

Marriages benefit when fathers share household, parenting responsibilities, researcher says

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Although no exact formula for marital bliss exists, a University of Missouri researcher has found that husbands and wives are happier when they share household and child-rearing responsibilities. However, sharing responsibilities doesn't necessarily mean couples divide chores equally, said Adam Galovan, a doctoral student in the MU Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

"Sharing can mean something different to every couple," Galovan said. "It could be taking turns changing diapers or one parent watching the children while the other prepares dinner. Doing things together and having mutual, agreed-upon divisions of labor benefitted both spouses."

Galovan and his Brigham Young University and Utah State University colleagues surveyed 160 [heterosexual couples](#) to see how the parents divided household responsibilities and how those chores affected the husbands' and [wives'](#) relationships. The [couples](#) were married for an average of five years and had at least one child age five or younger. Most of the parents were between 25 and 30 years old, and about 40 percent of the women had full- or part-time jobs.

"The more wives perceived that husbands were engaged in routine family work tasks, the better the relationships were for both partners," Galovan said. "Wives in our study viewed father involvement and participation in household chores as related. Doing household chores and

being engaged with the children seem to be important ways for husbands to connect with their wives, and that connection is related to better [couple relationships](#)."

The bonds between fathers and their children also contributed to couples' [marital satisfaction](#), Galovan said.

"When wives felt their husbands were close to their children, both spouses reported better marriages," said Galovan. "The father-child bond was particularly important for wives."

Couples should realize that transitioning into [parenthood](#) requires an adjustment period, and it is normal for [husbands](#) and wives to feel stressed, Galovan said. To counteract the stress, he recommends that parents make each other a priority.

"Find ways to connect throughout the day, even if it's just doing dishes together or watching a movie," Galovan said. "These simple connections in daily life seem to enhance couples' marital satisfaction and improve the quality of their relationships."

The study, "Father Involvement, Father-Child Relationship Quality, and Satisfaction with Family Work: Actor and Partner Influences on Marital Quality," was published in the *Journal of Family Issues*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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