

Dove
MEN 
+CARE × Ogilvy

Care Makes a Dad

Stella Asia Consonni

director's statement



I didn't grow up with a loving and caring father. From what I was told, he never wanted children, but we came into his life anyway. He remained a distant figure, too consumed by his work to give us attention.

Seven years ago, my mom met a lovely man who had always longed for children but never had any of his own. From the very start, he was kind to me and my brother, leaving us both stunned by the newfound fatherly love.

Yet he never gave up on us.

His care slowly mended my wounds and soothed my anger. It transformed the pain caused by my biological father's absence into an understanding that being present feeds the soul. It taught me that light needs shadow to exist.

Care is thicker than blood. It transcends biological connection, gender and sexuality. It is sensitive and vulnerable. And within that vulnerability there is power. Care is the cornerstone of fatherhood.





*Care is thicker
than blood*

Dear Dad

In 2023, my short film and photo series Dear Dad was released, a culmination of a year's work exploring modern fatherhood in New York, and what fatherhood means from a child's perspective.

I worked with streetcast fathers and their children across the city to create a series that revealed contemporary fathers and dispelled stereotypes, including adoptive and multigenerational families.

In the short film, I worked with 3 young kids to give voice to their ideas of fatherhood. From this experience, I learned that although traditional ideas of fatherhood are still based on old concepts of family and gender roles, modern society is challenging those ideas and valuing male role models who embrace a caring and loving form of masculinity.

Some images from the project on the next slides and here the [LINK](#) to the trailer.





intro

Unconditional, devoted and selfless care is the emotional thread that runs through every story of every life-changing role model, whether they're a godfather, stepfather, foster father, brother, coach, friend or teacher.

We will champion the stories of the men who stepped up against convention. The men who were not bound by biology to help those in need, but by a sense of compassion and a desire to make a positive impact.

We will hear from a diverse range of 'children' from all walks of life. I can't wait to talk to them and connect with their stories. I can't wait to hear how their world grew when someone picked them up and had their back..

This is about real people opening their hearts. The stories these kids will share are simple, expressed without embellishment, but endlessly profound.

This piece is for the men, like my stepdad, who showed up, and showed what paternal care can be, in all its variety and color.

A photograph of a man with extensive tattoos on his head, neck, and arms, gently kissing a sleeping baby on the forehead. The man's tattoos include various designs, including faces and text. The baby is wearing a white headband and has a small earring. The background shows a simple, possibly outdoor or semi-outdoor, setting with a concrete wall and some household items like brooms and a toy truck.

*Expanding
what it means
to be a dad*

We are innovating what it means to be a dad. To match this, our tone needs to feel modern whilst also keeping the intimate warmth from the authentic depiction of our subjects, and to capture the uplifting nature of their heartwarming relationships.

Through soft, delicate lighting and a focused color palette, we will create a cinematic visual style that is both warm and understated. This will allow the piece to concentrate on the deeply emotional journeys of our characters and audience.

A lively editing pace will keep our audience engaged.

HERE is a good tonal example, even though our format is different.

We will utilize strong and graphic compositions with smooth tracking movements, bringing sleek and clean motion to push forward the energy of the piece, towards our final reveal: these are stories of non-biological dads bound by care.

tone & style

With a grounded approach in not only our visual style, but also when working with the talent, we'll create a space for them to deliver authentic and relatable stories.

This piece is just the beginning of the discussion. It is the ignition point from which audiences can ask themselves and their loved ones about what truly makes a dad.

Male figures who couldn't have children, never got around to it, or who found their calling in their community also deserve to be seen, their care needs to be recognised and championed.



*our
approach*



*Emotional misdirection
in a three act structure*

elevating the misdirection

In order to heighten this distinction between our dated depiction of fatherhood and the newfound idea of the modern male role model, we will employ a sharp misdirection inside of a simple three act structure in order to powerfully open up this discussion.

We will guide the audience to think that it's a film about traditional fatherhood by showing all the emotions that characterize the topic. We will reveal that the father figures in the film, although not biological fathers, share a deep bond with their children through their care and attention, creating an intriguing shift in perspective for the audience.

Through a slow build of hints from intercutting between dads and their kids, and clues in the dialogue, we will build towards the strong visual payoff of these dads uniting with their unlikely 'children'.

