

DAUGHTERS!

A guide for fathers

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What you won't find in this book

Anything about mothers and sons, the latest football scores, why Switzerland is never in the news, the confessions of a mountaineer, an eye witness report from that Smurf who wears glasses, the reason why women nag.

AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR a girl

After two sons, I got a daughter on the 10th of October 2005. I thought it would be about the same as having a son. And naturally that was largely true. Babies are babies. They poo, pee, drink, sleep and cry. With a baby girl, you just have to learn to wipe their bums from front to back instead of from back to front. It takes a while to get used to this. And at first I thought that this would be the only difference during the early years. But soon mysteries began to pop up everywhere.

For example, there were the ecstatic reactions of grandmothers, aunts, female friends and the lady next door. It's no secret that women get a little strange and start making funny sounds whenever a newborn baby is nearby. But I got the impression that they were going crazier for our baby girl than they ever did for our boys. 'It's a girl! Hallelujah! The mighty female shall inherit the Earth!' No one said this out loud, but I could feel them thinking it.

The next shock came one morning when I opened the closet. My stack of shirts had been replaced by towers of girl's clothes. Half of the wardrobe was reserved for sweaters as big as napkins.



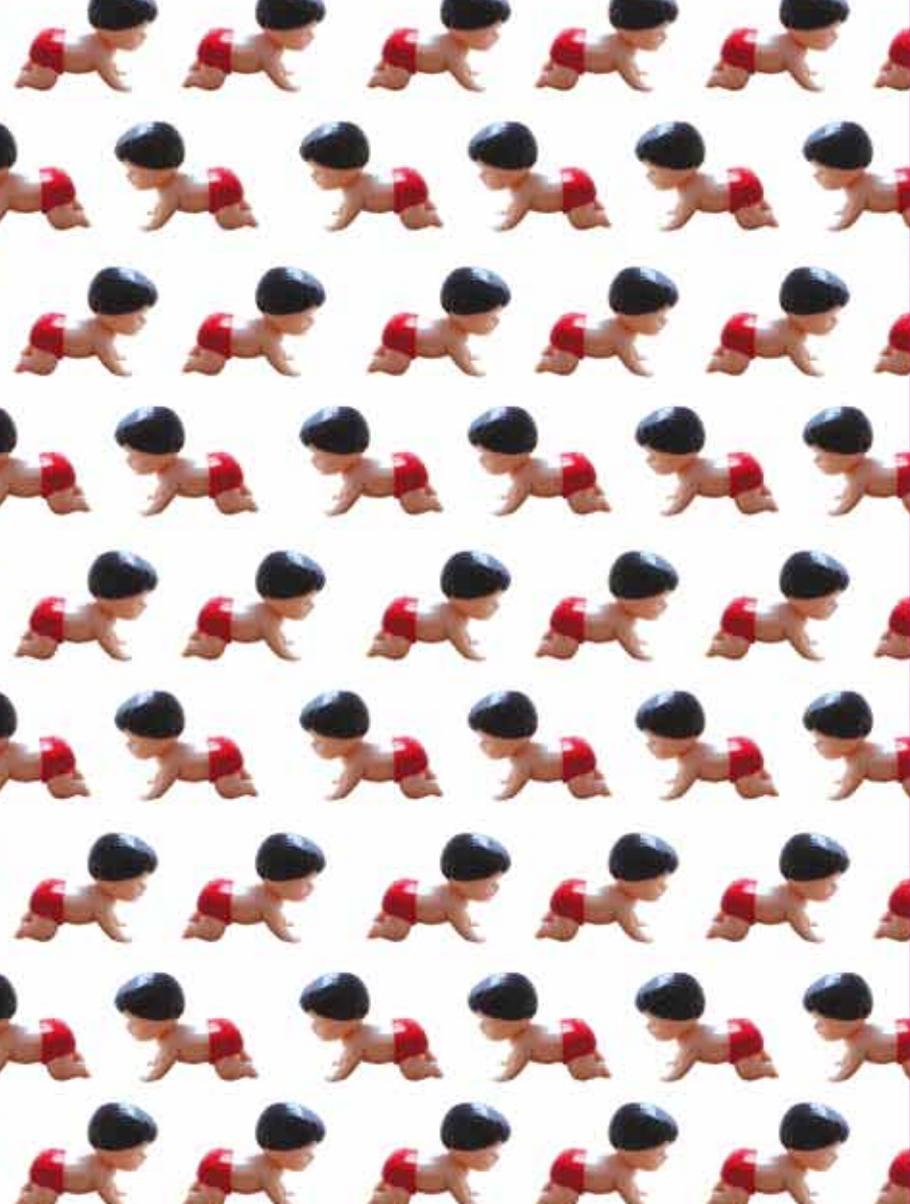


before with the boys, I could just reach blindly into a modest corner of clothes and just grab for a jumpsuit or some jogging pants. Now I was confronted with cubic meters of multicolored tights, tiny jean skirts, militaristic slacks and a whole range of funky tops. It looked like the walk-in-closet of **a midget supermodel**. To make things worse, everything seemed to come covered with tiny buttons which made the whole dressing process of the baby much longer. And to twist the knife in: it turned out that only certain color combinations were judged as acceptable. Every day another postal van would pull up to deliver another stack of girl clothes bought online. Or suddenly **the lady from three doors down** would drop by with two plastic bags full of baby clothes which she got from her second cousin's daughter-in-law.

With all these small observations came the big discovery: girls are actually quite different than boys. And it doesn't matter if they are six or 23. It begins at birth. Girls look different, laugh different and do different. **Enigmatic events** occur that happen too fast for a male brain to grasp. Before you know it, as a man you are lost in a **haze of femininity**. It's an arena where both your knowledge and feelings draw short. That's why I wrote this book to explain to fathers how girls are different than boys.

