

We took our daughter to the play-park beside our house and met our plumber there. He got the job of plumbing our house during the remodel and made a really good job of it. Well, he was fine, but his workers left leaks in 3 of the 4 bathrooms and one under a floorboard somewhere. Anyway, he fixed all of that and we were happy with him. He was carrying his baby son and a little girl was milling around him and his wife. Except it wasn't his wife and I started to recall that he had sons and no daughters. He awkwardly introduced his wife as his partner and that was when the penny dropped. He was also out, with the lady and kids, in his work van on a Sunday. Clearly a change had been made.

My head hurt afterwards thinking about it. Years ago, I wouldn't have blinked at people leaving their spouses and hitching up with someone else. That all changes when you have kids of your own. Suddenly the impact of that change takes on an entirely new gravity. Kids growing up without a parent there every day. Houses being split, maintenance payments - cost, misery and a lifetime of grief. Add to that the fact that your new squeeze probably has kids, with an ex-partner who will be on the scene forever and all the issues with your kids and their kids and that weird dynamic.

I'm not saying people don't slip up - it happens, but to follow through and split up - that's a huge deal. I think I'll stay here and deal with marital reality. I haven't the optimism or fortitude to be doing anything other than that. Good luck, plumber.