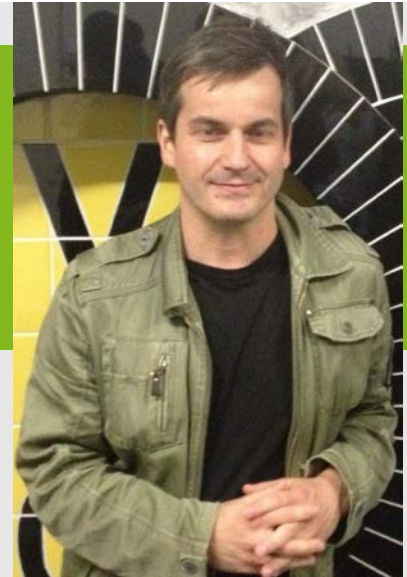


Carsten Feßler (*1970) is an employee in the IT and Medien Centrum (ITMC) and lives with his wife and son Lenjo (*2010) in Dortmund. Son Jan (*1992) comes from a previous connection, son Larin (*2013) was born shortly after the interview.



Source:
Private

The Swiss Army Knife

On the way to Carsten Feßler's office, I accidentally hurt my hand and arrive at his office with a bloody finger. He hurriedly takes me to the kitchen, gets the medical kit out of the cupboard and treats me with professional care. "This happens to my little one all the time. You're trained for that," he explains with a laugh as he cuts out a band-aid. After my finger has been treated, we move into his office, which is currently being renovated but is already equipped with three large monitors. As an IT supervisor, Carsten Feßler really needs them...

Morning Rituals

His day usually starts less hectic than our interview. He gets up earlier than his wife and son Lenjo so that he can have a cup of coffee in peace. Only then does he wake his son, but he is not allowed to help him get dressed at the moment. With an amused grin, Carsten Fessler explains: "Mom has to do everything at the moment. It's the typical classic: Lenjo is slowly realizing that he will soon have a brother and will be toppled from his 'throne', so to speak. That's why my wife mainly has to take care of him at the moment."

Before driving himself to his workplace at TU Dortmund University, the IT supervisor takes his son to the childminder who has been looking after him since September 2012 on Mondays to Thursdays.

From August 2013, Lenjo will attend a daycare center in Dortmund. Carsten Fessler explains that choosing a KiTa was not so easy: "It was a bit difficult here, because one KiTa likes to take children under one year old." Shaking his head, he continues, "That was out of the question for us. Because I really wanted to take parental leave, and I also think it's a bit too early to put the little one in the KiTa at the age of one, if you don't have to." He quickly admits, however, that he doesn't think it's a bad thing in principle. "There are always reasons for it, but for us the opportunity arose to do it differently."

The best years

When it comes to organizing childcare times, his flexible working hours have been a decisive advantage. "I can reduce my hours without it turning into action," reports the 43-year-old father with satisfaction. "I find that very pleasant." He can organize his 25 working hours per week individually. So he has distributed them in such a way that from Monday to Wednesday he can also pick up the little one from the daycare center and then take over his care. On Thursdays, his wife takes over and Friday is the joint family day. "It's actually perfect," he sums up, beaming.

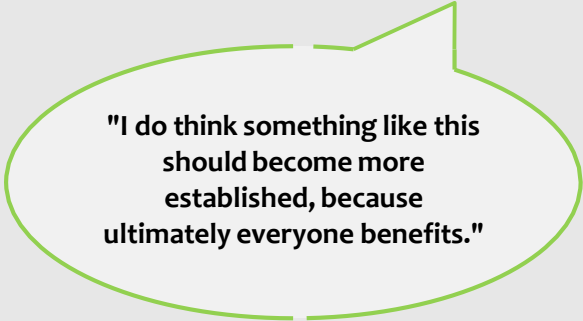
The TU Dortmund is very accommodating in this regard.

As he sits back and relaxes, he recalls the moment he announced to the college that he wanted to take a year's parental leave. "No one was really shocked, but rather concerned that someone else would be taking over my activities for such a long time. They were worried about whether the transitions would go smoothly." Carsten Fessler waves it off:

"But I think the fears were completely unfounded."

For friends who work in industry, however, the situation would be somewhat different. "Unfortunately, you don't find that in the free economy."

He enthuses: "I think it's great to have the opportunity to take a relatively carefree break from your job to take care of your children. Those are the best years.



"I do think something like this should become more established, because ultimately everyone benefits."

Especially when the children are small, you still get the most. It was clear to me that I wanted to experience that. I just wanted to experience what it's like to look after the little one in this special phase of his life and watch him grow up."

