

**Cyprian Piskurek** (\*1978) works as a research assistant and subject coordinator at the Institute for English/American Studies. He lives in Dortmund with his wife, son Emil (\*2013) and daughter Hedi (\*2015).



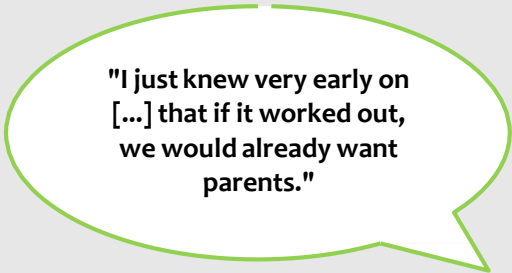
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## The flexible researcher father

*Shortly before the Easter holidays, I meet Cyprian Piskurek for an afternoon interview. I talk with him animatedly about his dissertation, which he wrote on soccer and English literature. As a soccer enthusiast with some experience in soccer research from my studies, I naturally find this exciting. The interview, however, is about his role as an active father. Almost a pity, actually!*

## Spontaneous in many roles

Looking at the various father types, Cyprian Piskurek shakes his head slightly: "I'm generally not a big fan of typologies like that." He smiles somewhat tentatively and flips through the brochure from 2013, saying that there is no way he could have identify with a role like the "theorist" or a planning father. Rather, he tries to be a spontaneous father. In recent years, he has learned that many things simply cannot be planned. Of course, he has principles that he tries to implement, but a lot of things have to come naturally, he smiles. It is quite clear, however, that his "father personality" is different from his "scientific personality."



**"I just knew very early on [...] that if it worked out, we would already want parents."**

In his job, he has a different approach. Nevertheless, his work as a research assistant influences his fatherhood, because it allows him the flexibility that he likes to use as a father. It allows him to take on different roles and tasks as a father. For example, he likes to discover the world with his son.

region by rail, because this trains and railroads quite great and Cyprian Piskurek a VRR ticket. He also usually takes him to the kindergarten, because the little one loves to be taken there by bike. In general, the bin- He said that his relationship with his son, the older child, had become closer since the little daughter was born. Since she often asked for her mother, especially in the beginning, he spent more time with his son and, for example, tended to take care of him at night. "That's what I think turned out for us, that this is important, that the children of course also learn this from an early age, that both parents can already potentially be there - even if there are always things that you prefer to do with the father, that you prefer to do with the mother," he clarifies. "I think that the children naturally also notice that the father just doesn't only take over at certain time corridors or only certain tasks."

He couldn't say whether he had always wanted to become a father. In fact, he has been asked the question many times among his friends.

"I just knew very early on in the relationship with my wife that if it worked out, we would already want to be parents," he is sure. In his younger years, on the other hand, he gave it little thought.

## Comparatively safe conditions

When Cyprian Piskurek first became a father, he said, he was in a financially secure but

situation was not completely calm. As a specialist coordinator, he had had an open-ended position for years. However, the time had not yet been completely relaxed. Due to his permanent position, he had to take over some tasks and offices.

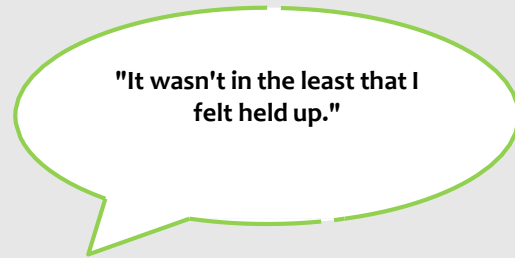
at the institute, for which colleagues in temporary employment were not eligible. "I had just become vice dean for studies and teaching, which of course meant another major reorientation and retraining," he says. He consequently took two months' parental leave during a busy period, which also included the need to make progress with his doctorate. He had hoped to work on it mainly in the evening hours. "I thought (...) after that the doctorate would be complete, but of course that was completely utopian," he smiles knowingly. "But it wasn't in the least that I felt held up," he rigorously cites. Compared to his colleagues in the scientific mid-range, he had secure conditions for starting a family.

