

Your Shortcut to... Dads (For Fathers' Day)

Some dads brave the Antarctic winter to protect a single egg... others disappear before their babies hatch... and almost all of them believe their jokes are hilarious. This is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to Dads, for Father's Day. The podcast where we explore the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the wonderful world around us. I'm Christie Kijurina.

And I'm Bryce Corbett. Christie, since you're here... what do you call a fish wearing a bow tie?

I don't know... what do you call it?

Sofishticated.

Oh, Bryce...

What? I'm practising. Here's another one. Why did the scarecrow win an award?

I suspect you're about to tell me.

Because he was outstanding in his field.

Urgh!

One more...What's brown and sticky?

Uh, a stick!

Christie! You've heard it!

Every kid on Earth has heard it. Is there a reason you're subjecting me to your best, or possibly worst, dad jokes today?

Father's Day is coming up this Sunday, Christie. I thought I should make sure my material was ready.

Of course. Because nothing says Father's Day quite like a joke everyone has heard before, followed by Dad laughing at it harder than anyone else.

Exactly. Would you like to hear the one about the roof?

No

"That's okay. It's over your head. [laughing hard]

Today, we'll find out WHAT being a dad looks like in the animal kingdom; HOW dadding has changed throughout human history; and WHY we celebrate Father's Day and the

many different people who can do the dadding in our lives. But first, Christie, did you hear about the restaurant on the Moon?"

Don't

Great food. No atmosphere. [Boom Tish]

Listen carefully there's a S'Quiz at the end.

WHAT

Bryce, your dad jokes may be terrible, but compared with some fathers in the animal kingdom, you're doing very well.

Thank you... I think.

Let's play a little game. It's called Dad or Dud? I'll name an animal father and describe his parenting. You decide whether he belongs in the Dad Hall of Fame... or whether he's a dud.

Easy. Although I feel I should let you know before we start that I've never abandoned my children or eaten any of them.

Excellent. OK, first up: the emperor penguin. After Mum lays a single egg, she carefully passes it to Dad. He balances it on his feet, covers it with a warm flap of tummy skin and guards it through the freezing Antarctic winter while Mum heads to sea to feed.

That's impressive. How long is he standing there?

For around two months. The dads huddle together against winds that can blast at more than 150 kilometres an hour, taking turns on the warmer inside of the group. And during that time, they don't eat.

Definitely a Dad. Possibly the only father who can truthfully tell his child, "I stood barefoot in the snow for two months for you."

Next: the seahorse.

The dad that gives birth!

That's right. The female places her eggs inside a special pouch on the male's body. He fertilises them and carries the developing babies until he goes into labour and releases them, sometimes hundreds at once.

Dad Hall of Famer right there!

Not so fast. Once those tiny seahorses are born, they're on their own. Mum and Dad provide no further care.

Ah. Outstanding pregnancy and delivery... less impressive follow-up service.

Not every animal dad sticks around. In many species, the male's involvement ends after mating. The babies may be raised entirely by Mum, or, as with sea turtles and many fish, receive no parenting from either parent.

So... Dad?

Not by animal standards. Remember, animals aren't following human rules about good and bad parenting. Different species have evolved different ways of producing the greatest number of surviving offspring. Sometimes caring for a few babies works best. Sometimes producing thousands and leaving them to fend for themselves does.

Fair enough. But what about the dads that eat their own children.,, or at least their own eggs.

That's true. Some male fish carefully guard a nest, clean the eggs and fan fresh, oxygen-rich water over them and then eat a portion of the brood. It's called filial cannibalism.

So Dad spends all day protecting the kids... then has a few for dinner?

Scientists think there may be several reasons. Dad might eat damaged eggs to stop disease spreading, reduce an overcrowded brood so the others have a better chance, or regain some of the energy he's using to guard them.

I'm going to say that one is both Dad and Dud.

Nature is complicated. It doesn't hand out World's Best Dad mugs. What looks shocking to us may be a survival strategy for another species.

And human dadding is complicated too. It doesn't involve balancing eggs on our feet or eating the children, but the job description has changed enormously over time. So, Christie... what did being a dad look like before barbecue tongs and school drop-off existed?

HOW

Well, Bryce, there's no single moment when someone invented "the dad". Human fathers have always helped their families in different ways, and what was expected of them depended on where and when they lived.

In many early communities, survival was a team effort. Adults gathered food, hunted, made tools, cared for children and taught them the skills they would need. A dad might show his children where to find water, how to track an animal or which plants were safe to eat.

As societies grew and developed laws about property and inheritance, fathers in many cultures became the official heads of their households. In Ancient Rome, for example, the eldest man held enormous legal power over the family. Dads were expected to provide discipline, make important decisions and prepare their children for adult life.

Which could mean teaching a son the family trade, arranging marriages or making sure property and family status passed to the next generation. Of course, not every family or father behaved in exactly the same way. History usually records what society said dads should do, not necessarily what happened inside every home. There have always been strict dads, playful dads, loving dads, absent dads and dads who changed nappies... even if nobody thought to write that last part down.