Spinach and potatoes

Now Carsten Feßler and his wife are expecting a another child. They want to divide the workload in a similar way as they did after Lenjo was born: first, the IT specialist will work full time for a whole year and his wife will take over childcare. After that, the roles will be swapped and Carsten Feßler will again take parental leave. This approach proved successful the first time around.

His fatherly thoughts drift back: "That was a whole new experience." With a slight pride in his voice, he says that it was during this time that he really learned to cook. "I thought it was stupid to heat up ready-made food. That's totally dumb. Children are supposed to get something and you have to do something if you want to eat. You have to peel potatoes sometimes. I learned how to do that because it was just part of the job." Carsten Feßler laughs heartily: "That's why the little one now likes spinach and potatoes so much!

But if his wife stays at home for the time being, that doesn't mean she has to take over the household alone. "Of course I'll help, too." he explains with conviction. "We don't have the typical role clientele, à la 'You have to iron, put- It's just the way things are at the moment. There are some things she can do better and some things I can do better."

He describes it straightforwardly: "I'm also that kind of guy, I can stay outside with the little one for a few hours in bad weather, when she's not so keen. I don't mind that. not, I dress warmly and go with him outside. We simply complement each other quite well." Against this backdrop, it's not surprising that Carsten Feßler describes himself with a quiet sigh as a 'Swiss army knife': "As a father, you have to be able to react flexibly in many things, to be your man or not, however you like. Also

sometimes hard, sometimes soft. Basically, it's the whole program. There's no other way."

Like aliens

Carsten Feßler was fortunate to be able to quickly establish contacts with other fathers during his parental leave.

"I had already met two fathers in such a toddler group who had parental leave with me almost completely at the same time. One only half, the other almost to the end." There is a certain amount of relief about this that can't be ignored. "That was very pleasant. Then there were the other women you met there. There they met more often, usually once a week for breakfast. What was particularly interesting, however, was the response that the fathers' group received on many occasions.



Source: Private

With a grin, Carsten Feßler recalls an anecdote that left a lasting impression: "When we three fathers with children were at Dortmund Zoo on a weekday, at 10 o'clock in the morning, we were almost looked at like aliens by other mothers, because apparently that is still a very rare sight. I thought it was kind of funny." When asked if something like that happened to him more often, the 43-year-old nods eagerly. "When you're out and about outside of work hours as a father with a child, you realize that people look more irritated. Especially older people. The cliché that the man goes to work and the woman looks after the children is probably still prevalent there."

But he himself doesn't care at all what others think, he explains with conviction. "The only thing that matters to me is that I feel good about it, the little one feels good about it, or we as a family feel good about it. How others see it is up to them."

Nevertheless, he shakes his head incomprehensibly.

"But I really didn't think people still thought that way in 2011."

Sees himself as a Swiss army knife: Carsten Feßler with his sons Lenjo (left) and Larin, who was born shortly after the interview.

This reminds Carsten Feßler of the birth of his first son Jan in 1992.



"Some braids just take a hell of a long time to get cut."

"There was also the classic when I moved in with his mother. You still had to be married then. You can't even imagine that anymore, that was only 20 years ago. I find that somehow impossible. It's funny." This time, too, was nice, but it was anders. Now, at over 40, priorities have clearly shifted, admits Carsten Feßler: "It was clear to me that if I became a father again at 40, then it has a completely different meaning than when you're in your mid-20s."

A nice time

For the down-to-earth IT specialist, the children are his top priority at the moment, although a career has never meant much to him anyway.

"The career is not that important to me. I also never had the inner claim to have achieved certain goals at a certain time.

have. For me, it was always more important that the whole package around it was right."

Does he nevertheless have a personal definition of career? Carsten Feßler has to think a little longer. "I would describe a career as, that I am satisfied with my professional situation. I never want to think 'Oh no, now I have to do this stupid job again. Satisfaction in and through my job is actually a career for me. I think it's a privilege when you have a job that you can work on.

that you really want to do. In my case, that's IT. That's always been my thing."

His professional path has led him through various stages: an apprenticeship, which today is comparable to that of a functional assistant, then a degree in IT science, already coupled with a position at the TU Dortmund.

This gave him the chance to stay at the university directly after graduation. He has never aspired to other positions. "I'm not the type of person who, once he's reached a certain status, is dissatisfied with it. On the contrary, he is currently very satisfied, and it shows.

Serenely, Carsten Feßler leans back once more and says with a satisfied look: "We

actually live relatively well now. The neighbors are totally nice, so it's also fun. I'm looking forward to seeing my sons grow up. It's really fun to see the little one grow up and the nonsense he gets up to sometimes. "It's a beautiful time. It's unaffordable."

The interview was conducted by Debora Rahma
① ● winter 2013.