And that can be convenient. Because having a daughter means that you are now the most important male in the life of a young woman—a very challenging task.

Gerard Janssen



THE FATHER

DADDY can do IT ALL

It isn't easy being a father. A daughter needs a father who listens, compliments and shows empathy. When she is sad, a daughter doesn't want fast and easy solutions but rather someone who listens. But a daughter also wants a father who's a real man: fixing the car when the family is stranded along the road, winning at ping-pong against all opposition and removing spiders from the bathroom with his bare hands.

While there are already hundreds of books 'for Dummies', there is not yet a 'Fatherhood for Dummies'. From your daughter's perspective this is a logical state of affairs: it's impossible for her to imagine that her father is a dummy. From your perspective, this is less impossible to imagine. That's why you need to expand your skill set as quickly as possible.



FATHERS CAN

- Drive cars
- Draw pictures
- Do headstands
- Throw a ball real far
- Dig very deep holes
- Climb trees
- Run very fast
- Be a horse
- Be a tree
- Fix appliances
- Repair tires
- Set up a tent
- Do basic arithmetic
- Play chess
- Drink beer
- Watch football
- Read the paper
- Carve a turkey
- Snore
- Go to the office
- Smoke crack
- BBQ
- Shave his head

DAD AT WORK

Are you often away from home? No worries.

As long as you actually know what you are doing out there in the world, you can pretty much weasel yourself out of most situations.

Why a busy weekend dad is right:

Humans are hunters and gatherers. In the past men went into the woods to go after game, and women stayed at home to pea the pods. And actually very little has changed. Only now men go to an office and women buy groceries and prepare the food. We are still very close to the culture of our ancestors—a zone where most people still feel the most comfortable. Did you know that a man, who takes care of the children while their woman earns the money, is generally less happy and more often sick than those who are the breadwinners?

HOUSE DAD

**Not interested in
hunting? And the same
goes with cleaning?
No worries: it's normal!**

Why a house dad is right:

Of course I haven't made any money today. I also didn't bother cleaning the house. I was too busy playing with my daughter because it's very important that we build up a bond. A daughter who has a good bond with her father is more likely to be happy, have a better job, sexually maturing later, and not become a teen pregnancy statistic.





