

Beijing's essential international family resource

beijingkids

November 2019

Plus:
Open
letter
to dads

**Family
Dynamics:**
Beijing Dads
share their
unconventional
stories

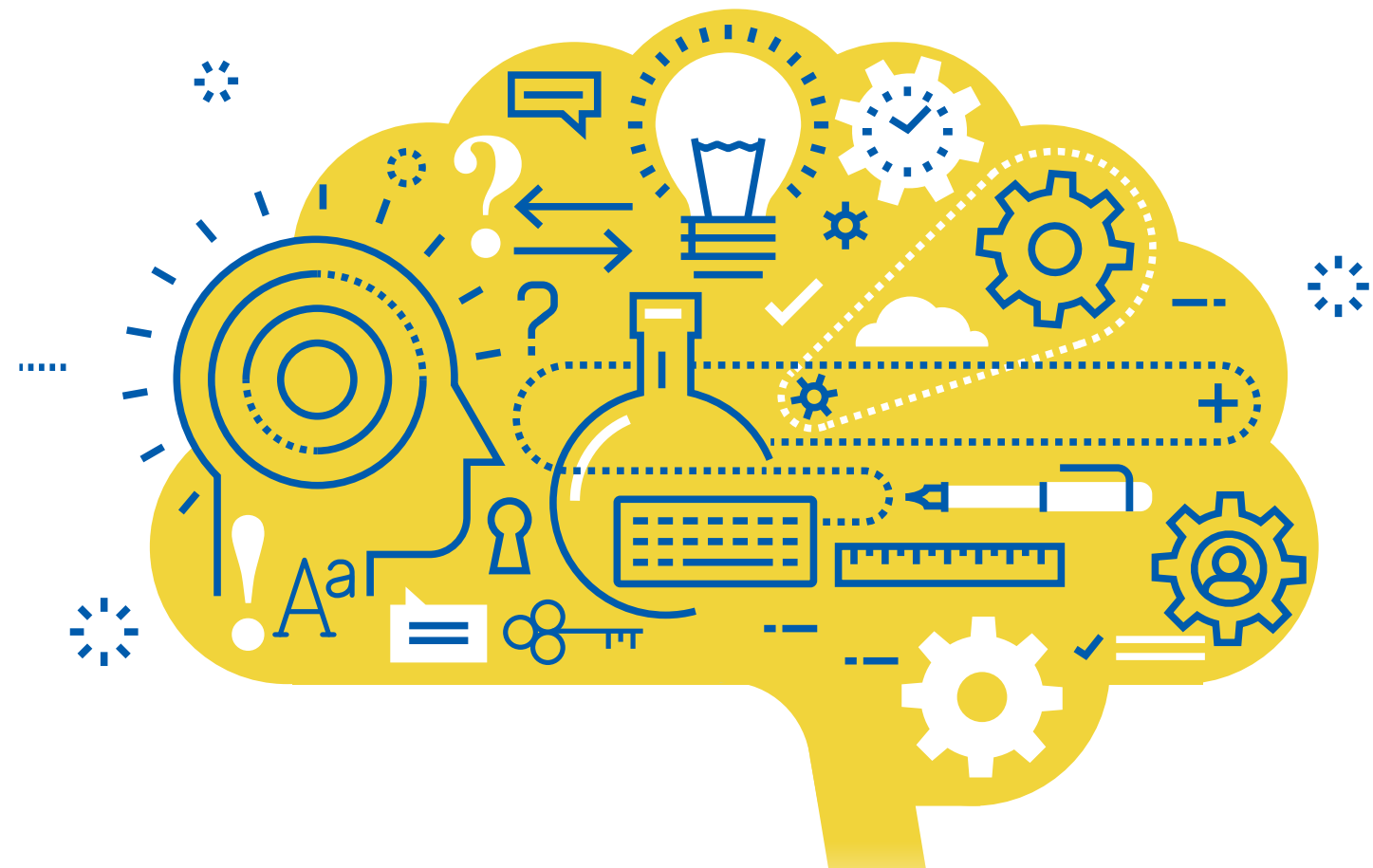
Beijing Baba

Meet the cool dads on the block



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12 DEC 2019

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November 2019

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北京顺义国际学校
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF BEIJING

广告



Middle & High School Open House

Wednesday, November 27

8:45 am – 11:45 am

The International School of Beijing invites prospective middle & high school parents and students to meet our Head of School, learn about our comprehensive college guidance programs and hear from our student panel. Families will have the opportunity to tour the campus and learn about our exciting new facilities, set to open in 2019 and 2020. *Space is limited.*

Scan QR code to register.



Visit us online at isb.bj.cn.edu

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ON THE COVER:

For our November Beijing Baba issue we had pleasure of photographing dad Alex Cros and his daughter Jade Cros (4). Alex's eyes light up each time he talks about his daughter and we're so thrilled to capture that special bond. Photos: Dave Studio

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The *beijingkids* Board

Tim Coghlan

Tim first came to China in 2001 and has made Beijing his home for the last 10 years. He specializes in new market development for the world's most iconic consumer brands, previously helping luxury brands enter and expand in China, and now helping a Chinese technology company build their global business. He enjoys outdoor adventures with his two young children, and time permitting, vlogs in Chinese under the moniker of "Kangaroo Daddy".



Mike Signorelli

Mike Signorelli arrived in Beijing in 1994 as a student and has called China home ever since. He has held several senior management roles over the past 20+ years, including his last corporate job with NBA China. Mike is the founder of Signature Wine, China's first independent subscription wine club. Contact him at mike@sigwine.com.



Marianne Daquet

In Beijing for 12 years, Marianne Daquet has always been passionate about art and education. She founded Atelier Art School 6 years ago with the mission to pass on her strong belief that creativity can change the world. She and her French husband have two daughters. You can reach her at Marianne@atelier.cn.com.



Tara Gillan

Tara is from England, UK, and been in China over 14 years where she is raising third culture, bilingual kids. She has a passion for education in China, and is a life long learner still trying to master Mandarin. In between, work, study and being a mum, you will find her looking for her next adventure!



Caroline Nath

Caroline Nath moved to Beijing as a teenager after having grown up in the US, Canada, France, and India. She is a filmmaker, radio host, Parent Effectiveness Training teacher, founder of Bonne Nani Jams, and an organic food promoter. She has two multi-ethnic and multi-lingual children. Contact her at kulfidoll@gmail.com.



Elisabeth Koch

China's milliner, Elisabeth Koch, arrived in 2007 and hit the ground running with her hats. This TCK has three children who were born in Beijing. While her creations adorn famous heads on the covers of international glossies, Koch gives hat-making workshops in her studio and is kept busy by the kids. Find out more information at www.ElisabethKoch.co



Lise Floris

Lise Poulsen Floris is an EU official turned blogger. Since leaving her native Denmark in 1998, she has lived in Italy and Belgium before moving to China with her family. She writes about life in Beijing on her blog ninemillionbicycles.com, aiming to tell "the big story through the small story." Her work has been published in the *South China Morning Post*, *Global Times*, and *Point of View International*.



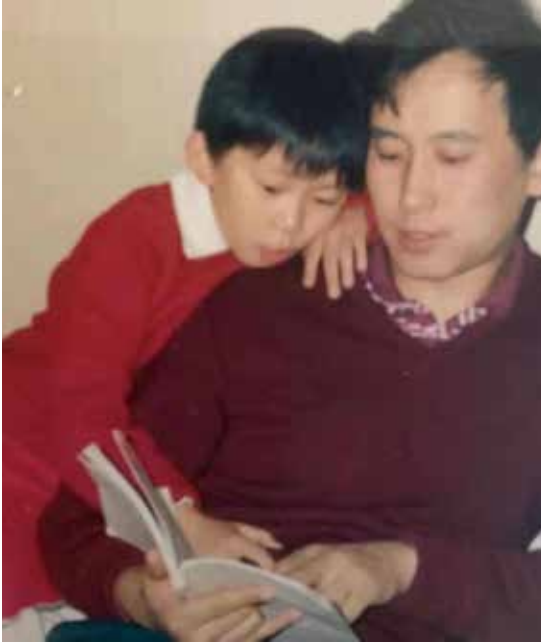
Juliet London

After seven years in Beijing, market researcher, branding consultant and writer, mother to two teenagers, Juliet 'Lady' London continues to be fascinated by this ever changing city. British by birth, she has also lived in Australia and Hong Kong. Her work primarily focuses on education research, leaving less time than she would like to take exercise, walk her dog, and snap up bargains at local markets.



A NOTE TO OUR READERS

“



When I was little my dad was Superman. He was the tallest man in the world, he wore the coolest clothes, he could fix any toy, and I knew I could always sweet talk him into buying me snacks and candy whenever I wanted. I was daddy's little girl and I had him wrapped around my pinky. Then I started middle school. My parents got divorced, and suddenly I saw my dad less and less. It took years before I was even willing to attempt to mend our relationship. Our father-daughter relationship didn't sour overnight and it's not going to be rebuilt in a day. We're still working on it with every visit, video chat, and silly meme sent over WeChat. It took years but my dad's starting to get his red cape back.

In this Beijing Baba issue we give Beijing's dads some much deserved love and attention, and get a bit

of insight into some unconventional lives of dads in the city. Jack Smith is a loving husband and father of twins by day, but by night he's Elizabeth Stride, beautiful, fierce drag queen. Smith shares his story (p. 49) and tells us about the challenges of being a parent and a drag performer. We also touch on the family dynamic of a newly single dad and his relationship with his now 'roommate' son (p. 54).

We give one Beijing dad a total makeover (p.14), transforming his early morning bedhead into a runway ready look for winter that rocks. Chef Nick shares the holiday dessert recipes that he makes for his little girl (p. 26). And a few of Beijing's musicians prove that they can still rock on after having kids (p. 16).

When it comes to education, male teachers from Canadian International School Beijing, British School of Beijing, Sanlitun, and Beijing City International School share their views on how men are now defining their place in early childhood education (p. 34) as positive role models. Those valuable life lessons we learned as children stick with us our entire lives. Beijing's dads share some valuable advice that their dads passed on to them (p. 44).

These are just a few of the topics we tackle in this issue. Flip through for more advice on life and parenting in Beijing, school news, and fun things to do with the family.



A stylized black ink signature of Mina Yan.

Mina Yan

”

What's New



Community Comes Together for Miracle Baby Camila

Beijing's international community have come together recently to help a very special baby. Camila Cortavitarde Urdandeta was born at just 25 weeks after her mother Coro was diagnosed with preeclampsia. Camila weighed only 590 grams, and requires intensive medical care. She is in an incubator and needs round-the-clock medical supervision. Family friend Anna Lin Yip launched a campaign to help Coro and dad Marco pay for the their little miracle's care, and the community responded magnificently. The target of RMB 600,000 has been reached, and any money left over after all medical bills have been paid will be donated to a local charity. At the time of writing Camila had reached a weight of over 1.3 kilograms, and her parents have been able to hold her for the first time. If you want to help baby Camila, then you can contact Anna via WeChat: annalinyip.

Sinking Ships and Blue Men Come to Beijing

Tianqiao Performing Arts Center, often host to international touring productions, this month has two shows which will appeal to families. Titanic the musical debuted in the same year as Titanic the movie, but there's no connection between the two, which tell different stories about the infamous 1912 disaster. However the Broadway show was a huge hit in its own right, winning five Tony awards including Best Musical. It's playing at Tianqiao from November 12-24, and will be followed by a show that's been touring for even longer. The Blue Man Group has been delighting audiences worldwide since 1987 with a unique mix of comedy, mime, and music – all performed by bald blue men. You can sample it for yourself from November 27 to December 1. For more information, and to find out what else is happening in the city, check out the Events section of our website, www.beijing-kids.com.



Tough New Recycling Rules Aim to Cut Landfill

Beijing has a trash problem. The city produces a staggering 25,000 metric tonnes of garbage every day, with around 40 percent of it going straight to landfill. It's not sustainable, and now the authorities are taking action. Under draft regulations recently published, residents will face a RMB 200 fine if they don't separate their household waste into four categories: hazardous waste, kitchen waste, recyclables, and "other". It's an important step forward, if the city is to achieve its goal of eliminating the use of landfill for domestic waste by 2035. However, there's an awful lot more we can do, and even more important than separating our garbage is producing less of it in the first place.



Spend Thanksgiving at the Great Wall

Towards the end of this month Americans will be celebrating Thanksgiving (Canadians had their special day last month.) This year the celebration takes place as late as it possible can, as the fourth Thursday of the month falls on November 28. For some it can be a challenging time, a reminder of loved ones far away whom they would normally be sharing this day. So if you're feeling homesick this Thanksgiving, why not spend it somewhere that reminds you what an amazing place you are living in? The Brickyard Retreat Centre are holding a Thanksgiving dinner in the stunning setting of Mutianyu Great Wall. They promise "roast turkey and all the trimmings served family style and with a dessert buffet." A live jazz band will provide the mellow vibes. And if you really want to make it special, for RMB 2,488 you can spend the night in a room with a view of the Wall, make use of the Jacuzzi and Health Center, and enjoy breakfast the following morning before returning to the city. However you're spending Thanksgiving, we at beijingkids wish you health and happiness!

Speed Reading Schools Attract Derision

Are your kid struggling to plow through lengthy textbooks or reading assignments? One Beijing company claims to have the answer: "quantum speed reading". They claim that once students have mastered the technique, after a mere 72 classes, they'll be able to memorize up to 100,000 characters in five minutes. And of course they're willing to teach you, but they'll have to charge: up to RMB 260,000 for the full course. A promotional video has gone viral, showing what appears to be students simply flipping through the pages of a book, and it's fair to say China's netizens are skeptical. "I have invented a new reading method, too. By putting a book on my head during sleep, the knowledge flows right into my brain because the concentration of knowledge in the book is greater than that in my brain," China Daily quotes one Weibo user as saying. The authorities have now taken an interest, and are understood to be asking the company to drop their more outrageous claims.



Harmony and Steve

By Jin Chan Yum Wai



广告

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NOVEMBER EVENTS



Promote your family-friendly event on the *beijingkids* website!

Submit your activity details before **November 16** to be considered for our November listings.



