

CAN A DAD BE A HOMEMAKER?

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[Assignment: Write an essay about a traditional social structure that has had to change to fit today's changing gender roles. Make it clear to your readers whether you feel this is a positive or negative change.]

(1) When I was young, I had what one might call the "traditional" family. My dad worked from nine to five, while my mom stayed home with my brothers and me. Then, when I was about six, all of that changed. My dad decided that he didn't want the average desk job and set out to start his own swimming pool installation company/retail store. This was the first step in the process of my family's transition from the "traditional" to the "modern" family. No longer would Dad be working eight hours a day, twelve months out of the year, nor would Mom be able to stay home with the kids if Dad couldn't work during the winter months. These changes in my parents jobs changed their roles within the family. They also influenced some basic relationships among my brothers and me.

(2) The first winter after my dad started installing swimming pools, my parents realized that our family would not be able to live for the entire winter on the profits from the summer. They decided that whoever found a job first would work while the other would stay at home with the kids. My mom was the first to find a job, leaving us at home alone with Dad for the first time.

(3) It was quite a change. Dad had done an extensive amount of traveling with his previous job; therefore, none of us knew him very well. He didn't know the routine of getting us ready for school, or how to pack our lunches, or anything else that seemed extremely important to young children. Even though it was difficult at first, we adjusted and developed new routines, different from the way things had been with Mom.

(4) Beyond the matter of initial adjustments, Dad's stay at home had profound and positive effects on our family. The kids in my family were able to establish strong relationships with our Dad at an early age, something that might not have happened if Mom had not gone off to work. The process of changing from "Mom the homemaker" to "Dad the homemaker" also taught my brothers and me about cooperation. Since we had to band together in order to make things work, we also bonded together emotionally. For example, my brothers and I had to get up early every Saturday morning so that we could get our chores done before going outside to play. We learned that our work could be fun and fast if we did it together. These Saturday mornings helped create fond childhood memories for all of us. We learned that each of us could contribute in his or her own way, and sharing our abilities and time brought us closer together.

(5) In March, with summer approaching rapidly, it was once again time for a change in our family structure. Dad was starting to prepare the store for the summer and Mom was going to quit her job in order to stay at home with us. Everyone had to readjust to having Mom home again, and, surprisingly, this was relatively easy. We automatically went back to the way things were before Mom went to work. It was then that we

realized when Dad was home we did things his way, and when Mom was home we did things her way.

(6) My family continued this way for the next five years, and because of this, I am able to see the advantages of having each parent as the homemaker. This change in my family's lifestyle has also affected my expectations about my own family in the future. I realize that it is all right if I want to stay home with my kids, even if it is not a common practice at the time. I also realize that circumstances may not allow for such an arrangement, so I must be prepared to make necessary adjustments to create the most advantageous setting for my children.

(7) My family might not have been what one considers a "normal" family, but I don't think that there really is such a thing. Each family is unique and must develop its own structure in response to its situation. In my instance, having both Mom and Dad as homemakers has, I am sure, helped us children to develop more rounded personalities than is typical in the "traditional family" and it certainly has ensured closer ties to both parents.