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**Time to Air the Dirty Laundry
Better Yet, Get Someone Else to Do It!**

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I'm a full-time student, working outside the home and caring for a house, husband and two dogs. So, time often gets away from me. Between my work and classes I'm often gone from seven in the morning till five or six at night. When I return home I must feed and care for the dogs so they wouldn't lose their minds and complete school work without neglecting my husband or home.

I am a control freak. When something reduces my control, I work to regain it. Unfortunately, this has annoyed my husband. Whenever he worked around the house, I would often complain that his work was inadequate as if, for example, there were only one way to load a dishwasher.

Several years ago, we agreed that he would not do laundry, or mine at least, because he always mixed colored and white laundry which discolored the entire load. Somehow this ban drove him to stop helping altogether. I can't say that I blame him. If he had complained every time I did something he thought inappropriate then I too would lose it!

As I began my upper-level courses and more responsibility at work, I came to realize I couldn't do it all myself; I needed help. So, I gradually increased my husband's cleaning duties around the house.

We started with bathrooms, places I hated cleaning. My husband would clean one and I would shower him with praise. At first, his rate of cleaning was very inconsistent. I would clean the rest of the house every weekend except for the bathrooms. If he didn't clean the bathrooms he had to live with this and keep quiet, as did I. When he did clean, I made a big fuss about his work. This positive attention made him feel good and his rate of bathroom cleaning increased. This got me to thinking that I could probably get him to do other household chores.

I knew the laundry would take a bit more than the bathroom because there are more steps involved. To help him, I bought a laundry hamper with separate bins for dark, light, and white laundry. I showed him the bins, however, I continued doing the laundry, complimenting him for correct sorting and ignoring when he just threw his clothes in the machine mixed together. I also seduced him into folding clean laundry. If he wasn't doing anything while I was folding the clothes, I would make him a deal. If he helped to fold and put away the laundry then I would do something that he wanted. Increasingly, he began to volunteer to fold laundry and this behavior became quite frequent although I provided reinforcement intermittently.

Now that my husband was getting more involved, I decided to bring on the laundry. I started putting clothes in the washing machine and asked him to put them in the dryer, sometimes offering some instruction for clothing unsuitable for drying. If he complied and loaded the dryer, I again showered him with compliments for his helpfulness. If, for whatever reason, he didn't put the clothes in the dryer, I just did

without a fuss. He gradually came to consistently load and unload the dryer as well as fold clothes, so I started him on actually doing the laundry.

Before I asked him to do the laundry, I examined the bins to verify that the laundry was sorted. I also set the dials on the machine so, just in case he hadn't checked, the water temperature and load size settings were correct. After he successfully completed the laundry several times, I left it to him to properly sort the laundry and would just bite my tongue if something slipped by and all of my whites were now pink or grey. Sometimes, when there were clothes in the washer and dryer, I would switch them over and fold what had come out of the dryer and sometimes I would do nothing and see if he did it.

Last weekend I realized just how much this had paid off. I slept in for the first time in months, and when I arose, my beloved husband had completed four loads and was folding and putting the clothes away as I arose. This freed up much time for me such as completing schoolwork or taking the dogs to the dog park. I continue to reinforce my husband's good works and he appreciates my being less stressed. I am much calmer and happier now and if he does something around the house in a way that I wouldn't have, I just let it go. My husband has learned to help maintain our house and I've learned to give a little on trivial issues like laundry and household chores.