

**Dr.-Ing. Patrick Kurzeja** (\*1985) has been since April He has been a research associate at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering since last year. He lives in Bochum with his wife and daughter Finja (\*2017).



Source:  
private

## The sporty father type

*I have arranged to meet Patrick Kurzeja for the interview in his office, right next door in the building of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. When I get there, I'm five minutes early and hear that my interview partner is still on the phone in his office. I wait. When I don't hear anything, I knock and am invited in. Patrick Kurzeja greets me in a friendly manner and offers me a seat. After briefly discussing the interview questions, we begin the interview.*

## Often at work in thought

"Finja has already become a little heavier," says the new father with a laugh. He appreciates the fact that, as a research assistant at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at TU Dortmund University, he can organize his working day according to his own needs.

needs. "Thanks to my colleagues and the bosses, I'm very flexible, so if my daughter is sick and has to be picked up, that's really no problem," explains Patrick Kurzeja with satisfaction.

He can arrange his 39 working hours a week as he likes. However, working as a scientist is something special, as he explains:

"As a scientist, I also take the work home with me in my head. It's not something where I say at 5 p.m., okay that's it now, but if something worries me and interests me, then I also think about it further. It's not always that easy."

Patrick Kurzeja has only recently become a permanent research assistant at TU Dortmund University. Before that, he had already worked at several other universities on temporary contracts. "I was still working in Duisburg when my daughter's ter was born. We had just returned from the United States, where I had worked for a year. I was in a phase that is typical for many scientists after the doctorate. I think it was my twelfth contract then.

and still no permanent job. So now I know all the universities in the Ruhr region almost inside out.

## Scientists on parental leave

When his daughter was born, Patrick Kurzeja first took two weeks off and then worked only three days a week. In this way, the parents bridged the first four weeks in their new life situation with a child. After the engineer had settled in at the TU Dortmund, he took parental leave for two months. Finan-

However, there was hardly any financial support for him as a scientist during this time.



Patrick Kurzeja has fun with his little daughter.

"I had worked on a stipend for most of the year before my daughter was born and was not entitled to parental benefits as a result. That's a shame because I worked just as much as my colleagues."

Nevertheless, Patrick Kurzeja took his parental leave to go on a long-distance trip to South Africa with his little family. He was inspired to do so by a friend who also used his parental leave to travel with his family: "I've only ever had one colleague who took parental leave, and he drove through half of Europe in a VW van. And then we went to South Africa for a few weeks. Yes, that had a good influence on me. To get a little further away with the child, because when do you have the time again?"



Patrick Kurzeja's wife is currently taking care of their daughter until she can start daycare in September. "We want our daughter to join a larger group of children very soon.

goes. She needs that, we're starting to notice that now," he says with a smile.

Support for supervision from family and friends is unfortunately not available on a large scale. "After the doctorate verab- many colleagues and friends left in all directions. Since I received my doctorate be, many friends have been lost due to moves and new jobs. That means we have only a few friends left in the immediate vicinity, but none of them have children. The grandparents also live a little further away, so all we really have left is the daycare center as a social place."

### **New ways**

However, the new phase of life with a child also gives rise to new networks and friendships, as the father of the family reports. "We've already met new people through the PEKiP groups, for example." Typical topics of conversation there are, above all, the children's illnesses, their developmental progress and, of course, the number one topic: sleep problems. Since Patrick Kurzeja has returned to work full-time, however, as a father he can no longer often attend the group meetings, because they often take place during his working hours.

## Type question

For Patrick Kurzeja, it was always clear that he wanted to become a father someday. When he ponders the question of what type of father he is, he is unsure, however. "I like to do sports and would also like to do sports with my child. Then maybe I would be a sporty father type. At least that's how I'd like to see myself," he answers.

**"I enjoy playing sports and would enjoy playing sports with my child."**

Despite his work, Patrick Kurzeja doesn't want to give up getting up with his daughter every morning at seven o'clock and having dinner with her in the evening and putting her to bed. The priorities have changed due to his small daughter Finja has changed, that much is already clear to the young family man. Whereas scientific work was the top priority before, family life is now. He puts it this way: "The old priorities have been supplemented by beautiful, new things."

**Patrick Kurzeja with his little daughter.**

Patrick Kurzeja is sure that having children makes you more balanced at work. The engineer sees his professional career as an opportunity for further development through interesting work that he enjoys. His next goal on the career ladder is his habilitation. Family planning is also far from complete: "Since we want to have more than one child in the long term, all the fun will then start all over again," he says with a laugh.

The interview led Michelle Reit on 26.07.2018



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