3E INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Nov 8

3e International School invites parents to experience their Elementary School dual language immersion program. Parents can tour the campus and its diverse learning environment. Along with the tour, parents can receive an overview of grades one through six bilingual program and curriculum. *Parents. Free, requires registration. 9.30am – 11.30am. admissions@3einternationalschool.org, 3einternationalschool.org. 3e International School.*



HUIJIA OPEN DAYS

Nov 9 and 24

At Huijia Open Days, Huijia Private School's leadership team will meet with you to elaborate on Huijia's philosophy and carefully answer your educational doubts. Your child will experience Huijia's teachers, classroom model, courses, hardware, and campus life. Learn about Huijia's professional education consultants, its one-to-one consulting services, and how it can help match you to more suitable education resources. *RMB 150 for parents and RMB 415 for students. admissions@huijia.edu.cn. www.huijia.edu.cn. Huijia Private School.*



BEIJING HIKER'S KIDS CLUB: GUBEIKOU WALL AND ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

Nov 10

This hike is 3-5 km over 2-3 hours. A slow-paced walk up to the middle part of the Gubeikou Great Wall to take a look about the towers, hike along the wall, and then hike down to the adventure playground for play and picnic time. *Ages 3+. RMB 150 for kids 3-5, RMB 180 kids 6-12, RMB 380 for adults. 8am – 4.30pm. beijingshikers.com. Gubeikou Great Wall.*



FRENCH HOLIDAY WORKSHOP

Nov 11 – 15

Every year Atelier prepares a holiday workshop to celebrate the French holiday in November. This workshop consists of two parts: Art and Fablab. The art workshop will focus on constructivism from different aspects, and Fablab will focus on making a big project called, "Recycling enlightened paper house." During Fablab students will learn the importance of environmental protection, the recycling process, and a basic knowledge of electricity. At the end they will make a 3D paper house that lights up. *RMB 2,000 – 2,700. 10am – 4pm. contact@atelier.cn.com. Atelier at Shunyi and Sanlitun Campus.*

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FEATURED EVENT ORGANIZERS



TITANIC THE MUSICAL

Nov 12 - 24

Titanic the Musical comes to Beijing! Everyone probably knows the story of the "unsinkable" ship, the RMS Titanic, sinking on its maiden voyage, costing the lives of 1,517 people. This musical brings the stunning story to life, based on real people aboard the ship and their varying dreams and reasons for being on the Titanic. The original Broadway performance won five Tony Awards including Best Musical, Best Score, and Best Book. This new production from London has similarly won critical acclaim from across the world. *All ages. RMB 180 – 880. 2.30pm and 7.30pm. www.247tickets.com. Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Centre Grand Theatre*



AN EVENING WITH DR. JANE GOODALL DBE

Nov 13

Spend an intimate evening with renowned primatologist, conservationist, and UN Messenger of Peace, Dr. Jane Goodall DBE. Attendees will have an opportunity to screen the documentary, *Jane*, followed by a powerful discussion by Dr. Goodall about her life and work. What's more, a Q+A will also be featured as part of the discussion. *RMB 80-350. 5.30pm-8.30pm. British Chamber of Commerce in China. Hilton Beijing. No. 1 Dongfang Lu.*



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THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION NOW CONFERENCE

Nov 13 – 16

The Future of Education Now is a festival/conference that emphasizes learning in today's modern world. Attend workshops, and presentations from some of the world's leading innovators and disruptors in international education. School leaders from all over the world will share their best practices and visions on what learning NOW should look like. *Parents and students Grades 7 and up. RMB 500. Registration required. WAB parents and student tickets are available at reduced rates. web.cvent.com/event. Western Academy of Beijing.*



DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES: ANTON NEL

Nov 19

Join Western Academy of Beijing's (WAB's) intimate concert and discussion with Anton Nel, world-renowned classical pianist and winner of the 1987 Naumburg International Piano Competition. Anton's remarkable and multifaceted career spans five continents and four decades, and includes the release of several solo CDs and performances with the globe's most famous symphonies and orchestras. *All ages. Free. Concert: 5:10-6:00pm, Talk 6:00-7:30pm. RSVP at wab.edu/DSS. Western Academy of Beijing, Blu Theatre, 10 Lai Guang Ying Dong Lu, Chao Yang District.*

SUICIDE PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Nov 23 – 24

Lifeline and Livingworks are hosting an "Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)" session in Beijing. They have held ASIST courses in Shanghai for many years, but this is the first time it has come to Beijing. This workshop provides valuable skills training on how to spot someone who is at risk for suicide and how to support them. It also helps remind people of the benefits of working together to help keep people safe. ASIST is an internationally accredited course and space is limited. *Counselors, therapists, teacher, people who work with vulnerable groups. RMB 3,800. All day. email director@lifeline-shanghai.com. If you need someone to talk to call 400 821 1215.*



END OF YEAR CHARITY AUCTION BASH

Nov 23

The Beijing Clothing Auction Network's annual End of Year Charity Auction Bash is back. Combining sustainability, charity, and community, the Network brings women together through a love of ethical fashion and giving back to the community. It's a clothing swap with a twist! Clothing Auctions are a way of sharing pre-loved clothes with other like-minded women in private homes across Beijing and raising a ton of money along the way. The annual event held at East Hotel is a big celebration of the network's successes in 2019. New people are always welcome to join. *Women of all ages. RMB 150, please register. 7.30pm - 10.30pm. wechat: becstarnz. Domain.*



BSB SHUNYI SECONDARY PRODUCTION "LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS"

Nov 23 - 24

Come and see this exciting show performed by The British School of Beijing, Shunyi's (BSB Shunyi's) secondary students. With music and lyrics by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, this show will surely entertain. This musical stars Seymour, a shy shop assistant whose life completely changes after finding a strange plant. Expect the unexpected and enjoy the sensational 60s style music and dance along the way! There are three performances: Nov 23 at 2pm and 7pm and Nov 24 at 2pm. *RMB 65 (kids) – 100 (adults). 2pm and 7pm. www.bsbshunyi.com. BSB Shunyi Campus.*



BLUE MAN GROUP ON TOUR

Nov 27

Share the crazy, the colorful and the cool, as Blue Man Group takes you to places you've never been, seen or heard before. It's a masterful and musical trip, led by three of the boldest, baldest and bluest guys on the planet. Over 35 million folks worldwide, young and old, have rocked, laughed and partied with Blue Man Group. Come see what you've been missing. *All ages. RMB 280 – 680. www.247tickets.com. Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Centre Theatre.*



PARENT EDUCATION WORKSHOP: THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

Nov 27

House of Knowledge (HoK) presents a parent educational workshop on how the Reggio Emilia approach can prepare your child for a successful life. In this workshop, Mr. Farshad Danicek, co-founder of House of Knowledge, will share his thoughts on why the Reggio Emilia approach is so important in the 21st century. He will explore how children learn through project work, how teachers and the environment influence learning, and what parents can do to support learning at home. *Parents. Free, please register. marketing@hokschoools.com. 9.30am. House of Knowledge.*

ISB MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Nov 27

The International School of Beijing (ISB) invites prospective parents and students of middle school (Grade 6-8) and high school (Grade 9-12) to learn about ISB's curriculum and teaching practices. Meet the Head of School Mr. Patrick Hurworth, learn about their high school and college guidance programs, and hear first-hand accounts from a student panel. Families will have the opportunity to tour the campus and learn about the school's new facilities, set to open in 2019 and 2020. *Free, RSVP required. 8:45-11:15am (high school), 8:45-11:45am (middle school). (8149 2345 ext. 1047, admission@isb.bj.edu.cn) International School of Beijing.*



CAVE EXPLORATION

Ongoing

Sometimes we get so busy in the city, swept up in the hustle and bustle of subway crowds, that we forget about the big, beautiful world right outside Beijing's center. If you ever want to get away for a day and explore some natural caves, learn about their formation and biology, make new friends and get some exercise, then Green Camps Cave Exploration is great for you. *Ages 6+. RMB 350-700. 8am - 4pm. Green Camp. Pickup at Dongzhimen Subway Station Exit C. (WeChat ID qqblxdly). www.qingqingbuluo.com*



MAD CAMP "IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY"

Ongoing

An interactive, multi-sensory journey through 17 different landscapes that reflect what it means to be a teenager in today's hyper-everything world. Through the use of overly-digitized images, magnified structural pieces, and multi-media installations, attendees will come face-to-face with the social pressures facing just about every member of Generation Y, ultimately asking them to confront very real questions about what makes us human, and what unites us all. *Ages 15+. RMB 88-150. 10.30am-10.30pm. ZJZM. Workers' Stadium West Gate - Gongti Park A05, Chaoyang. www.247tickets.com/t/mad-camp-beijing*

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FEATURED EVENT ORGANIZERS

SAY HELLO TO BEIJING'S SMALLEST



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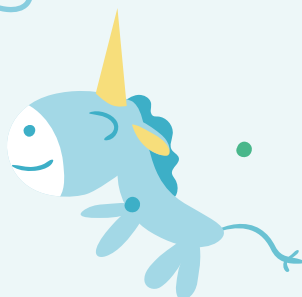
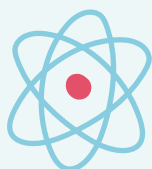


Note that we will only publish
photos of babies born
in the last 12 months



Gilbert Li

American/Chinese. Born on August 4
to Ruth Shen and Yan Li
at White Memorial Hospital



Avery Katharine Dracz

Canadian/American. Born on October 19
to Stephanie Anne Dracz and Curtis Dracz
at OASIS International Hospital



Pippa Joan McMath

New Zealander. Born on April 5
to Tor McMath and Sinclair McMath
at OASIS International Hospital



Yuxuan Ma

Chinese. Born on September 11
to Lulu and Ares Ma
at Peking University Third Hospital



Wusi Kong

Chinese. Born on May 4
to FanRong Kong through IVF
at Beijing United Family Hospital



LOOKING HOT, PLAYING IT COOL

Defining the new "Dad Style"

By Mina Yan

Pro Tip:

With a good haircut your basics are all set and a little bit of hair wax goes a long way. It just takes a few seconds to take away the morning bedhead look by running a bit of wax through your hair.





When I was growing up, my dad was cool, but never once did I think my dad was stylish. He grew up during a time when he thought that because he's a man, he didn't need to put effort into his looks. Thankfully those days are long gone, and now most dads have more than just a bar of soap that doubles as a shampoo and body wash. They've finally learned to indulge and pamper themselves.

This month's issue is all about dads. Those strong role models that help us shape who we grow up to become deserve a bit of pampering too. Just because you're a great dad doesn't mean you need sport the dad-bod, or the "I don't have time so I'll just wear a hat" look.

And so for our November Beijing Baba issue we invited China Radio International contributor and father to a 4-year-old son, Patrick Flanary for a total style makeover.

Arriving at Tony Studio in Lido, Flanary was ready for a makeover that's fit for a celebrity. Tony Studio is no stranger when it comes to celebrity makeovers. They're one of China's silver screen favorites for styling the country's A-listers on a regular basis.

With 19 years of experience under his belt, Sam Yan from Tony Studio has been the go-to guy for men who are looking to capture (or sometimes recapture) the best of their youth. Flanary's thick head of hair and no-fuss attitude is every stylist's dream. Yan starts with a quick chat about Flanary's preferences when it comes to his hair, ensuring that Flanary will be happy with the end result.

After a quick trim with special attention to specifics, Flanary was ready for the camera. Those wild, untamed morning bedhead locks got a major style makeover. Thinned out and softened, Flanary modeled the 'after' look.

A simple haircut can change a person's whole image. Draped with a New and Lingwood dressing gown, Flanary looked effortlessly chic at East Beijing Hotel.



Hair

Tony Studio
2 Shangrui Lu, Building A-4,
Hairun International Apartment,
Chaoyang District
5135 8055

Wardrobe

New and Lingwood dressing gown
from The British House

Location

East Being Hotel



DADS WHO ROCK

Turning up the beat on parenting

By Dan Rothwell

OPENING TRACK

Whether it be car journeys soundtracked by Santana and Scott Walker, or explorations into the vast expanse of records, scattered and squeezed around the house, my music-filled memories of childhood courtesy of **my father** are some of my fondest. He worked as a lecturer in the **history of music** and art, a presenter of pre-concert talks, and an outspoken hater of avant-garde jazz, so I wouldn't necessarily say my dad **rocked**. (Apart from maybe that one time when he was found dancing on stage at Temple Bar around 3am after one too many coffee shots - true story.) However, the respect and admiration I have for what he's taught me over the years is immense, and will only continue to grow.

Scientists have claimed that our musical tastes as adults could be influenced by emotional attachments to life events in the early stages of development. It has also been proven that learning a musical instrument from a young age can help with not only muscular and mental dexterity, but also social skills, and linguistic acquisition. Finally, to the joy of metalheads all around the world, it has recently been disproven that listening to Mozart will make your child smarter than listening to Metallica.

With these studies in mind, I wanted to find out more about how some of the dads I've shared both stage and mosh-pit with maintain family life while being a dad that rocks.

LEO AND SUMMER

Leo, vocalist for Beijing hardcore legends Unregenerate Blood, remembers the songs from his father's Huqin, as well as the Beijing Opera he'd listen to around the house. It's quite a different experience for Leo's daughter, Summer.

"Yes, my daughter likes some punk-rock bands like Rancid or The Ramones, but she also loves all the children's songs she listens to in kindergarten. When she gets home, I'll stop playing my hardcore records and listen to the cartoon soundtracks and other songs she loves." When asked about how he might influence the listening habits of his daughter, he's adamant that she can "choose what type of music she listens to." Positive attitudes and out-looks on life are more important.

"I just want to let her know that some people are different to 'normal people'. They play different music, sometimes look a little weird, but they are nice guys that follow their faith. I want her not to judge people based on appearance. The best thing is that while my daughter may not always like the music we play, she loves my friends who are like uncles to her. That's a cool thing, I think."

Many new parents' timetables change with an addition to the family, Leo's story is no different. "My band used to hang out on the weekends before my daughter was born, but now I'll stay at home... or bring her to where I need to be."

Timetables aside, Leo believes it's essential not to lose sight of who you are and your core values. "With regards to being a father, do not change yourself too much. Let your child know that daddy is cool, and let the child choose what he or she loves. Encourage them to do the right thing; help their friends, help animals, and feel love and happiness."



FREDDY "THE MAGGOT", TYNEES, AND JUNIOR



Drummer for rowdy-punk-rockers Oldy Baby and surf-rock revivalists Boss Cuts, and self-confessed horror fanatic, Freddy "The Maggot" recalls a compilation cassette of Chinese rock music from the early '90s his "Ray-Ban clad" dad would play in his minivan. This is what helped spawn a "blurred realization that road trips and rock and roll were magical partners."

When asked about how his children might recount their own road-trip rock anthems somewhere down the line, Freddy seems to have somewhat shifted gears. "When my wife was pregnant with our first child back in 2011, it was non-stop Motörhead and ZZ Top while driving anywhere. Part of me just wants to recreate that minivan scene, although I'm dead certain their answer would be 'Let It Go' from Frozen."

"Before being a dad, I'd have doom-metal and grind-core booming full blast from my sub-woofers. Now I can't remember the last time I fully embraced a noise attack in my living room. Saying this, kids can be extremely loud too, especially when there's a birthday party. I guess the noise is inadvertently preserved in the household one way or another."

"Luckily, I've passed my hard time adapting to 'Let It Go' after well over 1,000 listens. In fact, this song happens to describe pretty much every parent's situation perfectly. Your kids are going to grow up, no matter how much you want to resist it. They are going to choose their own way of life, no matter how desperately you suggest otherwise."

Whether or not the noise continues at home apparently isn't of paramount importance, not just yet anyway. "Both my daughter and son loved to slap on the furniture with their bare hands when they were small, and I took that as an intuitive thing. They had this groove while air drumming. I bought my girl a toy drum when she turned three, and her passion for beating things stopped at that moment. I felt relief for some weird reason."

"One of the greatest things I ever learned being a dad, is that there's a duality between you and your offspring. You think it's just you influencing your kids, but before you know it, they're influencing you."

DANIEL AND YUNI

Guitarist Daniel, also a member of Boss Cuts, recalls “countless hours” spent listening to his father’s collection of old rock tapes in the vintage cars he’d fix up. Daniel is also well known in the Beijing vinyl community for his collection of first-issue rarities, and he cites his father as an influence on this. “He would always be digging for lesser-known musicians and bands. I’ve been listening to music from the 50s and 60s my whole life, and I’m still discovering new stuff.”

Unlike Leo and Freddy, Daniel’s home listening habits haven’t changed too much since Yuni arrived. “The volume was lower when Yuni was a baby, but now that he’s a toddler, I play my records as I did before. With most of my music, I don’t have to worry about swearing or much violent content. Except for songs like ‘Run For Your Life’ by The Beatles. John was a jealous psycho.”

Daniel gives a lot of credit to his partner, Ling, in being accepting of his continued nightlife, saying, “having a child definitely isn’t the end of having a social life, so long as you have a supportive partner and that you each take turns looking after the kid.”

With regard to the musical upbringing and influence of Yuni, Daniel is already curating a curriculum. “He can listen to whatever he wants, but I’m definitely going to give him lessons in the fundamentals of 20th-Century American music history. From Charles Mingus, Otis Redding, and James Brown, to modern artists like Flying Lotus and Kamasi Washington.”

“Rock may be the devil’s music, but it is also a fearless demonstration of your individuality and creativity. These life skills are good for kids to learn from a young age.”

Yuni’s musical roots were apparently already set, with an early fondness for Daniel’s turntables. “He would watch the record spin for 10, 20, 30 minutes and would cry when I eventually had to take them away. So we bought him his own turntable, and I gave him some old records, and he quickly learned how to put the needle on, albeit very roughly.” Since then, Yuni’s amassed quite a collection of instruments. “I also bought him some drums, an electronic keyboard, and I gave him an analog synth and an acoustic guitar.” Some might think this is an instrumental over-saturation, others might think Daniel just wants them for himself, but having been fortunate enough to have a similar arsenal of noise-making tools from an early age, I believe variety and the way Daniel handles the situation is spot on. “I don’t force him to play any of these instruments. Instead, I just play along with him.”

“Being a father isn’t the end of your life. Having a child expands every aspect of your life, but it also gives you perspective and makes you appreciate everything you have and do. As much as I am lucky to have great mates to play shows with, nothing is as special as playing music with your kid.”