A cinematic scene featuring several men in a warm, intimate setting. The central figure is a man with a mustache, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, who is laughing heartily with his eyes closed. He is being embraced from behind by another man with a beard and mustache, who is also smiling. To the left, another man with a beard and mustache is laughing. The background is softly lit, suggesting an indoor environment. The overall mood is joyful and human.

*Cinematic, deeply
human, and joyful*







script
90 seconds

Here are a few ideas of how we can plan the script, completely open to discussion — let's make the best possible film together.

ACT I

We open on a dad walking over and sitting on a comfy armchair, next to a modern coffee table and lamp.

The scenery is minimal and welcoming, with warm light coming from the lamp, like a cinema room before the movie starts.

He sighs, comfortable in his skin.

A melodic refrain comes in as we see a diverse series of real dads in the same armchair, talking about what it feels like to be a father and what that means to them.

They speak directly from the heart, sharing how important this paternal role has been to their own life. On a particularly poignant phrase we cut to black and cut the music, a moment of suspense.

ACT II

CLICK of a switch. **WHIRR** of a projector coming to life. The kids' clips appear on the wall, the dads enjoy the surprise and watch with love.

ON SCREEN: The kids share their personal stories of care as we intercut with the dads' emotional responses, laughter, guffaws, pulling their sleeves, a vulnerable silence, teary eyes.



ACT III

The projection turns off.

An ambient soft light slowly comes on, the dads breathe in the love we've just witnessed.

For most, this is the first time hearing such gratitude for their care.

The dads gasp. Some stand in shock, others pull back in their armchair. Their 'children' enter the room, completely taking their dads by surprise.

We watch as they come together in whichever way their heart takes them, with the driving feeling of this deep gratitude for one another.

Different ethnicity parents hold their 'children'. A man is rushed by a youth soccer team. An older brother/father figure banter with his younger siblings.

Laughter, tears, cheek pulling, shoulder squeezing, dancing, singing.

SUPERS animates over the dads together with their children.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey sweater, is seen from behind, embracing a man. The man is wearing a dark jacket and has his head bowed. In the background, another man in a dark suit is visible, and the setting appears to be a hospital or a clinical environment with grey walls and a window.

Care Makes a Dad

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+CARE

script

cutdowns

Our film will have natural story beats that will let us frame perfectly-formed short edits, keeping with our warm, honest and heartwarming tone.

In our 30 or 20s edits we will move from an establishing cut of our dads talking about what it means to be a dad, to the projection of the kids and the dads' reactions, to then end with the most expressive moments of our dads together with the kids.

For shorter cutdowns (10 or 6s) we could take different routes:

- Focus on the most emotional moments of all our dads watching the kids.
- An edit of the dads together with the kids.
- Open with a short and powerful quote, matched with the surprising visual of our dads physically uniting with their unlikely children.

When focusing on the longer-form cut, we will be conscious of our cutdowns.

Ultimately, this will be easily found through hinging these cutdowns on the most profound soundbites and sitting it alongside the visual payoff of our misdirection.



process

To enhance the emotional impact, I would want to conduct pre-interviews with our cast to establish trust.

Brief calls or Zoom sessions, where I can learn about our dads' stories and help them get comfortable.

This way, on set, we can ensure a relaxed atmosphere, making it easy for them to open up.

I'd love to film the kids a few days before our studio shoot, to then curate the best clips to show the dads. This can be a simple yet striking set up with a camera on a tripod and talent against black backdrop.

On the studio day we will prioritize capturing authentic emotions, following an elevated documentary approach.

Budget permitting, on this day it would be valuable to have 2 cameras to capture both dads' and kids' emotions.

However possible, I'd love for the dads to be unaware that their kids will be on set in person, to maximize their emotional outburst when they come together.