Stay-at-home dads are vegetarians. House husbands are wimps. Real men go and hunt big, hairy mastodons. Such thoughts represent the view of the deep, testosterone voice that dwells in many male brains. But does this voice have a point?

HOUSE HUSBANDS ARE vegetarians

Psychologist Vincent Duindam is a man who knows everything about house husbands. He is also the father of two daughters. For the last 15 years he's followed a group of 182 house husbands. The resulting research is known the world over.

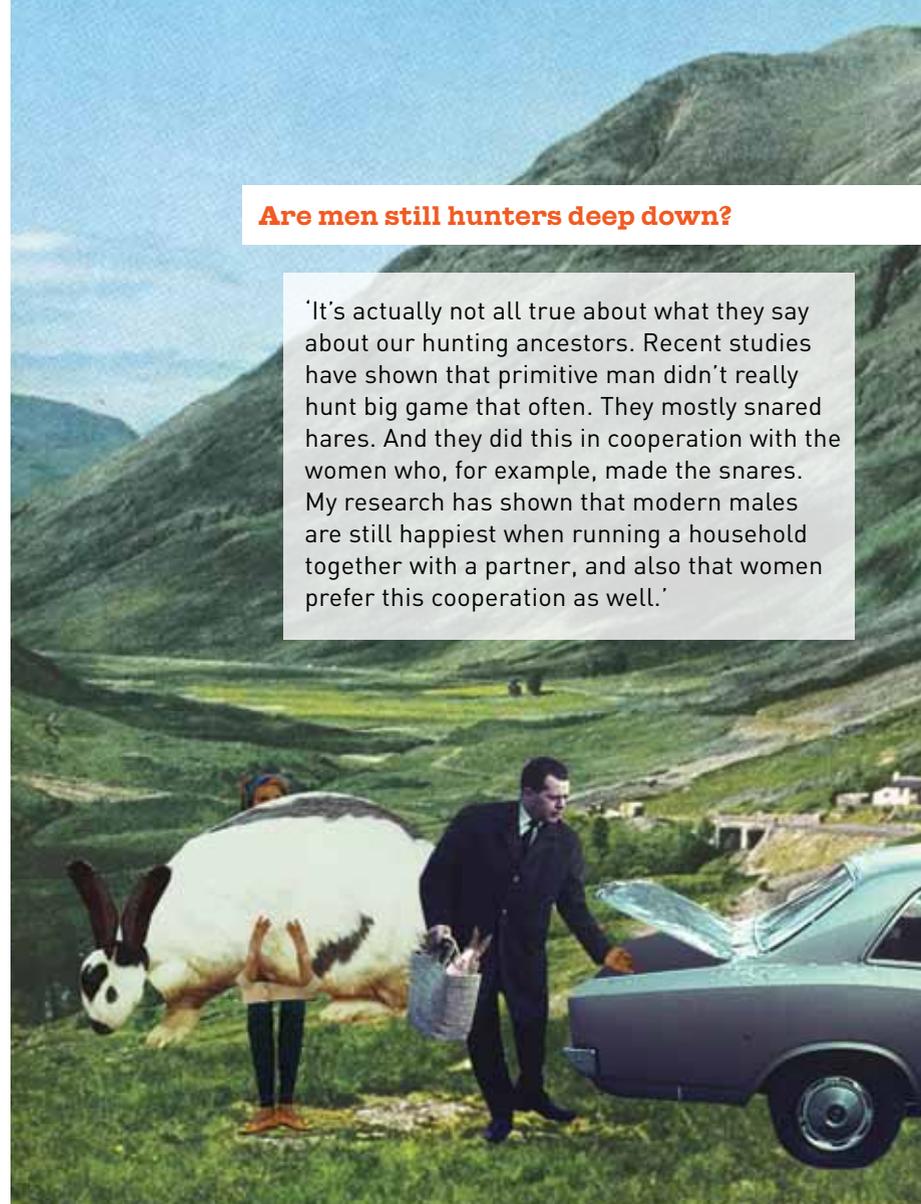


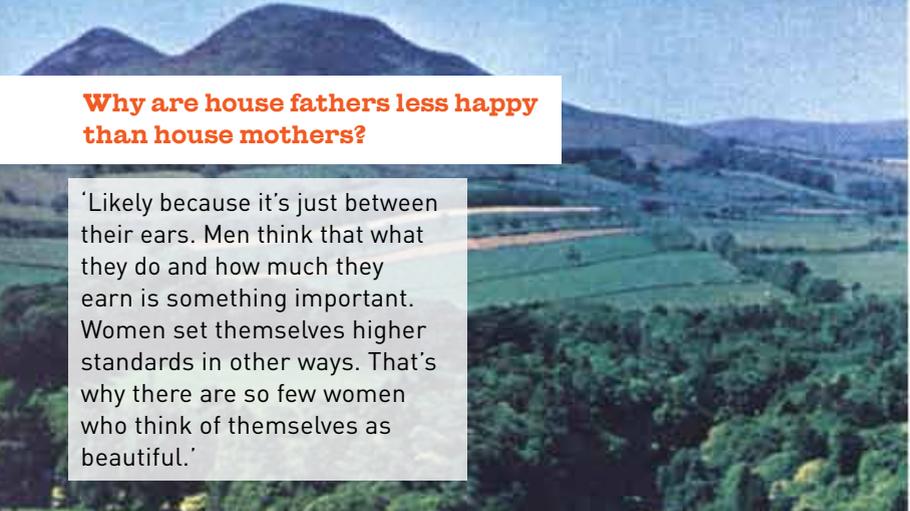
Is it best to be a busy, hard-working father? Are men happiest when they work hard all day and then come home at night with the bacon.

‘No, not really. Men who take a step back in their career—for example, by taking an extra day off every week—are often happier and maintain more stable relationships than hard-working fathers. It is however true that real house fathers, who have female partners who make most of the money, are often less happy and more sick. So men should keep working on some level. My research shows that the average father is happiest if he works four days and is a caregiver for three days.’

Are men still hunters deep down?

‘It’s actually not all true about what they say about our hunting ancestors. Recent studies have shown that primitive man didn’t really hunt big game that often. They mostly snared hares. And they did this in cooperation with the women who, for example, made the snares. My research has shown that modern males are still happiest when running a household together with a partner, and also that women prefer this cooperation as well.’





Why are house fathers less happy than house mothers?

'Likely because it's just between their ears. Men think that what they do and how much they earn is something important. Women set themselves higher standards in other ways. That's why there are so few women who think of themselves as beautiful.'

Are daughters of caregiver fathers happier than those with dads who are not much at home?