HUIHAN, SAMI, AND LUZ

What do Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong, and Edith Piaf have in common? They’re all in both Huihan and his father’s list of favorite songs. On discovering boxes of his dad’s old records as an early teen, a “whole magic world” opened for him. Saving up-tempo jazz or experimental music for the bike, (and/or preparation for drumming with the intergalactic psych-prog project (afka) SHA!, and feel-good-beach-rockers Prost) as the “freaky music might put the kids off”, a variety of music that focuses on “crisp songwriting, melodies and rhythms” vibrates the air of Huihan’s hutong pad.

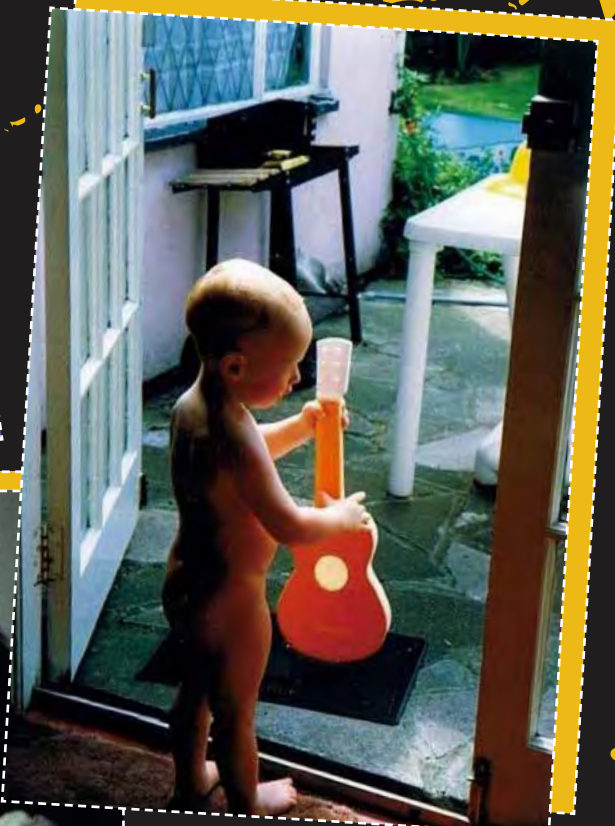
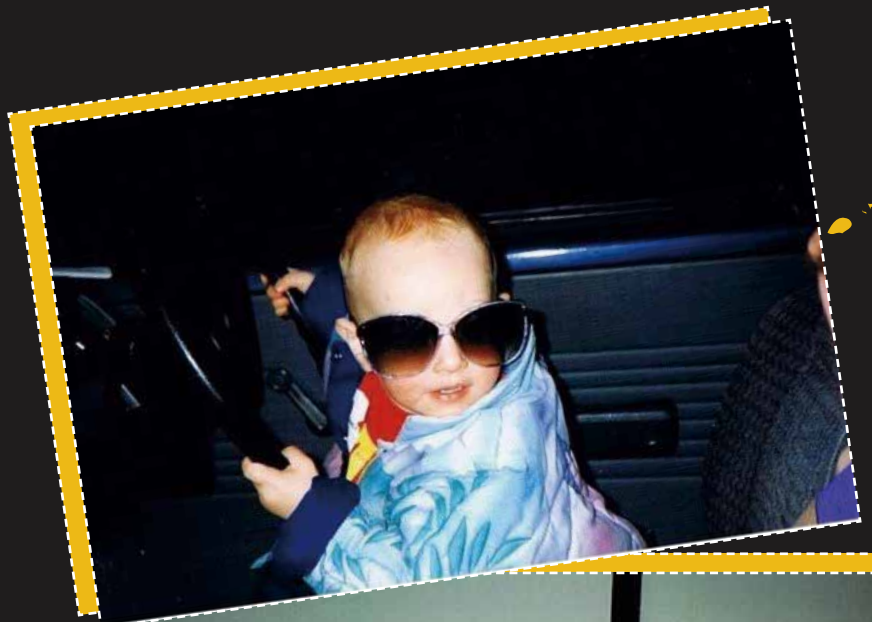
Further to this, while the kids might be too young to attend shows at this age, Huihan tries to recreate the fun in other ways. “Any way in which music can come alive is important to me. Like dancing in the living room, using instruments to imitate animal noises, clapping and singing along with songs, changing lyrics. Adding lots of poop and pee words usually works well too.”

With regards to subjectivity in developing music tastes, Huihan adopts a very open and sincere approach after I (rather insincerely) refer to the “pop-garbage” kids are listening to these days. “I think to me the question is: do they love music? Do they really love music? If they keep putting on ‘pop-garbage’ without really listening to it, then to me they don’t really love music, and then I hope they can find their own art forms, hobbies or sports.”

“The topic of taste versus enjoyment is an interesting one, though. I don’t have an extremely sophisticated taste palette when it comes to food or drinks, but I can get intensely and immensely happy from certain foods. I guess the same would apply to music for other people. I’d rather have my kids get intensely happy from listening to mediocre music than moderately happy from listening to great music.”

“There are few thoughts that make me as excited as the prospect of playing music with my kids, but obviously, you can’t force it. Remind yourself regularly what it is that you love about life, then follow up on that. Otherwise, to be a dad that rocks, just buy one of those rocking chairs”





BONUS TRACK

At this point, I wonder what thought processes my father went through when raising me. The memories blur as to when he started giving me clues about the covers of records he thought I'd enjoy, and a cassette recorder to make mixtapes of what I'd find. Were these decisions intentional or accidents in good parenting? Whatever it was, I hope the children of these dads will harbor the same appreciation for what they're being taught and, hopefully, someday do the same with kids of their own.



THE SIXTIES SWING BACK INTO ACTION

By Mina Yan



Marking the beginning of social gala season was this year's British Ball, held at Kerry Hotel Beijing. The theme was the Swinging Sixties, and the Beijing community came together for a night of shagade-lic fun and, most importantly, fundraising for two organisations that have been giving back so much to the community - China Association of SOS Children's Villages and Gift of Life.

Founded by Hermann Gmeiner in Austria in 1949, SOS Children's Village is active in 135 countries and territories around the world, helping thousands of children each year through school, health centres, family strengthening and alternative care programs, and other community-based work.

Gift of Life (GOL) is a Rotary supported organisation that has evolved over the past four decades into a global network caring for children with medical needs. Rotary works with Hebei Shijiazhuang Paediatric Hospital in a GOL outreach program by sending paediatric urologist surgeons to the rural areas to examine children with defects, educating families about seeking medical treatment from experts, and providing clinical training to rural county surgeons, as well as covering the cost of surgeries.

The British Ball is organised by volunteers by representatives of the British community and was hosted by the Chair of the Organising Committee, Russell Brown OBE of LehmanBrown, and Steven Lynch, Vice-Chair and Managing Director of the British Chamber of Commerce in China. The night started with bubbles and the Beijing Beatles, then with an outstanding performance by the choir of The British School of Beijing Shunyi (BSB Shunyi) singing some of our all-time classic favourites, and followed by three hours of live music by BigCityBeat.

Since the first Ball back in the 1990s, the British Ball has been an annual event that expats and locals alike look forward to each autumn. Since 2003 all net proceeds from the British Ball have been given to a chosen good causes, including those raised through auctioning and raffling items donated to the event by generous businesses in and around China.

Guests wined and dined throughout the night while indulging in 60s nostalgia, from lava lamps to flower power, ending with a breakfast for the true party champions at 4am. Groovy, ba-by!

If you were not there, make sure that you look out for next year's event, which takes place always around the end of October.



BOYS DON'T CRY

Winter blues making us SAD

▶ **B**oys don't cry. It isn't just a song by The Cure or a famous film with Hilary Swank. It's a claim that unfortunately rings true for many of us. For some, it's a statement we grew up hearing but didn't think much about, for others maybe it's something we've internalized and come to accept. Men (and boys) clearly do get sad and cry, but as a society we still seem to have trouble truly believing it.

Sadness is something that all humans experience, but when symptoms are extreme and last more than two weeks, this is known as depression. Men and women can both experience it, but the diagnosis occurs more frequently in women. It may be in part because men tend to dismiss symptoms and are less likely to seek medical treatment.

Interestingly, men also seem to experience depression a little differently than women. For them it may be expressed more as anger, irritability, or aggressiveness. Physical symptoms can also occur, things like changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, feeling extremely tired, as well as problems with sexual desire and performance. These could all be signs of depression. Some men may turn to alcohol and drugs to cope with their symptoms. Suddenly engaging in high risk behaviors could also be a sign.

There are different types of depression, and these can all be diagnosed by a physician. If you feel you may be depressed seek counsel from a trained professional. This is important because different types of depression are treated differently. If you feel your partner or your friend is exhibiting some symptoms of depression consider bringing up the subject in a delicate way. Take any comments about suicide very seriously. Though women attempt suicide more frequently, men are more often successful because they use more lethal methods.

There is a common form of depression aptly called SAD. That stands for Seasonal Affective Disorder. It

occurs during the winter months when the nights are longer and colder, and we're exposed to less sunlight. Sun exposure on our skin helps our body make vitamin D. Vitamin D helps our body absorb calcium, supports healthy immune system function, and is involved in mood regulation. In more northern locations, such as Beijing, it's important to supplement with Vitamin D during the winter months. A doctor can help you test your levels and see how much you need to supplement. Please note I'm not saying Vitamin D can cure depression. What I am saying is that Vitamin D deficiency may be a factor, since low levels can cause irritability, low mood and a feeling of being unwell.

Maybe we can all change our tune. Let's say boys do cry and it's okay. Let's reach out to a male friend who seems down and out, talk to the boys in our lives about their emotions. Let them know it's all right to feel sad sometimes, and if the feeling persists, then it's okay to ask for help. Who knows, it may just be a simple case of needing more Vitamin D.



Got a question?

Melissa Rodríguez is a naturopathic specialist and mother of two. To find out more, check out her website at drmelissarodriguez.com

THE **PAINFUL TRUTH** ABOUT GETTING OLDER

Understanding chronic pain and the aging male body

By Drew Pittock

It's somewhat of a running joke that when men hit a certain age, they wake up one day and their shoulders inexplicably hurt. Upon visiting the doctor, they explain their problem, and the doctor says something to the effect of, 'Yeah, your shoulders hurt because you're 40.' While this theme has afforded male comics with a wealth of material over the years, mostly

because it's incredibly relatable, it's still a serious issue that no man wants to face.

In an effort to help our readership stave off the impending nightmare of unnecessary pain and discomfort, we spoke with Professor Yuanxin Nie, Chief Orthopedic Expert of Pain Management at VISTA Medical Center.



Q A What are the leading causes of chronic pain amongst men?

Degenerative Arthritis / Osteoarthritis

— As one of the most common types of arthritis, it's the result of joint cartilage and bone deterioration and causes progressive pain, stiffness, and deformation of the joints.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

— As the other most common form of arthritis, it occurs when the immune system, which usually protects the body against foreign bacteria and viruses, mistakenly attacks joints and tissues. It can result in painful joint deformity and even immobility.

Q A What are the most at-risk joints, or parts of a man's body?

Knees, Hip Joints, Lumbar Spine

— These are known as weight-bearing joints, and they're responsible for managing the majority of the pressures exerted on the body.

Q A What are some preventative measures men can take to stave off pain?

In general, try not to exert pressure on the joints concerned. For instance, carrying heavy bags and lifting heavy objects. Avoid any injuries, like falling down and twisting the body or legs.

Q A Are there any age related milestones that bring on pain?

Generally speaking, men aged 45 begin to experience joint degeneration, though it can happen earlier than that.

Q A What advice do you have for men experiencing pain, or are concerned with the on-set of pain?

Eat sensibly and exercise regularly to stay healthy. In particular, keep seasonable body weight. Also, avoid certain activities which could exacerbate pain.

Q A Any other information you think is important to share?

If pain gets worse without reason, is disturbing your sleep, or you develop a fever, go and see a doctor without delay.

The Model Diet

Nom noms at MIAM MIAM

By Mina Yan



The Flo Group's latest restaurant addition has a little bit of everything for everybody, making dining there as a family that much easier. The open space restaurant located on the sub level 1 of Phoenix City Galleria is decorated like a foodie's gaming paradise, with food challenges and foosball for anyone who wishes to partake in some friendly competition. The staff is friendly and laid-back, so if your kid is still at the age of uncontrollable occasional outbursts at restaurants, nobody will mind.

Yoga-instructor-mom Angelina Liu and her two boys Oliver and Tristan, both professional models and familiar faces on the runway, spent an afternoon at Miam Miam with their tasty favorites. The brothers have different tastes when it comes to food, and Miam Miam's menu variety is enough to keep both boys (and more) happy.



Pizza! Pizza!

We at *beijingkids* don't take sides when it comes to pizza toppings. We love the ZA - any kind of topping, any kind of crust! There's quite a bit of debate about putting fruit on pizza. Some people are 100 percent against it, while others love the way a sweet slice of pineapple mixes with warm gooey cheese. Miam Miam's pizzas are among their best sellers, offering two styles, classic Italian-style toppings or the more creative Miam Miam-style pizzas like Aloha Hawaiian (RMB 33) and lamb kebab (RMB 26) that are a combo of local and Italian snack favorites.

Smooth Criminal

Nothing hits the spot like a freshly made smoothie after an intense game of foosball. Miam Miam offers four delicious smoothie options and freshly squeezed orange juice to quench your thirst.

Eat Your Greens

Meals need to stay balanced with a bit of green. The crisp, chilled Cesar salad (RMB

53) is just the thing if your kids aren't fans of salads. It's not all healthy greens. Topped with a hard boiled egg, parmesan cheese, and yummy bacon bits, it's a great "entry level" salad that'll have them asking for kale in no time.

All About Comfort

Oliver's favorite is a comfort food that's popular with kids and adults alike. The big bowl of fragrant jasmine rice mixed with Thai basil and pork (RMB 56) is satisfying no matter what age you are.

For The Kiddos

While only two items on the menu are created specifically for kids, most of the dishes at Miam Miam have been well received by their pint-size patrons. Their tasty mini burgers (RMB 40) come in a stylish race car fully loaded with fresh fruits, green veggies, and juice.

A note worth mentioning is that Miam Miam is a proud partner of Bethel, an organization created in 2003 to help blind and visually impaired children. Each time anyone orders a margarita pizza or any item from the kids' menu, Miam Miam donates RMB 5 to Bethel China's "Love is Blind Project" which offers scholarships to low-income families of preschool students.

Nice Buns!

Their juicy beef cheeseburgers aren't just for kids. For the grown-ups (or kids with really big appetites) the banjo burger (RMB 69) is as big as one's head. If you can finish one on your own, then hey, count us impressed!

MIAM MIAM 咪呀咪呀

Daily, 10am-10pm
B140 Phoenix City Galleria, 5 Shuxing
Xili, Chaoyang District
曙光西里甲5号凤凰IC购物中心
地下一层B140号
(8436 7501)



Baked to Pie Fection

This is what you call squash goals

By Mina Yan



The end of the year is holiday season, and the time for house parties, brunches, and any excuse to get together to wine and dine. As any good hostess can tell you, guests should never arrive empty-handed to a house party. One of the easiest things to bring is a good pie for dessert, and one can never have too many pies.

Nuo Hotel Beijing is known for their extravagant buffets, and pastry chef Nick Xu fills the N'Joy dessert station with at least 20 pies along with other cakes, candies, and tarts every week. Here he shares with *beijingkids* his all-time favorite, the classic pumpkin pie. One of the best things about this recipe is that once you've mastered the basics of pie making you can easily get creative and start coming up with your own variations of fillings.

INGREDIENTS (THE CRUST)

- 1,200g butter
- 600g icing sugar
- 300g egg
- 1,800g cake flour

INGREDIENTS (PIE FILLING)

- 450g pumpkin purée
- 75g egg yolk
- 50g egg white
- 80g sugar
- ½ cup whipping cream
- 2g ground cinnamon
- 2g nutmeg

INSTRUCTIONS (THE CRUST)

1. Combine all the ingredients together in a big mixing bowl and mix well.
2. Roll the dough out into sheets and let them rest in the fridge for about 15 minutes. This will make it easier to transfer into the baking pan.
3. Transfer the crust into the baking pan and make small holes on the bottom with a fork. This will allow heat to pass through the crust more evenly when baking.
4. Prep your pie crust by baking it for 15 minutes at 180 degrees C.

