

ISSUE 29

Househusband

I've been a househusband for five years, and I'm not even married. I think it's great! I'm very particular about living in a clean, neat environment, but I'm my own boss and my hours are flexible. The only "bad" thing about being a househusband is the pay. But my "real" job is a free-lance writer, so it's easy for me to do the housework around my other schedule, and I don't have to fight the traffic every day to get to work. Someday I'll probably get married, but I'll retain both my present jobs. My wife can continue with her occupation without having to worry about getting home to clean house, or she can stay at home with me and we can spend even more time together.

What do you think about househusbands?

- (1) I think it is a stupid idea.
- (2) I think people should be able to live their lives anyway they want.
- (3) I really don't care one way or the other.



Sample Answers

(A) For a long time, people have *framed* individual rights from a feminist perspective: women who are qualified and interested should have the same right to pursue any career as men have. But the same should be true for males as well. If it *suits* them, why can't they be homemakers? Let their wives work for a living!

(B) It is unnatural for men to do housework for a living. There is nothing wrong with helping out in an emergency or sharing the household chores with a wife who works outside the home, but both of these situations are very different from a man cleaning the house and raising the kids *day-in, day-out*. Househusbands are not real men!

Speak Your Mind

1. Have you ever talked with your spouse about being a househusband? Why or why not?
2. If a man's wife had a more *promising* job than he, should he be willing to be a househusband?
3. What do you think is the main factor that determines who stays at home and who *goes off* to work?
4. What would be the merits and the demerits of house husbandry?
5. A lot of social prejudice against househusbands still exists, so they are often reluctant to talk about their lives. Why?

-**frame** : express (sth) carefully in a particular way

-**suit** : be convenient or appropriate for (sb)

-**day in, day out** : everyday for a long time

-**promising** : likely to be successful or very good -**go off** : leave a place

Speak Your Mind Helpers

1. Have you ever talked with your spouse about being a househusband? Why or why not?

(A)

My husband and I have discussed this many times. I think he should take a year off from his job and take over the housework, while I go out into the working world full time. It would be a kind of experiment in living. We would both become more *sympathetic* to each other's *lot in life*; and, who knows? — maybe we would both find out that we're happier *reversing* the sexual *stereotype* and it would not be temporary after all.

(B)

No, we've never talked about it. We both think the idea is just plain silly. It's too bad that so many women are forced to work outside the home for economic reasons. They would have much happier, more fulfilling lives if they stayed home and took care of the family. But bringing the men home to do the housework would just make the situation worse. Men are men and women are women, and any society that *obliterates* those roles is in very serious trouble.

2. If a man's wife had a more promising job than he, should he be willing to be a househusband?

(A)

No man should be expected to stay at home just because his wife has a better job. He should feel proud of his wife's achievements while also taking pride in his own. Since they would be doing well financially, the best solution would be for both of them to continue working and to hire someone to handle the domestic chores.

(B)

Absolutely! Men often talk about how *ennobling* women's work is, and how *debasing* it is for men to have to sell their souls out in the market place. Fine; if that is true, they should be happy to stay at home themselves and enjoy the pleasures of changing diapers, scrubbing the floors and windows, buying the food, cooking the meals, and washing all the clothes and dishes every day. It's only fair, after all.

→ **sympathetic** : favorably understanding toward (sth) → **(sb's) lot in life** : (sb's) general situation; fate

→ **reverse** : change one's views, policies, etc. to the opposite

→ **stereotype** : conventional idea or image of (sb), based on race, gender, religion, profession, etc.

→ **obliterate** : destroy (sth) → **ennoble** : give (sb) elevated qualities → **debase** : reduce the value, quality, or status of (sth)

3. What do you think is the main factor that determines who stays at home and who goes off to work?

(A)

It is entirely social. Because of the woman's ability to bear children, traditional societies have focused solely on that aspect of her being. So, females were expected to stay home and take care of family affairs, while the men were out hunting or farming. But social conditions have changed a great deal. In a modern society, families are smaller, most work is mechanized or computerized so physical differences between men and women are minimized, and urban populations are much more *anonymous* than small villages. So people are free to pretty much do as they like.

(B)

It is not a matter of fairness; it is all biological. Men cannot bear children. No one can argue with that. So *it follows* that men are not biologically or psychologically *suited* to do what is usually called "women's work." It is called that for a good reason: females are *predisposed* to being mothers and homemakers, while men are more inclined to more physical kinds of activities like being soldiers or farmers. Men get very bored and *restless* if they are *confined* indoors for long periods; they can't help it, it is the way they are genetically programmed. But women are more patient, and they also express their feelings better, so they make more easily, more caring parents than their husbands.

4. What would be the merits and the demerits of house husbandry?

(A)

My husband would *go nuts* if he had to stay home every day. He has worked hard to get where he is in his profession, and he is proud of his accomplishments. He loves his job, and he loves the *perks* and income it has provided him. In addition, if he just stayed home and did the housework, his friends would *look down on* him, and his own self-respect would decline as well. I love him just the way he is!

(B)

The best thing about house husbandry is letting a man do what he enjoys. Not every man is *suited* to the task; but not every woman is, either. Likewise, not every man (and not every woman) is *cut out* to be a doctor or a teacher or a welder or a clerk. We should all have the opportunity to do what we like best, whatever occupation that turns out to be.

Speak Your Mind Helpers

5. A lot of social prejudice against househusbands still exists, so they are often reluctant to talk about their lives. Why?

F : And now, I would like to introduce the local head of Househusbands Anonymous. He has asked that his name be *withheld*. Why is that, Sir?

M : Because we househusbands are discriminated against. People seem to think that somehow we are lazy, unambitious, or *effeminate* just because we enjoy taking care of our own homes.

F : Have you noticed any *stigma* of that nature?

M : Constantly. Men who know what I do stop talking about football and politics in my presence. I guess they believe that since I am not “a real man,” I must not be interested. But, in fact, I’m just like any other man; the only difference is that I work at home.

F : What do you enjoy about your profession?

M : I get excited about doing the routine little things right every time. It’s not easy maintaining a spotless house. It seems like every time I clean something, or do something, it immediately gets dirty again or I have to do it all over. But it’s just a matter of keeping constantly *on top of* things. It is a real challenge, let me tell you.

→ **withhold** : refuse to give

→ **effeminate** : looking, behaving, or speaking like a woman

→ **stigma** : sign of shame or disgrace

→ **on top of** : in control of

F : What does your wife think about your being a househusband?

M : It took her awhile to adjust to the notion, but now she loves it! She isn't tied down to a task that always bored her in the past. She has the freedom to do whatever she pleases, and when she gets home she knows that she will have a strong, happy man waiting for her. Our relationship is so much better now than it used to be, when I got home tired and unsatisfied every day.

F : Hasn't there been a financial loss since you left your old job?

M : Well, money isn't everything, you know. At first, we had some loss of income, but we were not poor. And we were much happier than when we had money but no job satisfaction. However, now that my wife can concentrate full-time on her job, she has gotten several promotions and our family income is actually higher than it was before.

