

Everyone has
UNAVOIDABLE CHORES
Best to share the load



Acknowledgements

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In this scenario, we illustrated a heterosexual couple, however the questionnaire can apply to all different types of couples. In addition, we use the term “partner” to reduce the stigmatization of a gender. The purpose of this guide is to create communication between partners on various topics in order to establish a better balance within their relationship.

Valcartier Military Family Resource Centre

Building 93

PO Box 1000, Station Forces

Courcelette, Quebec G0A 4Z0

Telephone: 418-844-6060

Toll-free: 1-877-844-6060

Source: This document is based on the Guide « C’est à mon tour » published by Quebec’s Ministère de la Famille et de l’Enfance.



Josée works outside the home. She is leaving for a two-day conference. Her spouse, Marc, returned from a mission a month ago, and must return to work this morning.

She has prepared dinners and organized lunches, laid the children's clothes out on their beds in plain sight, and asked her sister to pick up Chloe and take her to daycare (because Marc has to do PT with his unit at 7:00). On the evening of her return, after kissing her darlings, she will scrub pots and pans. She will also do a load of laundry, as William has Phys Ed tomorrow and needs... Phew! Are you out of breath yet? So is Josée. She gets the sinking feeling that she is the only one who organizes and plans things; in short, the only one who really takes responsibility for the household chores and parenting duties. It would seem that for Marc, these are all secondary interests, especially since his return.

If Josée were to speak with Marc about this, he would be totally surprised. After all, he never hesitates to "lend a hand" whenever she asks. And his kids! God knows he adores being with them, playing with them, taking them to the movies. Josée does not dare bring up the issue. It's not so bad, she tells herself. So she, like many other women, continues to secretly dream of a day when her spouse no longer thinks it's enough just to do household and family chores when asked, but will think about doing them himself. It's surely one of her favourite fantasies!

Over the last six months, Marc and Josée each have had very different everyday experiences. Marc was on a foreign mission, and during that time, Josée took charge of the household responsibilities. Now that they are reunited, adapting to family life requires some adjustments. Returning to the normal routine is not necessarily just one person's job, and sometimes a discussion is needed.

For couples, there are certain subjects that are difficult to broach: sexual dissatisfaction, money, the children's education—and sharing responsibilities. In these cases, couples are usually not on the same wavelength, and tend to put off truly talking about these issues. Both men and women would like it if these things would just sort themselves out. What makes us hesitant to talk?

It has been proven that when chores are shared equally, it increases couples' level of satisfaction with their relationship, just like a healthy sex life.

How are things in your home?

Take the test, just to see. Write your answers on the pullout sheet in the middle of this brochure.

TEST

represents your situation. Better yet, complete the questionnaire twice: once for you, then once on behalf of your partner, trying to guess his or her answers. Then ask your partner to answer the questionnaire, for him or herself and for you, and then compare your answers. You will probably both be surprised by some of the answers.

1. “Stuff” is lying around everywhere, flyers have been read and are strewn across the living room, someone “forgot” to hang up their coat and tossed it on a chair... Who tidies up?



- A. I tidy up. I prefer to, otherwise the children’s toys are put away any which way.
- B. Me. Otherwise, I’ll be navigating a slalom course in the living room for at least a week.
- C. I do it, if asked nicely.
- D. My partner. I don’t even see the mess.
- E. Either one of us. We each do our share.

2. What's for dinner? Who cooks?



- A. Me. I love cooking! Plus, I don't like the way my partner seasons food, always changes recipes...
- B. Me. My partner doesn't gets around to it.
- C. Me, if I'm told exactly at what time to defrost the spaghetti sauce in the microwave. Nothing to it!
- D. My partner. I have many great qualities, but cooking is not my specialty.
- E. Either one of us. I go more for "macaroni/ground beef/grilled cheese" during the week, and my partner goes for sophisticated dishes on the weekend. We work it out.

3. There is a stack of pots teetering on the counter and the sink is overflowing with dishes... Who rolls up their sleeves and gets to work?