INSTRUCTIONS (THE FILLING)

1. Combine all your ingredients together and mix well.
2. Strain the pumpkin purée mixture into a large bowl. This will remove any chunks and give you a much smoother texture.
3. Fill the pumpkin purée into the pie crust.

**BAKING**

1. Bake at 160 degrees C for 30 minutes.
2. Depending on your oven the cooking time will vary. Check your pie after 30 minutes. If the pumpkin purée is still runny, put your pie back in the oven. Continue checking on it every 5 minutes until your pumpkin purée becomes solid.
3. Let your pie cool down to room temperature before slicing. Enjoy!

PRO TIPS:

1. To avoid a soggy bottom crust, prep the pie crust by baking just the crust at 180 degrees C for about 15 minutes and then letting it cool.
2. If you're using fresh pumpkin, "cook" the purée and then let it cool down before filling your pie crusts. Simply letting your pumpkin purée come to a bubble for about 5 minutes will remove any of the raw pumpkin flavor and give your pie more depth.



The trophy idea is originally from
Harrow Beijing art teacher
Karenann Matthews-John

Best Dad in the World!

Make an easy and fun trophy for your dad
with Harrow Beijing

By Wendy Xu

Getting a gift for dad doesn't have to be reserved for a single day in June. However, finding that perfect gift can be tricky. The typical "dad" gifts like watches, golf clubs, and iPads will always be there, but if you want to give something really special to a special dad, there's nothing more precious than a homemade gift of appreciation.

For this issue, 4-year-old Diego, along with his 2-year-old brother Carlos, make their very own trophy for their dad, David Mayers, Harrow Beijing Key Stage 1 Leader. Mayers proudly pointed out "[The trophy] is made of love"!



What You'll Need

- Paint
- Cups
- String
- Balloons
- Flour
- Scissors/box cutter knife
- A ruler
- A paint brush
- A pencil
- A marker pen
- Double-sided tape/glue
- Empty bottles

Instructions

Paint the white cup with the yellow paint from inside to outside and up to the brim.

Take the plastic bottle and cut off the upper portion using scissors. Paint the outside of the upper portion of the bottle and the rim of the bottle cup.

Take a piece of paper, and cut it twice lengthwise, to make two strips both 5-6 cm wide. Fold both strips of paper evenly 3 times.

Use a ruler and measure about 4 cm from the top and bottom; mark it with a pencil. Glue the strips of paper on both sides of the painted cup, so that they look like the handles of a trophy.

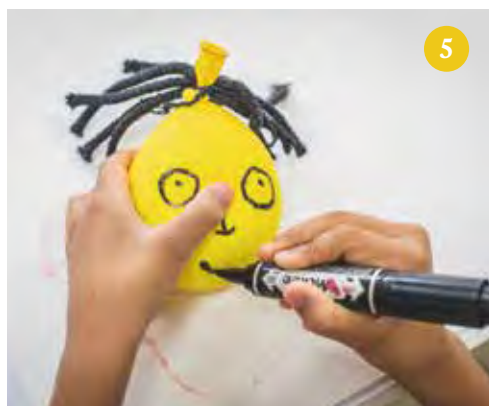
Put double-sided tape or glue on the lid of the painted bottle and stick it to the bottom of the cup.

Pour flour into an empty water bottle (to make it easier, use a funnel). Blow air into the balloon until it's about the size of a child's head, and place it over the lid of the bottle.

Pour the flour into the balloon, and let the air out. This is a very difficult step, so proceed with caution and adult supervision.

Tie the balloon into a knot after all the air is out. Glue or tie the string onto the lip of the balloon and place it into the cup. Put the balloon in the cup.

Paint your dad's face on the balloon and create the best trophy ever!



SELF-DEFENSE FAMILY

Training today for a safer tomorrow

By Drew Pittock

If you've ever found yourself in a threatening situation, you know how easy it is to become so disoriented — your heart pounding, thoughts crashing into one another — that you are, as the old cliché goes, paralyzed by fear. While the hope is that none of us ever have to experience something like this, the sad reality is that some of us will be thrust into these environments and situations. Nevertheless, through a mixture of training and preparedness, you and your children can be better equipped to come out on top of the scariest scenarios.

Whereas some martial arts are predicated on showmanship and aggression, Krav Maga is rooted in the idea of real-world situations and efficiency. Developed for the Israeli Defense Forces by a Hungarian-Israeli martial artist named Imi Lichtenfeld, Krav Maga prioritizes an ability to avoid life-threatening scenarios in the first place, and engage the attacker only after it becomes clear that exiting the situation is not an option.

At Warrior One in Chaoyang, Von Ng, head instructor and China Director of Krav Maga Global (KMG), uses the guiding tenets of Krav Maga to teach students how to thrive in a world that isn't always so predictable, and unfortunately, isn't always so kind.

Speaking to *beijingkids*, Ng describes KMG x Warrior One's approach as such: "For kids, our lessons always focus on dealing with issues that are relevant to their age groups. In addition, we teach them street smarts, how to deal with peer pressure and stress, and making good decisions about their safety. We also teach them how to deal with bullies versus how to deal with adult attackers."

He goes on to explain that, "Our classes will always include age-appropriate striking and defensive skills, mindset and practical knowledge — which includes situational awareness, violence prevention,

stranger danger, good decision-making, etc. — as well as simulation training, and progressive stress inoculation."

It was precisely this synthesis of intellectualism, creativity, and self-defense that caught Alessandro Rolandi's attention, and led his kids, Clara (13) and Amedeo (10), to enroll in classes at KMG x Warrior One.

"I was always interested in martial arts, but not in the combat form," Rolandi tells *beijingkids*. "When I read about Krav Maga, it had both an interesting pragmatic level, but also an interesting idea of exploring the psychology of defense and fear." After doing a bit of research, he came across KMG x Warrior One and decided to see if it was something his son and daughter might be interested in.

"When I saw they had the program for kids I came over and met [KMG x Warrior One owners] Von and Yonina. They were interested



in the idea of creating skills to be able to defend yourself, but also to work on the psychology of when one feels threatened or in a complex situation. This is what I was looking for in an approach for kids. On a practical level there's knowledge of the body, sensible knowledge, but their main idea is to deal with a difficult situation in a smart and creative way."

According to Rolandi, Clara and Amedeo are rather independent, and signing up for lessons was ultimately their decision. However that was a year ago, and to this day they happily wake up every Sunday morning, eager to learn new skills and techniques.

"I am passionate about spy movies, anime, and cartoons and so I enjoy Krav Maga because I feel a little bit as if I was learning skills and tricks of that kind," says Amedeo. "And the moves really work! You can defend yourself, hit, and run away."

When asked why she enjoys attending Krav Maga lessons, Clara states that, "Although it is physically hard, it is taught in such a way that it is fun and useful."

No matter the reasons why they participate, Rolandi has certainly noticed its effects. "I've seen that my kids have gotten attached. With both of my kids, you can see that energy coming out at the end, you know. They're happy, they're funny, even in the way they're dealing with the tough moves, it makes them laugh. So I like what it brings out in them."

When asked if he's noticed any change in his kids' confidence levels, Rolandi points out a unique distinction about his son and daughter. "My kids are untypical in the sense that my daughter is more interested in boy's things, my boy is interested in a more feminine world. So my daughter has always had sort of excessive energy. She's mainly intellectual, but she has this excessive energy, and I found that Krav Maga gives her a place to combine the two things."

As for his son, Rolandi mentions that, "he doesn't do the typical masculine things like playing soccer, so bringing him here, it was a way for him to explore something we, internationally, consider masculine. I told him you can learn different things, you know, it's intelligent, but it's not aggressive in that masculine way. So I think psychologically, it's very reassuring for my son and my daughter."

KMG x Warrior One has a range of classes including KMG Krav Maga, Boxing, Kickboxing, Kali, and more for every age and skill level. Contact them today, and protect yourself tomorrow.

KMG x Warrior One Contact Details

Address

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Chaoyang District

Phone number

15010514712 (Eng)
15010246131 (中文)

Email

info@kravmagabeijing.com
info@kmgchina.cn

Wechat

KMG_BJ



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Funny Dad Portraits

Students from the British School of Beijing, Shunyi create humorous impressions of their Dads based on distorted photos

By Wendy Xu



Adrianna T. (Hong Kong) Age 8

I like my Dad because he is always kind to me and looks after me. He is funny and makes me laugh.



Arnaud B. (Belgium) Age 7

I like my Dad because he plays with me and helps me with my homework. He tells funny jokes and always makes me laugh. He is always there to help me.



Sihyun J. (Korea) Age 7

I like my Dad because he plays with me and cooks me some lovely, yummy food. He also goes with me to the playground and gives me cakes.



Sophie L. (France) Age 7

I like my Dad because he is funny. He is nice to me all the time. He also plays the saxophone to me when I am sleeping.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING, SHUNYI



Michelle W. (Hong Kong) Age 7

I like my Dad because he is funny and he is kind. I like playing jokes and making cupcakes with him. I also like my little sister because she is nice.



Siena M. (USA) Age 7

I like my Dad because he is very funny and really kind. He always calls me his Little Princess. He likes riding his bike with me and giving me tickles. My Dad is always telling me jokes.



JuBeen P. (Korea) Age 8

My Dad is my best friend. He is always funny and happy. He likes animals too because they are cute. Do you know him?



Camilla C. (Canada) Age 7

I like my Dad because he is very kind and funny. He is always teaching me new things. I always watch TV with him. When I ask if I can watch TV, he says, "Yes you can watch as long as you do your homework."



Men of Learning

How a growing number of males are defining their place in early childhood education

By Drew Pittock



When Orlando Basco Jr. was a child growing up in the Philippines, he was surrounded by five sisters and a large, close-knit extended family. One of the kids' favorite activities was playing school, and Basco Jr. relished those days that he got to act out the role of teacher. Even after they had aged past the fun of make-believe, his sisters had brought new children into the world and, still fondly remembering those times from his youth, Basco Jr. reopened the 'classroom' for his nieces and nephews. So when it came time to choose a career, early childhood education (ECE) seemed like a natural fit.

"Back then I knew I had that potential to be a teacher," Basco Jr. tells *beijingkids*. "I grew up in a big family back home and I always loved being surrounded by the children because of their energy. They're full of life and that's very contagious for me."

However no amount of make-believe could have prepared Basco Jr. for the rewards that he would reap from a life in the classroom. It wasn't until six years ago, when he started working as an early-years

and pre-nursery practitioner at the British School of Beijing, Sanlitun (BSB Sanlitun) that he realized what the full impact of working with kids would be.

"Teaching is always a mutual process between the children and me," Basco Jr. says. "They learn from me, and without a doubt I learn from them, tremendously. I've learned how to be mindful about their emotions, because you never know what to expect with children. Sometimes there's better days and sometimes there's not, so I take cues according to their energy levels, and I make sure I try my very best to work on their well-being."

In speaking with Basco Jr., it's clear that he has both a sincere passion and true knack for working with young minds. As it happens though, his gender puts him in the minority of a sector that has long been dominated by females.

When most people think of an elementary school teacher, they imagine a soft spoken, rosy-cheeked woman standing in front of a blackboard, picture book in hand, leading the students in a lesson

about colors, animals, or the alphabet. And generally speaking, this image is spot on. A cursory dive into the statistics surrounding early childhood educators reveals a dearth of male teachers, worldwide.

In fact, according to figures from China's Ministry of Education, in 2017 there were about 2.43 million kindergarten teachers across the country, of which roughly two percent were male. Likewise, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, among the 1.57 million kindergarten and elementary school teachers working in the United States in 2018, male employment also hovered around two percent. And across Europe, the numbers fluctuate between one and three percent.

These are numbers that Basco Jr. himself can attest to. "From my primary years all the way through university, most staff were women. And most people would think that this job is meant for women, because they have more of a maternal instinct. But for me teaching is not just a job, it's a passion, and I've never been clearer about what I wanted to do."

It's interesting to note that in recent years, global conversations have focused on empowering women to take up roles in those spaces that have historically been occupied by men, and for good reason. Just about every industry and locus of power, from technology to business and entertainment to finance, has been a virtual 'boys club,' either completely off limits to women, or extremely difficult for them to break into.

And while these conversations are long overdue, there's a flip side to it that is not being discussed as much; that is, the role of men in fields that have traditionally been dominated by women. Various careers such as flight attendant and nurse have generally been the domain of women, and men who wished to enter these spaces have faced their own uphill battles fraught with prejudice and discrimination.

It's clear that the same double standards which preclude women from climbing the corporate ladder also keep men from pursuing careers in elementary education. Whereas women are seen as being too compassionate, nurturing, or emotional to lead a high-powered business team, men are seen as too brusque, pragmatic, and logical to lead a classroom of young learners. Ultimately, what history and

society tells us is that men and women possess different qualities, and thus they can only excel in different positions.

Writing in *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, researchers Yuwei Xu and Manjula Waniganayake published an article titled, "An Exploratory Study of Gender and Male Teachers in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers in China." Their report sheds light on both the societal and internal feedback loops that operate outside of and within men, two forces that effectively stop them from entering ECE. On surveying early childhood education centers (ECEC) in China specifically, they summarized their findings as such:

"Reflecting the globally recognized historical construction of ECEC as a 'feminized' job...employment in ECEC centers in China has also long been regarded as a woman's occupation, making a career as an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) an unattractive option for men. More importantly, Chinese society still sees men as the main breadwinners of families, and the low wages paid to ECTs is a significant reason preventing men from seeking a career in the ECEC sector."

Similarly, speaking to Margaret Paton at GetEduca.com, Dr. Martyn Mills-Bayne, an ECE lecturer at the University of South Australia boils down the lack of men in the field to two main factors; "it's women's work and men are not 'designed to work with young children,' and the breadwinner argument, meaning men can't afford to earn as little as the sector pays." All of which suggests that these gender imbalances are truly a global issue.

Nevertheless, despite the stigmatization and social pressures that he could've faced going into ECE, Basco Jr. knew there was no other job for him. "I don't want to put any label on who is better regarding teaching and education, because I think you can be anything you want to. If you're very passionate and determined with your goals and aspirations in life, then you can represent your individuality in any field."

Thanks to men like Basco Jr. and others, the perception of what an early years teacher should be is changing, and future generations will undoubtedly be better for it. Ilich Granados is the Kindergarten Integrated Specialist and Enrichment Activities Team Leader at Beijing City International School (BCIS), and he believes that a gender balance



in ECEs is an integral part of a child's development.

"In my opinion, having a balance of role models in the early years centers allow children to develop a better understanding of who they are and who they want to be," says Granados. "Children begin to see patterns of behaviors in adults around them, and they start to adopt these behaviors based on their identity."

At the same time, he understands that being a man in a field otherwise devoid of them does require a bit of contextualizing. "I see myself as a teacher who is trying to create fun, meaningful, and lifelong learning experiences for my students. However, as one of the few male role models in the school, I also think that I have the responsibility of showing that men can be nurturing and caring."

And it would seem as though CISB and its parents agree. According to Granados, "I have been lucky to be surrounded by supportive and encouraging colleagues. Thankfully, I have never experienced any pushback or negative responses from anyone. On the contrary, I have felt that the parents at the [early childhood center] appreciate having me as their children's teacher."

Within the realm of ECE, one area that has been reserved for men is the physical education department. The world over, men are regarded as being more sporty, brave, and strong. While on some level, these stereotypes are beginning to wane, they have long been a pervasive force in elementary schools. Even still, as the tides of modernity continue to change, so too has the awareness that men carry with them as they navigate social and professional spaces.

As the PE teacher for kindergarten through grade two and Elemen-

tary Athletic Director at the Canadian International School of Beijing (CISB), Matthew Thompson takes care to be mindful of those traits that are traditionally associated with masculinity.

"I feel like being a male kind of has a connotation of being a little more stiff in a teaching environment, almost not welcoming," says Thompson. "It's just building those relationships at a young age so they know male educators are approachable as well, it's not just a female field."

Even in the gym or on the pitch, where a man could get away with being a bit more gruff, Thompson deeply understands the lasting affects he can have on his students. "I try to watch my tone of voice, certainly. And body language is everything. So if a kid is doing something, and it's not the expectation I have, I've caught myself and gotten upset with myself when I take that deep breath in front of the kid or roll my eyes, doing any of that body language that is dismissive. So I'm very conscious of that and I try not to."

