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## WORKING AT HOME WITH AN UNCOOPERATIVE SPOUSE

When we first decide to make the transition from an outside job to a home-based job or business, some of us might face a dilemma -- a spouse who suddenly seems uncooperative and difficult. Even if our spouse is usually good-natured, we might find ourselves enmeshed in arguments and battles for control over our own careers.

While this can be frustrating, it is important to understand that our spouses are probably not trying to be difficult without reason. More likely, they have concerns that are being expressed in erratic ways. If you suspect this is the case in your own household, you might want to open the lines of communication and encourage your spouse to share his or her reasons for not wanting you to work at home.

Following are some of the most common concerns, and ideas for dealing with them:

**Decreased Income.** Your spouse may be worried that your salary will be less than what it is in a traditional job. Unfortunately, this is true in most cases. Telecommuting jobs usually pay far less than jobs in an office would. Even if you start your own business, it can take time to build up a decent income. If your spouse earns enough money to cover the household expenses, he or she might be agreeable to a reduced income from you temporarily, but if your spouse's income isn't enough to cover everything, you might need to compromise on your wish to work at home so you don't get into debt and cause financial difficulty for the family. Possible compromises might include keeping your regular job and working to build your own business after work hours, or working a regular part-time job, while working a part-time telecommuting job from home. You can also focus on building up enough savings to carry your loss of income for the first several months of working at home. Aim for at least 6 months of your normal salary, perhaps even a year, depending on the type of business or job you are working toward.

**Sacrificing Luxuries.** Your spouse might also be concerned that less income means he or she will have to give up extras that your salary makes possible, like entertainment, dinner out, more expensive vehicles, etc. This is also a valid concern. While most of us spend much more than we really need to on recreational activities, it's also not fair to expect our spouses to give up the smaller pleasures in life either. If your spouse is willing to work together with you on your desire to work at home, you might be able to agree on some smaller sacrifices that you can both make temporarily. You and your spouse will need to go over where your money goes, and see what you are both willing to do without. You can also find creative ways to replace the things you have sacrificed. For example, instead of going out to dinner 3 times a week, cut down to once a week, and then make more creative family dinners at home, trying new recipes to keep things interesting. You can rent movies to watch at home rather than going to the theater, or spend the day at a local park instead of visiting an expensive amusement park.

**It's Not Really Work.** One of the most maddening experiences is having our spouses believe that we sit home all day doing nothing when we "work at home". They might believe that we just want to sit home with the kids all day, watching television or chatting on the phone. If you are not yet working at home, it can be a major challenge to convince your spouse that you do indeed plan to work, but you might try explaining the type of work you plan to do, how many hours a day you plan to work, and how much income you are planning to earn. This can help them put it into perspective in measurable terms. If you already work at home and your spouse treats it like fun and games, it might be helpful to have him or her sit down with you for a short time one day and demonstrate exactly what you do. In my experience, the paychecks were the turning point. Once my husband saw that I was indeed bringing in an income, he began to take my work more seriously.

**It's All a Scam.** Unfortunately, many of our spouses are cynical about work at home jobs, because they see so many scams. Even worse is if they know someone who got burned by a scam or shady business opportunity. They might have the skewed idea that all work at home opportunities are like that. In situations like this, you can show your spouse the websites of legitimate companies that hire telecommuters, or have him or her read postings on a work at home community. Again, once you begin bringing in the paychecks, this fear will vanish.

**Jealousy.** Believe it or not, your spouse's concerns might be caused by a veiled sense of jealousy. Why should you get to sit home in your comfy sweatpants and earn an income when he or she has to trudge off to a lousy job every day? Especially if your spouse doesn't particularly like his or her job, they might resist the idea of you working at home while he or she deals with arrogant bosses and office politics. This is completely understandable, and many of us would feel the same way, wouldn't we? This is a tricky objection to overcome, but it is possible. Perhaps you can talk to your spouse about helping him or her transition to a home-based career too, and you would both eventually be working from home. Your spouse might be willing to compromise by allowing you to build up your business to the point where it could support the family and then he or she would be free to pursue their own business venture. You can also start a business together and work on it in alternating shifts. For example, you can work on the business for a few hours during the day while your spouse is at work, and he or she could do a little work on it in the evenings, and you can both work together on it Saturday mornings. Once the business begins bringing in enough profit, your spouse can come home permanently.

Ultimately, I believe that our spouses want us to be happy in our work, just like we wish the same for them. We just might need to work on them a little to convince them working at home is not only possible, but beneficial for everyone. If the above suggestions haven't convinced your spouse, you might need to put some figures down in black and white and show your spouse how much it costs to work outside the home. You might need to list the benefits of having one parent at home, or ask them to give you the benefit of the doubt and let you prove your ability to make it work.

I would love to say to you, "Your career is YOUR business; no one else's," because that is what I truly believe. However, that's easy for me to say because I'm not the one living in your household, facing the hostility from your spouse!

The truth is, everyone in your home will be happier if you and your spouse can come to an agreement, rather than stubbornly butting heads. If your spouse refuses to work with you at all on your desire to work at home, you may face some tough decisions. The best advice I can give you is to consider your options fully, and make the choices that you feel would benefit everyone the most, including your spouse.