

Thinking like mom: Fatherhood makes male brains more maternal

The [amount of time](#) bat-eared fox fathers spend monitoring their young is an even bigger predictor of pup survival than maternal investment or food availability. Dads, at least in this species, matter.

But what determines whether a dad will be so devoted? Defining paternal dedication is a fraught field of study, but according to scientists, much of paternal behavior seems to boil down to just a few brain basics.

Because the entry into fatherhood isn't cued with the same slew of physiological changes that accompany pregnancy and motherhood, the biological and chemical bases of paternal behavior have [remained](#) somewhat [mysterious](#). However, recent discoveries show that, across vertebrates, the recipe for a good dad is actually pretty clean-cut: think [more like mom](#). "As males become paternal, [their brains] become more like females'," says [primate biologist] Toni Ziegler.

These changes include [increases](#) in a few hormones that have massive effects on the brain: oxytocin, estrogen, prolactin and vasopressin. Oxytocin, famously nicknamed the "cuddle hormone," appears to play a well-established role in parent-infant bonding, particularly in the days following birth. For instance, recent research shows that male non-human primates making [more oxytocin](#) seem to be more responsive to needy infants.

...

For many mammals, having a nurturing father tends to have long-lasting effects on the physical and behavioral health on kids. In several mammals, male investment increases offspring [litter size](#), [survival](#) and [sociability](#).

Read full, original post: [This Is Your Brain on Fatherhood](#)