All of this is reminiscent of Thompson's own time in grade school, which he remembers as being ruled by adults that were steeped in rigor and inflexibility. Even then, he understood that the best way to inspire and nurture children was to leave room for failure and let them learn from those mistakes. What's more, this disillusionment, or realization that something in the system wasn't working, is what led him to pursue a career in ECE.

"When I was a junior or senior I felt that things were very rigid, and that people were dealing with very direct instruction with kids, not letting them explore or come to their own conclusions, I felt like that was a very real thing," Thompson remembers. "And I was like, okay, this is a place where I could actually create some change."

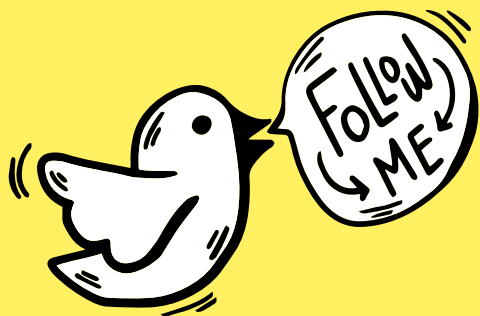
And at CISB, he's found an infrastructure, support system, and leadership team that feels the same way. "We are an IB school, so that allows for a lot of inquisition and open-ended questions, and giving the kids an opportunity to explore, collaborate, and come to their own conclusions. When I talk about people being very rigid, everybody wants to move so fast cause they have the next expectation to meet, and that's not what's best for kids or for learning."

Whereas most people would think of the PE department as a place for developing motor skills and a time for kids to run around and expend some energy in the middle of a school day, Thompson understands there's a lot more to be learned on the court, or sometimes, when a kid storms off it.

Aware that his frustration will in turn frustrate his students, especially if they're failing to grasp a certain lesson, Thompson brings it back to those traits that are generally associated with uncaring, cold, and calculating machismo. "This is that old style of PE, the male rigidity, if you just yell at a student [who's walking off the court], and say 'hey come back here or else you're gonna get a zero,' the kid's never gonna respond to that. So when a kid gets upset like that, it's giving them the opportunity to be upset. It is developmentally appropriate to be upset if you can't do something. The trick is when we can't do something, we ask how we can come at it from a different approach, and do better in the future."

When you strip away all the sports equipment and lessons though, Thompson sees himself as a role model and a caretaker more than anything else, both for boys and girls. "At this young age, and with mental health globally right now, it is letting them know they're safe and that being a man is not a rigid thing."





POST LESS, PARENT MORE!

How social media warps
perceptions of our lives

By Ember Swift



Mommy, why don't you take videos of us?" This is my son, skateboard tucked up under one arm in our compound's courtyard, a look of curious judgment on his nearly-six-year-old face. His helmet is askew. His knees and elbows are bulging with protector pads, wispy bangs damp with skateboard exertion.

Is this a complaint?

I've just arrived back from a job to pick my kids up from their grandparents' care. Apparently, their father had just left from a spontaneous visit. (I'm always happy to hear that he's made time for them.)

"Daddy always takes lots of video and photos and then he puts them on his WeChat so everyone can see them!"

A request?

My day has been a kaleidoscope of freelance jobs and my band's music recording work. Shortly I'll take the kids back home, make them dinner, help them with homework, get them in bed, and then after the completion of the dishes, the life of a single mom continues into the evening with audio editing work until I'm too tired to stare at the screen. I am their primary caregiver, followed by their grandparents and then random visits from their dad who now lives across town. With this schedule, who has time for video posting?

Social media has seriously skewed our perceptions. It used to be that busy people were just unavailable. Eventually, the result of their hard work was revealed in completed projects or successful benchmarks. But now, in this social media day and age, a busy person is judged by how actively they post about their accomplishments. If you post all the time, you're seen as busy. In fact, in my music career, it's simply part of the job to promote and advertise gigs or albums or videos—and, frankly, it gets in the way. The very act of posting itself interrupts the work's progress! See the catch-22? When you're authentically busy, there's no time for social media!

The same goes for parenting. Social media has created an

environment in which parental engagement is judged by the frequency of posts that feature the kids. Lots of videos and photos showing a parent with their kids proves engagement. Infrequent posts of this nature suggest parental absence.

"I do take videos sometimes, honey," I say to my son, trying not to reveal defensiveness. "It's just that mommy doesn't have a lot of extra time to..." but he is already over it. He's on his board again and rolling away. My daughter yells for me to watch her do a crouching move. I smile and clap.

You see, to me, an engaged life with both work and kids is not something that can be proven via social media. It's proven by living it, by being it. We're all tempted to view WeChat or Facebook as a reflection of a person's work or family's dynamic, but it's quite often an inverted view. Even in my case, the majority of my "WeChat Moments" are about my music, but the genuine majority of my life moments are about my kids.

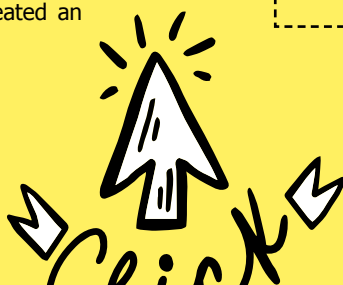
My son's initial question? I'll go with: observation.

So, I lift up my phone and take a video of my two kids skateboarding. I'll never post it. Extra time to edit it for length or add subtitles (etc.) is a luxury I can't afford – too many other important things to do! But, it's a "life moment" that has at least been documented. And I know that this video contains more than just a record; it's filled with a mother's fierce devotion to her family, regardless if it's ever shared beyond the confines of my mobile phone.



About the Writer

Ember Swift is a Canadian musician and writer who has been living in Beijing since late 2008. She has a daughter called Echo (国如一) and a son called Topaz or "Paz" (国世龙).



RAISING BEIJING

Dads from different cultural backgrounds talk about staying home to look after the kids

By Andrew Killeen and Jolie Wu



Tim Coghlan grew up in Australia, but always wanted to live in China. He's been coming to China for over 20 years, and it was here that he met Hong Kong born Enoch Li. They now have two children: their daughter Riviane is 5, a student at the French International School (Lycée Français International Charles-de-Gaulle de Pékin, LFIP), while 2-year-old Arlen attends Little Park Nursery. Coghlan works freelance and looks after the children, while Li is Managing Director of Bearapy, a social enterprise promoting mentally healthy workplaces. As a family they like to stay active and creative, and enjoy skateboarding and Chinese calligraphy, along with other arts and crafts.

What did you do before you became a stay-at-home dad? What made you decide to be a stay-at-home dad?

I worked in the fashion and retail industry – mostly consulting on projects to help luxury brands enter and expand in the China market. I first stopped working a full-time corporate job to experiment with being an entrepreneur and to have some more time and flexibility for the children. As it turned out, around the time my son was born, my wife's company started growing faster, demanding she focus on it and travel more internationally. I also wanted to spend more time with the children as I think their formative years are very precious and few have the opportunity to be with their kids full-time. And since we had decided early on that at least one parent would be with the children during their early years, with my wife's travel schedule, we decided that I could become a stay-at-home dad and take on consulting work when the projects suited me.

What does being a stay-at-home dad require of your wife?

Although I'm the main "stay-at-home" partner we still divide the labor of child raising. I take

care of most of the real-time physical things: meal times, outdoor play, naps and bedtime, getting ready for school, going to the doctor etc. My wife does most of the children's administration like school registrations, buying clothes, and food online – and generally making sure everything is "in order". My wife is an entrepreneur, and me being a stay-at-home dad without the income and security benefits of a full-time corporate job has actually put more pressure on her to work harder and succeed with her own business. This has also put a strain on the family.

What are your favorite things about staying home with the kids?

Mainly that I'm in charge of them having fun! My other favorite thing, I think, is just being part of their everyday life, knowing intimately everything about them and me being an anchor in their life. This gives me the confidence that in any situation I can manage with them on my own, and allows us to do fun adventures like traveling overseas, just me and the kids (some other dads I've encountered can't even change nappies and can't function on their own at all!)

What pressures do you face as a stay-at-home dad?

As above, not being in full-time work and my wife being an entrepreneur has put some financial pressure on the family. There is also the pressure of having to maintain a "story" of what I'm doing to fit with society's notion of what men my age (40+) are supposed to be doing, which is "working". Also, it's affected my social circle. I do work on freelance consulting projects, but a lot of that is remote work. So the circle of people I am in contact with day-to-day is mostly moms, ays, or other child carers who are generally women, and so I miss the company of mentors and male peers in a professional context.

What has changed you permanently about being a stay-at-home dad?

I've become less self-absorbed and concerned about careers and titles and owning stuff as an indicator of personal worth and success. It's also brought back my creativity and resourcefulness, by having to think up fun creative adventures to do with the kids – like making dinosaurs out of cardboard boxes, or finding which parks have the best rocks to climb on.

How has being a stay-at-home dad changed your relationship with your wife? And your kids?

The relationship with the kids has grown stronger, and as mentioned I know them both intimately from being their primary carer. As a couple, our marriage and relationship faces the same pressures of living in Beijing and having to make decisions on lifestyle, education, housing, health, and cross-cultural family values, just like all other families here regardless of nationality or which partner takes care of the kids.

What do you have planned for the future? Do you want to stay home with the kids for as long as possible?

It was very important for us to have a parent as a full time carer for the first few formative years of the children's lives – to help establish strong parental bonds and build all of their habits the way we wanted (rather than outsource to an ayi or grandparents). So, now we have done that, and our son is now older and going to nursery everyday, I'm about to go back to full-time corporate work.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TIM COGHLAN

Matthew Lin and his wife Ann both graduated from Tsinghua University. Matthew is a hotel designer, leading a project team, while Ann has started her own business for which she is closing the third round of financing. As she is very busy and under great pressure, while Matthew's work is less stressful and his time freer, he takes care of their two children. Their older son Martin was brought up by his grandmother before he went to primary school. Now he attends sixth grade in Beijing Shijia primary school, where he likes to play baseball. The second son Shawn studies in Laimeng International Nursery. His parents say he is a true Capricorn, "serious, just like a German"!



What did you do before you became a stay-at-home dad? What made you decide to be a stay-at-home dad?

I majored in environmental art design. Since graduation from university in 2000, I have been engaged in the design of large-scale public buildings. After 2009, I began to focus on hotel design. Both my wife and I were very busy with our work, so we entrusted our eldest son to his grandmother until the second grade of primary school. In the end though, the grandparents spoiled their grandchild, making it hard for him to focus. He became near sighted very young because of watching TV too much. When we had a second child, I was determined to take fewer projects or less money, and bring up the second baby. At the same time we took our older son back into our home and tried to correct the bad habits formed in childhood little by little.

What does being a stay-at-home dad require of your wife/partner?

I fully support to my wife's entrepreneurial projects, which, if successful, would also give us the ideal lifestyle. At the time we decided on a startup, we analyzed and thought my wife would be more suitable for the business. And we decided she would focus on work while I focused on family. Her career can improve childrens' nutritional well-being on a national scale, which is more important than my design work. So I hope she can take care of their health, and try to complete this work and achieve her goals! She can entrust the children to me, and not need to worry.

What are your favorite things about staying home with the kids?

Reading books. I hope to be a learning dad; a good family atmosphere is the most important thing.

What pressures do you face as a stay-at-home dad?

I think it is the conflicting demands of my design work and the time spent with my children, which leads to the pressure. It's a lot better now that my elder son is a big kid and I don't have to be there all the time (or we could say a boy his age doesn't want dad to be around all the time and needs his space and distance from his parents). Our second son has developed a good habit of self-discipline since childhood, and he can study independently. I can spend more and more time on work.

What has changed you permanently about being a stay-at-home dad?

Being with my children has brought me a lot of emotions that I had never experienced before. It was my sons who gave me a new perspective on how to love and be loved. Being a good father, going through the process of raising children, has helped me to become a more complete person, to constantly improve myself, and to see the meaning of life. Because I let go of my desire for the future and did not ask for anything in return, I really enjoyed raising my children.

How has being a stay-at-home dad changed your relationship with your wife/partner? And your kids?

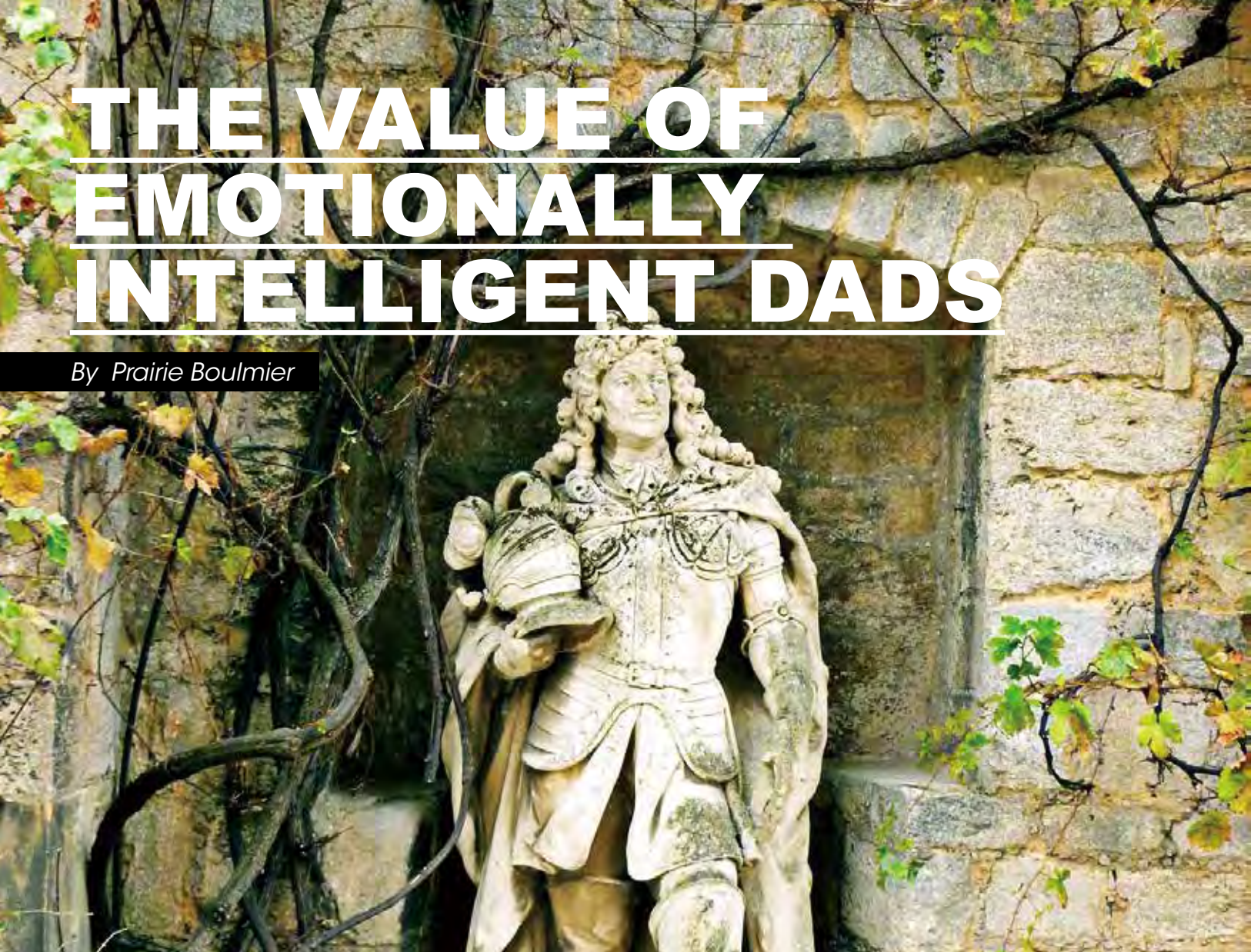
Being a father spending all his time caring for children, brings the role of father totally back to the family. My wife is envied by her friends and we have a stronger relationship. In addition, it's good for raising boys when their dad takes charge of family things. I also grew from boyhood, and I know better the boys' needs and changes in every stage. It's easier to become their friend, mentor, and example.

What do you have planned for the future? Do you want to stay home with the kids for as long as possible?

As my children grow up, I will eventually fully return to my career, but I will make a clear distinction between my career and my family. Time that belongs to the family will never be usurped by the career. An enterprising father gives a clear and natural example to a child who has left infancy. Let them build positive ideals, be able to withstand setbacks, take responsibility, and constantly strive to create their own careers and future.

