

Sexism works both Ways

On the back of some quite negative publicity I have read about men and childminding during the Corona Crisis, I realised that sexism works both ways. And I felt the need to show a different side of the story. It is obviously going to be a very personal point of view from within our family. Nevertheless I don't think that my husband John is an edge case. If we still *do* live in a world where men are misogynistic and can't or don't want to look after their children, I am even more lucky to have found the one and only super husband & daddy.

„Feminists shouting sexism all over“

I don't mind "Men-are-from-Mars-and-Women-from-Venus Jokes". Men and women *are* different by nature. They have different strengths and skill sets, often complementing each other. Generalising and joking about their flaws can be humorous. Especially when both sides are aware that it involves stereotyping and exaggerations.

A friend of mine sent me a video the other day about what would happen if women went on strike. It was hilarious! Men were holding crying babies, unable to work out what to do with them. Business men in suits panicking over having to pick up their little ones from kindergarten for the first time. Men at home clueless how to look after domestic stuff. It clearly was exaggerated and sarcastic which I don't have a problem with as such.

But jokes like that don't seem to work the other way around. Feminists would be shouting „sexism“ from all over. Why is it that we find it very funny when men are put down or made fun of when it comes to child rearing? But jokingly criticizing women's driving or mechanical skills – which is obviously as clichéd – is sexism?

Men against Women

What I have noticed – even more during the Corona Crisis – is that often it is men against women. As if it was a competition that has to be won by either side. What happened to being partners? Making use of what we both bring to the table and work as a team? Rather than just finger pointing and jumping all over each other's flaws.

I am not saying that we never have these – let's call them gender-based – arguments at home. Who is more tired? How many hours did I look after the kids on the weekend and how many hours did he etc.? Who deserves a break more? We *do* argue about these things, because it can be tough at times. [Looking after two small children 24/7 in your own four walls](#) while working from home is a challenge that grew exorbitantly during the pandemic.

However once our tempers have cooled down after above mentioned confrontations, we remind ourselves that we don't gain anything from *winning* in a marriage. (Well, except for half an hour extra sleep maybe at the cost of not talking to each other for a while.) We made agreements that we tend to stick to. And if we can't for one reason or another we try to compromise and re-adjust. Above all, we know that we are on each other's side and not in some strange pseudo-battle between male and female.





Lazy Housewife vs. Career-oriented Husband

One of our biggest standing agreements is how we split the roles at home. My main task is to look after the children and the domestic chores in the house. John is the sole bread winner. We both have a big responsibility. But for some reason I find neither is perceived as such.

An example for the negative media coverage during the Corona Crisis that I mentioned at the start stated that women are the losers of the pandemic. They have to stay at home and look after the children whilst the men can continue their jobs as before. No one even considers the increased financial pressure now resting on the husband's shoulders whilst the mother gets to spend more time with the children. It might not have been the mother's choice, but not necessarily the father's either.

It doesn't help that the image of a house wife and stay-at-home mom is still not the best in modern society. People argue that women make themselves dependent on their husbands and are denied self-fulfilment. They talk about "giving up" something, but never about gaining at the same time. Everybody knows – at least in theory – that it definitely *is* a full-time job to look after young children. And an important one on top of that. So why is it that women still feel the need to justify themselves for being home carers?

The Grass is always greener on the other Side

It looks like neither men nor women get what they are looking for. Of course I enjoy withdrawing to our home office to work on the computer while John is minding the kids. John on the contrary can't wait to get out at night time and roll around on the floor with the kids.

Does that mean we envy the other person all the time? Is that why there is a constant, merciless battle between men and women? Neither a full-time job in the office nor minding the kids at home is always a pleasure. But John and I chose our roles for a reason. The more we enjoy switching occasionally for a break. However we are far from questioning our whole system.

Jobs with a Meaning

After a hard day – rather than arguing who got the better end of the stick – we try to show each other appreciation for what we have achieved. John in his job and I in mine. I also disagree with the assumption that having a paid job is generally more fulfilling. Whilst our children show me appreciation almost every day, John might be looking for it in vain in the office, despite his hard work.

When it comes to the questions whose job as such is more important, I am also the clear winner. The purpose of my work, i.e. our children, add by far more meaning to my life than John's tasks at the office to his. At the same time we are well aware that we couldn't afford our life style without John's long hours and his good salary.

A Healthy Co-Dependency

There is no doubt about it that it needs us as a team to make it all function. Rather than striving for personal happiness and self-fulfillment, we believe that owning up to our responsibilities and contributing our part is the key to a

content (family) life on the long run. With this comes happiness and fulfillment.

Apart from that, there is no reward system or competition going on for the harder worker. If one slacks off, the other one has to bear the additional load, or things will start slipping. We are not ashamed of admitting that we are depending on each other. Our marriage and family would not work if we were two separate individuals fighting to realise our own personal goals.

Trouble Shooting in the Crisis

The Corona crisis has required a lot of re-adjustment. Even though our traditional roles made it easier for us to adapt quicker to childminding and [working from home](#), we weren't prepared to master it all by ourselves, entirely without the support of family and friends.

Hence we do have our moments when when we are sick and tired of it all and annoyed by each other's company. We had an argument recently which we didn't sort out before we went to bed. However we both agreed the next day that we didn't like that and won't be doing it again going forward. (Well, we will argue for sure, but won't drag it out until the next day.)

There really is no point. We know that we are generally on the same page and agree on the 'big stuff'. Otherwise we wouldn't have got married in the first place. When we argue it is about day-to-day things in combination with being tired or overwhelmed. At the end of the day we know that our marriage is the base camp where we both re-charge our batteries.