

How to balance the MENTAL LOAD

Ever feel like you're the one juggling everything at home? Follow these tips to stop resentment building in your relationship

You put the kids to bed, come downstairs and notice a pile of washing. As you go to put a load on, you realise that you're low on washing powder, so you add to your shopping list.

There, pinned under a magnet, you see a bill that needs paying by Friday, which reminds you that it's your mother-in-law's birthday, so you need to pick up a card. You go to ask your husband if he's bought her a gift, to find him sitting on the sofa watching TV. 'Any chance of a cuppa?' he asks.

In every relationship there's usually one person who feels they do the lion's share. And they're not just talking about the housework.

It's all the invisible tasks that you're meant to keep on top of as well, such as being the one to juggle everyone's schedule for

the week, who needs what in their school bag each day and which groceries need replacing.

Having to constantly remember, manage and do the tasks required to keep your household running, is known as the 'mental load'.

It is almost completely borne by women.

So it's little wonder that it can create resentment in even the healthiest of relationships.

Here's how to readdress the balance and stop it ruining your romance...

Make a five-minute list

Relationship expert, Sarah Louise Ryan, says: 'Nipping things in the bud when they arise will help communication between the two of you. So, things like who does more around the house, or for the children, needs to be vocalised, but from a place of love.'

'Calmly sit down together and make a list of all the jobs to do, including all the organisational tasks around the children and family life, such as making doctor's appointments and sorting out who's grown out of which clothes. This gives your partner a chance to reflect on how much you're doing, and to step

up to the mark if they're not pulling their weight.'

Plan ahead

Combat busy lives, and small amounts of time, by using management techniques to streamline your processes.

Sarah says: 'Do food shopping online, batch cook meals in advance, and if you can, occasionally treat yourselves to a cleaner, as that is most couples' bugbear.'

'Another thing you could do is for the two of you to sit down at the beginning of the year, look at all the birthdays ahead, and bulk-buy cards and pre-order flowers. This will save stress further down the line.'

Thank each other

When your partner does a task, thank them, and ask for the same in return. Often, we take on the responsibility of doing jobs because we feel that we do them better. But this can make us critical of others, which



discourages them from helping in the first place. So the next time your partner does the washing-up, instead of saying 'you've missed a bit,' just say 'thanks'. And if you're the one feeling unappreciated, ask them to make more effort too.

Take time for you

In the workplace, if you were a manager, you'd get rewarded for having extra responsibility. So do the same at home. Explain to your partner that in return for all the extra work you do, you'd like a couple of hours every weekend to yourself while he has the kids.

You could use that time to read, watch TV, or exercise. Not only will that help you feel less resentful, but it might make him more aware of the 'invisible' jobs.

Sarah says: 'Often it's only when we step back and let the other person spend a day in our shoes that they get the full picture of just how much we do.'

Look for hidden strengths

Accept that people think differently. While it's unacceptable for one person to do everything, it's also vital to acknowledge that your partner's brain might not work like yours.

Ignoring the dry washing on the line might seem inconsiderate, but if they're



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