

## **DAD WEARS THE APRON MOM WEARS THE PANTS**

**by Margaret Rose**

Children are crying and the teenagers are fighting. The dog is howling, he's afraid of the lightning. There's mud on the floors left from the dogs paws, running around trying to close all the doors. It's one of those days of a busy housewife, except the roles have changed and this is the husband's life. Mom is the one earning the keep and Dad is the one having to sweep!

Role reversal was unheard of years ago and now in the twentieth century it has become more prominent amongst couples. This may be due to various reasons: The husband is unemployed or has retired, it is more viable for the wife to work and she brings in a higher remuneration, or it is just the couple's preference. But still, it seems strange to hear of a man staying at home cleaning house, cooking and taking care of the kids while mom is out working. How are men coping in this situation? Surprisingly it seems that men are coping well in these roles despite their realization of how demanding childcare and housework can be

However, research has shown that the challenges of being a stay-at-home dad are loneliness, ridicule and pride. They feel isolated from other men and they miss general adult interaction, specifically if they are not involved in any social activity. It is weird to imagine a man sitting with a group of housewives who are discussing their children and husbands over a cup of tea with cookies. Men may experience hostility from mothers with whom they are interacting daily as part of their childcare activities. Other mothers may be reluctant to accept them into their social groups. Unfortunately a man in this role is often teased and becomes part of community gossip.

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(more follows)

Stay-at-home dads may struggle with their masculine identity and sense of self-worth because of the strong relationship between family care and femininity. It is recommended that they should become involved in some activity or sport involving other men. Even getting involved with networking is another option to interact with other stay-at-home dads.

Feeling isolated at home is one thing, but waiting for your wife to bring back the pay-cheque each month, is another! This can really hurt a man's pride and knock his ego, especially if he once was the provider. This situation calls for sensitivity and respect for one another as husband and wife. Despite the working roles, the husband can still exercise leadership within the family, while his wife creates a loving environment within the home. After all, he hasn't swept away his wisdom and she hasn't worked away her loving care for the family.

Don't despair if you are considering changing roles. There are families who have adapted to the change happily and it is working for them. The important thing is that before making a decision the husband and wife need to discuss this thoroughly and both of them have to be comfortable with the idea. Find out the pros and cons of such an arrangement so that you know what to expect and how to prepare. It will help to speak to others who are in the situation, to learn from their experience. Constant affirmation and support will also go a long way towards easing the situation. Maintain respect for one another and communication is the crux of any relationship, despite the roles. An idea may seem almost genius at the time but doesn't necessarily work out as expected, or on the contrary, it may work out so well and be the perfect solution. Only you as a couple can discover the roles that bring peace and happiness to your lives.