Background
As more preterm-born children receive life-saving care and survive, more parents live through the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit experience. Previous research points out the risk for stress disorders stemmed from stress caused by the initial hospitalisation of the child. There has been a large body of research examining the experiences of mothers of preterm-born children, while studies focused exclusively on fathers are sparse, although increasing. Few studies focus on the years after the child’s birth.

Results
The fathers’ lived experience was described as a process towards a reorganisation in life and they described a journey from past to present time. The first time at home with the child was hard and they had difficulties handling the situation. After three years the fathers seemed to have lived through the experience of having a preterm-born child and had adapted to living an ordinary family life. They were now able to believe in a future for the family as a whole. Three themes were identified: Struggled to endure; Experiencing empowerment and Building a secure base.

Conclusions
The findings reveal that fathers undergo a fragile process in the first years after their very preterm child is born. An increased understanding of their experiences can guide professionals to include fathers’ specific needs in the care during and after the hospitalization to a greater extent.

Aim
To illuminate fathers’ lived experience of the three years since their very preterm child was born.

Method
This was the second part of a longitudinal study following fathers of very preterm born children with qualitative interviews. Open interviews with 8 Swedish speaking fathers were performed and analysed using a hermeneutic phenomenological method.

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