

How to Support Your Husband's Career

In January the hashtag #tradwife burst onto our collective consciousness. British housewife Alena Kate Pettit gave an interview to the [BBC](#) to talk about her traditional lifestyle. She calls herself a “tradwife” and does not work outside the home, preferring to cook and clean for her husband. Her interview strongly divided opinions and many commentators noted the financial challenges of living on one income.

[Polls](#) show that plenty of women would like to either cut back their working hours or stay home fulltime to care for their families. The problem is that they can't afford it. So what should you do if you are an aspiring tradwife but your family needs your income? Conventional answers to that question focus on better budgeting or finding a more flexible job. But perhaps the best use of a wife's time is to advance her husband's career so he earns enough to support the family.

That rather novel idea is put forward in [*Beside Every Successful Man: A Woman's Guide to Having It All*](#) by Megan Basham. The title is a play on the old expression “Behind every successful man is a strong woman.” I happened upon this book – originally published in 2008 – by accident. A tradwife myself, I was immediately intrigued.

Studies consistently show that married men earn more than their unmarried peers. If simply having a wife boosts a man's income, Basham asks, how much more could it go up if that wife was actively involved in promoting his career?

Much of this book is simply marriage advice, but Basham does make a few very good points.

First, she advises wives to help their husbands identify and then pursue their dreams. Some men seem unambitious, but it

might only be because they are not passionate about their current jobs. Given the right goal, men often reveal themselves to be remarkably driven.

A wife has to be fully onboard with her husband's career transition. Risks are usually involved. A temporary reduction in lifestyle may be required. Basham advises "Deal realistically with what failure could look like and what it will mean to your family if he does fail. ... Will you really be out on the street if it doesn't work out or will he just have to take another job doing what he was doing before?"

Basham also encourages wives to attend their husband's work functions. She calls this doing "public relations" for your husband. Presidential candidates are always trotting out their wives on the campaign trail. There's a reason for that. A wife is in a unique position to create a positive impression of her husband to others.

Books about how to support your husband are usually associated with the 1950s. However, Basham acknowledges the reality that many modern wives have significant professional accomplishments of their own. She encourages wives to put those to use for their husbands. She cites several examples of a wife who "at some point took duties and performed tasks that would in any other circumstance have put her on the payroll." However, "their recompense was reflected in their spouse's paycheck and performance."

Our society is deeply influenced by feminist thinking. Many people will take offense at the idea that a man should get the credit for his wife's work. Basham acknowledges this briefly in the introduction, but the issue deserves far more attention than she gives it. For many modern women, letting their husbands take center stage requires a full reprogramming of their worldview.

Some critics of Pettitt's BBC #tradwife interview argued it is

risky for a woman to become financially dependent on her husband. There's some merit to that. Basham's book was published in 2008, and she praises Mackenzie Bezos who was instrumental in helping her husband Jeff Bezos start Amazon. In 2019, the couple divorced because Jeff was having an affair.

Basham also interviewed Kathleen Matthews, wife of TV host Chris Matthews, who has twice been accused of making inappropriate comments to female staffers or guests. Depending on your husband to bring home the bacon is not always a panacea.

Ultimately, though, if a working woman wants to stay home, considering how to promote her husband's career is a strong option. Actor [Dick Van Dyke](#) once observed, "Women will never be as successful as men because they have no wives to advise them." Wives are great assets, and they should not be shy about leveraging their strengths.

—

[Image Credit: Pixabay]

Image Credit: [Image Credit: Pixabay]