

Can stay-at-home moms and their working husbands really get along?

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My friend, Robin Saks Frankel, who is a stay-at-home mom (SAHM) and founder of [Crib Notes](#), an e-newsletter for parents of kids ages zero to three, told me that she loves her husband, but she can't stand him when he offers opinions on raising their young children. "When my husband has parenting suggestions I get annoyed, even though he certainly has the right as the daddy to be a part of the decision-making process."

Despite her admission of his fatherly rights, the emotional tug of "You don't know what you're talking about!" is too much of a draw and they get into unnecessary fights. After all, she doesn't tell her husband what to do at work, so why should he interfere with her job at home? I can imagine her rolling her eyes at her partner's naïve parenting suggestion like "just ignore him" when their toddler throws his vegetables on the floor. Her response: Ignore him? When I do that he just continues throwing the rest of the food on the floor and he eats nothing for dinner.

My advice for her and for any loving mother and wife is to ask herself, what kind of boss do I want to be? A dictator or a diplomat?

Imagine that you are a corporate executive (which some SAHMs used to be, and some working moms still are). How would you make decisions without alienating your colleagues? Would you ask for input before making a decision that could affect them? Would you let your colleagues know that your door is always open to their ideas? When they approach you with a suggestion would you ask questions, take their input into consideration, and then discuss your reasoning when it's decision-making time? If you'd do those things then you are choosing to be a diplomat- a respectful, attentive listener. It doesn't matter whether 80% of your colleagues' suggestions are entirely impractical. What matters is that 20% of those ideas are valuable. (Honestly, how many of your own ideas end up being impractical?)

But, even with the logic of diplomacy, it may still be hard to stay on course. Why is that? I think the answer is that



some women expect their husbands to have levels of knowledge that they couldn't possibly have. When my husband suggested that perhaps our son would eat the chicken if I grilled it instead of baking it, I was annoyed because I already tried that and it DIDN'T WORK! But here's the catch: He didn't know this because he wasn't home, and it was ridiculous for me to expect him to know it. The diplomat in me has to remind myself that parenting involves a lot of trial and error. So if I'm the one

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making the majority of the trials and handling the majority of errors, then I have to be patient when my husband's idea is one I tried last week. It's not a dumb suggestion; it's just one I tried already.

And every now and then, my husband, acting without my preconceived notions about our son, comes up with a good idea that would have never occurred to me. Encouraging him to share all ideas is what enables us to find the good ones.

Are you a SAHM or working mom who handles the majority of child-rearing responsibilities? Do you get annoyed with your husband's suggestions? Do you find yourselves in a power struggle? Are you a stay-at-home dad who deals with the same issues?

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