### Flexibility at work

Flexibility in his job is of great importance for the division of labor within the family. The statement of a superior, whom he quotes with the words: "I don't really care where you are on Monday mornings, as long as the work gets done. He could thus keep his

Presence in the office with few exceptions

very well to his family life. For example, his wife now works one morning a week again, and he does not go into the office until 1 p.m. and is at home before then.



With both children, she took one and a half years of parental leave in her job as a social worker at Caritas. "The period between the two children was very short, (...) because they were born almost on the same day.

are exactly two years apart. Then it was just four months that she worked again," he says. He took parental leave for both children "for the two months that were then added for the partner. This was possible both times, but it meant a lot of organizing and arranging, as well as organizing a substitute. For his daughter, he opted for the lecture-free period in September and October of last year.

Nevertheless, he had only recently completed the last

Working off legacies. The preparation for leave, spot to be

Parental leave was different this time. "We went to England for four weeks with the big boy and simply had family time from morning to night," he enthuses nostalgically. With his daughter, such a trip was then no longer possible, as his son had just finished his orientation in kindergarten.

"That was more in the foreground for us, because he is shy and has initial difficulties in new situations, that you don't, after he has just been in kindergarten for 6 weeks, take him out completely and then start the acclimatization all over again," he explains seriously. Before kindergarten, he says, his son was cared for only by him and his wife, with grandparents sometimes stepping in. "Yes, the grandparents don't live very far away, but they don't come as often as you would sometimes like," he smiles, somewhat embarrassed. Also, because his son is rather shy around new people and always needs some time to get used to them, friends or babysitters can rarely step in to take care of him.

Finds it pleasant "not to lose the other perspective": Cyprian Piskurek with his two children Emil and Heidi.

## Keep another perspective

Cyprian Piskurek and his wife have friends who are single or childless as well as parents. Only a few of the close

Friends, however, were already fathers. Thus, there were few contacts for his role as a father. Father given who could report at first hand.



Source:  
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"But sometimes I also find it pleasant not to lose the other perspective," he murmurs. He finds clear words: "There is of course the cliché that parents, as soon as they are parents, are just parents and not socially active.

situation more without telling about the children. But I think that's actually good for my wife and me, to have contact with people who are in a different life situation." He is very happy with that, he says. Maybe he's just not the type of person who likes to get help, he admits with a smile.

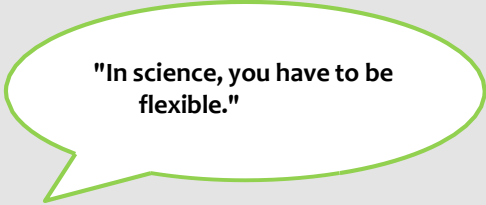
### **In search of the middle way**

He says it is quite easy to reconcile work and family life in his job. However, he wonders how the compatibility of family and the desire to continue researching himself can be arranged in the future. He does not feel the need - like other mid-level researchers who are on their way to becoming a professor - to have a family.

professorship are - to invest an extremely high amount of time in scientific work in order to have a secure future. "Nevertheless, I would never say: I have now finished the doctorate and that's it. I like research too much for that, and I don't want to just do the same seminar topics for 30 years," he explains seriously. "I have a permanent position, which means I don't have to struggle to get to a professorship at some point, but I still went into science in order to make progress.

He explains the dilemma of research work and family work, for which he is currently trying to find a middle ground.

In science, however, you have to be flexible, submit an article quickly, and travel to conferences and meetings even on weekends. In addition, as an English specialist, he also conducts research abroad and excursions are part of the scientific standard.



**"In science, you have to be flexible."**

"This fulfills me very much as a scientist and is what I would like to do in my profession, but I cannot suppress the slightly guilty conscience that I am not at home during this time," he sighs thoughtfully. "That's where it gets difficult, of course, for the whole family." At the moment, he says, his wife supports him and has his back for his research.

"with more or less grumbling" when he sits at his desk until midnight again or attends a conference on the weekend.

The interview was conducted by Stefanie Raible in  
2017.