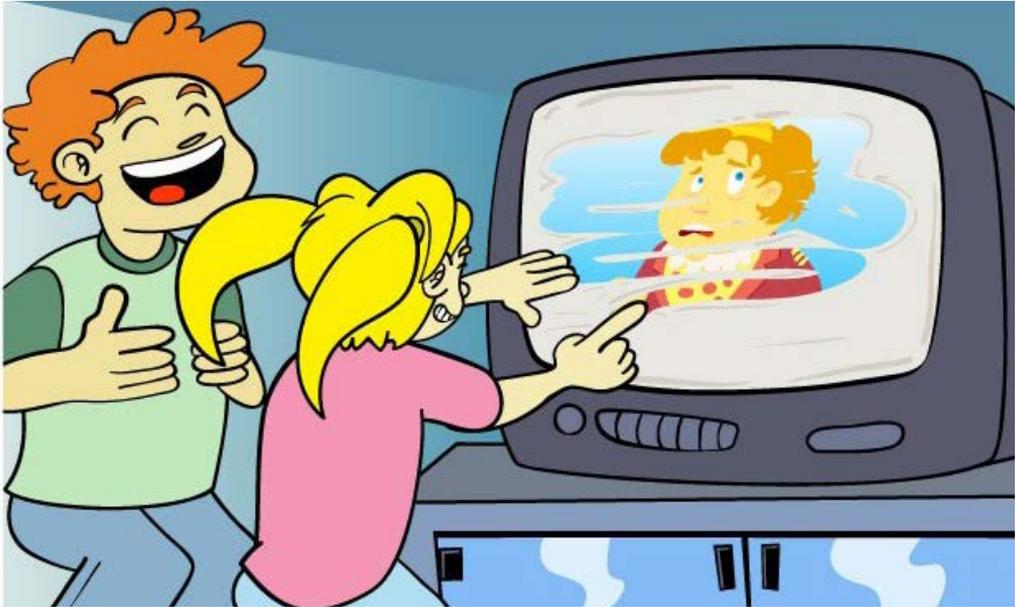
- A. Me. I'd rather do it myself. Otherwise, there are spots left on the dishes.
- B. Me. My partner thinks that moving the pans to make room on the counter is good enough. I don't like it.
- C. If I get asked, I'm happy to help out.
- D. My partner. I'm allergic to detergents; I was born that way.
- E. Either one of us. I wash, he/she dries.

4. The laundry basket is bursting at the seams. Even by packing it down, it's impossible to fit any more clothes in. Something needs to be done. Who tackles the job?



- A. Me. I'd rather do it; it's safer—ever since my beautiful wool sweater shrank so much that it fits my 3-year old. And I can't stand it when the bath towels are folded upside down in the cupboard!
- B. Me, of course. If I wait for my partner to do it, someone in the house always ends up without clean socks or underwear.
- C. Me, just give me the word. And separate the loads for me. It's really not that complicated; you can wash everything with khaki.
- D. My partner. I know the computer like the back of my hand, but the washing machine... no clue; I'm stumped.
- E. Either one of us. Usually, if one of us washes, the other one folds. Isn't that nice!

5. “Operation housecleaning” never generates much enthusiasm. Who usually takes initiative?



- A. Me. Otherwise, it gets done, sure, but my partner always cuts corners. And I can't stand it when things get left under the couch cushions!
- B. Me. When dust bunnies are blowing across the floor and we can write each other messages on the TV screen, I will do it myself.
- C. Me, as long as I'm told where to start and all the products have been set out—no problem!
- D. My partner. I already cut the grass this week.
- E. Either one of us. We do it together. One of us sweeps, the other washes the floor and we switch every week.

6. It's time for skating lessons or some other activity. Who gets up at 7:00 a.m. on the weekend to drive the children to their lessons?



- A. Me. Otherwise, the children are 15 minutes late.
- B. Me. Otherwise, the children would miss at least 3 out of 5 lessons.
- C. Me, as long as our little one is ready!
- D. My partner. I don't know what to do; I was away for six months.
- E. We both take turns or make arrangements with other parents.

