

Ask Louanne

The Collegian's Advice Column
by Dr. Louanne Barton
Personal Counselor



Dear Louanne,

I am a female, working adult student, who was recently married. I am finding it difficult to balance my responsibilities as a wife, employee, college student, and homemaker. The biggest problem is keeping up with things at home, because housework doesn't have a "due date." My husband doesn't help out around the house. Although he appreciates a clean house, a dirty one doesn't bother him enough to help with the cleaning and upkeep. I am exhausting myself trying to do everything. How can I balance my roles and convince my husband that housework needs to be shared when both spouses work?

A Woman With Many Hats

Dear Woman With Many Hats,

Your letter was very timely. I took it to the Returning Adult Women's Support Group on campus and asked them for advice. They came up with some good ideas:

There are still some men left today who have been raised in families with traditional male roles that are very resistant to change. It's important to realize you can't change your husband. You can change yourself; and, with good communications, your husband may surprise you and decide to make some changes too.

First, you need to take stock of your own standards. Are they too high? Are you a perfectionist? Do you need to weed out the "shoulds" from an early generation of full-time homemakers? It sounds like your husband doesn't believe that "cleanliness is next to godliness." The group suggested you try a major time management redesign. Make a list. Eliminate or cut back whatever possible. Prioritize. Allow yourself to do little pieces without having to finish the whole job (like cleaning out one drawer at a time). Practice leaving messes like unmade beds and breakfast dishes. Change the beds and vacuum once every two weeks, instead of every week. Try using frozen convenience foods on weeknights, if you haven't already done so. At first it will be hard; but, believe me, it gets easier with practice.

As for your husband, don't assume that he will know what to do if he really cares. Remember, he may have had no helpful role models growing up. Try working out a schedule for the work that really needs to be done. Include your schoolwork on the schedule. Be sure to schedule time to relax or play. (It will do wonders for your attitude and energy level.) Share your schedule with your husband. Ask for his input. Ask him which specific tasks he would be willing to pick up. Agree upon a general time frame, but let him decide when he wants to do the work. Remember to make clear "I" statements describing what you want and need. Don't assume, accuse, or generalize. Be specific and timely. Your husband may surprise you. If he does, be sure to tell him how much you appreciate his help.

One woman in the group had a final piece of advice: "If you ever have a son, spare his future wife this problem."

Louanne

P.S. The Woman's Support Group meets Tuesdays at noon in the Reed Seminar Room.

INNOCENT BYSTANDER.



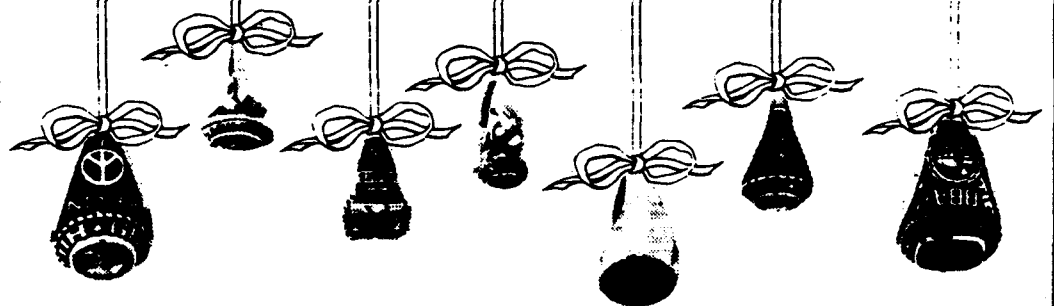
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