

## Dominant

*To be dominant is to exercise power over another person, group of people, or weaker animal—as in the dominance of the alpha male lion over his pride. Among humans dominance can be physical—as in the flogging of a slave or a sex partner, or psychological—as in the spiritual power a great guru exercises over his followers.*

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### *Examples*

1 In most marriages, my own is one, there is a distribution of dominance between the two partners. In my case my wife, who is younger than me, has a natural dominance over me in life expectancy, virus immunity, and closeness to the spirit of our times. She is physically weaker than me in a few respects—ability to deal with heavy loads, to open screw top bottles, or to bench press, though these are skills we could, in a pinch, live without. To my wife's dominances I counterpoise a longer career life, and a certain superiority in breadth of human experience. I am in a sense the breadwinner of the family, but after twenty years our mutual involvements in our life together are well balanced. In fact the skills she exercises as homemaker more than balance my contributions to our mutual welfare.

2 I come from a family of non-dominance. My father was a quiet, reserved, rather critical academic with a thorough disciplinary background. He was a quiet and routine-loving presence throughout my life, and it has taken me a lifetime to see how carefully, and understatedly, he was helping me shape my own life through the family. My mother was an *imaginativa*, full of frivolity and life at her best, whom hard knocks—blindness in her sixties, a heavy blend of drinking and cigarettes—reduced to a shadow of her former self. Neither of these parents raised a hand or voice to dominate me, though I have to believe that, given my provocatively chaotic early marital life, both parents must have wondered at the results of their parenting. There was little dominance in my family background, and I have equally avoided power-wielding in my own families, happily replacing power with ambition.