for Minority Business Development, Youth Works Board of Directors, Women & Work Conference Board, Eli Lilly MBD Coordinators, and Career Options Advisory Council.



Being a male is not the same as being a man. We are male by birth. We are men by choice. Often the only difference between the two is discipline. Men act with reason and forethought. Males act on instinct, setting aside intellect and letting desire, urges, and impulses lead them through life.

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# Segment Ideas / Interview Topics

## How to Play Catch with Your Son

*Learn the far-reaching importance of father-son bonding.*

Ask any man to recall a formative moment with his dad, and invariably he will recall the time his dad played catch. Tossing a ball is one of the most effortless yet powerful bonding activities between a father and son. Learn:

- How simple male bonding activities teach boys about identity, trust, belonging, love, respect, and leadership
- Other unique ways fathers and sons bond
- The positive role of forceful and combative interactions in father/son relationships
- How male bonding helps boys become men
- How to recognize and fill the void left by an absent dad

## How “Angry Mama Dramas” Turn Kids into Pawns

*Why excluding dads from kids’ lives is a harmful, selfish act.*

Children pay a heavy price for the behaviors of angry mothers. Ricks’ mother worked hard to raise her son single-handedly—but she never forgave his father for leaving, and kept the two of them apart throughout his childhood. Such actions driven by anger can permanently scar boys. He discusses:

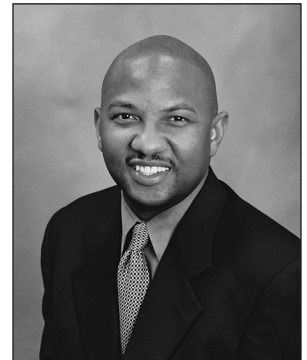
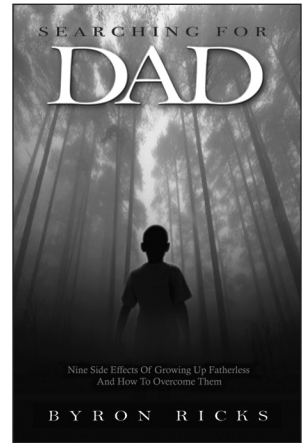
- Top mistakes angry moms make with their sons
- How to talk to a female friend or relative who believes excluding the father is in the child’s best interests
- Advice and tips for dads seeking a way back into their kids’ lives
- For dads: why some contact with your son is better than none

## Sexuality and Growing Up Fatherless

*How father involvement helps boys develop healthy views of sex.*

Fathers play an important and complicated role in how sons view sex, love, commitment, responsibility, and many other aspects related to intimacy. Ricks explains:

- The unspoken message boys get from a father who abandons his mate and offspring
- Who should talk to boys about girls, wet dreams, contraceptives, pregnancy, and other key topics



### Tips for Dads

Spending time with your children shows them they are important. Here are other small acts that yield big results:

- Hug your child.
- Tell him you love him.
- Never use “Dad time” as a reward—e.g., for good grades or better behavior.

—MORE—

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## **Lack of Belonging—and Its Ramifications in the Workplace**

*How growing up fatherless can affect workplace relationships and career choices.*

Boys who grow up without an involved father are more likely to join street gangs. According to Ricks, that's because they lack a sense of belonging—and look for social acceptance wherever they can find it. But what behavioral experts call “low inclusion”—the feeling of not belonging—can also have long-lasting effects later in life, especially in the workplace. Learn:

- How to recognize low inclusion traits in yourself
- How low inclusion affects leadership skills
- The key role belonging plays in self-presentation—before bosses, and with colleagues and clients
- How fatherless boys are often loners—and suffer for that in workplace settings that require teamwork
- How to improve workplace interactions and make career choices consistent with your natural interpersonal style

## **Turning Boys into Productive Men**

*Learn how to encourage your boy's best instincts.*

When our instincts are properly encouraged, they help us become more productive social beings; however, some of our natural instincts require a measure of control to keep them from becoming self-destructive. Ricks explores:

- The natural longing for a father's praise
- How being part of a family encourages young boys to contribute to their community
- How fatherless boys can learn skills that foster productivity
- How to help a boy with his anger
- How to help boys develop a perspective on love and sex

## **A Father's Role in Developing Character**

*Learn why dads need to be in the picture.*

When a father slips out of his son's life, he compromises his child's ability to trust, and in doing so makes it harder for that boy to trust others in the future. Ricks explains other ways a father influences his son's character development. Discover:

- Six universal values of character that guide our life choices
- Why fatherless boys often mistake respect with being feared
- How the fathers' treatment of the mother and children models citizenship
- How a father's participation gives boys a sense of balance
- How to nurture respect and responsibility
- How to teach the difference between being a male and being a man

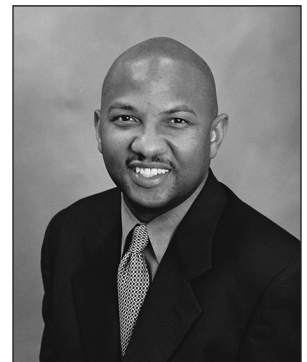
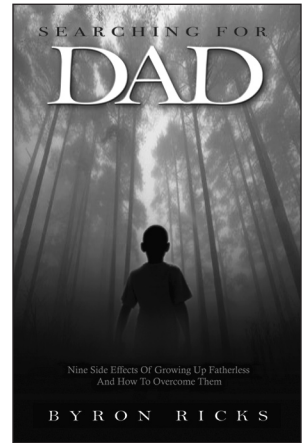
## **3 Steps to Self-Respect**

