

Becoming a Better Dad: Seven Ways Your Spouse Can Help

The following list of Seven Things Wives can Do to Get Husbands More Involved was expected from the book *Throwaway Dads*, by Ross D. Parke and Armin A. Brott.

1. Look at things from your wife's perspective

"Women usually measure what their husbands do against what they do," says researcher Jay Belsky. Using this scale, most men fail miserably. But men tend to do "measure their domestic contributions against what their father did, adds Belsky "and sometimes even against what their friends and co-workers are doing". By this standard, many husbands feel pretty satisfied with themselves and their contributions around the house.

2. Adjust your standards

Let's face it, men and women often have very different standards. Adjusting yours to his level doesn't mean that the kids will be wearing the same clothes every day. Also, there are many different ways to change diapers, play, teach and entertain children. Yours isn't always right.

3. Treat men as partners, not as helpers

Just as men need to rethink their family roles as "assistants" to mothers, women need to change their ideas about what's reasonable to expect from their spouses. Asking your spouse for help only reinforces the view that men have little direct responsibility for the care and management of children. Instead, ask him to do his share.

4. Praise your spouse

As a group, men generally dislike doing things that make them feel incompetent. At the same time, most men love compliments. Tell him what a great job he's doing and ask him to do the same thing again - even if it's not exactly the way that you would have done it.

5. Don't be a gatekeeper

Even if you know how to stop the baby from crying, let your spouse try to figure it out for himself before jumping in. Men and women have different approaches to the same task and fathers need the confidence that only comes with practice.

6. Recognize that you can't do it all

Let your spouse know that you have limits. Increasing his awareness that you simply can't do everything will go a long way to bringing men into action on the home front.

7. Redefine work

When dividing up responsibilities, many couples have trouble defining what exactly the term "work" means. In many families, for example, couples err by neglecting to give parenting the same weight as other domestic chores.

Switch responsibilities once in a while - let him make dinner while you relax. This kind of trading can change your understanding of what both of you contribute. You and your spouse can devise your own ways of assigning responsibilities