7. It's homework time, and in your child's agenda you notice an invitation to parent/teacher meeting to discuss your child's report card. Who takes charge of the children's school life?



- A. Me. I hate only knowing half of what's going on!
- B. Me. At least I did for six months. And I am "so good" at it, it seems!
- C. Me. If my partner really can't, I'll do it, I don't mind!
- D. My partner. I don't have the patience.
- E. Either one, it depends on our "strong suit" and availability.

8. Crisis! It's 7:58 a.m. Your youngest is sick and has just thrown up. You both have a very important morning at work. Dilemma: who will stay home?



- A. I would rather stay. I want to make sure everything is going well.
- B. Me, by default. My partner cannot miss work.
- C. Me, if I'm asked.
- D. My partner. Not coming in at an hour's notice—what would the boss say? It's very, very complicated. It's easier for my partner to stay home for one day; there are fewer consequences.
- E. Either one; it depends on our schedules.

9. In the evening, your little one has to be picked up from daycare, clothes need to be picked up at the dry cleaner ... and don't forget to buy a present for the birthday party on Saturday! Who does all the running around after work?



- A. Me. I would rather do it; that way I'm sure to get everything I want.
- B. Me, even though my partner usually finishes work early.
- C. Me, except when I have an appointment or planned activities.
- D. My partner. I need to relax when I get off work.
- E. Either of us. We try taking turns; it all depends on our schedules.

10. Tomorrow is the big day: garbage day. Who goes around the house collecting all the garbage from the garbage cans, and who bites the bullet and takes the garbage and recycling out to the curb?



- A. Me. I take it out the night before. Otherwise, I'm the one running down the street after the garbage truck.
- B. Me. The idea of being buried alive under a pile of garbage doesn't appeal to me at all.
- C. Me. Except when no one reminds me that tomorrow is garbage day! I can't remember everything, you know.
- D. My partner. I'm very sensitive to odours! Crazy, huh?
- E. Either one of us. At our place, we share the fun. No sense depriving the other person of the pleasure of getting rid of garbage, so we take turns (or we try to).

11. Taxes, hydro bill, phone bill, mortgage, etc. Who gets out the calculator to try to plan (and balance) the budget? Who makes the payments? In short, who manages the family funds?



- A. Me. Otherwise I'm lost.
- B. Me. The only financial "planning" my partner does is it their personal purchases.
- C. Me. In fact, I help out from time to time. But let's be frank: short-sighted budgeting and two or three unpaid bills are not the end of the world. It sorts itself out, doesn't it?
- D. My partner. I get a headache just looking at numbers.
- E. Either one of us. We talked it over and opted for pre-authorized payments.

12. One child is whining for a glass of milk; the other is screaming that a ferocious dinosaur is about to savagely rip him apart. Who gets out of bed to run to the rescue of these defenseless little creatures?



- A. Me. Otherwise, the hallway light will surely stay on all night (“he was really scared, you know”), and I may find an empty milk carton on the counter in the morning.
- B. Me. The day my partner decides to do this is when pigs fly.
- C. Me. If my partner really seems dead to the world, I lend a hand of course. But it better not happen too often. I need to rest because I get up early.
- D. My partner. My children cry at night? That’s news to me!
- E. Either one of us. We alternate weeks—and pray that all nightmares happen during the other person’s week!

INTERPRETATION

You have probably already come to your own conclusions. Nevertheless, here is a little more information.

Mostly A: You choose to do it.

You have a strong need to control, it gives you some security. In addition, your answers seem to indicate that you often short-circuit your spouse's efforts out of fear that they will not do things the RIGHT way, from folding towels to raising your children. But rest assured, you are not the only one who reacts that way. The situation is even more difficult when one partner has taken care of the household for six months. Try to let your partner take their place gradually, you will enjoy their involvement and it will take a weight off your shoulders.

Mostly B: You do it by default or out of spite.

You had hope that the other person would take initiative, but they didn't, so the responsibility comes back to you by default. Did you know that 61% of couples report that household chores are evenly distributed?¹ Increase this statistic and increase your level of satisfaction by taking time to communicate expectations and timeframes in order to come to an agreement.

