

3 Reasons Why the Pets-Babies Comparison Just Doesn't Work

"Happy Father's Day to all dads of human and fur babies!"

This was the first thing that appeared in my Facebook newsfeed last Sunday. Like many people, I have the bad habit of checking my social media accounts as soon as I wake up. When I saw this, I rolled over and buried my face in my pillow.

It probably should not come as a surprise that pet owners are now claiming Father's Day. As fertility rates fall all over the world, adopting a pet is replacing giving birth to a child. I live in an upscale neighborhood in a major global city, and I constantly see dogs being treated like children. They trot along the sidewalk, groomed to perfection, adorned with little bows with rhinestones. When it's cold, they wear little sweaters. Sometimes, they even get pushed around in specially designed, super-expensive dog strollers.

Childless celebrities are at the forefront of the trend. Last year, Oprah posted a photo on [Instagram](#) of a woman with a dog in a stroller with the caption, "Happy Mother's day to Mothers of all varieties of children!" She's also said in an [interview](#), "I wouldn't have been a good mom for babies. I don't have the patience. I have the patience for puppies, but that's a quick stage! Explaining her decision not to have kids, celebrity chef Rachael Ray [said](#), " I feel like a borderline good mom to my dog. So I can't imagine if it was a human baby." According to the [New York Times](#), Ray spent \$80,000 on a private jet to travel to Europe with her dog. So it's fair to say she's better than a borderline good dog mom.

I have two human babies and one so-called fur baby. My children are ages 3 and 1, and a few months ago we adopted a cat from our local animal shelter. We love our cat, but it is silly – if not insulting – to compare her with my children.

Here's just a few of the many reasons:

1. Children live longer

Thanks to modern medicine, you can reasonably expect your child to outlive you by a great many years. Life expectancies for dogs and cats is significantly shorter. Let's assume you both have a baby and adopt a puppy when you're 30. By the time you're 50 your kid will be in college and your dog will be 6 feet under. My cat won't be around to visit me in the hospital when I'm dying—and even if she was, the hospital would probably ban her for hygienic reasons. But my kids likely will.

2. Children develop further

Despite what Oprah says, the human baby stage is also a very quick one. My son emerged from my womb 18 months ago able only to cry and flail his tiny limbs about. Today, he can walk, feed himself, and say simple phrases. The miracle of child development is a major reason why parenting is so rewarding. Of course, pets develop too. Dogs, in particular, can go a long way in their training. But no matter how long your pet lives, it will never be able to speak the basic noun-verb constructions my 18-month-old does.

Your pet will never grow out of their dependency like your child will. Ok, I guess some pets could survive on their own if they had to, but that's hardly ideal. The world's most famous dog lover, Queen Elizabeth, recently lost the last of her beloved [corgis](#). She decided awhile back not to breed any new ones because she was concerned about who would take care of them after she dies.

3. Children make more of an impact

on the world

I believe that my children have eternal souls. Thus, investing in them is a better use of my time than pretty much anything else I could be doing. But even apart from that consideration, a child will go on to touch the lives of other human beings in ways their parents cannot imagine and may not live to see. A child can grow up to be a nurse or a doctor who cares for people when they are suffering. A child can grow up to be a soldier who defends their homeland. A child can grow up to be a good husband or wife. A pet cannot grow up to be any of those things.

On one level, it seems to me that everything I've written here is obvious. But apparently, it's not. Many people think differently. Also, I don't mean to disparage pet ownership. It's wonderful and quite rewarding in its own way. But please do not compare it with child-rearing. And please, whatever you do, don't wish a happy Father's or Mother's day to "parents" of fur babies.

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