Work Stress and Marriage

Stress is contagious. In this age of high expectations and long work hours, it’s easy for a man to bring his worries and frustrations home and spread them all over the household.

A dad might treat his family like his boss treats him, which can be very destructive. Or some men might start resenting their family responsibilities, and expect to just relax on the sofa when they get home. Of course, that’s an insult to wives, since they have stresses of their own after a day corralling the kids or working somewhere else.

What can we do?

First, recognize the value of “decompression time.” Take some time in the car—or in your first few minutes home—to adjust your frame of mind. Exercise, read the newspaper, shower, change clothes. After a few minutes alone, you can shift gears and be ready for family time.

Second, keep communicating—even about the stresses you’re facing. It’s easy for a wife to feel like she’s going through the stressful work situation with her husband. But if she is informed about your work situation and she believes in the value of the work you’re doing, that will be a positive factor. Communicating will help both of you stay aware of the stresses, and can make you both more forgiving when one of you is in a bad mood.

Third, realize that sometimes bigger steps are necessary. If you’re stressed out or blaming your family for your tension, or if there’s a growing distance between you and your wife, it may be time to start thinking about a job change. Have a heart-to-heart about your true values and priorities.

Looking for a less stressful, more flexible position may cause more stress for a while, but you know you’re doing it for the right reasons. Even if the new position pays less, that’s an adjustment that most families can make. And isn’t your marriage worth it?

You know, there are a lot of divorced men and fathers right now—still working in high-stress jobs—who regret not making changes sooner to try to save their families.

Dad, don’t let a stressful job slowly erode the foundations of your marriage and family. Take steps to protect it, starting today.

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