



Want to Get Ahead? Pick the Right Partner

Research suggests 3 ways the right relationship benefits you.

Who you marry doesn't affect just your happiness at home. Your spouse can also play a major role in your career prosperity, according to new research from Washington University in St. Louis. The study, published in *Psychological Science*, found that it's not only your personality that matters when it comes to career achievement; your spouse's personality also affects your success.

The five-year study examined 5,000 married people who ranged in age from 19 to 89. Approximately 75% of the sample came from homes in which both spouses worked. Researchers administered a series of psychological tests to assess participants' scores in five broad areas of personality—openness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. They also tracked the on-the-job performance of working spouses by using annual surveys designed to measure occupational success. Each worker provided self-reports related to job satisfaction, salary increases, and the likelihood of being promoted.

While many other studies have shown that it's helpful to have a spouse who ranks high in agreeableness, this study shows that workers with the most occupational success had spouses who scored high in conscientiousness on the personality assessments. Conscientiousness is characterized by a tendency to be organized and dependable. Conscientious people also show self-discipline, behave dutifully, strive for achievement, and prefer planned activities over spontaneous events.

3 Ways a Conscientious Spouse Contributes to Success

The study showed that having a conscientious spouse promoted career success, regardless of whether both spouses in a household worked. It also concluded that a conscientious spouse was equally important for both male and female

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working spouses. The researchers discovered that a conscientious person is likely to support a spouse's career in three pivotal ways:

1. Completing day-to-day tasks. The conscientious spouse is likely to do household chores, pay bills, shop for groceries, and care for children. This can free up a partner to focus on work outside the home.
2. Role-modeling healthy skills. A working spouse may pick up on some of his or her partner's good habits—like behaving diligently and reliably—which can boost career success.
3. Keeping a working spouse's personal life running smoothly. The conscientious spouse reduces overall stress and promotes a healthy work-life balance which can assist a working partner in career advancement.

What Can We Learn?

Spouses who can truly help advance your career go beyond simply encouraging you to ask for a raise or apply for a promotion. Instead, career success relies on having a spouse who keeps life outside of work operating smoothly for the long haul.

If you're not yet married—and you're ambitious about your career endeavors—a potential mate's conscientiousness may be worth considering. But if you're already married and you're concerned that your spouse's personality isn't advancing your professional life, don't run out and get a divorce with the hope of benefiting your career! Most of the research shows that the stress of divorce decreases workplace productivity for about five years.

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the study is that we should develop an awareness of how our own personalities affect our partners. Simply being aware of the characteristics and behaviors that may help—as well as hinder—each other can go a long way toward reaching your goals, as a team.

Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201505/want-get-ahead-pick-the-right-partner>