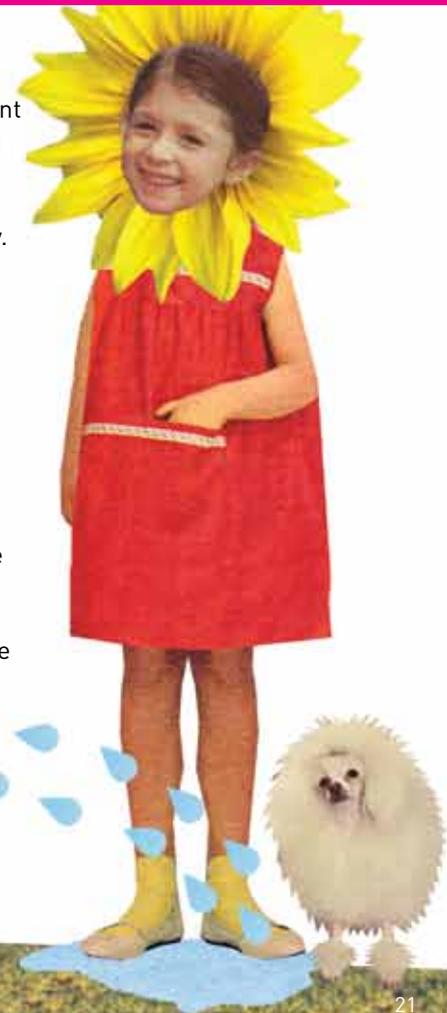


'Scientifically speaking I can't say anything concrete about this because I am not following a control group of men who work a lot and are often away from home. But it does seem that daughters with caregiver fathers do better than average.'

Daughters suffer from depression more than sons. Can a father have an influence on this?

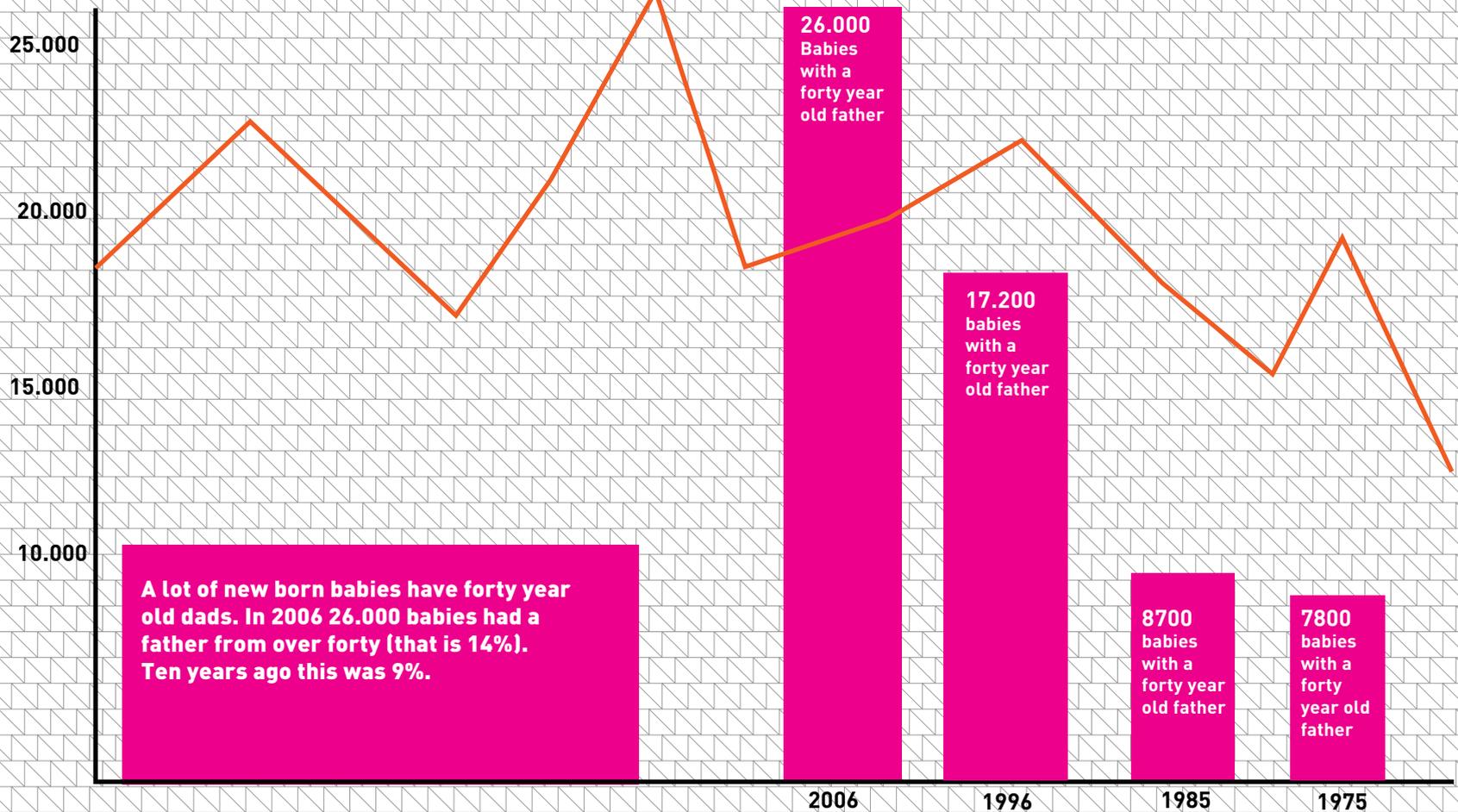
'Currently ten to twenty per cent of girls suffer from depression or an eating disorder. It is difficult for them to fulfill society's ideals around beauty. As a father you can likely not have a direct influence, but you can contribute to your daughter's self-confidence.'

