

# Dual career family life style

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## Abstract

*Dual-career couples are individuals who, rather than being simply employed, have "jobs which require a high degree of commitment and which have a continuous developmental character." A dual-career family is "one in which both heads of household pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family life together." The need for gainful employment of women has arisen for better management of the family and fulfilling its needs. More and more women are entering the working class to satisfy the family's needs. As the number of women entering the work force continues to rise, it becomes increasingly difficult to manage families. Because of their dual responsibilities, working couples are particularly vulnerable to the problems of work-family spillover, conflict, and crossover. Work-family spillover, which can be negative or positive and bidirectional, involves the transfer of mood and behavior from one domain (home or workplace) to the other. This paper is a modest attempt to highlight the lifestyle principles, the challenges and benefits and to suggest some of the recipe for successful dual career family.*

**Keywords:** Dual career, Family life style.

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## Introduction

The need for gainful employment of women has arisen for better management of the family and fulfilling its needs. More and more women are entering the working class to satisfy the family's needs. As the number of women entering the work force continues to rise, it becomes increasingly difficult to manage families. Some of these women are part of a relatively new lifestyle, the dual-career couple. Resulting primarily from expanded educational opportunities for women and increasing job opportunities for these educated, aspiring women, dual-career lifestyle has evolved during the last decade.

Dual career families have created a unique set of challenges, many of which relate to socialization and role expectations, work role conflicts, and family role conflicts. Many couples have difficulty resolving role expectations because the likelihood is great that the individuals involved have been socialized for roles very different from those they are likely to experience as part of this lifestyle.

Dual-earner couples negotiate housework, childcare, and emotionally support their partners to maintain and develop their relationships. Dual-earner couples also engage in status-enhancement work to support their partner in their employment. Dual-earner couples face special challenges as they try to balance work and family responsibilities. Long work hours, inflexible

work hours, an unsupportive supervisor, and a less than positive work environment are some of the factors that can contribute to work-family conflict. In other words, work conditions can have a negative impact on family life. Similarly, family problems can lead to unsatisfactory work experiences. An unsupportive spouse, inequities in the division of housework and child care, significant health problems of family members, and changing child-care arrangements are some of the family problems that can contribute to work-family conflict.

## Dual Career Couple

Dual-career couples are individuals who, rather than being simply employed, have "jobs which require a high degree of commitment and which have a continuous developmental character." A dual-career family is "one in which both heads of household pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family life together."

## factors Affecting Dual Career Couples

- Money management (Who handles the family budget and how much money does each working individual keep for his or her own personal expenses?)
- Cleaning, shopping, cooking, responsibilities, etc. (Who does what, and when?)

- Health and energy level (Do you both have similar drives to do a lot of activities in the evening, weekend?)
- Hours in a day (How do you plan a meal when you are both working until 9:00 PM)
- Children (When do you have them and who will care for them?)
- Job/study pressures (How do you handle stress?)
- Friends (Do you share mutual friends? How often do you see them? Do you keep contacts with friends of the opposite sex?)
- Family relations (Do you come from similar family backgrounds? How much time do you spend with each others relations?)
- Employment prospects and career mobility (Who seeks an advanced position first and when? What is the availability of positions in each person's career area - in and out of the geographic area?)
- Intimacy and communications (How do you handle disagreements and grow together when your time together may be limited?)

These factors are critical for dual career couples to the extent that they serve to facilitate or thwart growth in their

relationship. Some factors may be growth producing for some couples and may serve as points of serious conflict for others.

### **Advantages of Dual Career**

Couples have experienced several advantages in dual-career lifestyle.

According to a recently released Catalyst study, "A two-career marriage offers couples the benefits of economic independence and career control". The study also cited other advantages including: an increase in household income, the flexibility to change jobs or switch to a new industry, and the option to start a business.

These challenges and advantages can be viewed and evaluated using the four LIFE principles: L - Lifestyle, I - Identity, F - Financial and E - Experiences.

The LIFE principles are briefly described below:

- The first principle, Lifestyle, includes all of those elements that improve one's current lifestyle-- such as cultural enrichment, purchasing a better home, sending the children to better schools, and purchasing more expensive vehicles -- or decrease the quality of one's lifestyle—such as juggling too many activities, keeping up with the Joneses living in the fast lane and more.

- The second principle focuses on the Identity needs of each partner. It explores the growth and personal feelings and emotions that each partner receives or gives as a result of the dual-career lifestyle. It encompasses individual aspiration and goal-setting as well as feelings of independence, freedom, control, anger, resentment, and stress.
- The third principle, Finance, relates to the positive and negative effects of having a dual-career income, such as having additional monetary funds to live a better lifestyle and to experience a better life. It incorporates the individual and joint goals for financial planning and spending.
- The fourth principle, Experiences, highlights all of the positive and negative experiences that will be encountered in the home and at work as a result of two partners dedicating themselves to their work. It touches on the relationships that we have with our husband, wife, mother, child, father, friends, co-worker, boss, and more.

