

Opinion

>> The Mummy Chronicles

It's all daddy's fault, according to science



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BY TAN KENG YAO

ONE day, my five-year-old son took a ballpoint pen to his legs and drew triangles, squares and random squiggles from knee to ankle, which made him look like a person who had lost a bet with a tattooist.

When I asked him why he did it, all he would say was: "I like."

Meet my son, also known as the Crazy Baby. This is a pet name he acquired because of his inclination to engage in strange behaviour.

Other somewhat deranged things he has done include dragging a tricycle out of the storeroom so that he could ride it to get from bedroom to bathroom; going to school wearing mismatched shoes of different colours and sizes (grey and navy blue, sizes 8 and 9); and taking his clothes off in the middle of a meal (yes, we lectured him on the virtues of modesty and made him put his shirt back on).

I am perfectly sane. I turn up for work when required to, shower every day and don't do extreme things like chewing gum where it's forbidden. I also subscribe to moderate parenting (no sweets before bedtime, limited screen time). I have no idea where the boy's streak of insanity came from.

So, through the process of elimination, I concluded that the boy had inherited the madness from his father.

"It's not me, it's you," I told him.

And then I added: "You must have been a very strange child yourself."

My husband doesn't have much ammunition in the way of rebutting me, because neither of us actually has an intimate knowledge of the intricacies of genetics.

So he said: "Okay."

And then he added: "Can you not talk so loudly? The whole block must have heard you."

(He complains constantly that my voice is way too loud. I beg to differ. WHO SAYS MY VOICE IS LOUD?)

And what used to be just blind speculation on my part about the boy's genetic heritage has now been confirmed by science.

A recent study by the University of North Carolina's School of Medicine conducted on lab rats concluded that even though mammals (including humans) inherit an equal amount of DNA from both parents, our growth and development are mostly influenced by genetic material from our fathers.

This means that genetically speaking, we are more like our dads.

These findings are useful in helping scientists understand more about hereditary diseases and genetic conditions.

What the findings mean for me, a layman interpreting them in a very unscientific way, is that if we are mostly influenced by genes that came from the father, my son must have got most of his traits from my husband.

But when the boy is being loving or acting adorable, those traits are mine. It is a universal fact that all things good flow

from the mother. We are the bearer of life, we are all that is wonderful and pure. That the boy is also at risk of inheriting my breathtaking inaptitude for financial matters or my general lack of logical thoughts is besides the point.

Anyway, my moment of triumph turned out to be short-lived. Even if the science supported me, the hard facts didn't.

Last week, my husband and I took our son to the Singapore Food Trail at the Singapore Flyer for a meal. After my son and I had finished eating, I took him for a walk around the garden at the Flyer, while my husband stayed behind to finish his drink.

My son was really excited about the things he was seeing at the garden.

"Look! Fish!" he squealed.

Then, he gasped: "Mummy, look! Waterfall!"

My husband WhatsApped me from where he was sitting in the eatery, metres and metres away. "Is that the boy talking loudly? I can hear him from here."

"Oh wow, yes!" I replied. Sound sure can travel, I thought.

Later, as we went back to meet my husband, he gave me a strange look. Then he said: "We now know that the boy inherited his horribly loud voice from you."

Egg on my face moment.

Okay, fine, whatever.

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