

The odd phenomenon of some Japanese husbands making their wives put their socks on for them

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Photo: Pakutaso

Japan has long had a stigma as a society in which there's an extremely rigid division of labor in marriages. Under the traditional framework, husbands are supposed to breadwinners, going to work and earning the money the family needs, and wives are in charge of what needs to be done at home.

Because of that, many Japanese husbands' less-than-helpful attitude regarding housework has long been a cause for exasperation from their spouses. However, a recent topic on Japanese Twitter shows that some wives have had to deal with husbands who don't only refuse to cook or

clean, but who also can't be bothered to perform a certain life function that people are expected to have already mastered by the time they start elementary school. And just what is that function?

Putting on their own socks by themselves.

The conversation got started when Tokyo lawyer [@shouwayoroyoro](#) tweeted that when talking to women who are getting a divorce, they sometimes tell him "My husband won't put his socks on by himself." Now, it's true that every culture is different, and some things that might seem unusual by Western standards are perfectly acceptable by Japanese ones, such as [couples cleaning each other's ears](#). However, dressing themselves is something that adults in Japanese society are generally expected to be able to do with no problems, so desiring such assistance from your wife is a quick way to raise her eyebrows and lower her esteem for you.

What makes the whole thing especially strange is that putting on socks doesn't have any stigma as "women's work." This isn't like a man who never cooks for his wife because his mom made all the family's meals for him growing up — Japanese boys are expected to, and do, put their socks on by themselves. Surprisingly, though, many other commenters chimed in to say that they too have run into such levels of self-non-reliance from men in their life.

"The guy I used to date was like that. If someone is putting your socks on for you, they have to kneel down in front of you first, right? He said that was the part he liked."

"My ex (who said he was from Kyushu) wanted me to do that for him, When I asked 'Huh? Is there some reason you can't put 'em on yourself?' he looked really unhappy."

"I had a guy ask me to take his suit off for him! I flatly refused, but maybe I

should have done it for him while asking 'Oh, so did you just turn two years old?'"

Others hadn't experienced such things first-hand, but knew others who had.

"I heard my uncle used to be like that with his socks, but then after the company his owned went out of business, my aunt stopped doing it for him."

"My grandfather was born in 1901 in Kyushu, and when he'd get home from work, he'd stand there with his chest puffed out while my grandma completely changed his clothes for him."

"Up until one day when I was in preschool and asked him "Dad, why do you have Mom put your socks on you?" that's what my dad did too. My dad is from Fukuoka, and my mom from Nagasaki [both in Kyushu]."

Looking through these anecdotes, a couple things stick out. First off, it looks like the custom of husbands wanting their wives to put their socks on for them has stronger roots in Japan's southwestern island of Kyushu, which has long had a reputation for particularly old-fashioned gender roles, even compared to the rest of Japan. Second, a lot of the stories come from a generation or two back, so hopefully the number of guys who think their wives have a duty to help them with such a low-difficulty part of getting dressed will continue to decline.

Reference: [Twitter/@shouwayoroyoro](#) via [Hachima Kiko](#)

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