Carsten Feßler (*1970)



Source:
private

The update interview 2017

The sun is already shining over the North Campus as I walk to Carsten Feßler's office in Otto-Hahn-Strasse one morning in March. When I arrive, I immediately notice the fabulous view from the window. The ITMC employee offers me a coffee. He laughs apologetically that he cannot guarantee that the milk in the refrigerator is still fresh. After I assure him that I also like my coffee black, we start talking about what has happened in the last four years.

The same model

Carsten Feßler had been interviewed in 2013 when his wife was pregnant again and his second son in this relationship was announced. At the time, he reported that the couple was planning the same division of labor that had proven successful after the birth of their first son. This actually worked out, says Carsten Feßler, beaming with joy. He took another six months of parental leave and then returned to work with 25 hours a week. His wife took a full year's parental leave, just like last time.



"Things always turn out differently than you think"

But some things went quite differently, not only because two children require a different amount of work and more coordination.

"Back then, when I was settling in with the daycare provider for my first child, it was quite simple. and quite quickly, I thought 'okay, it will be relaxed', but unfortunately it was completely anders," he snorts humorously. "It always comes It's not what you think. I was still getting used to it until the last day of my parental leave."

He was looking forward to some free time during his parental leave, especially because the weather had been nice, but he didn't hold it against his son, he says with a wink.

More independent children

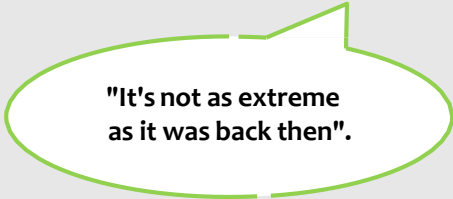
In the meantime, his two sons already go to daycare, from where they are picked up alternately by Carsten Feßler or his wife. So he is working full time again, and in between he can also work in the office. His wife still works a somewhat reduced number of hours. "And the big one (...) is also starting school this year, then the cards will be reshuffled again, then let's see. I may have to re- duce a bit again," he predicts with complete composure. Although there is daycare at the elementary school, he still wants to make the change as relaxed as possible for his son. He is also relaxed about a possible reduction in the number of jobs, "because the TU Dortmund is a really great employer when it comes to that. With the daily workload of household chores, running has become a way for him to compensate. It also helps that the older man, who is almost seven years old, is already more independent.

"He can ride a bike now, too, and of course he meets up with his friends, goes around the house sometimes, meets up with others there.

You can let him go on his own sometimes, and you notice that because it's somehow more relaxed. He also sometimes stays alone with his grandparents in Bremen for two weeks or goes on vacation with them to Sweden.

Still not normal

He still gets irritated looks, as he did in 2013, when he was a father "out of line" with his children.



"It's not as extreme as it was back then".

"I already notice this at the daycare center, where it is often the case that I, as the father, pick up the children and the mothers are usually there. I mean, the people at the daycare center know all about it, of course, but when other people go there, you notice that they still look irritated. Because apparently it still hasn't really caught on in society, even though it's actually normal. It's 2017 now, but I think it's gotten better, it's not as extreme as it was back then," he says, both thoughtful and relieved. But he also finds it a bit funny, despite all the criticism. Cars-

ten Feßler smiles mischievously.

New contacts

The old contacts with the other fathers from his older son's toddler group no longer really exist. "It's all become a bit disjointed," he sighs.

He also went back to the toddler group with his younger son, but this time he didn't make friends with anyone. The chemistry simply wasn't right, he states.

short. Instead, friendships and networks have developed elsewhere: "These are more the neighbors who also have children of a similar age, so you are now more active with them, which somehow fits better.

Serene pocket knife for two

As a father type, he would still be the "Swiss Army Knife. Little has changed since 2013.

"You (...) have to constantly think your way into new situations. Children are simply interested in things and have no idea at first. You kind of have to try to figure it out first," he grins. His older son is very interested in construction, while his younger son is fascinated by animals and music. "You're always changing like that, I find that really fascinating," he says enthusiastically.

The dynamic between the sons is also exciting, as there are also disputes, whether over toys or attention.

"You have to constantly think your way into new situations."

When one of them is on vacation with his grandparents, it almost feels like a vacation to Carsten Feßler, he laughs. He also becomes more relaxed with the increasing number of children. He also benefits from the fact that he has already raised an adult son.

"So I think you become much more relaxed. I think you have to be. If you were to take everything too seriously, everyday life would be far too stressful," he summarizes soberly. "There are such classic things: you're somewhere, the child wants something and starts screaming around. And then you think to yourself 'Ha, in the past you might have thought, people!' and today you think to yourself 'yes, my God, that's just the way it is, you can't change it now,'" he now laughs heartily and shrugs. To become more relaxed, he recommends: "More children!"

☛ The interview was conducted by Stefanie Raible on 28.03.2017.



Source:
Private