'Take the time to build a bond with your daughter, and to be a good role-model. Make sure you are not always in a rush. Let things go every once in a while. If you pick up your daughter, go fifteen minutes early so you can let go of some stress and be more cheerful and relaxed when she comes out of the school. Have some fun and try not to be so much of an old grump.'



STATISTICS

OLDER DADS STILL ON THE INCREASE



Compared to animal dudes, human dudes are soft-boiled eggs. Wouldn't any self-respecting animal just leave their woman at home with the kids?

FATHERS in the **ANIMAL KINGDOM**

A male lion has at least a dozen ladies. He lays relaxed, often snoring, until the women have caught something nice to eat. From this prey he gets all the tastiest bits. He loves his offspring but only if they stay at least a kilometer away. It's easy to imagine zoo animals laughing their asses off whenever one of those vegetarian househusbands comes mincing by with his children. It's equally easy to imagine that many of these fathers are themselves busy wondering about whatever happened to their inner alpha male.

Professor behavioral biology Jan van Hooff, is the man to ask these questions to.



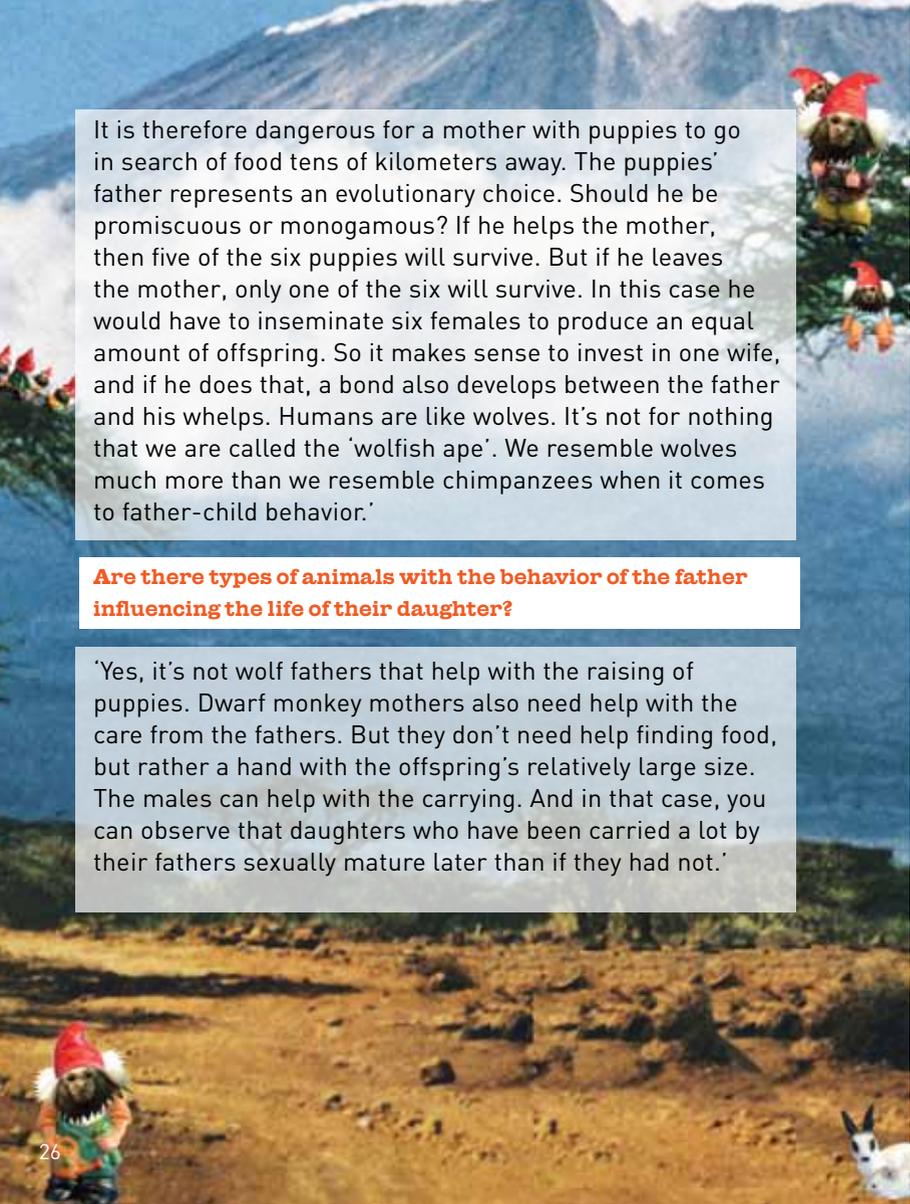
Is a caregiver father actually something natural?

