

## [special report]

# How to make your husband *want* to come home earlier from work

Yeah, we've heard it before. "I have to work late." And it's true. Some men have no choice. But others who work a lot of overtime can rearrange their schedule to make it home an hour earlier once or twice a week. The trick is *motivating* your husband to want to do that.

Your husband probably already wants to come home earlier but his heart is pulled in conflicting directions. He is in the middle of work at five o'clock in the afternoon, so his focus is on work projects. He is also under pressure to perform on the job. He may not realize he could plan on leaving an hour earlier once or twice a week without adversely affecting his job performance. It can be done, as long as his supervisor is willing to be flexible.

Here are five ways to bring your husband home earlier. Every man is different, so his response to motivation will differ as well. Try some of these ideas and see what works for you.

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*Marriage and Parenting Enrichment*

*"...the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord" (Tobias 9:12)*

## Bring him home method #1

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### **Appeal to his stomach.**

Prepare a nice meal for him (or plan on going out and get the kids ready for a babysitter).

This will be particularly effective if you don't usually prepare nice dinners. Use real plates, nice silverware (if you can afford it, buy a second set for special occasions and use it for this meal), a good bottle of wine, real cloth napkins, and a dessert dish.

Men live a paradox. They get married and *want* to spend time with their wives, and they *want* to spend time with their children, and they *want* to be home more often. In high school, they didn't particularly want to become bureaucrats or analysts when they grew up or work 60 hours a week. Your husband probably didn't have much choice in choosing his colleagues or the building in which he works. In **theory**, and in his heart, he would rather be home with you and the kids. Yet, look at what really happens in **practice**: toys aren't on the floor where he works. He never stubs his toe. He can make a phone call without kids crying in the background. When he eats lunch, he sits down with other men in a mostly clean dining area. He probably doesn't wash the dishes. Someone else takes out the garbage and does the cleaning in his office.

When he comes home, he leaves the order and functionality of the quiet, sterile American workplace for the disordered noise and chaos of the Catholic hearth and home.

Part of his heart is excited for his home, and part of it is revolted. Some men are bothered more by the chaos than others; all, however, try to suppress their feelings.

What can you do to bring him home earlier? When you appeal to his stomach, you are appealing to his need to be taken care of. On his “come home early to a nice meal” night, don’t ask him to help with the dishes (unless you really are overwhelmed). Imagine you are setting the table for an important visitor. Use real table settings. See the first few pages of *The Joy of Cooking* or look online for the proper way to set a table.

If you can win that small part of his heart that flinches when he thinks of coming home to dinner, you’ll increase his real-life desire to be with you and the kids.

## Bring him home method #2

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### **Appeal to his need for order.**

Make sure you have a clean space for him where there are no toys. Actually, this should be a daily thing. Now that cell phones are ubiquitous, your husband can call you when he’s about 20 minutes from home. That will give you enough time to move all the toys out of the way so he has a clear path to a “gentleman’s place” in the living room or some other area in your house. This area should be free of toys. There will be a fresh glass of water or his favorite drink waiting for him and some light reading, like a newspaper.

You can tell him you’ve made his favorite drink and you’ll put it next to his chair. Put some “upscale” items near his chair (for example, a bookshelf, a nice little water fountain with pebbles, a classy potted plant, and maybe a love note). As I mentioned earlier, some husbands don’t really look forward to coming home because they consider their house a gigantic toy box. Toys and papers are everywhere. Clear a special spot just for him, where there is order, no clutter, and nice decorator touches to uplift his spirit.

## Bring him home method #3

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### **Appeal to his need for physical affection.**

Promise him an immediate back rub when he arrives home. Tell him on the phone that you've already told the kids, "Daddy isn't feeling good so when he comes home I have to take him right up to our room for about 10 minutes."

It is a myth that men are only interested in sex. Actually, men need physical touch about as much as women do. When two people touch, they are bonding at a certain level of attachment. The ancient Greeks believed there were three kinds of love: *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*. Eros is sexual or erotic love; philia is friendship, and agape is a love rooted in faith (spiritual love). In their pure forms, all three types of love are expressed in the marriage. Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical discussed these forms of love at great length.

Two people shaking hands exhibit a limited philia, or friendship. Dear friends who embrace exhibit a fuller philia. When the married couple embraces, or holds each other close, or rubs each other's sore muscles, this love has more elements of philia than eros, although both loves are certainly present.

Your husband needs to know you love and respect him. When you offer to rub his back, you are telling him two things: One, that you love him and want him to feel good; and two, you are willing to physically bond with him. This tells his heart that both loves – philia and eros – are alive and well in your marriage.

Agape love must also be strong in the marriage, and I will discuss that at length in other articles.

## Bring him home method #4

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### **Appeal to his need for organization.**

Tell him that you will be his "perky secretary" (use those exact words) and you'll help him with whatever paperwork or project he is working on. Ask him to bring the work home and you'll help him. Most men hate paperwork, and thanks to computers, they don't have secretaries. Also thanks to computers, men have to organize their schedules and their paperwork themselves. Most are very bad at it.

The computer age has wrought a lot of good and a lot of bad as well. I've worked with dozens of small business owners, executives, and middle managers – all of them men, and none – none! – had a good organizational system. Some were better than others, but as long as they had to organize their schedules themselves, they fumbled with it. Try to take this burden off him at least once or twice a week, in exchange for his arriving home early.

## Bring him home method #5

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### **Appeal to his need for recreation.**

Gently remind him that the kids would love to throw the ball around the backyard with him. Or gently remind him that you would love to see him working on his hobby. Better yet: Help him plan a “hobby day” or a “play with the kids day” ahead of time so he has something to look forward to once or twice a week. This is part of what is known in the corporate world as “work-life balance.” If he uses this phrase at work, the boss will be more understanding.

NOTE: You must never “dump” on your husband when he gets home. Wait at least 20 or 30 minutes before you tell him about the problems of your day. He needs time to deprogram from work and traffic, and slow down to family mode.

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