

Is he having an affair with work?

Workaholic is an unfortunate label. It conveys a picture of a husband who works long hours because he is a slave to his job. It simultaneously says there's something wrong with the work-oriented husband and that he can't help it. Like an alcoholic, the workaholic supposedly can't say no to his job. He's trapped by his tremendous hunger for money and success.

It's a handy label. By calling your husband a workaholic you place the blame for his absence on his compulsion to work, and you take yourself neatly off the hook. After all, you rationalize, even the most interesting wife and most satisfying marriage couldn't compete against an addiction to work.

And that's why it's such an unfortunate label. It leads you away from the truth and prevents a solution to a solvable problem—a marriage problem.

You'll have a far more accurate understanding of the so-called workaholic if you realize that a work-oriented husband is actually having an affair with his job. And like a romantic affair, this only occurs in the context of an unsatisfying marriage. It's a substitute, a way of getting needs met that aren't being met at home.

By

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Ph.D.



discuss feelings with his wife and kids. Ask him to solve a complicated work problem and he'll do it. But give him a challenging child-raising situation or a marital conflict and he's lost.

NOT BECAUSE he doesn't want to be a good husband and father. In fact, he wants to be the best. He wants to feel as successful at home as he does at work. He wants to feel that he makes a special, important contribution to his wife and kids. But he just doesn't know how. He expects to fail at home and so he doesn't really try.

Instead, he keeps a low profile, hidden behind his newspaper or behind the work he has brought home. And his work hours get longer and longer.

Yet, as unfortunate as this situation may seem for the husband, the real tragedy is felt by his wife. At the same time that he has been becoming increasingly independent of his marriage for his emotional needs, she has become more needy. As he has drifted away from their partnership, meeting his needs at work, she has been left to starve for the same personal strokes.

But she doesn't admit it. Instead, she expresses her loneliness by nagging her absentee husband about how he's neglecting his superficial duties around the house. Even family recreation and sex are discussed as unmet

obligations. And he feels even more like a guilty failure as a husband.

The work-oriented husband feels like a failure at home, and he hates it. If you can cope with that fact, then you can turn this pattern around.

DON'T THINK of him as a competent man who just refuses to take an interest in his marriage. That would lead you to nag him and pressure him.

Think of your so-called workaholic husband as a man who expects to fail in his roles at home. Think of him as a person who needs to build his confidence as a husband and father. And you'll realize that what he needs is encouragement and support, not guilt. What he needs is an emphasis on his successes rather than rubbing his nose in his failures.

When work-oriented husbands are treated in this way they make amazing changes. As they feel more and more successful at meeting their families' needs, they also feel more interested in being with their families. They feel they are not just putting in their dutiful time at home, that they are truly needed and appreciated for their special contribution.

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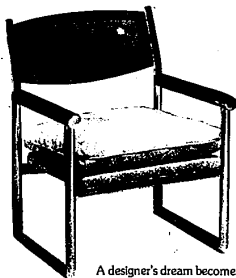


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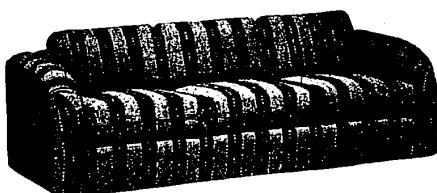
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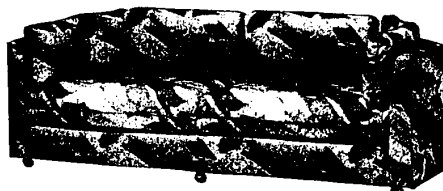
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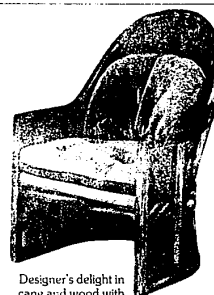


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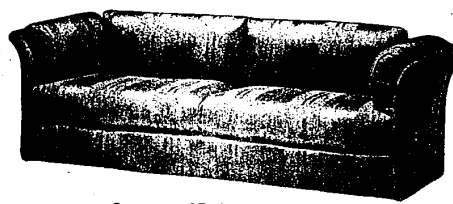
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