

DUAL INCOME LECTURE GUIDE

How did traditional get to be a tradition? Before the industrial revolution in the early part of this century, men and women worked side by side. It was not until work was moved to the factories that women's work place became the home and labor was rigidly divided by sex. The division became especially strong after World War II. But currently, the number of women in the work force has dramatically increased with more than half of all married women and mothers working outside the home. The biggest increase in women moving into the work force in the last few years has been women with preschoolers and infants.

What would you say are the MAIN REASONS for women being in the work- place?

1. Economic Factors

- * Most women use their income on necessary goods and services for their families.
- * Almost 20% of families are headed and supported by single-parent mothers.
- * For many families where the husband is the major wage earner, the wife's earnings often raise a family above the poverty level.
- * The economic reasons for women being employed remain throughout the life cycle:
 - Young couple stage: to save for buying a home and starting a family.
 - Young children stage: to help make house and car payments.
 - Older children stage: to support children in college.
 - Children fully launched: to save for retirement.

2. Changing Gender Roles

Although men have traditionally found their identity through work outside the home while women found their identity through work inside the home, the pattern began to change in the 1960s with the women's movement. Many women now seek to be involved in the occupational world as an important avenue for personal fulfillment as it has always been for men.

3. Family Life Cycle Changes

In early America, the difficulties of childbirth and the large number of children born to most women meant that few women lived to see all of their children fully grown. But today, women have longer lives, fewer children, and more time left over from raising children to work. For those women who choose to remain home while their children are young, there remains an average of 25 years for employment outside the home.

DUAL INCOME CASE STUDIES

Discuss the following case studies with the class:

EXAMPLE #1—Cindy is 32 years old and has four children. "I quit high school to get married when I was 17. I had four children quite close together, and now the youngest is nine. I have tried being busy with community things, but I need to do more. My husband's income is fair, but it does not do much when you have four kids. I want to work, but there is not much available for someone without a diploma and no work experience. When I was 17, I thought I would be ancient at 32. Now I see I have got lots of years left and need to be productive."

EXAMPLE #2—Regina is 29 years old and has two children. "I graduated from high school and went to a junior college for almost a year. I dropped out because I had to study so much and my friends were out having fun. They had jobs and were earning money. I got a job as a cook's helper at a restaurant and then I met Bill. We got married. He worked with a trucking company and I got a different job with a candy company. The babies came and I quit work to stay home. Two years ago Bill lost his job. Things got really bad and we did a lot of fighting. He left me and I have been alone for almost one year. I am able to

get public assistance money, but that is no way to live forever. I want a good life for my kids and for me. I have a long life ahead. I am starting a job training course in welding. I am very good at this and my instructor is helpful. Hopefully, I will be a paid welder next year."

EXAMPLE #3—Jan and Frank both work. Their jobs require a lot of energy. When they come home to three active children, the stress level can get out of control. Their children are young. Andy is 6, Erica is 4, and Jessica is 18 months old. When they get home, Jan starts dinner while Frank changes his clothes. Frank takes Andy outside to play ball, wash the car, or wrestle on the lawn. Jan gets the girls into the bathtub and straightens the house. After supper, Jan gets the kids ready for bed and cleans up the dishes while Frank reads the newspaper and watches his favorite television program. One night Jan exploded and demanded that Frank help more around the house and with the children. "You never do anything to help me. You have never even changed a diaper and I am sick of it!" she screamed in total frustration. Frank explained that he was just no good in the kitchen. He did not even know where to find anything. He had never taken care of babies and was afraid he would do something wrong. "I know how to handle Andy. He is a boy. I just do not know what to do with girls," Frank said in a weak self-defense.

What are the main problems encountered by two-income families?

1. **COMPETING DEMANDS OF CAREER AND FAMILY LIFE.** Many dual-career couples have not had family role models to help them know how to manage careers and families together, so their expectations may not be very realistic. There is less time to spend with children and often even less time with the spouse.
2. **WORKING WOMEN OFTEN SUFFER FROM HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, HEADACHES, TENSION, AND DEPRESSION CAUSED BY STRESS.** However, it is not the question of whether or not they work that determines the amount of stress, but whether they enjoy the work and what kind of support they get from their husbands.

SHARING ROLES SUCCESSFULLY

With so many women in the work force, men have accepted that they need to help more with housework, but they have been slower to accept the household-family role than women have been to accept the employment role. Whether women work outside the home or not, they still do most of the housework, meal preparation, organize doctor appointments, etc. Successful role sharing includes sharing the workload more equally in both the work place and at home. More than anything else, the husband's attitude toward the wife's working becomes the deciding factor in whether the roles are successfully shared.

Older children can help take responsibility at home to ease the work load and to become more independent and responsible members of the family.

Other conflicts may include:

- * Work hours may be opposite each other, not allowing the couple to see each other very often.
- * Shift work causes multiple problems with transportation and arranging for child care.
- * If one person has a higher paying or more prestigious job, there may be jealousy from the other partner.
- * One parent may feel ownership for specific roles. Dual-working couples may feel threatened in these areas.