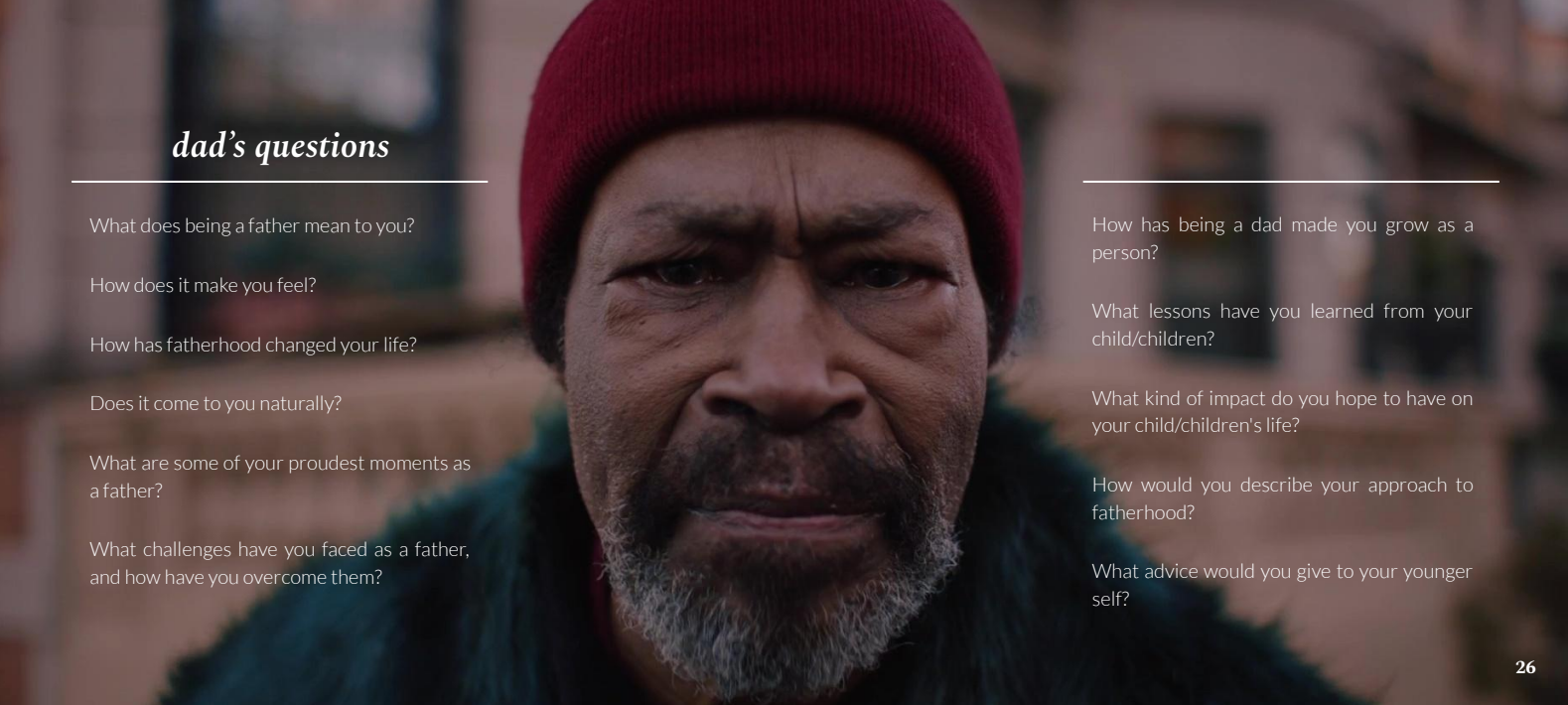
questions



I'm good at getting at the core of people. That's when the magic happens, they open up to me and allow me to create a film that connects with the audience.

In order to tap into the right tone and emotions, I'd like to ask questions that will resonate deeply with our dads and kids.

I'd like to meet them on a personal and emotional level, in a conversational tone that doesn't feel like I'm reading from a clipboard, but nevertheless I will share some key questions we will address throughout these conversations.



dad's questions

What does being a father mean to you?

How does it make you feel?

How has fatherhood changed your life?

Does it come to you naturally?

What are some of your proudest moments as a father?

What challenges have you faced as a father, and how have you overcome them?

