



## Be the Master of Delegation Getting the help you need

One of the biggest reasons that people fail to stay organized is because they don't get support from their family. Are you having a hard time getting help from your spouse and children? You're not alone. A study by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research found that women do two to three times more housework and child care than men do. How do you change your situation so that you are not just another statistic? Good question.

Psychologists will tell you that "you can't make a person change, you can only change yourself." and "People won't change until they are ready." So what do you do in the meantime?

**1) Create a team.** Assign jobs to everyone, adults included. That way everyone is in the game. Everyone has their own position and the burden doesn't rest solely on the quarterback. It may be tricky to get them off the bench if they aren't used to playing the game. But here are a few tricks:

- Young children respond well to job charts. You may want to attach a small reward, an allowance or the promise of time spent together. Some children are happy with stars or smiley faced stickers.
- Work together and then have a group reward. Once everyone realizes how fast work can be completed when everyone is helping, they won't mind helping. Of course a movie, game or pizza party could be a valuable incentive.
- Show appreciation. Many times if you are grateful and thankful for the help, family members will want to please you.

### **2) Become the Master of Delegation.**

Delegate some chores to your kids. Our family motto is, "Many hands make light labor." Kids can help out in a multitude of small ways. *And* every task they complete is one less item on your list. Just think if three other people work for 20 minutes each, they've saved you an hour!

### **3) Keep the jobs as simple and straight forward as possible.**

- Plan special cleaning or organizing times in advance. That way everyone has time to react.
- Make it a game. Play "Gimme Five." Spend five minutes in the morning and five minutes at night straightening up.
- Be reasonable about job distribution. Take into account the work that your

husband does outside. Things like cleaning gutters and mowing the lawn can be quite time consuming. If you like the team approach, spend a day outside together. Then when it is time to wash windows he may be more willing to lend a hand.

*Regarding kids:*

- Children over the age of five should be able to help in some capacity. Figure out jobs that are age appropriate for them. Don't ask children to dust if you have a collection of tiny figurines. Have them take out the trash and recycling or set the table instead.
- Set up children's rooms to be user friendly. Lower the hanging rod so it is easier for them to hang their own clothes. Buy baskets or plastic bins for board books and toys and then label them with pictures or words. Create a place for everything so they don't have an excuse for not putting things away.
- If your child has too many toys to keep under control at one time, consider putting some away and rotating them. They will be happy to see their old favorites, *or* they may have forgotten about them all together. Either way it is a great way of keeping order and insuring that all of the toys are being played with.
- Periodically purge kid's rooms. Before birthdays and Christmas our kids donate books and games that they have outgrown to make room for the incoming gifts.
- Give reminders from time to time. (This differs from nagging!)

**3) Institute natural consequences.**

You may not use any of the following techniques but they may make you smile.

- Donna Smallin, author of the *One-Minute Organizer* advises, " If family members leave their things where they don't belong, gather them up in a large garbage bag and take it out to the garage. When they ask why, tell them you found it lying around and thought it was garbage. They should get the idea pretty fast."
- Another option is to wash only the clothing that finds its way to the laundry hamper. So when socks are left strewn around the bedroom floor, ignore them. ...until family members run out of clean socks.
- Kathy Peel, author of the *Family Manager* series, says privileges and responsibilities go hand in hand. Remember that if children have privileges like toys, cell phones or TV or they can always be taken away if kids don't complete their work.
- If teenagers still neglect their duties, hire outside help. And when they ask for cash or a clothing allowance tell them you diverted the funds to pay for cleaning services advises Judith Wills.
- I have a job chart for my kids. When I first set it up I explained to them that I had a job in a toy factory one summer. Part of my responsibility was to punch a time clock each day. If I didn't, I wouldn't get paid. I explained that in the real world, that's how it works. So if they wanted to collect an allowance they needed to complete the work and record that they had completed it.

*What if its your husband?*

**1) Yours, Mine and Ours Rule.** Author, Stephanie Culp recommends this rule which divides the house into three areas:

- Yours: an area that you keep pristine and perfect.
- His : which is messy but hopefully behind a closed door and finally
- Ours: which is a common area where you both make compromises.


**2) Discuss it, rationally.** Be diplomatic. Sometimes it is hard to keep your cool if you feel that all of the burden has fallen on you. But before you say anything rash, sit down with your husband and explain:

- that the clutter makes you feel overwhelmed and out of control.
- that you are concerned that important papers may be lost under a pile.
- that you want to set a good example for your children.
- Appeal to his sense of fair play. Explain that you've been working hard and need extra help. Ask for his help. If he doesn't have the time or interest, request that you pay for services such as cleaning, yard work or household repair.

*Negotiate with your spouse. I was going to give up singing in the choir because my sons had basketball practice. But then my husband thought he would enjoy coaching. So it was added to his schedule and deleted from mine. (The basketball games were on Saturdays, so I was still able to cheer the boys on.)*

**3) Create a Honey-Do list.** This is an old but useful invention. Sit down and make a list of things that need to be done. This will allow him to focus and work on the list on his own terms. Sometimes women are more invested in the house and men don't notice the smaller details. Their idea of what needs to be done and your ideas may be vastly different. A list should help. It certainly beats nagging.

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