

## ***Marriage Milestones***

### **ROLE REVERSAL**



**Role reversal may be caused by many factors: it may be a conscious decision or it may be forced upon you by circumstances – relocation, redundancy etc. Some couples choose that both work part time in order to 'job share' the task of caring for the children and home. Traditionally this has been the realm of the mother, but increasingly fathers are choosing greater involvement.**

Whilst working wives have become an acceptable social norm, there remains a strong expectation that the husband will be the main breadwinner in a household.

One man working part-time in order to help care for his pre-school children was mocked by colleagues, who thought his time at home was time off! He was also asked, when out with his children one day, whether he was having a day off. Such comments would not be made to a woman. Many are the examples of such an attitude – so, beware, but do not be put off.

It is important to remember that a person is not worth what they earn, but each is valued as an individual; for who they are and not for the size of their pay cheque. A parent caring for a child is of infinite worth to that child and no value can be placed upon them, whether male or female.

### **FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO CHOICE**

**For those who have had job loss forced upon them, there are the added dimensions of coping with that loss, as well as adjustment to a new way of life for the whole family. At such times there are many emotions with which to cope, alongside everyday living.**

It would be good to begin by together taking stock of the situation. What are the new opportunities that can be taken hold of? Rather than feeling worthless and unwanted, look at the positive ways in which the man can contribute towards running the home. What routine home/child care can now be undertaken by the other spouse? It may be a temporary state or it may be long term, but either way plan ahead. If it is helpful, put all the household tasks on paper and consider who does what.

**You will also need to consider how you plan time off for both of you,** and how you will fit in your own personal space or recreation, as well a needing to look again at the time you spend together as a couple.

Try to be positive in facing the new situation and look for the strengths. However, it is realistic to understand that there may be struggles too. Men may start to feel inadequate, feeling that they should be able to support their families. These feelings are not helped by the kind of comments mentioned earlier. It will be necessary for the wife to give a lot of encouragement to her spouse.

For the wife there may be feelings of resentment at having to work when she would prefer to be at home. For those whose body-clocks are ticking by there may be fears about getting too old to have children and being trapped by circumstances. Again, there needs to be mutual reassurance and comfort given by each spouse.

## **FOR THOSE WHO MAKE THE CHOICE**

**Sharing the experience of bringing up children and the world of work can be enriching,** leading to a far greater degree of sharing than takes place in a traditional setting.

Both partners understand the joys and the stresses that each area of life brings to them. It is also inevitable that there is more crossing over of boundaries and therefore more discussion and communication, which is vital for a healthy marriage.

Whatever your situation, there will always be positive and negative issues. Being prepared for the difficulties can help in coping with them. Enjoying the good times will bring greater happiness and enrich the lives of all the family.

## **FINALLY**

**Most of us will have the car serviced regularly (if only for the MOT). What about marriage?** Just as a car that is neglected is more likely to breakdown on the road, so is a neglected marriage more likely to end in divorce. How about giving your marriage a service?

To meet this need various marriage enhancement courses have been produced. **See the page "Marriage Enhancement" on the Marriage Resource website [www.marriageresource.org.uk](http://www.marriageresource.org.uk)** . These courses are usually either provided by organisations on a residential weekend or a midweek break, or on a series of weeknights usually by a local church, both for their members and for non-members. These courses are designed to make any marriage better, whether or not there are problems. Do give your marriage a service – the benefits last for years!