### **Challenges Confronted**

New challenges are emerging and dual-career partners must learn to face them together. Some of the issues that dual couples confront include the balance of personal development with professional career advancement,

balancing personal needs and career satisfaction, and finding happiness and meaning as individuals, as couples and as parents.

Professor David Rice lists four challenges confronted by dual careerfamilies. They are included:

- balancing career and familial responsibilities;
- attempting to provide mutual support while at the same time managing competitive feelings;
- dealing with a finite amount of time in the light of multiple role demands; and,
- Preserving one's identity as a "person," as distinct from "spouse."

These challenges will continue to have a rippling effect on dual-career couples.

### **Work – Family Spillover**

Because of their dual responsibilities, working couples are particularly vulnerable to the problems of work-family spillover, conflict, and crossover. Work-family spillover, which can be negative or positive and bidirectional, involves the transfer of mood and behavior from one domain (home or workplace) to the other. For example, negative work-to-family spillover occurs when an employee is distracted and irritable at home because of pressures at work.

**Table 1: Work Family Spillover**

Type of Spillover		Example
<b>Negative</b>	Family-to-work	Disagreement with spouse leads to poor performance at work
	Work-to-family	Heavy workload leads to distraction and irritability at home
<b>Positive</b>	Family-to-work	Positive relationships at home energize and improve ability to cope with work
	Work-to-family	Experience at work makes one more cheerful at home

Work-family conflict occurs when the responsibilities of work and family interfere with one another. For example, work-family conflict occurs when a parent must leave work to attend to a sick child, or when an employee brings work home to complete during family time.

### **Balancing Family and Work**

Family-work balance is a complex issue that involves financial values, gender roles, career paths, time management and many other factors. Hidden values and models from our cultures, original families and other sources influence our choices in ways that we often don't anticipate or understand. They have far-reaching consequences for our lives.

Like so many of the challenges and dilemmas of marriage, balancing family and work has no easy solution-no one-size-fits-all approach. Every person and couple will have specific preferences and needs.

Preparation, intentionality and joint decision-making are the key to creating and maintaining the right family-work balance. Many couples experience extremely strong forces pulling them away from the priority that they would like their family to have. If you don't aggressively plan and maintain your balance, these other forces will prevail. Without a clear plan and commitment to maintaining balance, time and energy earmarked for family erodes and evaporate.

Family-work balance is a process, not a static achievement. It is important to make the 'big decisions' - selecting careers and jobs, timing children, allocating roles and responsibilities, etc. that will provide the opportunity for balance. The real task of balance takes place on a weekly and daily basis, even from hour to hour. This is where couples hold the line to protect family time or allow it to evaporate where they opt to take advantage of a family opportunity or allow other priorities to interfere.

The nature of balance is that you can and must adjust as required. No decision, plan or approach need be permanent. If it does not work or satisfy, you can reconsider and make changes. In fact, constant tactical adjustment and flexibility to keep on target toward your goals and priorities (but not to accommodate outside demands where limit-setting is usually more in order) is a hallmark of couples who are satisfied with their balance.

But how can you tell when you have found the right family-work balance for you and when you need to adjust and make a different plan? Good balance, while different for everyone, is characterized by

- having enough time for both work and family without expending great effort, so that your life feels relatively comfortable
- having enough back-up, so that you can cope with minor emergencies like sick baby sitting, car breakdowns, etc. and
- Being on the right personal and professional path.

## Recipe

Following are the recipe for a successful dual career marriage:

- Begin each day with some discussion of that day's agenda. Difficult as it may be for some of us to talk (let alone breathe!) in the morning, it is

critical to communicate with your spouse about the day's coming events. The day may be special or routine...but touching base before the day begins fosters a sense of companionship even as you go your separate ways.

- At day's end, recount your experiences together. Asking your spouse, "How did it go?" and listening to the details invites a sharing of our jobs. It is important to discuss our jobs, unload our burdens, and give each other support for our hard efforts. Being a best friend to your spouse means providing empathy and a "sounding board," as well as expressing appreciation for each other's toil.
- Decide your plans for the evening together. Time spent after hours should be planned too. There are always household tasks that need to be done and responsibilities for the children. But each evening should include some "couple" time as well. Often, however, one spouse relaxes while the other does chores, and by the end of the evening, we have one spouse who is bored and another who is resentful...neither of whom has shared these feelings with the other.
- Every week deserves at least one date night. Regardless of how long you

have been married, how old the children are, how pitiful our finances or how active our social obligations, there is nothing sexier than a couple's date night. Date nights are defined as time out from the house and all of its encumbrances and time spent alone as a couple. NO ONE ELSE ALLOWED! It is essential to schedule this time. What you do doesn't matter. The important thing is to have fun!

- At day's end, relax together... go to sleep together. Work schedules often rob us of the most intimate time of the day; but nothing can take the place of this important time to relax and be loving together. Sleep is a time for renewal of strength and energy. Sharing this time brings a couple closer together and not sharing this time often drives them apart.

It is often said that it takes a lot of effort to make a good friendship. The same is true of marriage. But in a dual-career marriage there is the two-fold need for understanding, encouragement, sharing, and communication... in order to make this multi-faceted business and personal endeavor a success.

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