

By Carole B. Ricks



Carole

Carole's Corner...

Couples Constantly Struggle Over Where The Power Lies

Dear Carole:

My husband travels a lot. He is gone for two to four days a week. While he is away, I have to make all the decisions: decisions about the house, the children, you name it. I think I do a great job. But when my husband comes home, all of a sudden, I can't do anything right. Everything has to be done his way. I know he doesn't mean any harm by being critical, so I usually give in and do whatever he wants. I'm getting tired of pretending to be helpless when I'm not. How can I tell him that I am able without him thinking that I'm trying to take over?

G.S.

Dear G.S.:

The question you ask has another question hidden within it. That question is, who's in charge?

Many couples constantly struggle over where the power lies in their relationship. When your husband is away, you're in charge. When he returns, he wants to be in charge.

It may be helpful if the two of you can begin to talk about how to appreciate the many responsibilities that you both have. Both of you need reassurance that you care about each other. You need to hear from your husband that you are doing a good job holding the family and the household together. And he needs to hear from you that he's still needed, that he still fits into the family even though he's been away. Keep in touch by phone or mail as often as you can. Find little ways of making emotional bridges to close the distance between you.

As you work towards creating a happy relationship, you will find that supporting each other and sharing duties can become more important than being in charge.

Carole

Dear Carole:

I am a 30 year-old woman who wants to talk about what it's like to be a single parent. First of all,

I want to change the image of the single parent. My kids and I just happen to be happy. I work 1½ jobs. We don't have a lot. Yes, there are things we have to do without. But we're making it okay. My four kids are doing well in school because they know I expect them to. They also do everything they can at home to help because they know I'm working hard and doing the best I can. Don't you think that a single parent can be happy?

Mabel

Dear Mabel:

If the person's outlook and attitude are like yours, she will have to be happy. The strengths of you and your family seem to hold all of you together well. You seem independent and determined. It also seems apparent that you have firm expectations of your children. Your children must feel that what you expect of them is important and worthwhile because they are achieving in school and sharing duties at home.

What you are doing is not easy. My admiration and respect go to you and your family.

Carole

EDITOR'S NOTE: Carole B. Ricks is an M.S.W., A.C.S.W. social worker. She has a private practice in Charlotte, N.C., as a counselor. If you have personal adjustment, parent-child or marriage problems that concern you, write:

Carole Corner
P. O. Box 37107
Charlotte, N.C. 28237

Can Wood-Burning Stoves Really Save You Money?

By Audrey C. Ledate
Post Staff Writer

Wood stoves have made a comeback in the last five years. Although sales this year are down somewhat because other fuel prices have stabilized, wood-burning is probably here to stay as a significant source of winter warmth.

Bill Frykberg of Carolina Alternative Energy estimates there are 15,000 to 20,000 wood stoves in use in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.

Most everyone knows a fireplace by itself won't heat much of anything except your feet if you prop them up in front of it. Is a wood stove really anything more than a glorified metal fireplace?

And, taking into account the initial expense and the often high cost of wood, can a wood-burning stove really save you money while it heats your home?

I decided to find out. In order to have a basis for comparison, I first checked out the costs of some other heating methods.

Andy Thompson of Duke Power calculated the average cost of heating an energy-efficient 1,460 square foot house with a heat pump to be \$345 for the heating season. The calculation was based on Duke Power's RC rate and minimal use of the cold-weather back-up heating system that heat pumps require. Not everyone who heats with electricity has a heat pump, however. Heating with an electric resistance furnace is considerably higher.

Although Piedmont Natural Gas couldn't give me an average cost for an average house, their representative indicated that gas prices are at or below heat pump levels, somewhat lower than oil, and considerably lower than electric resistance heating. (Piedmont's Steve Conner suggested that for an unbiased comparison, you contact the State Energy Office of the Department of Commerce in

Raleigh).

Based on prices in Charlotte in September, 1983, The Fire House on South Boulevard compared the cost of producing 10,000 BTU's (one therm) of heat from electricity, oil, natural gas, coal and wood. Even at \$110 per cord for wood, only coal was cheaper.

Proponents of wood heating claim you can save up to 66 percent in heating bills by burning wood, even when you have to pay for it. The percentage saved would vary, depending on your current heating system.

There is a great deal of variation in the quality of wood-burning stoves. They range from almost useless and sometimes down-right dangerous to more than 60 percent heat-efficient. Design, construction and installation are the primary factors which determine how efficiently a particular stove will burn.

But doesn't the initial cost of a wood stove offset

any savings on fuel?

The price of a good quality stove or fireplace insert ranges from about \$600 to \$900. Delivery and installation, if you're not the do-it-yourself type, is about \$50. If you have a basement and ductwork, you can purchase a wood furnace for anywhere from \$600 to \$1,500 plus installation.

In this area, most homes can get by with two to three cords of wood for an entire season. At \$110 a cord, let's say you spend \$330, plus someone to deliver, if you don't own a pick-up truck. Or, if you do, at least six round trips at a dollar-plus a gallon.

Of course, if you have access to a free wood supply, you have it made. Almost.

All you have to do is cut your own wood, which is great exercise, no doubt.

If you already own a chainsaw, go to it. If not, add the cost of one chainsaw to your initial investment.



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