

**Arne von Irmer** (\*1966) works in the ITMC of the TU Dortmund as head of software development and has three children with his wife Heidrun. Johanna, Wim and Anna were born in 2004, 2006 and 2011.



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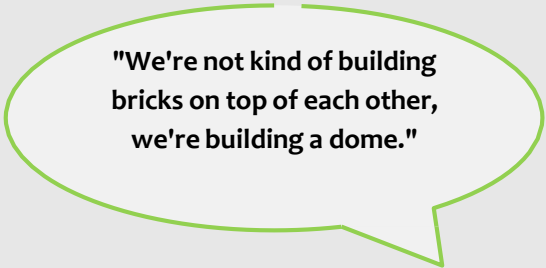
## The exemplary father type

*For the interview appointment with Arne von Irmer, I go to Otto-Hahn-Strasse 12, on the outer edge of TU Dortmund University's North Campus, on this spring day. In this building, the head of software development at TU Dortmund University is already waiting for me in his office, in a good mood. We quickly strike up a conversation and talk for a while until we start the interview.*

## Symbol father

Arne von Irmer rides his bike to school every morning with his son Wim before continuing to his workplace himself. Cycling is close to both of their hearts, as Arne von Irmer says with a smile. At home, he is always repairing the broken two-wheelers of his three children's friends. For him, that's just part of being a father.

"Being a role model in the family. Being there, wrenching bikes, cleaning up, helping out, putting in and taking out the dishwasher. Showing a male image that also means: I am present," he explains.



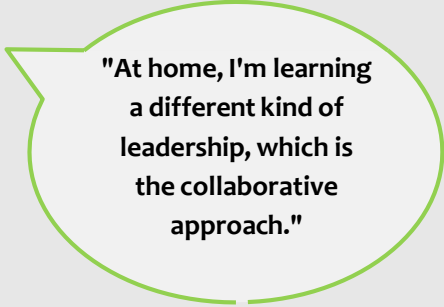
**"We're not kind of building bricks on top of each other, we're building a dome."**

A family and everything that is necessary for a good together.

It is not at all easy to explain what it takes to live in a cathedral, but it is worth it: "We don't just build stones on top of each other, we build a cathedral, and that takes time.

To ensure that family life functions well despite three children and full-time work, there is a calendar for the whole family in which each family member is listed.

The father can enter all the appointments that affect everyone. When the family father thinks about the question of what type of father he is, he immediately thinks of many things. He is a cuddly father, a sporty father and, above all, a caring father.



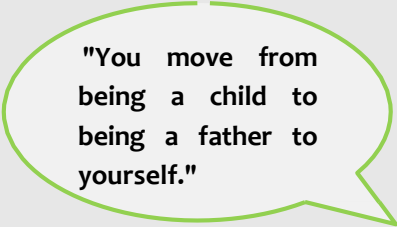
**"At home, I'm learning a different kind of leadership, which is the collaborative approach."**

What is very clear to him is that becoming a father was something very special in his life. "When you say, okay, I'm really going to be a father now, that's something that has an eternity. It is of course irreversible and you have that little in life. That was an extremely exciting and important moment for me. It's like coming out. You move from being a child to being a father to yourself."

## All good things come in threes

As exciting and enriching as becoming a father and being a father is for Arne von Irmer, after three children the couple decided together that no fourth child should follow. "The more children you have, the less attention the individual can get. That's why

I said we'd make a cut here." To that, he tells a funny anecdote about an invisible member of the family named Selma.



**"You move from being a child to being a father to yourself."**

"We bought a car one day, and there was a sticker on the back that said, "Selma on board." "Who is Selma?" my neighbor asked me. "Who is Selma?" my neighbor asked. And I don't know, it was such an intuition or maybe we had already pre- I've been talking about it for a long time. So I yell across the street to my wife, "Where's the selma?". And of course she answers completely logically: "Who is Selma?" And I say to the neighbor, "Don't take it amiss. You know, with the fourth child, it's sometimes a little difficult to remember."

Sometimes such a thought construct is quite important to understand things. Selma is a very important character for us. It's a good thing that she doesn't exist. Only as a sticker on the car, and somehow she's still on board and accompanies us as important information."

## **Family life and the world of work**

"For the father of three, working at TU Dortmund University and being a father are very compatible. It's a give and take. The children are so incredibly close to me and when I receive support for the family, it also affects me personally. In the most positive sense."

Unfortunately, this positive attitude toward children and family is not evident everywhere, as Arne von Irmer knows from experience. "When someone drives an SUV that makes a really nice noise when you step on the gas, it conveys without words that you're successful. When our children have visitors and splash water around in our garden, it sounds like an outdoor swimming pool. Isn't this noise in the garden almost the same sound, the same sound as from success? But many people don't feel that way. They feel disturbed by the noise in the garden," he remarks critically. For the family man, his children and his family life are the greatest success.

This attitude to family also brings him a lot of positives for work. For Arne von Irmer, family and work are mutually dependent. "At home, I'm learning a different kind of leadership, namely the cooperative approach, which I think is also very important for a company. How much do individuals contribute? And then how much is the sum of the whole?" At the TU Dortmund University, it is precisely this interplay of work and

Family valued and supported. "At the TU, I'm one among equals. There, people look at what professional and social skills they have for their roles or tasks. I think that's important and that's how it is here."

**"A family needs security through early decision-making."**

"It was the only way I could develop personally and was supported to do my job well. And the university also benefits from it."

### **Tear test deferral**

Nevertheless, there is one point that Arne von Irmer still criticizes, even after years of good work at TU Dortmund: When his wife was pregnant with their second child, Arne von Irmer had already been employed at TU Dortmund for six years on temporary contracts. In this new family situation, the uncertainty about whether his contract would be extended became a real test of nerves for everyone involved. "Fixed-term contracts that are only extended at the last moment. What is that like for someone who has children? Everyone is trembling along," he says.

**Arne von Irmer with his three children.**

and gives vent to his anger about this ongoing situation at TU Dortmund. "A family needs security through early decisions," the family father clarifies and hopes that the situation will improve in the future. He now has a temporary position.

The interview  
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led Michelle Reit on



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