

If you're the spouse who travels, leave letters and gifts with friends who'll distribute them to your partner. Or order flowers to be delivered on key dates. This forethought means more thoughts will be coming your way!

## Independent Strengths Apart

The essence of a successful marriage over time is the ability to share power. This requires that power be present on both sides, because if all the power belongs to one person, sharing is not really possible. Sharing power, then, requires planning. Each spouse must do what is necessary to obtain some power and then must be willing to share it.

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Even if you are lucky enough to have a lasting, loving feeling, your marriage can fail if your lives are not arranged so each spouse has the maximum chance to respect the other and forgive their inevitable selfish behavior. When both spouses are allowed to make substantial contributions to the relationship, they have concrete reasons to respect, give space to, and forgive each other for their shortcomings.

I am not sure what really goes on in the development of today's relationships between men and women, but thirty or forty years ago relationships were often one-sided and it required some vision of the future to provide for power sharing. The man made a living. The woman made a life. If the man was the center of the relationship in marriage, as was the custom and the woman's role was to make the home, then her status and power in the relationship were precarious.

If the personalities were such that the husband was dependent upon the wife emotionally, or if she was smarter or more stable than he, then sharing power was more easily accomplished. Each needed the other and as long as nothing happened to disturb the relationship, a successful marriage was possible. However, if there was a glitch, the marriage collapsed because the man really had all the power and the wife's



We had a great laugh!" Write down funny things that happen while your spouse is gone and share them upon his return. If you're looking for these humorous incidences, then you'll find your burden lightened in the process.

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power existed only as long as her husband valued her. She had no real power of her own. If her importance to him changed, the relationship changed. This subtle pressure on the wife tended to make her insecure because she constantly worried whether or not she was necessary.

In my marriage, the traditional way was not a reasonable way to proceed, for several reasons. I am too independent to rely on anyone very much and my wife is too insecure to be in such a tenuous power position and too talented to play a secondary role. Fortunately, we worked out a better arrangement than the one in general use thirty years ago.

## Love and Romance



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I married, in my early twenties, a beautiful and intelligent twenty-year-old. She was the best person I had ever met, and so I married her, even though it was not a good time for us to do so. She was much too young. She had no real plans for her life. I was not really mature. Our relationship was full of love but there was little else to it. I was an intern and she was still in college. Life was not easy, especially for her. I knew the time would come when it would not be enough to be beautiful and in love. She needed to have a life separate from mine so she would value herself separately from us as a couple and I would value her as a person separate from myself. We worked this out together, although we never actually spoke of it in these terms. Later in my life, I encouraged my children to be independent. I wanted them to understand that women - particularly women - need to develop independent strengths apart from their husbands, in order to keep their own and their husbands' respect over time.

When our children were teenagers, my wife went back to school and then studied medicine and became an internist. The process was difficult and required sacrifices on all sides, but over time, it worked. She has been practicing for several years.

There is no doubt that her career has fortified her.

She has a much stronger self-image, higher self-esteem, and is more independent. She is happier than she has ever been. I see her as my colleague and equal in ways I did not years ago, and I respect and value her differently. We have more of a partnership, our marriage is stronger and more stable, and in many ways her added power and value make her more important and powerful to me as well. But it is

harder to actually live life this way. Things are hard to arrange day by day, details are inconvenient.

The theoretical disadvantages of a two-powerful person relationship actually become real in the end. It takes some getting used to.