Fatherless men are just as prone to low self-regard as fatherless boys. Here are 3 ways to improve it:

- **Self-concept:** Look in the mirror and see a successful man. Resetting your self-image changes your behavior and how others behave toward you.
- **Self-esteem:** Remind yourself you can choose how you respond to events, how you view others, and how you see yourself.
- **Self-talk:** Creating positive perceptions leads to positive realities. Begin today to speak to yourself in a way that results in positive outcomes. You are worthy. You are a conqueror. You can accomplish your goals.

# Nine Side Effects of Growing Up Fatherless

1. **A crisis of identity.** Boys look to fathers in their search for self. Without a father to observe and emulate, boys have a harder time defining who they are and want to be.
2. **Silent anger.** Anger in its many shades is one of the deep-rooted side effects of growing up fatherless, and it is often directed at the wrong people. When anger gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems at work, in personal relationships, and in the overall quality of our lives.
3. **A need to belong.** Studies show that boys without fathers are more likely to join gangs. They yearn to be socially accepted, and this sometimes takes them down the wrong path.
4. **Underestimating one's own value.** Boys without fathers are more likely to grow up poor. This can have a life-long impact on their future education and career. Beyond that, however, fatherless boys often feel as if they are not worthy and have no real value.
5. **Misunderstanding character.** Without a father to model character, boys choose character traits from the world around them—e.g., from celebrities, pro athletes, popular musicians, or neighborhood contacts.
6. **Lack of respect.** A father who does not show up for his boy epitomizes disrespect. That is what he teaches the boy. From fathers, boys need to learn respectful behaviors, including listening, trust, tolerance, politeness, and understanding limits.
7. **The void.** Boys without fathers feel incomplete. Consciously or not, boys will try to fill the void with sex, pornography, violence, drugs, alcohol, and other behaviors that offer short-term pleasures.
8. **A lopsided view of sex.** Beyond having a vague understanding of the difference between sex and love, boys without fathers have many unanswered questions about sex. Fathers are typically the ones to give practical advice about girls, sex, wet dreams, contraceptives, pregnancy, and other topics left to equally ignorant friends or someone's older brother.
9. **Not enough love.** Boys without fathers often view love as vulnerability, and they have a difficult time trusting someone with their heart.



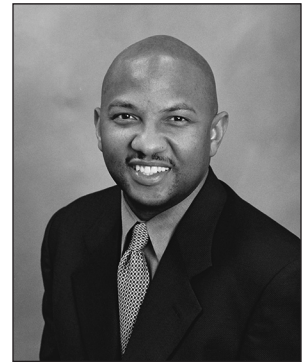
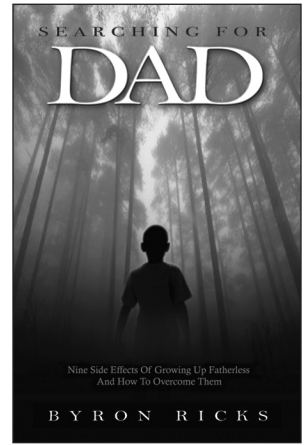
## 2 Skills to Deal with Anger

- **Awareness:** Note how you're feeling when you find yourself getting angry—your heart beats faster, palms sweat, eyes blink, breathing hastens. Note your self-talk—negative phrases you keep repeating.
- **Redirection:** Turn your anger into something else. It may be as simple as telling a close friend about a situation that upset you.

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# Suggested Interview Questions

1. What motivated you to write a book about your experiences growing up fatherless?
2. How did religion influence your life as a boy and now as a man?
3. How can fathers begin to reconnect with sons, even if they are now men?
4. What role does forgiveness play for abandoned sons?
5. What role does forgiveness play for absentee fathers?
6. How did the people in your life help or hinder your search for Dad?
7. What do you see as the difference between being a male and being a man?
8. How is faith related to trust and belief, and what is their importance?
9. Why do fatherless men need to learn that they “can’t do it alone”?
10. How can boys whose trust was violated by their fathers as children learn to regain trust?
11. How can a boy who has grown up without a male role model develop self-respect?
12. How do angry mothers unwittingly turn their children into pawns?
13. How can fathers recognize when they are using their children to punish their mothers?
14. Why is sex a more complicated struggle for fatherless boys than boys in general?
15. What do you mean when you say, “anger causes our hearts to hijack our minds”?
16. How can we learn to control anger?
17. What part does the concept of unconditional love play in personal healing?
18. What is the relationship between respect and violence?
19. How can men who long for unrequited fatherly love turn this need into something constructive?



These few words—“growing up fatherless”—have the odd and mysterious effect of getting men talking. For men, it is a subject that lowers our natural male reluctance to give away anything about ourselves. Prior to writing the book, I’d never had men open up so freely about something so personal.

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