

My husband and I have discussed this issue many times. Andy freely concedes that he finds multi-tasking difficult, whereas I thrive on it. So it is indeed very hard for him to remember various appointments while making a list for dinner while organizing a play-date. He forgets things, drops balls, and flat-out refuses to wash pots.

But. Just as he can put a tastier dinner on the table better and faster than I can, so can he also sit next our younger son for hours on end working through nuances and mistakes of his piano practice. He comes up with wonderful projects for both our sons, like reading through an entire set of plays or downloading an entire genre of music. He plans extraordinary trips and is a talented logistician. He is a much better disciplinarian. Many of these attributes come precisely from his ability to focus and put in sustained effort over a long period of time.

I can hear women readers who are better at those things than their husbands howling. I am NOT saying that women can't focus (I do manage to get books written, after all), or that men are better at cooking or homework monitoring. But I am insisting that if we women truly want equal partners in the home, then we can't ask our husbands to be "equal" on our terms. *They* get equal say, even if we disagree. And indeed, if we can discover the joys and satisfactions of professional success, why shouldn't men be able to enjoy the rewards and satisfactions of parenting and homemaking? For years, mothers have gotten that special rush when a child reaches for his mommy and says no one else will do; do we really think a father doesn't get the same wonderful sense of being needed and valued when a child insists on his daddy?

Lisa Miller quotes therapist Barbara Kass in a blunt assessment of the problem. According to Kass, "So many women want to control their husbands' parenting. 'Oh, do you have the this? Did you do the that? Don't forget that she needs this.