

Opportunities & Challenges to a Shared Involvement at Home

We've designed this survey for all families. If one parent already flexes, use the survey to think about how to support the other parent to flex. If both parents work full time, use the survey to see what barriers may need to be addressed to support both of you to make changes at work *and* home. Either way – we hope it initiates great conversations and new ideas!

	1 = Strongly disagree Strongly agree = 5				
FACTORS AT HOME					
1. Our family's current (and future) earning potential would be put too much at risk if we both asked for changes at work.	1	2	3	4	5
2. In order to meet our work/family needs, my spouse would prefer hiring more child care, over changing his/her schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My spouse is the primary breadwinner for our family, so it makes more sense for me to be the one to make changes at work.	N/A	1	2	3	4 5
4. I have always wanted to be an involved parent. My spouse is happy to support this by taking primary responsibility for finances.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would like to become more involved at home, but my efforts are always met with criticism.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The more I flex my work, the more my spouse becomes the main breadwinner, and the harder it gets for us to change things.	N/A	1	2	3	4 5
7. We've gotten very set in our ways. It feels challenging to really imagine doing things differently at home.	1	2	3	4	5
8. None of the dads we know, as friends or family, have flexed their work to care for children – it would be hard to be the first. <i>If you already are a flexing Dad, contact us and tell us your story!</i>	1	2	3	4	5
FACTORS AT WORK					
9. My spouse has tried, but finds it way too stressful to leave work early, or reschedule work to meet family obligations.	N/A	1	2	3	4 5
10. My spouse has a big job and can't imagine how it can be done in any less hours.	N/A	1	2	3	4 5
11. When asking to leave early (or make other changes), my spouse has encountered the "we don't do that here" attitude.	N/A	1	2	3	4 5
12. It seems like people are taken off the fast track if they make changes in their schedule. We both can't afford to take that risk.	1	2	3	4	5
13. In my spouse's organization, it's not unusual for leaders to joke or comment on their own lack of involvement at home.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My spouse would need to face the issue of being "the first" to ask for flexibility at work - that's just too hard to do.	1	2	3	4	5

Have both parents take this test and look at where your answers were similar and different. Then circle every number where you answered the question with a “4” or “5”:

- Questions 4, 5, 10 If you circled 2 or more, see response #1A below
- Questions 12, 13 If you circled both of these, see response #1B below
- Questions 1, 3 If you circled both of these, see response #2A below
- Question 2 If you circled this, see response #2B below
- Questions 6, 7, 9 If you circled 2 or more, see response #3A below
- Questions 8, 11, 14 If you circled 2 or more, see response #3B below

#1A- One or both of you believes in dividing up roles at work and home.

So long as each parent is satisfied with the roles they have adopted, there is nothing wrong with following traditional, or reverse traditional roles (dad as primary parent, for work and family. However, if one parent is less satisfied, it may be worth exploring what you both have to gain from trying things differently. Sometimes taking the long view – where would we both like to be 5 years from now- might help generate more ideas. Getting outside support from an expert who understands work redesign and family redesign may also be useful.

#1B – One or both of you faces rigid assumptions about who is most valuable at work.

The truth is too many men and women still face strong barriers at work. However, it’s also true if there is a will there is a way, and couples supporting each other to find “win-win” answers to work redesign is one of the most powerful resources for change.

#2A - You are worried about financial repercussions if your spouse makes changes at work.

#2B - You have different opinions about what is “the right” amount of child care.

Both of these challenges can be addressed by taking an “incremental” approach to change. For example, when children become school aged, the amount of outside child care families need significantly decreases. School hours can then provide regular time for both parents to work. By leaving early one or two afternoons to care for a school age child, both parents also begin to increase their integration mind set and skills. Families also decrease their financial risk when both parents are able to earn an income – especially in a world where “life time employment” is a thing of the past. Working together imagine your lives 5 years from now: how old will your children be; what roles would you both like to play as parent and worker; how much income will you really need; are there any expenses you can reduce or avoid? Then ask each other, what small steps can we take today to begin to create a new balance of work, family, income and spending for tomorrow?

#3A - It’s hard to break a routine, and you probably fell into these routines for logical reasons.

#3B - It can be hard to be different unless both parents feel like they have something to gain.

The bottom line, investing in what’s most important for both of you today will play huge dividends tomorrow. Couples who learn how to become partners in creating the lives they want – both at work and outside of work – develop incredible skills that strengthen their relationship to each other for years to come. Begin to map out regular time to discuss your work family goals for you as an individual, a couple, and as a family. It might also be useful to get expert support to help you imagine what’s possible. Then over time you can shift to new routines which will also provide new role models for generations to come.

Interested in learning more? Check out the resources for families on our website.

Couples can purchase our Work-Family Options Workbook or sign up for couples coaching to help them “get on the same page” and create their own unique vision for balancing work and family.