



How to thrive as a 'Single Wife'

Even before the excitement of the extra income from a fly in, fly out job cools, it's crucial to pay close attention otherwise you could lose your marriage as well as your business, cautions SUE LESTER.

An increasing number of women are finding themselves in the 'single wife' role as their partners accept fly in fly out (FIFO), drive in drive out (DIDO) jobs or positions based overseas.

Unlike divorcees and widows, your partner does come home and your family income will increase rather than decrease, but like them, you will spend the majority of your daily life as a single mother. Your tag-team physical support has gone, there is no one to gang up with against the kids and no one to cuddle up to at night.

If your expectations are not clarified and ground rules are not put in place from the very start, you could easily and painfully lose both your business and your marriage.

Things to consider beforehand:

A great tool to examine the pros and cons, and reveal any fears or misconceptions, is Cartesian Logic. These deceptively simple four questions, when answered in the context of each area of your life, will give a full picture of the consequences, both positive and negative.

1. What will happen if I do (i.e. accept the job)?
2. What will happen if I don't?
3. What won't happen if I do?
4. What won't happen if I don't?

It is crucial you are both open and honest about your concerns and fears, as well as expectations. Expectations on exactly what 'regular contact' means, decision making, bill paying, holidays, fidelity, time span, your

time commitment to your business, and what happens the first day he is home. For example, you immediately disappearing with a martini in hand is probably not his ideal after four weeks of 12 hour shifts seven days a week.

Write it all down, including contact details for all essential services, professional services, passwords, birthdays, and significant dates. Ensure your wills are both up to date, as well as your Enduring Powers of Attorney, and life insurance.

Brain storm together on your support network, in terms of who can you share childcare with, who can cover when you are sick, plus the need for a cleaner, yard maintenance, pool service and book keeper. Where (not how) will you fit in self-care including exercise and relaxation?

Systems are crucial for keeping both your household and your business running smoothly as you will have more responsibilities to fit in. The more organised you are, the more in control you will feel, the more resilience you will have on THOSE days. Invest in a personal coach to keep you focussed, supported and sane.

Things to consider during:

Help your children to adjust by saying, "Daddy is at work" rather than "Daddy has gone away". Using the term 'at work' reassures and reminds them (and you) there is a purpose for his absence, and it is only temporary.

Have maps and photos showing Daddy 'at work'. Encouraging each child to keep a diary of drawings, photos, and anecdotes is a great way to keep them emotionally connected, ensure they have something to talk about on Skype,

and help include their father in daily life.

Keep your mutually agreed house and behaviour rules consistent whether your partner is home or not. Be very wary of allowing children to sleep with you as that will disrupt their routine and require adjustment (and kill your love life) when their father returns and 'kicks them out'. Never link punishment to their father's return. It can stifle their relationship renewal, and make you appear weak, and only second in charge.

Remember, on those rough days when you are feeling exhausted, lonely and resentful, it is your choice to live this lifestyle. Remind yourself of all the benefits, look for the little moments of daily happiness, know he is coming home again, and do something nice for yourself, like putting work aside and going to bed when the kids do, or emailing your personal coach. Be aware of comfort eating, drinking and sex, and find alternative ways to get rid of the 'empty' feeling.

Expect that everyone will have an opinion on your new choice of lifestyle and they are entitled to their opinion. But remember, it is your life so you do not need to justify it to anyone. With planning, support and the right mindset, you can make it the best lifestyle choice for your family. ■

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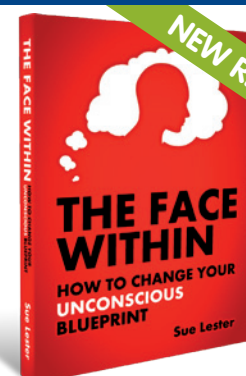
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