

How to Avoid Labor Pains

Tactics for an Equitable Division of Household Labor

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Professors Jess Alberts and Angela Trethewey, from the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, conducted focus groups in the ISSR's focus room facility for their project on the role of gratitude in the division of domestic labor. They found that a successful relationship doesn't depend just on how partners divide their household chores, but also on how they express gratitude for each other's contributions.

Alberts's and Trethewey's research suggests that the following strategies may help couples increase fairness and gratitude surrounding the issue of household labor. They recommend:

For people who do more than their fair share of household tasks:

- Avoiding repetitively performing a task you don't want to "own", especially when first living with a new partner.
- Let your partner know when you think a task needs to be done – don't wait for him/her to notice it (because they may not).
- Express appreciation for the labor the partner does perform – even if it isn't performed perfectly or to your standards.

For people who are doing less than their fair share:

- Perform tasks before they seem necessary to you; following a set schedule helps.
- Be aware of the work your partner does and remember to express gratitude frequently.

Both partners can:

- Develop a list of tasks they perform – and switch lists for a week or month.
- Understand that partners have different "thresholds" or tolerances for disorder that influence their perceptions of the need for housework.

Their article "Love, Honor and Thank" appears in *Greater Good* magazine published by the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. For the full article, visit http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/greatergood/current_issue/alberts.html

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