



IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO **LEGALLY FORCE MY HUSBAND BACK TO WORK?**

Dear Steve,

I'm 37 years old and have been married for 11 years. We have a two-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter. When my daughter was born, my husband and I decided that he would quit his job, which he hated, and I would support the family, while he went back to school to earn his B.A.



Since then, I've worked my way up to a director position in a financially stable organization. But my husband hasn't returned to school or even looked for a part-time job that would allow me to also work part-time as well as look after the children.

He makes excuses as to why he doesn't know what to do with his life, such as:

1. His dad wouldn't help him with his college decisions when he was younger.
2. His dad was an alcoholic, so he thinks he is too. (He was tested on this and the results were negative.)
3. He thinks he has Attention Deficit Disorder. (He has gone to counseling for this, and results were negative again.)

I've set up interviews for him, printed job-search material off the Internet, and helped in many other ways, yet he says I'm not supportive. He also says he does a better job at home with the kids than I do. I have a stressful job and would prefer to work part-time, but it's as if he doesn't want to give me any opportunity.

Both children can sense the tension among us. My daughter has issues with me not being at home for her. I discussed divorce with my husband, but he only got very angry with me. Now he says he doesn't trust me. I never wanted to consider divorce, because I came from a divorced family; my children have everything I ever wanted growing up. He is a very insecure person but very loving to our children. We were once a very close couple. I don't know what more to do. Any advice?

Hurting (F) 37
Wayne, PA

Dear Hurting,

I understand your frustration. You're facing the classic societal role-reversal situation. Although we've come a long way from the "Ozzie and Harriet" nuclear family, there's still something disturbing about a father who refuses to work to support his family.

Regardless of whether or not you stay with your husband, you can't legally force him to go back to work. But if you're in the middle of a divorce proceeding, it's possible for a court to find that your husband has an earnings capacity and assess him with an income based on that earnings capacity for the purposes of calculating support. However, as you seem to have substantially higher earnings than he would if he went back to work, that solution probably isn't of much comfort to you. Ironically, YOU would likely be the one paying HIM support.

Another issue that may be equally important to you is how you and your husband would parent your children if you separated. Since your husband has established himself as "Mr. Mom", it's imperative that you meet with a local family-law specialist to help you determine a reasonable parenting plan.

Your husband's statement that he doesn't trust you is typical of stay-at-home spouses who are afraid of having to reenter the workforce. A skilled family lawyer may be able to help you find psychological assistance to help you navigate the complex emotional issues that your family will face in the event of separation or divorce.

You should be proud of your accomplishments and the fine example you're setting for your children. Keep up the good work.

Steve

