

Looking at the working dad

There was a time when it was only up to the mother to take care of the child and the father's responsibility was limited to bringing food to the table. But now that the times are changing and the mothers are working outside, there is a need for division of labour and the father also has to take responsibility of household chores as well as taking care of the baby. As a result, balancing work and childcare can be a difficult task. So how do dads do it?

When it comes to balancing home and work, the young fathers start out hoping to capture the world but it doesn't quite work out that way, especially if they are involved in the corporate world. Whilst mums sometimes have the advantage of getting paid leave and flexible schedules, the dads may find their careers suffering if they try to take advantage of the same perks. For example, a partner at a law firm can't be on paternity leave because he has to bring in big sharks for the firm at every quarter. Furthermore, if a man even tries asking for paternity leave, he might be stigmatised, might be looked over for that raise or promotion and might even be laughed at some places. Given the times, this shouldn't be the case.

Early this year, a mid-level manager for a local fashion label faced a dilemma. He had made a promise to his wife and children that he'd go to this picnic with family and friends on a Friday. A few days before the



event however, his boss had told him that he had to go halfway across the country to meet with a potential client on the same day. He told his boss that he'd have to reschedule but the boss said no and later on the day, replaced him with someone else "I did end up going to that Friday picnic but believe me, it hurt me career-wise," said Ashraf, the young dad.

It might surprise you to learn that in

spite of all the obvious setbacks, a lot of working dads are doing all that they can to become "all in" parents. This means that the dads don't just come home from work and kick up their feet, leaving mums to do all the work but that they spend an average of at least four hours a day with their kids, caring for them, talking to them and bonding with them. Almost all dads who live with their kids dress them, help them with

homework, eat with them and speak with them about their day.

Ratul, a young working dad, had this to say, "It is sometimes extremely difficult to balance home and work, especially on those days when the work hours are extra long. I don't get to spend most of the day with my kid but I squeeze in as much time as I can with him. I get him ready every morning; I drive him to school and I spend two hours with him in the evening to talk about his classes and eat dinner together before he has to turn in for the night."

Only a minority of working dads fail to make time for their families. They are rewarded in the workplace where these kinds of stereotypes still reign. As they work their way up controlling the policies and the environment, they stay out of touch with what matters most. A Harvard University study found the vast majority of top executives in the US are men who admit not making their family the priority; they go as far as to consider work-family conflicts as primarily a "women's problem."

The ideals of the young working dads may differ with the realities of the workplace for now, but that will definitely change as the country's young workers become policy makers a few years down the road.

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Photo: LS Archive

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