Then, during the Industrial Revolution of the 1700s and 1800s, work changed enormously. More people began leaving farms and small workshops to earn wages in factories, mines and offices. That helped create the idea of Dad as the breadwinner... the person who went out to earn money, while Mum stayed home to care for the children.

But that picture was never true for every family. Plenty of women worked for money too, and poorer families often needed every available person, including children, to earn or produce something. Still, the breadwinner dad became a powerful stereotype. By the mid-1900s, the “ideal dad” in advertisements and television often went to work, came home, read the newspaper and left most cooking, cleaning and child care to Mum.

His main jobs were supposedly earning money, mowing the lawn, fixing mysterious objects in the shed and occasionally having mum announce: “Wait until your father gets home.”

A rather alarming phrase when you are the father and you’ve just arrived home.

From around the 1970s, expectations began shifting again. More women entered paid work, families changed, and people increasingly questioned why particular jobs had to belong to mums or dads. Fathers were encouraged to become more involved in the everyday work of raising children, not just providing money, but feeding babies, changing nappies, cooking dinner, attending school events and offering emotional support.

Today, many dads are much more hands-on. Some stay home as the main carer, some work part-time, and some take parental leave when a baby arrives. Dads pack lunches, plait hair, organise appointments, help with homework and know which coloured sippy cup will prevent a three-year-old from having a complete breakdown.

Although Australian figures show that women still generally perform more unpaid housework and caring than men. So the job description has changed, but families haven’t necessarily divided every job equally just yet.

Meanwhile, popular culture has created a new creature: the Modern Stereotypical Dad. And he comes with his own starter pack beginning with the determination to carry every shopping bag from the car in a single trip, even if it cuts off the circulation to all of your fingers.

A sneeze loud enough to frighten birds from nearby trees.

An intensely gassy belly.

Plus the ability to fall asleep during the movie he chose, then wake up and insist he was merely resting his eyes.

Now, those are only jokes and stereotypes. Not every dad barbecues, fixes things, follows sport or tells terrible puns, and plenty of mums do those things too. Being a dad isn't a personality type or a list of household jobs.

And there isn't one perfect way to divide responsibilities. What matters is that the people raising a child provide care, safety, guidance and love, and that everyone in the family feels supported.

Which raises an interesting question. If dads have existed for as long as humans have, why did we only start giving them their own special day relatively recently?

WHY

Bryce, the modern Father's Day story begins in the United States in 1909, when a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd was listening to a church sermon about Mother's Day. Sonora's mother had died when she was young, and her father had raised Sonora and her five brothers by himself.

Sonora thought devoted dads like hers deserved a special day too. She campaigned for the idea, and the first Father's Day celebration was held in her hometown of Spokane in 1910. From there, the idea gradually spread around the world, but not everyone celebrates it at the same time.

The United States, the United Kingdom and many other countries celebrate Father's Day in June. Here in Australia, it's held on the first Sunday in September. Father's Day began appearing in Australian newspapers and communities during the 1930s, although nobody knows for certain why September became our chosen month.

Today, Father's Day is also big business. Shops suggest that the perfect dad can be recognised by his urgent need for socks, barbecue tools, shaving products and mugs announcing that he is either the World's Best Dad or the World's Fartiest Dad.

Australia even has an official Father of the Year Award, which has been presented since 1957. But most dads don't need a national judging panel. Their award might be a handmade card, breakfast in bed or a slightly wonky clay object created at school.

And celebrating someone doesn't have to involve buying anything. You could spend time together, make their favourite food, take them somewhere they enjoy or tell them something you appreciate about them. The best gift depends on the dad. One might

love fishing, another might prefer football, gardening, gaming, cooking, music or a peaceful afternoon doing absolutely nothing.

It's also important to remember that families come in many different shapes. You might have one dad, two dads, a stepdad or a foster or adoptive dad. A grandad, uncle, older brother, coach, teacher or family friend might be an important father figure in your life.

You might have two mums, live apart from your dad, or not have a dad in your life at all. And for people whose dad has died, or whose relationship with their dad is difficult, Father's Day can bring some complicated feelings. However your family looks and however you feel about the day, that's okay.

Because, as we discovered from our penguins, seahorses and humans, fatherhood is about much more than biology. Dadding is all the showing up, caring, guiding, protecting and loving that someone does.

Although a truly committed father figure will apparently also embarrass you in public and tell jokes that make you groan. Which reminds me, when does a joke become a dad joke?

I'm afraid to ask.

When it becomes apparent. Get it?? Apparent... A parent?!

On that note...

THE S'QUIZ

"This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening...

1. Which animal dad carries developing babies in a special pouch and gives birth to them?

A) An emperor penguin

B) A seahorse

C) A stick insect

[B) A seahorse]"

"2. When is Father's Day celebrated in Australia?

A) The first Sunday in June

B) The last Sunday in August

C) The first Sunday in September

[C) The first Sunday in September]"

"3. True or false? Being an important father figure always means being a child's biological dad.

[False]"

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of Dads for Fathers' Day

Now get out there...and have a most excellent day!

Over and out. And a huge Happy Fathers' Day to all the Dads and Dad Figures out there!

Happy Father's Day!