

Note to Husbands...

One common complaint from Singapore wives is that their husbands are **NOT involved** in the family. Well, the key counter major complaint of husbands is that their wives are too concerned about the children's well being or too domineering (that probably explains why we have marriage agencies getting potential wives from Vietnam!). Some reasons for not being involved are:

- Career building is taking up a lot of time;
- Since wife is handling well or nothing seems to be an issue, let her handle;
- Wife is both historical and hysterical, better let her handle;
- Children are the responsibility of the wife;
- Wait till the children are older;
- Older children need space, so let them be;
- Too many activities are on weekends, getting involve means no rest time;

One of the practical tension points is "CCA" – not the school's but those started by parents for even 3 year olds (Ballet, swimming or abacus lessons that usually fall on weekends). The husband hopes to rest but the wife's idea of weekend is opportunity for dad's involvement with the kids.

There is no hard and fast rule for involvement because each family is different – whether financially or individual make-up and preferences. When our children were growing up, we had our fair share of tension – after Suan Ai stayed home, she tried to arrange all lessons on the weekdays and weekends are just rest and play. More importantly, if one motivation for sending our children is the fear that they will miss out, then we suggest a re-evaluation of needs, motivation and time allocation. Some bring more stresses.

As a husband, I have the responsibility to discuss this with my wife to see what compromise can be reached. For example, if I want some rest maybe I can suggest limiting activities only to Saturday afternoons. If I think there are too many activities, I need to work that out with Suan Ai. I can hear husbands protesting, "Tried, but she wouldn't listen! She just thinks that I am lazy! So, I become as she said – LAZY!" First, we need to ask ourselves how true that is. Then we need to take the lead to love our wives SO MUCH that she is willing to calmly discuss with me. Sometimes she may even be willing to LISTEN to me (even if she may not agree!)

or I take her point of view. Priority is to be given to communicating, not running away. The process is necessary. The final decision varies with families and is not as important as the process. This is the "cross" we carry!

Involvement basically begins with setting the tone and direction at home. The actual execution and monitoring of the daily routine is still done by mothers (usually). Take household chores. If that is happening, my role is to set an example to also help in a certain chore. If that is not happening, I can set the pace by discussing with my wife first. The mum still draws up the time-table and nudges all to do the chores (daddy included).

As a dad, I like my children to be part of the family and be responsible for part of the house too. If my wife does not agree to that, I will make an effort to persuade or start something small by myself, lead by example.

Constant review of where the family is heading is necessary (builds husband and wife relationship) and as husbands, we need to be active in leading / thinking. Just because our career is important, that does not mean we can temporarily neglect the family for the time being, we may never come back – if we fall dead the next day, nobody is going to regret it except our family members.

We need to get our act together, learn, lead, act, admit mistakes, apologize, pick ourselves up again, adjust, align and move with our families. One of the principles in the Bible is forgiveness. I believe this is a very powerful way to touch our growing children and steer them towards righteousness and moral purity. (¹ Jn 1:9-10 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.") Personally, I know of no other book besides the Bible that can provide my children with absolute moral truths. (² Tim 3:16-17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.")

The ultimate test is – do we love our wife enough to discuss with them, to listen to them and for them to listen to us (and at times give each other the benefit of doubt)? Our decisions must take her personality and temperaments into consideration. Lead within a certain frame work that is unique to each family!