



being a stay at home dad

Is it Right for You?

WRITTEN BY Dan Downey AND Cynthia Lyerly

Dave Weiss of Stillwater, Minnesota has been a stay-at-home-dad (SAHD) for nearly six years. Talking with Dave, you can literally hear the

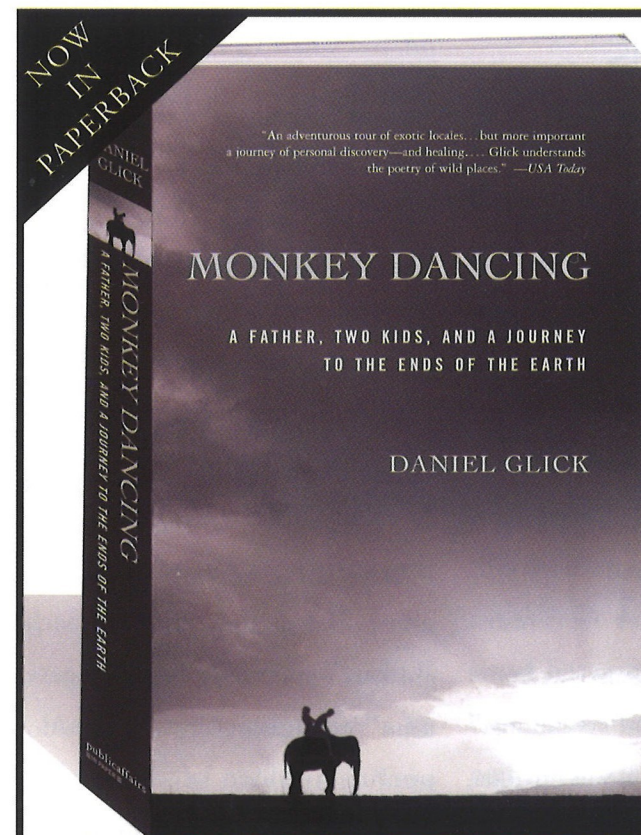
wife was more career-oriented and he was more patient, so it was decided he would stay home with the children.

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passion he has for being a dad. When he and his wife began having children, the decision was simple: his

Who are SAHDs? The United States Census defines SAHDs as dads out of the labor force for at least a

year to take care of home and family. This definition does not fully take into account the varied reasons men are SAHDs. There are many fathers who work from home or who may have a job that allows them the flexibility to work and take care of a child such as telecommuting. Some fathers may work an evening shift but during the day they watch the kids. A recent report from Fox News.com states that men 25 – 39 years old (children of baby boomers) include more stay-at-home dads, more fathers working from home, and more dads working fewer hours than previous generations.



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The causes for the increase in SAHDs are numerous. Many men, like Weiss, choose to stay at home while others are forced through circumstances to do so, through layoffs or reduced business opportunity. Many SAHDs work part

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Members of the Cincinnati Stay at Home Dad group

time running home businesses or working as freelancers and contract employees.

Patrick Gorman is a busy Arizona parent and the perfect example of a successful and happy stay-at-home dad. With a two-year-old daughter and five-month-old twins, this former Home Depot employee has served as the primary caregiver for almost three years. His decision to stay home was made “kicking and screaming,” after the loss of his job. It was obvious, with his wife holding a job with the same company for nearly 18 years,

that she should continue working. The arrangement works well for the family because the kids are their primary concern and income for the Gormans is “secondary.” To supplement his family’s income, Patrick sells real estate part-time. “This profession is easy to slide back into when the kids get bigger,” he says.

The SAHD conversion often occurs through duress, as was the case for Tim Nabors of suburban Ohio. Having to leave his screaming young child with another caregiver was what turned him to the ranks of the SAHD. For a time, his wife endured the dreadful and heart-rending ritual of the childcare drop-off. But when Tim was asked to drop their daughter off, he changed his two-income household tune in an instant. “Someone had to stay home,” he says. What helped solidify his decision was a large promotion his wife had recently received. “We then decided for me to leave my job and stay home full time.”

Many SAHDs work at home or run businesses out of their home office. This is the case with Sachin Waikar. Waikar left a lucrative career as a management consultant to pursue his love of writing. The lifestyle and requirements of a contemporary writer are often


befitting a SAHD, and with most of his writing done on a home computer, the decision seemed obvious. What really sealed the deal for Waikar was the knowledge that he was going to be more than a “weekend” kind of dad. Adjusting to his new life at home with a toddler was difficult to say the least, particularly since the family had recently moved and Waikar’s social circle was limited. So, like any good author, he wrote about his days at home with his son. These writings became Waikar’s first published work!

While being a SAHD can be rewarding, it can have its drawbacks. One major drawback is the loss of income. When a two-income family loses a revenue stream, financial sacrifices have to be made. “We look at cutbacks every few months,” Weiss admits. Nabors claims that, “we initially did cut things like cable, newspaper and other non-necessities. But we found that without the cost of daycare, my business expenses, dry-cleaning, and gasoline, things seem to balance out.”

Another drawback for SAHDs can be the lack of adult interaction throughout the day. “This is a big problem for SAHDs and moms,” adds Nabors. Men like Nabors and Weiss have been tackling this problem by creating groups in their area for

SAHDs. Nabors says his group (Cincinnati Stay At Home Dads) has been invaluable for dealing with situations like isolation and adult interaction. Weiss’ group (Minnesota Dads at Home) forms play groups so their kids can get together. They also have the occasional dads night out event.

If a father chooses to become a SAHD there are now a remarkable number of resources available for support and guidance (see sidebar: “SAHD Resources”). These support groups help fathers through the many trials, and share in the many triumphs, of staying at home with the kids.

Countless issues abound for the man who debates becoming a SAHD. To help, talk with other SAHDs to find out how they do it and learn how they feel about staying at home. For most men, and women, making the decision to stay at home and raise the children can be difficult, at best. Just remember, you are not alone. There are other men doing this successfully, and loving it. Use the available resources to make an informed and considerate decision. And, if you are home because you want to be, or if circumstances deem it necessary, enjoy your time with the little ones and strive to be the best dad you can possibly be. 

stay at home dad resources

An array of online sites and message boards are now available that address the everyday issues of dads who stay at home. Visit these sites for additional insight or just to meet other dads.

AtHomeDad.com

Great resource for the SAHD and also has an online group.

Slowlane.com

This is THE site for SAHDs. Here you will find a large, searchable site for the SAHD. Includes links to other at-home dad sites.

area groups

CincinnatiDads.com

For stay at home dads in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area.

DCMetroDads.com

This group covers dads who lived in the DC metro area. This includes DC, Maryland and Virginia.

MilwaukeeDads.com

For dads in the Milwaukee, WI area.

Mdah.org

Minnesota Dads at Home. Group for dads in the Twin Cities and across Minnesota.