THE VALUE OF EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT DADS

By *Prairie Boulmier*



It's the 21st Century. This means so many things to so many people. Our world has become increasingly global, and with that comes many challenges and opportunities. While the issues around global trade are hot in the news right now, there is also significant impact from the trade and sharing of ideas, values, and culture. These are the softer, more personal impacts of global culture. With the prevalence of the #metoo movement in the US, along with seemingly endless revelations of sexual harassment and abuse, men's role in the public eye is changing. Behaviors that may have been considered acceptable even ten years ago are no longer brushed off today. Men everywhere are reconsidering their choices and responses to women's concerns, not only wanting to ensure their own political or business interests, but to maintain credibility and respect within their social circles. This has required some shifts in what we, as a society, deem acceptable male behavior. While this may be an example on the extreme end of things, it's a good indication of how society's views on men's roles are changing.

The #metoo movement can be seen to ask men to be more sensitive, more careful, and more responsive to the needs of women. Similarly, parenting roles are changing. As women take on more powerful roles in business and politics, men are asked to step up and be more involved in the care of their children. This includes basic things such as home care, help with school and extra curricular activities, but also increasingly points to the need for healthy emotional responsiveness to

children and their ever-changing needs. While the tasks of daily living may be challenging enough for many men to add to their already busy work lives, the call for emotional intelligence is even more harrowing.

Traditionally, men have had much different roles as parents. Living by the "Male Code" has previously been an unspoken expectation. Men were expected to be strong providers, to be emotionally stoic and to secure for themselves positions of power and dominance. Men who displayed strong or tender emotions were discouraged and seen as weak, or even defective members of society. Now we ask them to behave in these ways. Author and family counselor Michael Gurian wrote a stunningly revelatory book in 2006, *The Wonder of Boys*, in which he explored the specific characteristics of boys and the shocking realities that many boys face growing up.

First, he argues that boys are physiologically different from girls and that we must safeguard against "enmeshing male development with a female culture in transition". Males are hard-wired for certain behaviors, he asserts. For instance, their higher levels of testosterone naturally lead boys to be more physically assertive, competitive, and risk-taking. He also points to differences in brain development between boys and girls. These differences impact the needs of boys and how they learn best. For instance, boys seem to benefit from spatial orientation, or seeing objects moving through space. They also need more space to move in than girls and seem to intrinsically need more deep-muscle contact and stimulation than girls. And boys are motivated

PHOTOS: PIXABAY

by having a mission to complete, not just expectations of pro-social or responsiveness.

Gurian also presents some of the gender-specific realities that boys face, and these facts may be surprising. Boys are more likely than girls to be victims of physical and sexual abuse. They have a much higher rate of ADHD diagnosis. They are more likely to commit acts of violence, to become socially or religiously radicalized, and to have problems with addiction. Clearly, in our push to advance the rights and freedoms of girls, Gurian asserts, we have forgotten to care for our boys and their specific needs. I present this context on the reality of boys to highlight the tremendous challenge for boys as they become men and take on new roles of fatherhood. Asking men to take on these roles must go hand in hand with an understanding of their needs from the beginning. Yes, we need to raise boys who are cared for according to their specific needs. We also need to support men in ways that are specific to their needs, with an awareness of what the reality of growing up male has been.

With all this in mind, let's look at what we are asking of fathers today. Fathers are being asked to take on increasing roles in the care and upbringing of their children, including emotional availability. They are being asked to share vulnerability with their partners and children. They are tasked with not just giving advice and imparting wisdom, but with being active and good listeners, to demonstrate empathy, to show physical affection, and to let go of their traditional role of control. It's a daunting list. And the list is actually fraught with challenges that bump up against elements of the "Male Code" that many of our fathers grew up with as children themselves. Let's take a look at some of these requests and the challenges that come along with them.

Emotional Availability and Vulnerability. Being in close quarters with children means bearing witness to their emotions, which can often be quite intense. As many boys were raised with the unfortunate belief that showing and expressing emotions was off-limits, they may feel quite uncomfortable when faced with the emotions of their own children. Some mental health professionals refer to this situation as "hearing the shark music", remember the movie *Jaws*? Okay, I think I just gave away my age. I remember it. That scary music that plays when you know the shark is about to appear and attack in *Jaws* is what we are talking about here. Perhaps everything is going fine. You are eating a snack with your kids. Everyone is happy. Then suddenly, an argument breaks out and there is crying, yelling – big emotions. From some unseen place, that building sound of panic starts to flood in. Mom is gone...what to do? Someone has to take action, and that someone is you!

Using the metaphor of shark music can be quite helpful in understanding the panic feelings of strong emotions in children. It actually points to a physiological process known as stress response. Basically, when we feel unsafe or under attack, our brain reacts by releasing stress hormones into the bloodstream. Cortisol, testosterone and other hormones are released. The gut shuts down, giving an uneasy feeling in the stomach. Our heart rate goes up, palms start to sweat. We are literally getting ready to fight off a shark or run for our lives. And there is no difference in humans, physiologically, between a real shark and a perceived shark (big emotions). With this backdrop in mind, it may be unsurprising that some men simply cannot find a way to deal with the emotions at hand.

So, what's the solution? Experts in childhood mental health suggest that we learn to hear the shark music before it reaches a crescendo. If we know the shark music is coming, we can do things to calm ourselves and our children. The first part, however, is hearing the shark music. If it's already gotten pretty intense, it's probably a good idea not to talk about the situation right now. Brains in stress response can't think logically as the prefrontal cortex (problem-solving region) shuts down in deference to survival mode. So this is a great time to actually follow that flow. Going outside for some exercise is a great

option. Those hormones need to be worked out, and there is no better way than by moving. A lot. Even jumping jacks are a great immediate solution. Getting into a safe space is another good strategy. It might be an opportune moment to jump back into bed and read a book to calm everyone (including dad) down. The issue can be resolved later, when everyone is calm. And drinking water. Drinking water is a terrific way to reset emotions and help the elimination of the stress hormones. Although it might seem strange at first, getting into the habit of recognizing the shark music and following the body's response is a great strategy to dealing with strong emotions. Later on, you can pick through the emotions, talk out the problem and be sane about it.

Emotional availability is not the only skill here. Fathers need to learn that it's okay to be vulnerable. This means that it's actually healthy and helpful for fathers to show their own emotions to their children and to model how to deal with those emotions in a way that moves things forward. It's just probably a good idea to wait until the shark music passes.

Active Listening. Part of the "Male Code" includes the image of the wise and knowing father, imparting their wisdom and guidance to the young. While this is an important role, it needs to include active listening. Rather than the all-knowing dad-in-residence, fathers can try to emulate the role of the noble king. (Remember the discussion of boys needing a mission? It goes for dads too. So here it is.) The noble king shares his wisdom and experience when he has it, but he is also a good listener and knows when simply hearing the children out is the only necessary action. The noble king does not need to have the answers to every problem. He needs to know how to hear the problem and give empathy, thus instilling in his children the sense that he truly understands the struggles they are facing.

Physical Affection. Another challenge facing fathers today could be the need their children have for physical touch and soothing. It may be an old cultural norm that fathers who show ample physical affection are weak or lack masculinity, it's something that children very much need. In fact, fatherly affection can prevent children from having trouble with aggression and impulse control. Boys especially need hugs, high fives and other nurturing from fathers, as they historically have had difficulty learning to self-soothe.

Letting Go. Parents who want to have lasting healthy relationships with their children need to cultivate the active skill of releasing control. Another keystone in the "Male Code", letting go of control can be challenging for fathers. However, children grow up and become adults, and that is when it may become abundantly apparent that we truly do not control them. Letting go of control and allowing children to step into their identity with support is an essential part of setting up a close and loving relationship into adulthood.

Honor the Mother. Women have traditionally carried the major burden of raising children and this still rings true today. No matter the circumstances, it's important for fathers to recognize the deep contributions and efforts that mothers make to their children's upbringing. It's vital that children see their mothers as the heroes they are, and that their fathers also value and recognize the contributions of their female counterparts. This is truly an act worthy of the noble king.

As we think about the changing roles of men and society in general, having a clear road-map about where we want to get to is important. But these changes can't happen overnight. Many fathers have very real patterns and childhood experiences that are challenging to break through, especially if they were not given the emotional tools by their own fathers. It calls us to be patient – as mothers who support fathers, and for fathers themselves. Even when we try to change patterns, there are a lot of bumps along the way as past experiences and learned behaviors pop up. This has to be okay to move things forward for us all. Together we can begin to shed the old image of the father in-line with the "Male Code", and instead begin to see the new image of the noble king emerge.





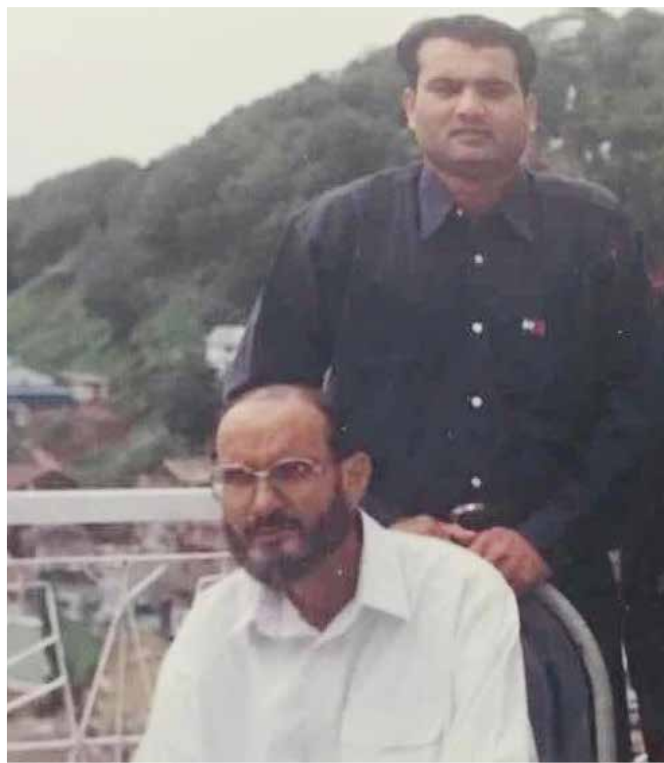
Fatherly Wisdom

for the ages

Here we've collected some of the finest fatherly advice from the expat community in Beijing – a testament to the wisdom of our beloved dads

By Drew Pittock

Let's be real, growing up is hard. It's a tumultuous time that tosses us about like tiny ships in open waters. Luckily though, we have our dads, standing with all the brilliance of a lighthouse on the shore, a guiding light to help us navigate the unknown. By following their lead, we might just stand a chance of safely sailing into adulthood.



"I remember when my father taught me about life and how to live in this world, he said, 'Be positive, polite, generous, and think good thoughts for others.' He intimated to me, if we think good for others, good will happen to us. I use his advice in my life and I have become a very successful individual. That's one thing I still remember, and I'm very proud of my father."

Dr. Sajid A on what he learned from his father, Khursheed A



"Many things in this world can be bought and sold, but never your reputation."

Tao W's advice to his son, Michael W



"Never get too high in victory, and never get too low in defeat."

Yong W's advice to his son, Ken L



“Never be scared to try something different, just because you’re scared to make a mistake. If you never make a mistake because you’re scared, you will only learn slower, so try something different and see if it works. If it works, then great! But if it doesn’t work, just make sure you learn from your mistake and do it better next time. Mistakes can always turn into a positive as long as you learn.”

Mozzie H’s advice to his son, Tim H



“Never turn your back on the sea.”

Norman M’s advice to his son, Andrew M



“Always bring an extra suit with shoes. Always pack the night before. And give a strong hand-shake, it counts more than you think.”

Steve H’s advice to his son, Rob H



“My father was teaching English as a foreign language in the French education system. He also loved traveling. One bit of advice that I received from him was to explore the world and to really value the importance of learning foreign languages. That’s what inspired me to live abroad, as I have been an expat for 19 years. And that’s why I studied two languages besides French in High School. I also understood from my father that education is one of the best ways to empower yourself. No one in his family had graduated from university before, but he believed that higher education would set him up for success.”

Leila R on what she learned from her father, Martin M



"Guy Tai"? Not I

The life of a male "trailing spouse"

By Andrew Killeen

Beijing's international community is smart and cosmopolitan, and we often like to think of ourselves as being above prejudices and old-fashioned ideas about gender and ethnicity. But there's one aspect in which we resemble a more traditional society: the realm of the "trailing spouse," those of us who came to China because of our partner's jobs or careers rather than our own. Almost without exception these are women accompanying their husbands, and the few men who do it are often given the derogatory label of "guy tai" (a play on taitai, the Chinese for wife). As one of those rare exceptions, I decided to find out just how rare I am.

Research turned up no reliable data on

what percentage of trailing spouses might be male. One expat blog enthusiastically labeled it "a growing trend," then produced a single lone example to interview. Another divided us, alarmingly, into "PIPs" and "POPs" (Previously Important People and Previously Ordinary People), but offered no data of any kind to justify its classifications. So I turned instead, as one does for everything in China, to WeChat.

Beijing Dads Group is one of the liveliest WeChat groups in the city, with nearly 400 dads sharing information, jokes, and thoughts on raising kids in the capital. However I was only able to find one other dad who would admit to being a trailing spouse. Based on this unscientific example, it looks like less than half

of one percent of international dads came to China for their wife's work.

"I knew it was for the best to move to Beijing, so I had absolutely no problems with it," says Rob Hackett. "I'm pretty easy-going, while my wife can be quite intense, so we make a good pair in these kinds of decisions."

It was not the first time he had moved for his wife's career.

"I met my wife in 2000, when we were both working at a startup in San Diego," Hackett tells me. "She was a data scientist and I was a sales engineer. She had recently graduated with her PhD in Electrical Engineering, and I was studying for the GMAT to go to business school. My wife stuck with the company after its acquisition and was offered a promotion

at another company in Orange County, CA. I had just finished business school, so it was a good time to move. I landed a job in the in-flight entertainment industry and have been pretty involved with that through to 2018. My wife left her company in 2014 and started her own business going back and forth to China. Eventually she received funding in 2015 and asked us all to move to Beijing."

Modern technology means that moving with your partner doesn't have to mean the end of your own career.

"I left my position in 2016," Hackett says, "but was able to secure another with an American company to work remotely at home from 2016 to 2018. They needed me to return to California every summer, so it was a win for everyone. My wife travels five days a week, so I was the primary caretaker from the beginning. My contract expired near the end of 2018, so I have been a full-time stay-at-home dad ever since."

For me, on the other hand, the move meant giving up a business I had spent three years building from scratch. When I met my wife, she was working in skills development while I managed projects supporting homeless and vulnerable families. We both then made mid-life career changes: my wife retrained as a teacher, while the publication of my first novel allowed me to follow my lifelong dream of making a living as a writer.

I earned my money teaching creative

writing in a variety of settings, mentoring aspiring writers and taking on roles such as "writer-in-residence" at an art gallery. It was fulfilling work, and I had finally built enough income streams to make a viable living from it. So why leave it all behind?

The reason was that I was working so hard at being a writer that I had no time for actually writing anything creative myself. So when my wife suggested she look for work in another country, so that our kids could have the experience of living in a different culture for a couple of years, I jumped at the chance.

"It's like you've got a two-year writing retreat," a novelist friend said enviously.

However, being a "guy tai" was not the easy life I had imagined. Having always worked, I found myself after a few months bored, broke, and seriously considering returning home to England. I was saved by a colleague of my wife's who was on the Parent Board of *beijingkids*.

"Isn't your husband a writer?" she said. "They're always looking for freelancers."

Four years later, we are still here, and I am still working for *beijingkids*.

Hackett too recognizes the important role work plays in maintaining our self-esteem and sanity.

"I really miss the social support structure that full-time work provides," he tells me. "I belong to a few WeChat groups that really help out in this regard and have a couple of

close friends in Beijing that I see regularly. I recently had surgery on my leg and was really nervous about having an operation done in China. The people I know in my WeChat groups really helped to alleviate my anxiety and made everything a whole lot better."

I ask him how people react when he tells them he's a stay-at-home dad.

