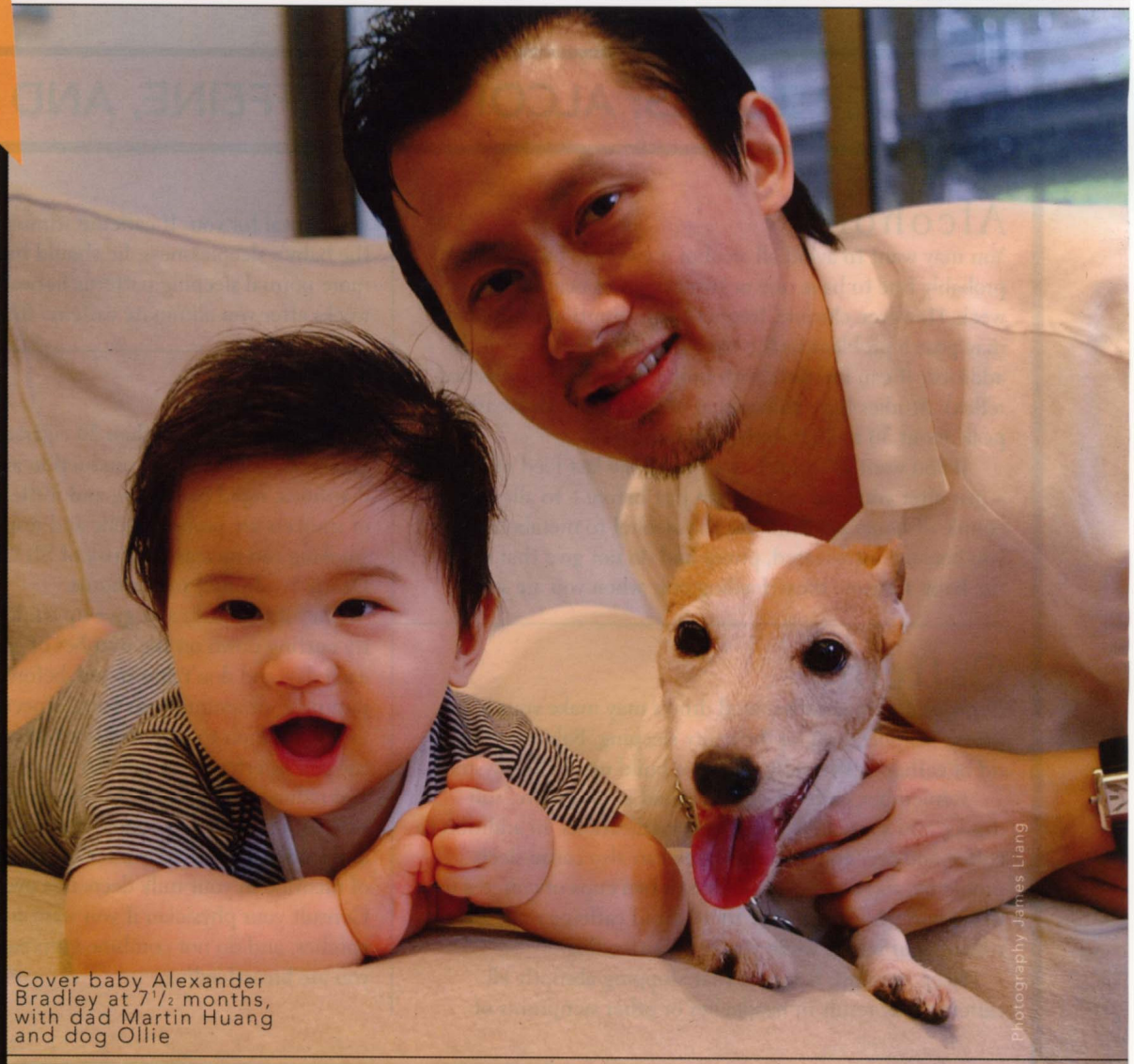


Dad's Da Man

You've heard mothers talk about what it's like to have a baby late in life, here's what some men had to say about their experiences



Cover baby Alexander Bradley at 7½ months, with dad Martin Huang and dog Ollie

Photography: James Liang

Dad Martin Huang, 43, plastic and cosmetic surgeon
Mum Patricia, 36, helps run their private company
Son Alexander Bradley, now 10½ months

What lessons have you learnt from your parenting experience?

I have learnt the following truths: There is nothing that can compare with the joy of having a child. Also, becoming a parent teaches you to become less selfish. At the same time, your children are more important than your work. Basically, there is no substitute for spending time with your child.

Do you have any parenting tips to offer?

