

# hitched

life advice

## Talk Less To Get What You Want

Sometimes it feels like you're doing everything, while your spouse does nothing. Use these tips to talk less and get more of what you want.

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Don't fight with your spouse if they give an excuse, instead think about the solution.

You moan, you groan, you are beyond frustration with your spouse. You just can't get them to accomplish anything you need them to do.

Then there's your child who absolutely refuses to do what they are supposed to do, and you are convinced that there must have been a mix-up at the hospital.

During lunch one day, your girlfriend clucks sympathetically and says, "Life has its frustrations."

"Oh that's real helpful. What am I supposed to do," you yell, quickly adding your girlfriend to the list of frustrations.

Good question. Maybe you're not supposed to *do* much of anything at all. Maybe the whole

problem here is that you only see one way to resolve your frustrations by demanding, pushing or nudging people—all of which are a form of "doing"—to get what you need done.

So what's the answer? Are you just supposed to give up? Let them do nothing and do it all yourself?

Giving up won't get the job done and letting *them* do nothing will only make you resentful, while doing it all yourself will earn you an early grave as you drive yourself prematurely into it. Instead, talk less, listen more and prepare more. Here's how:

### Listen More

When people resist doing either what they've agreed to do or what they are *supposed* to do, it's rarely because they truly, 100 percent don't want to do it under any circumstances. Most of the time, it's because there is something about doing the thing you need done which doesn't work for them.

"Great," you say. "So why don't they say so?" For about a hundred different reasons, none of which matter right now. What does matter is that you have a way to find out what their resistance is.

For example, ask your spouse some like this: "It seems to be difficult for you to do your share of the housework. What's in the way for you?"

The phrase "What's in the way?" is a very non-judgmental effective question.

Ask genuinely, really wanting to know the answer, without anger, without attacking, and then listen. Don't accept phrases like, "I don't know" as an answer, but ask the same question again gently and nicely: "Well, if you did know, what might be in the way of your getting this done?" And listen.

Accept the answer you get. If it's something like, "I don't have the time." Don't debate it! One of the reasons our mates are reluctant to share their reticence to doing things is our tendency to argue with them: "What do you mean you don't have time! You have time to watch the football game!"

Once you've determined what the resistance is, find out what their preference is: "OK, well, how can we work it out so either you do find the time or we figure out another way to get the housework done?" And once again, listen.

When we stop blaming our spouses, faulting them, and generally making them wrong for having their preferences and resistances, they become much more willing to share their reasoning with us, and open to working out solutions with us. Who wants to be cooperative with a screaming, demanding person, or a whining, pleading, nagging, begging one? Neither are conducive to working out solutions together.

Children are no different. You'll get a lot more cooperation from your children when you

approach them as people with their own preferences and resistances. If you are open to hearing and accepting those, your child will be more open to working with you to get things done.

#### Prepare More

Once you've listened, you may want to think for a while in order to take into account your spouse or your child's preferences and resistances with what you need to get done.

Don't be overly eager to jump to a new solution. Think it through and be willing to come back with two or three new solutions, factoring in the other person's preferences. Ask them to come up with two or three of their own. Use elements from both your "lists of solutions" to come to an agreeable decision.

Remember, spouses and children both are much more willing to go along with decisions in which they have had an active hand.

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