"The responses I get from people vary quite a bit," he says. "My boys went to a Chinese bilingual school for the first two years, and I think I was the first dad that ever helped on field trips or in the classrooms. My school friends became the Chinese moms, and they venerated me as some kind of saint. They thought it was great that a dad took an active role, with one of them going so far as to shaming her husband in front of me. I had to come to the poor guy's defense."

Not everyone responds as positively though.

"The older (55 plus) Chinese men at the gym love giving me a hard time about it. 'How's the boss?' and 'Did you join my wife's flower club yet?' were some of my favorites. The younger Chinese (under 30) are similar to Americans and Europeans, who are completely indifferent about it. Even the ones who are super curious about American culture just assume it's 'what's best for the family'. I think it really exemplifies the growth and global understanding that the next generation of Chinese have about the world."



PHOTO CREDITS: ROB HACKETT, PIXELS



But his choice is supported by the most important stakeholders of all.

"I asked my boys if they would rather have daddy or mommy at home and they both said 'daddy', but I'm pretty sure it's simply because I have grown to be more patient with them (which wasn't always the case). I remember asking them when they were younger and my mother-in-law spent a lot of time with them, and their answer was 'Grandma'."

I put the question to my kids, to be greeted with bewildered shrugs. They see nothing odd or exceptional about the situation at all.

"When you talk about it with your friends at school, what do they say?" I persisted.

"Dad, do you seriously think we sit around with our friends talking about you and mom and your jobs?" my 13-year-old responded, not unreasonably.

"Well, would you rather have Mom at home than me?" I asked, and this time received a definite "no!"

"At least we get to eat good food with you," my 10-year-old said.

"Are you saying," my wife asked with dangerous sweetness, "that I don't make good food?"

"No, you make great food Mom!" he said, then added quietly, "as long as you like salad."

Although there is little research into the needs of male trailing spouses, I found a 2010 doctoral thesis by Anne M. Braseby of Florida

International University entitled, *Adaptation of Trailing Spouses: Does Gender Matter?*

"Adjustment is harder for male trailing spouses," writes Dr. Braseby, "because psychologically they still feel the need to earn money and be a token breadwinner which inhibits them taking on new identities, but easier because they do not need such a strong support system, and they do not feel the guilt of leaving the responsibilities to their families back home."

Men were less likely to get involved in voluntary work, she found. While women saw it as giving them identity and purpose, men tended to perceive it as "doing menial work for free". Perhaps most importantly however, she found that men had always made the decision to become a trailing spouse by active choice, whereas women often felt pressured into it by social expectation. So men were better able to create the "new identity" required to survive and thrive as an expat, because they embraced it enthusiastically.

This insight gave me a new perspective on the "expat widow" of myth, often mocked and envied for their leisured lifestyle. I certainly found that idleness leads to frustration and unhappiness; how much worse this would be if you had given up your support networks reluctantly, out of a sense of obligation.

The traditional expat though is usually here for only a few years before returning to their

home country; a pattern which is less and less common, as ever fewer foreigners come to Beijing on postings from big corporations. I asked Hackett what the future held for his family.

"We have had a few discussions about the future," he said. "I definitely want to go back to work, as I am slowly exhausting the accomplishments of my hobbies and desires. The debate will be, do I work in China or do I work in the US? Mommy has a very important role with the kids, but at the same time her parents would like to see them more often, and the kids want to visit their friends in America. No matter where I work, someone is going to have to make some sacrifices."

For my family, we have decided that this will be our last year in China. Having come for two years and stayed for five, we will be ready for a change by next summer. However we are not keen to return to Brexit Britain, a country racked by anxiety and division. Instead we're going to look for a new adventure somewhere else in the world. I worry of course about what I'll do when we get there; sitting around getting bored is not an option, and I may not be lucky enough to find an employer as good as *beijingkids* has been. Whatever the future holds though, I will be entering into it as a matter of choice not compulsion, ready to adapt and make the best of it... Not trailing, but striding.



BEING BEIJING'S DRAG DADDY

By Jack Smith

Location: Red Dog

PHOTOS: UNI YOU

My name is Elizabeth Stride. I'm a 34 year old public servant, drag queen, and father of twins. Honestly, it's not that big of a deal.

Drag was something I discovered late in life – I've always loved to perform, but RuPaul's Drag Race showed me how diverse and talented drag queens actually were and I knew I'd found a calling. I felt the same way when our kids were born. I love drag and parenting, and have spent the past three years bringing the two together.

Back when Elizabeth first emerged, I was living with my long-term partner (now husband), and drag took a while for him to get used to – for a brief time, he thought my desire to perform in drag meant I might be a trans woman. But gradually he did his research and, as an artist himself, came to appreciate drag – as I do – as an art form. He sets very high standards for Elizabeth – but then, she sets even higher ones for herself.

In the early days we did have to have an awkward conversation with my mother-in-law – already reeling from the revelation that her son was gay and on track to marry another man – when, while 'helpfully' tidying up our apartment, she came across, as she whispered to her son that evening, "Jack's woman's bra." But on the whole, it's been a smooth ride. China has a long and distinguished tradition of female impersonation, from Ming dynasty opera through Mei Lanfang to Lin Yugang and beyond, so the notion of men dressing as women for entertainment isn't alien to even the more conservative sections of society.

The arrival of our twins in 2016 brought joy,

terror, exhaustion, and a wealth of new experiences that continue to shape me as a person, and Elizabeth had to do more than just lose the baby weight. More than three years later and I'm still in search of perfect equilibrium. I don't slap on full drag when taking my kids to kindergarten (partly because it'd mean getting up at 3am), but beyond that, I'm open about my sideline career at work and at home. As my

female alter ego, my commitment to performance and showing others a good time, and my open, loving relationship with their baba will help my kids feel more confident to express themselves and their unique upbringing and family situation – freely and proudly. If, one day, my son or daughter wanted to show up to a school costume party in full drag, I'd support and encourage them – and also help

prepare them for the reactions they might expect from others. Whatever their sexual orientations or gender identities, I hope they'll be able to see the beauty of difference and unabashed self-expression, and view drag queens as warriors in the battle for social equality and personal freedom.

And we are indeed warriors. I like to think of drag as both weapon and armour. A six-foot-six man dressed as Cher has more power than anyone else in the room. But, like the best superheroes, a drag persona also hides your identity, protecting you and yours from the hate that sadly still stalks the streets. As myself, I might hesitate to kick a homophobe or creeper out of a gig. As Elizabeth, I'd kick them to the curb. Her heels are needle-sharp and heavier than they look – a bit like me.

There are practical challenges to being a parent and a drag performer. In most cases, drag is a nocturnal activity, so performing

means missing bedtimes. And while that'd not be such a big deal with one kid, with twins it's a lot to ask of my husband, so I intentionally limit my evening performances. Parents are tired all the time, so even when I do manage



kids grow, we're gradually introducing them to Daddy's costumes, cosmetics, wigs and – crucially – his drag sisters, from Beijing's only syndicated drag house – Haus of Lily.

My hope is that my ability to explore my

to totter onto the stage, as soon as the gig finishes I'm out of drag and on my way home as fast as possible. The other queens might not have to get up early but, rain or shine, drag or not, my kids have to be up at 6:30am. Whenever a brunch or daytime activity happens I'm delighted as not only do I get to hang with some of the best people I know in the city (my drag sisters), I can also bring my husband and kids along and share an important part of myself.

I think kids – and other people in general – can learn a lot from drag queens. Unlike other entertainers, we're expected to not only craft flawless, unique looks with vibrant personality. We're also expected to be able to lip-sync and/or sing live, MC, do comedy routines, dance, do gymnastics, schmooze with our audience, and show up on time, every time – and all this in six-inch heels. You have to be the most talented person in the room. This is why Haus of Lily fights hard for fair pay for drag queens. It's hard work! We all have outside lives and we bust our butts to put on a show. When venues are offering a few hundred RMB and your makeup alone cost RMB 800, tell me – would you say yes?

People sometimes push back, arguing that, as community figures, we should perform for free. But we don't ask for more than to have our expenses covered – many of our queens are impoverished students and without

their drag paycheck, they'd have to give up. The rest of us have families and full-time jobs and need to keep the home fires burning. All the same, we regularly work with community organizations to help foster LGBTQ+ awareness and tolerance, and are looking for people interested in us doing drag queen story time in schools or preschools (a popular tradition in the US and UK) to help introduce the younger generation to diversity and the vibrancy of alternative cultures. All we ask is to be treated fairly, and with a bit of open-minded understanding.

Which brings me to my advice to the parents reading this. Al-

ways be open and honest with your kids about who you are – because if you're not, they'll still figure it out. Deep down, stripped of my lace-front wigs and Pat McGrath eyeshadow, I'm no different from any of you. My family is no different from yours. Parenthood is tiring, frustrating, complex, demanding – yet endlessly gratifying. But we all deserve to maintain the activities we love. J.K. Rowling was a suicidal single mother on welfare when she created Harry Potter. I've not only kept Elizabeth Stride alive, but I've helped her evolve into a more well-rounded, polished product because of the love and support of my family. Without that, she wouldn't exist.

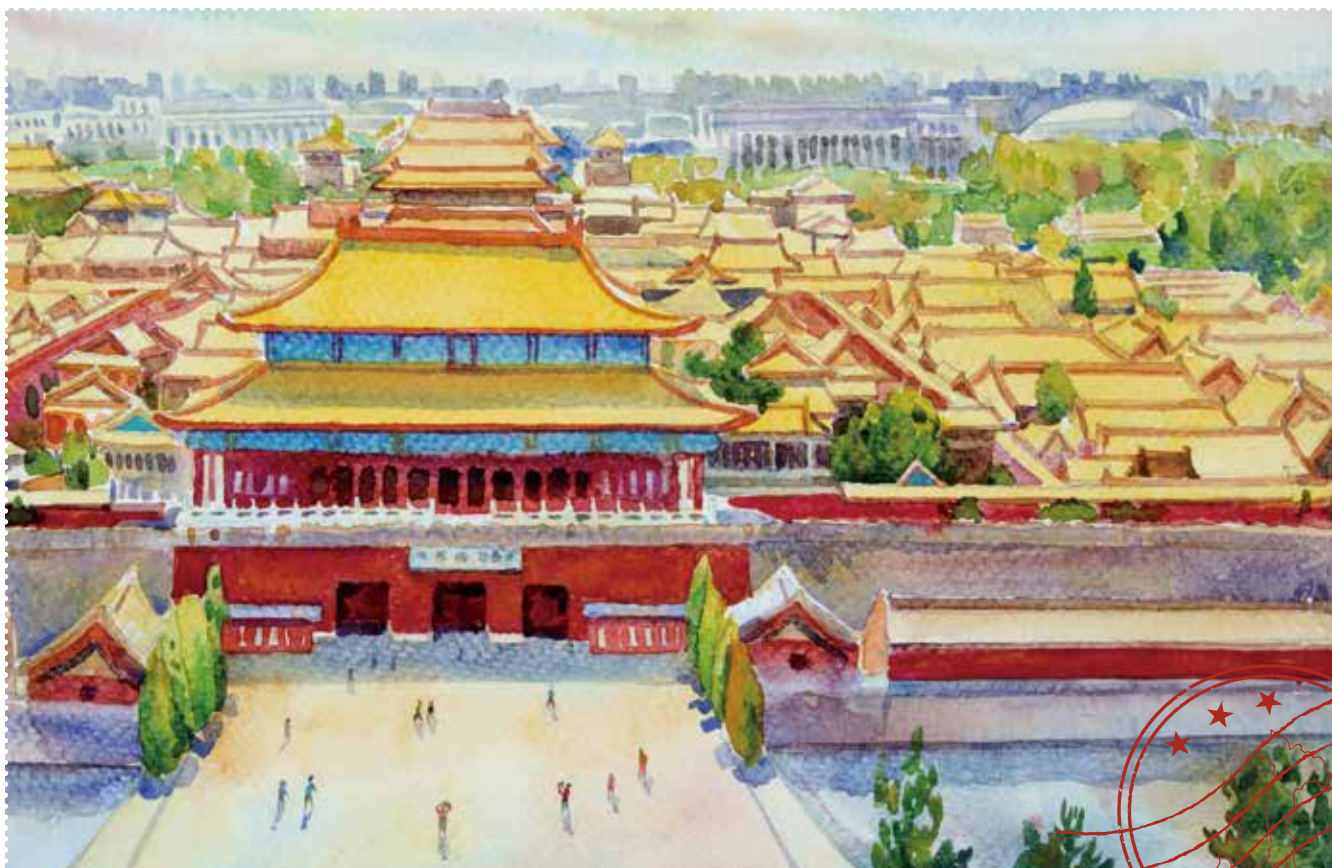
It's important for all parents to accept that they could be a parent to a gay, bi, trans, nonbinary, nonconforming, or genderqueer kid who, one day, might want to do drag. Having parents who accept and embrace diversity in all its forms really helps these exceptional, beautiful, talented children to be comfortable in their own bodies; a safeguard against problems down the line. Gay kids are a high risk for addiction problems, depression and suicide, and the best outcomes are in families where they feel safe, loved, and supported to be exactly who they are.

You don't need to put on a wig and heels to get that message across – just make sure your children know that. Whoever they are, whatever they want to do, you love, support, and take pride in them. I was fortunate in that regard, but lots of my sisters weren't. It makes a difference. It saves lives.

But, by all means, if you fancy giving drag a go, look me up, and let's add a splash of rainbow-tinted fabulous to the city our families share.

You never know. It might be your calling.





Work *Life* Balance

An open letter to Beijing dads

By Kipp Whittaker

When I embarked on the journey towards fatherhood in Beijing, I had no idea what to expect. Not only was there the anxiety of doing this in a place like Beijing, although I had already been here for three years, but also rearing a child in these uncertain times. While this pretty much ruled out the option of moving back stateside, my wife and I were content with our lives in China's capital.

At the time, I was the Nightlife and Culture editor for *the Beijinger*, a DJ on the weekends, a moderately successful voice actor for films and TV, and I loved that I was able to mix all of these different careers and side-hustles and start saving some

money. I was fairly certain I would be in Beijing for the rest of my life and that I could create a comfy environment for my family and myself in this city over time through continued learning and working my butt off.

After the birth of my son Victor, I became the Managing Editor of *beijingkids*. It was through my work here that I learned that Beijing is actually a great place to raise kids. It's safe in comparison to many other cities around the world, and at-home childcare is relatively cheap. Moms are also given a generous maternity leave, while dads are also entitled to a paternity leave to help out during the week or sometimes weeks after the baby comes. This is miles

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK

ahead of what you would find in America, where we are usually immediately back to work following a birth, but still behind areas of Scandinavia where equality between the sexes is considered more comprehensively.

But, like most countries with a booming economy and a rising cost of living, work commitments can often take control. This ability for me to pile on work, while good in many respects as we needed the money, also became problematic. It meant longer working hours. It meant always being at the beck and call of the whims of multiple employers. But with the desire to send my child to an international school on the horizon, no opportunity could be ignored. All of these things result in a considerable amount of stress for many parents living in the capital.

A Beijing survey office of the National Bureau of Statistics revealed in March, 2019 that the average working day for Beijingers was about 8.6 hours, just above 42 hours per week. The average of China as a whole sits at around 44.7 hours per week according to the China Labour Dynamics Survey, published by Sun Yat Send University. That puts China at the top of a long list of countries based on data compiled from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), just above Mexico, Costa Rica, and South Korea.

As an added note, and not to throw any shade, Germany ranked last on the OECD list with 26 hours per week, but for good reason. There are initiatives being created in the country to allow millions of Germans to have 28 hour work weeks to spend more time with their families.

This sort of work/parenting balance is something that has been troubling me considerably lately. I would often wake up around 5.30 am, do some work before breakfast, shower up and walk to work, do part-time gigs during lunch, and get home at 7pm. Tired and mangled by the stresses of the day, copy deadlines, and monotonous tasks, I would arrive home a zombie. I could only eat dinner and maybe entertain my son for a couple of hours before putting him to bed and usually passing out in the process. All the while, the weekends were normally spent voice acting or DJing at night, and only occasionally recuperating from the intense workload I had allowed myself to take on Monday through Friday.

My wife was also working a full-time job with abnormal hours; sometimes during the day, sometimes at night, and almost always on the weekends. We were only completely together as a family a couple of waking hours every week. At some points I convinced myself that this was only temporary, and that I would one day find "one job" that would cover all of our needs. But we soon came to realize that this was a gamble and would likely never fully cover the growing costs that Beijing continues to demand.