'Oh yes, it's not as if caring for children is a feminine trait. It's more about who the care is forced upon. With most animals the fertilized eggs are in the body of the mother and therefore her problem. But with the fish sticklebacks, it's the opposite. The female lays unfertilized cells and swims away. The male then comes along and fertilizes the eggs and is then stuck with them. With mouth-breeding cichlids, fatherhood and motherhood is symmetrical since their fertilized eggs are stored in the mouths of both mothers and fathers. With cichlids there is no difference between the sexes. And with birds you see something similar. When the egg is in the nest, the males and females are equally pregnant. The man can actively help by bringing home the worms.'

Are there examples of macho animals who are also caregiver fathers?

'With most animals, the mother-child relationship is the only one that matters. Father-child relationships only happen with animals where the father can be sure that he is indeed the father. It also happens with animals where the female has problems raising the children herself. For example, wolf puppies are born blind and totally dependent. It takes a long time before they can survive on their own. They need their mother.'





It is therefore dangerous for a mother with puppies to go in search of food tens of kilometers away. The puppies' father represents an evolutionary choice. Should he be promiscuous or monogamous? If he helps the mother, then five of the six puppies will survive. But if he leaves the mother, only one of the six will survive. In this case he would have to inseminate six females to produce an equal amount of offspring. So it makes sense to invest in one wife, and if he does that, a bond also develops between the father and his whelps. Humans are like wolves. It's not for nothing that we are called the 'wolfish ape'. We resemble wolves much more than we resemble chimpanzees when it comes to father-child behavior.'

Are there types of animals with the behavior of the father influencing the life of their daughter?

'Yes, it's not wolf fathers that help with the raising of puppies. Dwarf monkey mothers also need help with the care from the fathers. But they don't need help finding food, but rather a hand with the offspring's relatively large size. The males can help with the carrying. And in that case, you can observe that daughters who have been carried a lot by their fathers sexually mature later than if they had not.'

HOW TO COME ACROSS AS THE EXPERIENCED FATHER

You could say, if after the birth of your first child you start working a day less a week, you are doing fine. But 'doing fine' is an art. Every experienced father knows that when a father tries too hard to show that he's 'doing fine', that he's actually either a rookie or has something to hide. So try to stay cool. Follow these basic rules and chances are less that you will be busted



