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PROFESSIONAL PARTNER

Spouse Partner

It's a source of power.

by Colette Young

YOU ARE WELL AWARE OF THE PRESSURES of your work life—but you may forget that this high-pressure lifestyle greatly impacts your spouse, as well.

The way your spouse feels about your job can provide either a strong wind beneath your wings, or a terrible weight on your shoulders. Your spouse has a major impact on your effectiveness at work, and plays a major role in your success—or failure.

How can you ensure that both of you are on the same page, with a single objective and a commitment to move ahead to achieve joint goals?

In my experience as an executive spouse and mentor, I find that the most successful partnerships adhere to four critical principles:

1. Remember, you're in it together. You and your spouse must appreciate that you're partners in this journey, and you're in it for the long haul. Relationships hit bumps when one or both partners forget about the big picture, feel blindsided by stresses associated with work, or feel that their needs are taking a backseat to their spouse's. Both spouses need to recognize that a climb up the ladder is not easy—sacrifices are required. You and your spouse need to map out the long-term plan, discuss challenges that will arise, and commit to the entire journey.

2. Be accountable to each other and to yourself. Acknowledge your feelings and needs, and those of your spouse, and talk about them to ensure both of your needs are heard and met. Often, finding a solution

can mean compromising or creating common ground.

3. Be flexible. If you are promoted, both you and your spouse will have to adapt. With increased pressure, you may look to your spouse for more support. The executive spouse may have less time or focus with the busier husband or wife, and need to find his or her own path. A promotion that includes a move to a new city, or country, is a major challenge.

Family issues are cited as a major reason for the failure of relocations, especially foreign ones where pressures quickly mount. An executive spouse may need to seek new friends, or consider a career change. The executive may need to leave his or her work at the office, and focus more on the spouse when they're both home.

4. Provide unwavering support. Both spouses need to provide the support necessary to ensure each partner is fulfilled and content. Publicly recognize the other spouse's efforts. Acknowledgements reinforce the power of two and set a great example for other people who are building their spouse team.

The home is where this all starts. Small, everyday gestures of consideration build a strong team and lay the groundwork for unwavering support and personal growth. PE



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ACTION: Form a strong partnership.