Something that's often unspoken but widely known among expats in Beijing is that unless you are a foreigner with some sort of relocation package, living a normal life with the same advantages you were given as a child is pretty difficult. However, it is by no means impossible. So we continued to hope for a change.

All the while, so much about my job with this magazine was learning about what it means to be an effective parent, but I constantly lacked the time to implement anything in my own home. I knew this wasn't going to change, especially when my son started preschool with a monthly tuition of around RMB 11,000.

Some call it burnout. But it was also something more. I was feeling guilty about not being able to put into practice all of the parenting tools I had accumulated; guilty about relying so much on hired help to do a satisfactory job of watching over my child throughout these early years. Being on the phone replying to

messages late into the night was not the example I wanted to set for my son.

I want to play an integral role in my son's development into an empathetic, intelligent, and, most importantly, happy child. I want to help him understand the world we are living in and give him the tools necessary to thrive. This won't happen if I'm unable to balance work with life, and while I'm well aware that I'm not the only father in Beijing or the rest of the world going through this at the moment, it was a major factor regarding why my wife and I decided to hit the restart button and leave Beijing for a place that is more affordable.

We all know the tired cliché that dads belong at work, but I can no longer neglect the fact that my son needs me. He needs me to help him navigate this complicated and sometimes scary world we are living in. How else is he going to learn about what it means to be a man, or, more importantly a decent human being? So many of the pitfalls regarding toxic masculinity seem to stem from these developmental years and a lack of positive guidance. Even as an adult, this is something I'm still learning about and trying to reprogram about myself. As dads we need to understand how essential we are to our children, and that no amount of money can buy back the time we lose by not maintaining a proper balance to prepare them for whatever the future might bring.

While this will be an emotional departure for me and my family, Beijing will forever be a part of our identity. This city and the experiences I've gained here have taught me that being a good dad isn't about working yourself to death to provide. It's more important to be present and a willing participant in overcoming all of the challenges that family life may bring.

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My Son,
My Roommate

Adjusting to life as a single dad

By Michael J. Jordan

I didn't have to move. Nothing forced me to. But I did it for him - for my son. And for a toilet.

I'd been living alone in Beijing, in a cozy, two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment. Enough space for a guest to stay over. Besides, psychologists say that packing up your "entire life," to leave an old home for a new one, ranks among the most traumatic of life experiences.

So, why submit myself to this ordeal, if I wasn't compelled to?

To happily provide my 17-year-old son, Miksa, with his own bathroom: toilet, shower, and sink. And two months later - though the luxury of living in a two-bed, two-bath apartment costs me a few extra thousand RMB per month - it's no exaggeration to say: it's been one of my wisest investments ever.

After all, you'd be willing to pay a price to avoid daily conflict, wouldn't you? In fact, his bathroom has come to symbolize our evolving relationship today. Let me explain, because mine is no ordinary tale of single-father parenting, or of a typical expat family in China. It's a hybrid of both.

Moreover, while I like the cute notion of us being "roommates," writing this article inspired me to ponder: what exactly does distinguish us from actual roommates? And what's the difference between living alone with my son in China, versus back home in America - or anywhere else in the world? Is there anything unique about my single-father parenting here?

From the moment he moved in, in August, so began our journey over the next year. It'll be a memorable one, mostly because of our unique living arrangement: as a foreign father and son, together in an alien land. There's also this: for the first time in his 17 years, he only has me. And I only have him.

His Mom, and my two other children - our younger son, 15, and our daughter, 10 - left Beijing this summer. They'd lived in China for four years, together with Miksa. I'd often stay with the kids, as their mother routinely traveled for her work in international development. When she was offered an important post in Istanbul, Turkey in August,

our two younger ones followed her there.

Miksa, though, stayed behind with me. It was the right move, as he faced a pivotal year: finishing his high-school career, while applying to universities. We couldn't imagine the alternative - and potential turmoil - of extracting him from his solid support system of friends and teachers. Fortunately, the timing worked well for me, too: I'd recently signed a one-year contract with a new employer.

As expected, though, the separation from family has been hard for both of us. No amount of texting or video-chats can remedy that. Still, I shouldn't feel too sorry for myself: among the growing number of single-parent households, I imagine each is tinged with sadness. At least Miksa and I have each other. We do express, regularly, that we love each other - and kiss each other good-night.

That's also why I was determined to make him as comfortable as possible. Physically and emotionally. Having his own bathroom, then, serves as a metaphor.

That said, our cohabitation hasn't unfolded quite as anticipated. Once we decided that he'd stay with me, I romanticized the potential, like a character-driven reality-show: outside, an American father-and-son, exploring exotic China together. Should we travel next to Tibet - or Xinjiang? Inside, two "eligible bachelors," navigating the potential awkwardness of inviting over a guest.

In reality, we don't see each other that much. Miksa rises early, to catch a 7:15am bus to school, while my job often requires me to work nights. I'm proud that he's self-driven enough to work deep into most school nights, and through much of the weekend, to hoist his grades and SAT scores even higher.

He's also trustworthy - and capable enough with his Mandarin - that when he ventures into the city with friends, I don't worry about what time he'll be home. When I told him I'd note his trustworthiness in this article, he replied with a wry smile: "Well, why wouldn't you trust me?"

True, true. But that may change, with the first time I smell booze on his breath.



PHOTOS: UNIT YOU

That said, I won't sugarcoat the experience so far. Living with him includes just as many anxieties and frustrations as when we were a "happy" family of five. I can be cranky and impatient. Like every other "normal" parent, I also have pangs of insecurity: Am I doing this right?

We laugh, we bicker. We have our ups and downs: from going out for dinner and chatting about world affairs, to ordering in and watching a movie; from assisting him with university application articles, to exhorting him to not treat me as his personal ayi. (Are you allergic to washing dishes?)

Miksa himself doesn't like my half-joking use of the term "roommates." As he explained: "Then couldn't all families be considered 'roommates'?" Excellent point, Counselor.

He doesn't even like the idea of this article. "You're going to roast me, aren't you? Then I'll write a counter-article, roasting you!"

Still, I find time for the stuff that marks us from real roommates: namely, parenting. I feel entitled to sometimes lecture him about undesirable behaviors, despite his clichéd resistance. That's still my "job." Though, it can be easy to forget a child needs it, when he's already taller than his (taller-than-average) father; has begun shaving (occasionally); and will soon be old enough to enlist in the military.

Our daily routines illustrate this. Starting with breakfast, which also symbolizes something more. No, we don't eat together. Instead, I wake up earlier than necessary, just to prepare him a breakfast to go. Sure, he's old enough to make it for himself. And definitely capable.

But I do it for three reasons. First, he used to live in Shunyi, a five-minute bike ride from school. Now he lives in Chaoyang, about an hour away – but close to my workplace. So, I feel badly that he's lost an hour of sleep. Saving him a few precious minutes, then, is the least I can do.

Second, it may not sound like much, but when I pack up two or

three tasty items for his breakfast, I find comfort knowing that I'm doing at least one thing, this day, to be a good father. Again, it's a tiny gesture, but somehow eases my guilt over the distance from my two other children.

Third, for years I've preached the importance of "selfless acts": at least once in the morning, a selfless act for your siblings; at night, at least once for your hardworking mother. Would it kill ya?

Since no one likes a hypocrite, why not show him, not just tell him? By waking up for him, for this small act, I set an example. He even seems to appreciate my teamwork.

Then there's the housework. I recall once seeing a sign, along a nature hike: Leave no footprints. Pick up your trash. That's a life lesson about personal responsibility, too. Clean up your own mess.

Well, for kids pampered for years by an ayi, deprogramming isn't easy. Yes, I do nearly all the dishwashing, clothes washing, room tidying, etc. Occasionally, I erupt. I've also warned him: "At college next year, you'll have a real roommate – who may hate you for your messiness."

That said, some points resonate. He likes his shirts ironed, so I taught him. I'm pleased to see that every Sunday night, while we watch a movie, Miksa irons his five shirts for the week.

One step for man, one giant leap ... toward manhood!

Nevertheless, writing this article reminds me: time's flying. I should carve out enough quality time with him, during each weekend. The year will be over before we know it.

Overall, I aim for one (seemingly) simple objective: in the future, when Miksa looks back on our year together, all I hope is that he recalls it with fondness.

I think we're on our way.

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SCHOOL NEWS



ISB Holds Second Annual Teacher Recruitment Fair

183 applicants attended International School of Beijing's (ISB's) second annual Teacher Recruitment Fair on Saturday, September 21. The fair was hosted on the ISB campus, giving applicants the chance to be interviewed for positions and learn valuable information about the school community.



3e's Tea Talk - Positive Parenting Strategies

At 3e International School's Tea Talk, Learning Support Specialist Dr. Ira Canada provided parents with Positive Parenting Strategies which covered key areas of principles of behavior, reinforcement theories, and compliance support, giving parents a well-rounded introduction to implement strategies for successful results.



BSB Shunyi Scoops Awards at World Scholar's Cup Durban Mini-Global Round

The British School of Beijing, Shunyi (BSB Shunyi) won multiple awards at the World Scholar's Cup Durban Mini-Global Round. All students qualified to advance to the WSC Tournament of Champions at Yale University. Three BSB students were selected to be flag bearers for the closing ceremony.



TEDx at BWYA

On September 20, Beijing World Youth Academy (BWYA) hosted an inter-school TEDx event, organised and run by BWYA students. With the theme of "Identity", staff and student speakers from BWYA and the wider Beijing international school community gave a number of engaging presentations. BWYA looks forward to running more TEDx events in the future.

The Circuit is a chance to check out what's happening in the Beijing community. Want to see your event on these pages?



House of Knowledge Held a Storytelling Event

House of Knowledge (HoK) recently invited Dream On to share with the students their storytelling skills and passion with a strong New Zealand cultural influence. Students learned about the history of Māori people and Polynesian culture.



Annual Pink Week at DCB

Pink merch, pink treats, pink lemonade, pink photoshoot, pink dress day, and the best part, sponge the teachers with pink, all for a good cause. For a whole week in October, Dulwich College Beijing (DCB) put the spotlight on Breast Cancer Awareness across the entire school.



Send an email with the date of your event, a brief description, and high-resolution photos (at least 1MB each) to magazine@beijing-kids.com by **November 16**



Beijing TV Station's Recording from Beijing No. 55 High School

30 students from Beijing No. 55 High School (BJ55) participated in the recording of the Beijing TV station's "I grew up with the motherland - celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of New China". They showed the school's achievements of traditional Chinese cultural education with a unique artistic style.



BWYA Sports Day in the Autumn Sun

Earlier in October, Beijing World Youth Academy (BWYA) students stepped out of the classroom and into the sporting arena to show off their athletic prowess. With activities designed not only to highlight physical abilities, but also teamwork, a great time was had by all involved.





Harrow Beijing Leadership Service Week

Harrow Beijing Upper School students embarked on a series of expeditions all over China and beyond. As part of their Leadership and Service Week, students learned new skills, developed friendships, and challenged themselves in real-world scenarios.

CISB in the Beijing International Pop Music Week

Canadian International School of Beijing (CISB) Middle/High students were invited to take part in the Beijing International Pop Music Festival this year, and this unique experience was invaluable and one they will treasure and remember for the rest of their lives.





Hope International School Swings Into Fall

Hundreds of students, staff, parents, and friends played carnival-style games and devoured homemade food at Hope International School's annual Fall Fair. Students performed songs from the jazz and swing era. Ten percent of proceeds benefited the New Hope Foundation, to bless orphan children needing medical support.



One Book's Adventure at Daystar Academy

The Book Exchange Fair was a great collaboration between the school and StarParents. Altogether, 2,921 books were collected prior to the event. Around 250 families attended the fair, exchanging close to 1,600 books. For the remaining books, they will donate 1,225 children's books to elementary schools in remote areas.





Beijing Huijia Private School Autumn Sports Meeting

On this special day of sports at Beijing Huijia Private School, the soccer field was filled with interesting games, encouraging cheers, and joyful laughter. Everyone had a good time. They hope that every child can love and enjoy sports.



Keystone Academy Students Explore Learning Outside of the Classroom

Keystone Academy students ventured outdoors as part of the school's Outdoor Education Program (OEP), allowing students to experience the world while applying concepts they have learned in the classroom. September's OEP brought students to different environments in Beijing, Hebei, and Inner Mongolia.





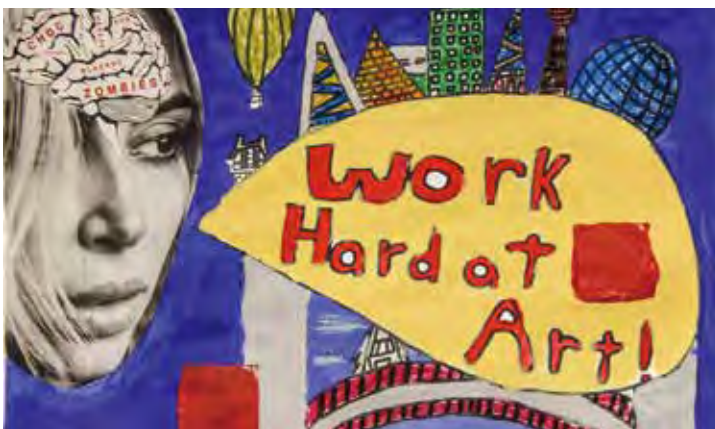
BISS Held First Open Day Session for the New Semester

Last Friday, Beijing BISS International School (BISS) held its first Open Day in the new school year. With the theme of "How to Get Admitted to Your Dream University", the Open Day provided all guests with information about useful application strategies.



October Holiday Workshop at Atelier

From October 2 to 6, a holiday workshop "A Journey into Abstract Art" was held by Atelier art school at both their Sanlitun and Shunyi campuses. The students learned about several artists of constructivism from different fields, and made their own quality artworks.



Favorite way to transport the family around the city

Didi. But if we are not going too far and the weather is nice we'll take the bike or scooter.

Favorite Spot to Relax

At home or in some travel destination, preferably with a pool for some fun in the sun.

Favorite moment in Beijing

When we finally got our house in order after four months of temporary living. That first night with working AC, hot water, and our furniture from back home was amazing.

Favorite weekend activity

If we're not traveling or exploring Beijing we love hanging out in our garden. We are from Norway so we don't really mind the cold weather during winter, and the temperature in Beijing in November is more than pleasant enough to spend out-side barbecuing and lounging with a fleece.

Favorite neighborhood

Sanlitun. We love the international feel: the restaurants, bars, and good vibes.

Favorite App

WeChat and Didi. Life in Beijing would be hard without them.

Favorite shop for groceries

Jenny Lou's. It's within walking distance and we can get most of the things we need for our Norwegian/Chinese fusion cooking there. Anything else we can't find is supplemented by Taobao and JD.

Favorite Non-Chinese Restaurant

First Floor in Sanlitun. The kids have had their special order ice cream there so many times that all the waiters remember who wants what sauce, cream, and flavor.

Favorite Chinese Restaurant

Da Dong Roast Duck in Sanlitun. The kids can't get enough of their elaborate desserts with dry ice and smoke.

Adapted Chinese culture

Initially we used to get very stressed about getting to places on time and our lack of language skills. Now we have realized that most things are OK even if they're not 100 percent according to plan. We also feel that we have mastered sign language.

Favorite place to play indoors

The giant trampoline park.

Favorite place for date night

Hatsune in Sanlitun followed by drinks at El Barrio.

Family Rituals

It has to be "Taco Friday". It's not a Friday without it.

Family Favorites!

Photography by Mina Yan

Met dad Bernt Johannessen, mom Linn Stokke and their kids Oliver and Emily. The family recently moved from Norway. Their grown-up daughter Vilde still lives in Oslo. Bernt works for a software company that creates visualization tools for TV. In his spare time he likes to travel and train for Spartan races. Linn is a former department manager for child protection services in Bergen, Norway. Now she is a stay-at-home mom spending her days as a spinning instructor, hiking on the Great Wall, and training for the "Wild Women on the Wall" run coming up in March. Oliver is in 6th grade at the Western Academy of Beijing (WAB) and plays soccer, piano, and tennis. Emily is in 4th grade and loves piano and gymnastics. The whole family is enjoying their new life in Beijing.





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