



Do Your Chores

GETTING FAIR ABOUT HOUSEHOLD AFFAIRS

Not so long ago, a woman's place was in the kitchen and the man's was in the office. But now that women are well established in the work force, men are finally tip-toeing into the laundry room and dipping their hands into the dish soap.

While it's great that the stereotypical gender roles are starting to disappear, it's also a pretty typical source of arguments: who does what around the house? If we're both working full-time jobs, why am I still the one to do most of the chores? Why is it so hard for you to put your clothing in the hamper? How many times do I need to remind you to wash your dishes?

Tara Kingston and her husband Sean, of Highland, Ind., have been married for four years and they believe they've created a system that works for both of them. She does the inside of the house and he does the outside. Tara says, "When we were first married, it did take some trial and error to figure out who was going to do what, but we've just worked through whose talents lie in what areas."

And when problems arise, they talk through them to tackle them together. Tara used to iron Sean's shirts—an inside-the-house chore—and while she was proud of her work, she became resentful about the amount of time she was spending leaning over the ironing board. So they decided that the few dollars they could spend on the dry cleaning bill was worth her sanity and their marriage.

The couple appears to be doing everything right, says Norm LeClercq, licensed clinical

marriage and family therapist with New Leaf Resources in Lansing, Ill. LeClercq suggests that couples make a commitment to address each chore and figure out ahead of time who will be doing what. Next, they need to realize that there's no right or wrong. One person will inevitably be neater and cleaner than their partner, but that person is not necessarily "right."

"These are preferences," LeClercq says. "Often what causes conflict is when they get put into the right and wrong category. In talking about the issues, there needs to be a focus on the issue instead of solely attacking the person. It's about the behavior, not the person."

Tara says she learned that the most important part of asking her husband to do tasks around the house is to be patient. If he doesn't do the task immediately, it doesn't necessarily mean that he's forgotten.

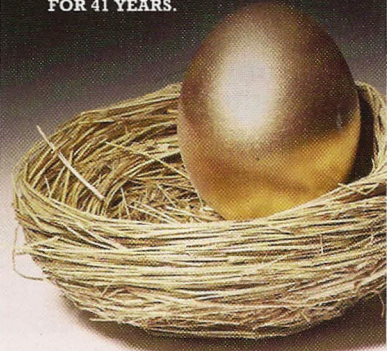
"It just means it's different on his list of priorities than it is on mine," she says. She finds herself nagging Sean sometimes, but she tries to stick to the system that she's found works best for them.

"What works better is a 'honey do' list, so I don't have to keep reminding," she says.

FINANCE TIP FROM A PRO

Save your money. Start now—even if it's the smallest amount. Put it away, and it trains you to keep doing it. You're old a long time, and it's very expensive. Start a separate bank account for the money, and it never gets touched. Or, buy a bond every month—something that you won't get at. Look at your parents or grandparents—what would they do if they didn't have a nest egg? Start now, so you'll have a long time to accumulate—and it does accumulate, the same way your bills accumulate. I wouldn't care if it was \$5 a month. It's just training you to start saving. I always said to my kids, "You're young for a short amount of time, but you're old forever."

—KATHY SELLERS, A LOAN ORIGINATOR FOR MUTUAL BANK IN NEW BUFFALO WHO HAS BEEN MARRIED FOR 41 YEARS.





gloves on

How to Fight with Your Spouse

The newlywed stage has barely started, yet you're already at each other's throats. Fighting. Yes, it's a normal, healthy part of any relationship. You and your hubby are together forever. But you're not sure you can live with that loud chewing sound he makes forever. Or you can't picture your life complete with his ugly chair forever. Whatever it is, you two will need to find a good way to communicate so the fighting itself doesn't last forever.

Norm LeClercq, licensed clinical marriage and family therapist with New Leaf Resources in Lansing, Ill., says there are some ways to make those arguments actually help your relationship rather than harm it. The key, he says, is to refrain from accusing or judging your partner. Instead, describe and disclose how their behavior affects you. If your husband goes out with his friends all the time instead of chilling with you, tell him that you love hanging out with him and wish you could spend more time together—instead of yelling that he goes out drinking with his buddies too often.

"Share not out of defensiveness, but out of vulnerability," he says. One hint: start by making a few affirmative statements about what you love about your partner. Once you've done that, just mention that there's a little glitch that you could solve together. "The main thing is 'I love you,' but this is causing problems," LeClercq suggests.

Once you've had the argument, there's the aftermath, but the make-up nookie that you see in the movies doesn't always

happen. Tara Kingston of Highland, Ind., says she had to learn that her husband Sean needs space after a fight—and it's not a rejection of her. "Rather, it's a way for him to reflect on what's happened," she says. "He knows that I'm waiting to talk it through, so when he's ready, we'll talk."

Another thing she learned: nine times out of ten, Tara's ruminating on the argument long after her husband's moved on. "I think women are more analytical, so we tend to do that anyway," she says.

While Tara and Sean have figured out ways to resolve their arguments successfully on their own, others need a little outside help. That's where LeClercq steps in. He says couples need help from a professional counselor sometimes in order to help listen to each other. If you've already become resentful and bitter of your partner, it's probably time to seek outside help. "At that stage, counseling can help a couple recognize that it is possible to address these issues," he says.

A good counselor will create a safe place for both people, and will value each person without taking sides—so don't go there expecting the counselor to agree with everything you say, and to yell at your husband for his actions. "The goal is understanding, not winning," LeClercq says.

Slowly, the relationship should shift with the help of the counselor, and each person will begin to recognize what they may be doing to trigger the other person's anger. And once they learn this, they can work to stop pushing buttons and communicate before the issue becomes too out of control.