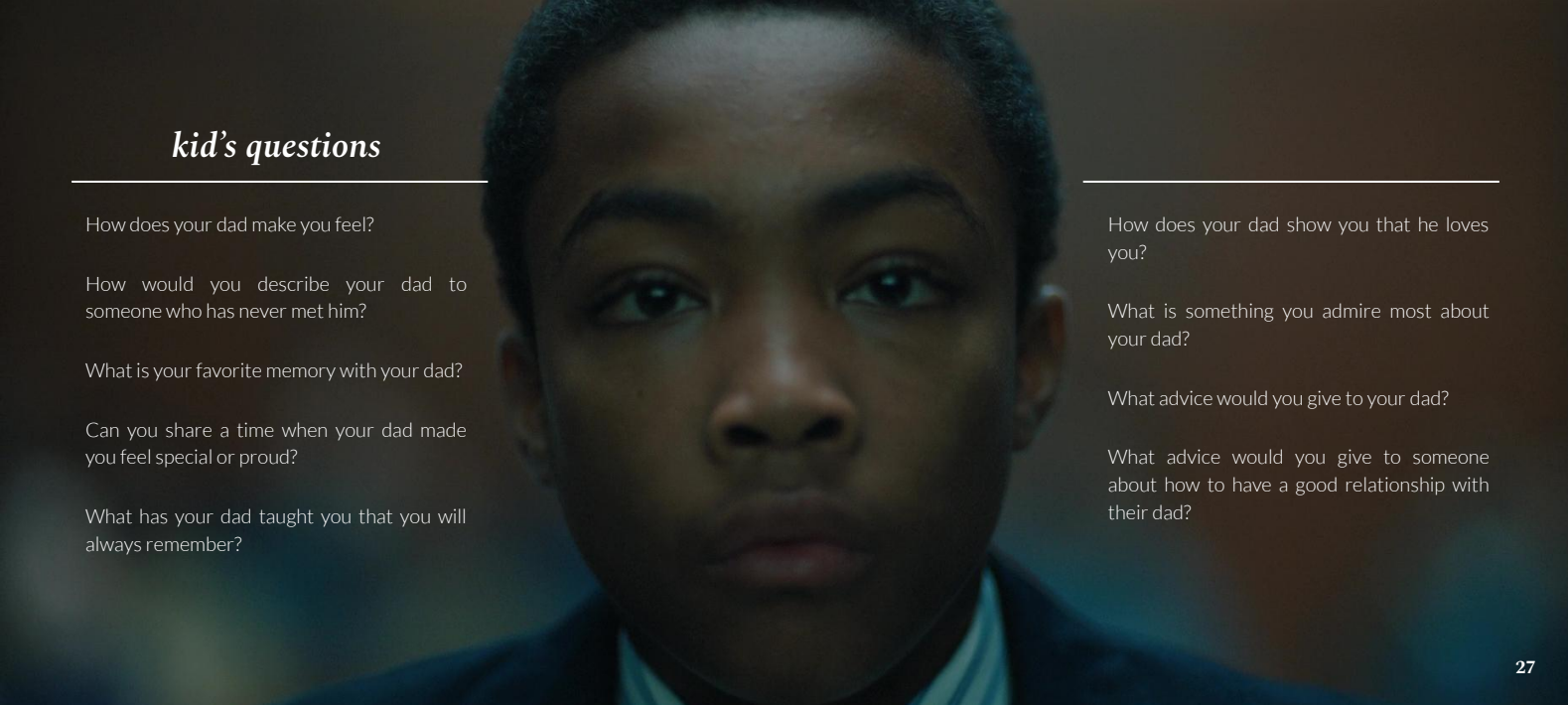
How has being a dad made you grow as a person?

What lessons have you learned from your child/children?

What kind of impact do you hope to have on your child/children's life?

How would you describe your approach to fatherhood?

What advice would you give to your younger self?



kid's questions

How does your dad make you feel?

How would you describe your dad to someone who has never met him?

What is your favorite memory with your dad?

Can you share a time when your dad made you feel special or proud?

What has your dad taught you that you will always remember?

How does your dad show you that he loves you?

What is something you admire most about your dad?

What advice would you give to your dad?

What advice would you give to someone about how to have a good relationship with their dad?

cinematography

Our smooth and subtle camera movement will carry us towards the emotional crescendo of our film.

In act 1 and part of act 2, we'll prioritize intentional and smooth shots on dolly or steady, creating sweeping movements. As we take the dads, and the audience, into the unexpected reveal, we will cover this with handheld shots to immerse the audience in this experience.

Our lighting will have an elevated naturalistic feel. This needs to feel like the dads are letting us into their safe space.

We start from a warm, cozy lighting seemingly coming from a table lamp. As we progress, our lighting will get brighter from the colorful projections, finally landing with a diffused soft overhead light, as the dust settles on our emotional hook.