Enjoy, savour and treasure the moments that you spend with your child as each phase of their growth and development is unique and there are no 'reruns'. You can't 'do it later' because once it is gone, it doesn't happen again. Secondly, do not get too uptight about the rate of development of your child, and the attainment of milestones. Respect the fact that each child has his or her own programme of development and destiny. Allow your child to bloom at his or her own rate always, and be encouraging and nurturing but not imposing and forcing. Thirdly, be generous with your love and affection, and demonstrate this amply with words

and physical gestures. This is the foundation for a self-confident and secure child.

Did you rely on any self-help material?

Yes, I sought help from books mainly. One is Rob Parson's *The Sixty Minute Father* and *The Sixty Minute Mother*. There's also *Touchpoints* by T. Berry Brazelton; Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Murkoff and Sandy Hathaway's *What to Expect – The First Year*, Glade B Curtis and Judith Schuler's *Your Baby's First Year* and finally, John Gray's *Children Are From Heaven*. The books by Rob Parsons and John Gray are excellent, and teach us some key ways of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships with our children.

What was the most important thing you learnt from them?

These books provide useful information, advice and guidelines that help parents understand, and monitor the development of their child, deal with common problems that occur, like sleeping problems, and to know what to expect as their child grows. Having a better understanding of their child gives parents peace of mind as they deal with a myriad of issues as their child grows and develops.

Dad Goh Eck Kheng, 49, publisher, Landmark Books
Mum Anita Fan, 41, an ex-lawyer who now volunteers with the Asian Women's Welfare Association
Kids Gillian, 5; Tim, 4 years

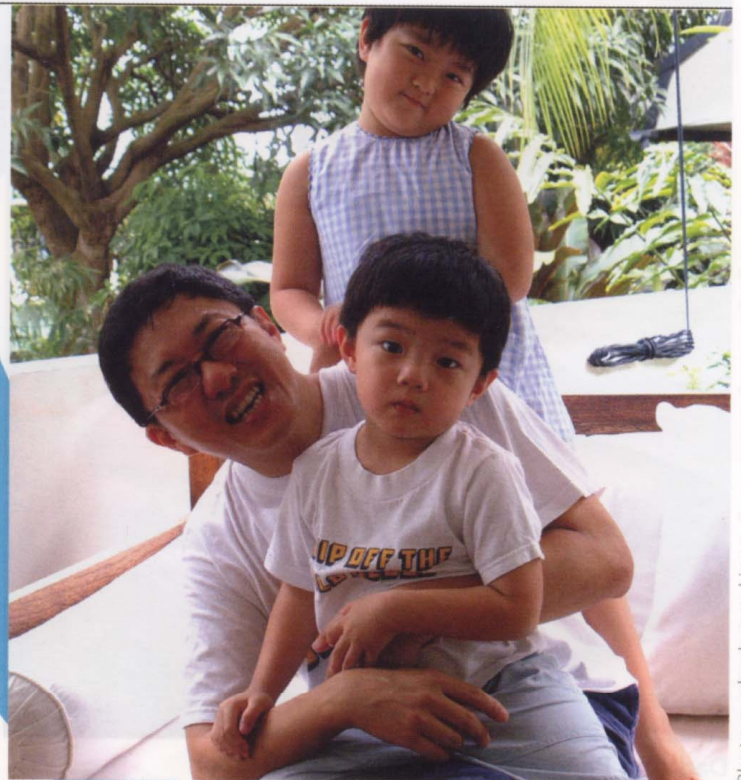
What lessons have you learnt from your parenting experience so far?

My wife and I have learnt that every child is different. Each child is basically a growing, evolving individual. From that, the focus becomes very clear: We must get to know each of our children as a little person. Once you understand their emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual makeup, you are on the way to becoming a better parent. By that, you can care for, and nurture children more sensitively and intelligently.

Our two children are very different. My wife and I treat them differently, not because we favour one over the other or have double standards. Our approach to parenting for each of them is based on who they are, and how we can build on their strengths, and help them develop in other areas. Take discipline as an example; Gillian is sensitive and is a thinking person, so the threat of 'corner time' is enough to help her stop, and consider her actions. Timmy is headstrong and a livewire. As he is slow in his speech, he gets frustrated sometimes when we can't understand him. Discipline for him involves being firm, yet making sure that he understands why he is being disciplined.

Do you have any parenting tips to offer?

Our tips all relate to this need to understand and know your children. They are tips to help you connect and remain in contact



Photography James Liang

with them. We play, read, and chat regularly with them, either as individuals or as a family. It's actually very simple, but does mean that one must make it a priority to give the children time. We have a lot of fun together.

The other thing is that we are seamless in our discipline approach. If either my wife or I say, "No, you can't have/do it", the other will support him/her. It is important to maintain a united