For a classic cinematic look we will use warm, nostalgic lenses that are good at rendering faces and shoot in 16:9 format, with 9:16 and 1:1 guides on screen, in case of different format deliverables.



casting

We will cast a range of real, unconventional, non-biological and unexpected dads and their kids with heartwarming stories.

They don't have to be professional actors but simply in touch with their feelings. Ultimately, we aim to cast dads that can transport the audience into their story effortlessly.

The 'kids' will be of all ages, helping us ensure diverse descriptions of what it means to be a dad from a child's perspective.

Diversity, inclusivity and uniqueness are key, we want to show a large spectrum of stories touching different themes, from foster care, to father figures that provide support to the LGBTQ+ community, to big brothers that have assumed the role of a dad for their younger siblings, etc.

This is why a holistic approach to diversity and inclusivity across our entire production is so important; we will have a representative crew, helping set a tone and creating an environment every member of our cast is comfortable in.

After a first selection based on photos and a synopsis of their background, I'd like to ask the shortlisted people for a self tape, telling us about their story.

Here we'll pick dads with both the most interesting story and the best on-camera confidence.

production design

This doesn't need overcomplicating. Striking and modern are our keywords. We will create a minimal studio look and provide depth and atmosphere with our lighting.

At the same time, we'll add warmth to the space with accents that recall a fatherly embrace: a super comfy armchair, a modern side table and a table lamp, recreating the classic dad's spot for watching the Sunday football game.

We'll steer clear of overly saturated colors. Cool tones of black, blue and dark green for the space and warm shades of brown for the props, visually translating our emotional spectrum.

If it's possible to shoot the kids a few days before our studio shoot, their set up could be simple and minimal on a black backdrop so that the focus is on their faces, words and expressions.

We will then project these clips on a large scale on a wall of the studio, in front of the dad's armchair.



The wardrobe will also follow our production design approach of simple and modern, utilizing shades from off white to brown or from blue/green to black, based on what looks best with our talent's complexion.

We will prioritize natural fibers such as cotton, wool and linen, making our talent feel cozy and comfortable.

I'd love to participate in the fitting process, to ensure that the outfits will work with our narrative.


wardrobe



*sound &
music*

Our talent's voice will be the focus of our soundscape, driving the emotional narrative.

The score will be minimalistic, subtle and inspirational. All this calls for is a delicate melody to support our talents' voice and further the emotional push of the narrative.



The edit will be a key tool in allowing us to build towards, and elevate, our misdirection.

By mixing long breathing shots and quicker cuts we will highlight the key emotional moments.

edit

thank you

Growing up a “father” was something I thought I did not have; fatherhood was an absence. I know now that being a father is not a consequence of biology, it is a commitment of care and love to someone who needs support and nurturing. Life found a father for me.

I believe I have a deep, personal understanding of the message at the heart of this campaign. But conveying that isn't something that can be left to emotion and personal experience alone, it will require craft and consideration. We have to create the right environment for our cast, and draw the response we want - their answers and their emotions - from them. We have to structure our film in a way that will land this impactfully with our audience, and provoke thought when the film is finished. And we have to ensure it is as beautiful, authentic and raw as Dove's best films.

Hopefully this treatment demonstrates how I will do that. I'd love to continue talking and to bring this to life with you.

Let's celebrate all those unconventional fathers whose care shapes future generations.

Stella x

Our equality policy

Sweetshop Films is a progressive company committed to representing the voices of creatives from every walk of life, and facilitating the careers of the most talented individuals, regardless of background. To that end, we aim to have the crew on our productions made up of at least 50% underrepresented groups*. This is not a box ticking exercise. Our experiences implementing this policy continues to demonstrate that a representative crew, meritocratically selected, gives us the best platform to make the most effective and creative work.

At times this is not possible, as we continue to be limited by the historical lack of opportunities afforded to many groups. On those occasions we work to create pathways into production for new and inexperienced crew. We hope that you will join us in effecting this change. We're confident you will see the benefits of a diverse, cohesive, engaged and passionate crew in the work we create together.

**Underrepresented refers to anyone from a background or of an identity that is marginalised within production, and the wider advertising and filmmaking industry. We currently consider women, Indigenous Peoples, people of colour, members of the LGBTQI+ community, those with disabilities, neurodevelopmental conditions, disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and gender non-binary individuals to be underrepresented.*

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