Mostly C: You react when your partner asks you to.

You are ready to help when the other person asks you. Would you like to be more involved, but you don't know how? DARE to take more initiative (for example: decide what to make for supper, do the dishes, give the kids a bath, etc.), without asking your partner. Trust yourself and take the initiative!

Mostly D: You don't take the lead

You don't see the tasks that need to be done, or you don't want to see them. Your partner therefore has an overload of responsibility and this can create conflicts and dissatisfaction in your relationship. If you have difficulty knowing which tasks to do, ask your partner to make a list with a timeframe for each task. Make a shared calendar on your cellphones so you can see your kids' upcoming appointments and share them fairly. You'll see – your relationship will grow and tensions will decrease.

¹ https://tout-petits.org/img/dossiers/cft/Conciliation-Famille-Travail-Observatoire_Rapport-Complet.pdf

Mostly E: You share responsibilities equally

Congratulations! You have managed to agree to share tasks fairly. You have overcome the difficulties that plague many couples! Often these difficulties go beyond good intentions. Continue to keep your family BALANCE!

Some Interesting Facts:

- 56% of couples report that childcare tasks are evenly distributed.²
- Women do housework 2.8 hours/day, while men do 1.9 hours/day; a difference of 54 minutes. Things are improving, since a few years ago, men used to do 42 minutes a day of housework.³
- Of all the provinces, fathers in Quebec are the most involved in household chores. They are twice as likely to do chores as fathers in the Prairie Provinces.⁴
- Gender roles have become more and more egalitarian.⁵
- Fathers are more involved with their children.⁶

Conclusion:

Your partner can not GUESS what you would like them to do since telepathy doesn't always work! Instead, try verbal communication; you and your partner can better know what to expect (your expectations will be met). You are a team, together you can move mountains!

² https://tout-petits.org/img/dossiers/cft/Conciliation-Famille-Travail-Observatoire_Rapport-Complet.pdf

³ <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1115548/rapports-hommes-femmes-societe-emploi-temps-taches-menageres-enfants-aidants-naturels>

⁴ <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1037348/peres-quebec-taches-menageres-statistique-canada>

⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2017001-fra.htm>

⁶ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2017001-fra.htm>

Here are some suggestions for making household chore-sharing more pleasant.

You can ...

- Write each task on a slip of paper, put them all in a box and each week randomly draw the job you will have to do. (And hope you're lucky!)
- Alternate chores each week. The person who cleans the bathroom one week will be spared that task the following week.
- Make a list of tasks and check them off as they are completed.
- Negotiate chores and mark down on the calendar the day you plan to do them. That way, your weekends will no longer be spent doing chores.
- Turn household chore time into a party. Put on music and have a race to see who will finish their job first—without cutting corners! You could even get the children involved in the fun.

In short, have fun!

Here is a list of jobs to help get you started:

- Make a grocery list
- Go grocery shopping
- Put groceries away
- Bedtime routine
- Bathe children
- Do homework
- Drive the kids places
- "Pack" school bags for the next day
- Feed children
- General tidying up (coats, mail, toys, etc)
- Dusting
- Sweeping
- Clean floors
- Clean bathroom
- Clean mirrors
- Clean kitchen
- Change bed linen
- Make beds
- Laundry
- Fold laundry
- Put laundry away
- Make meals
- Do the dishes
- Plan meals
- Prepare lunches
- Clear the table
- Pay bills
- Plan budget
- Put important papers away
- Empty garbage cans
- Take garbage out
- Outdoor maintenance
- _____
- _____

IN SHORT...

There is no miracle solution to sharing responsibilities, any more than there is a model couple. The important thing is to come to an arrangement that suits you both. Obviously, some jobs will have a hard time finding takers, like cleaning the bathroom or taking out the garbage. That's when you negotiate. There's just one rule : everyone should be satisfied. And if your children are old enough, get them involved.



Resources

The Military Family Resource Centre offers the following services:

- Support during absences
- Support during postings
- Psychosocial services
- Childcare services
- Employment and education support
- Early childhood services
- Youth Services
- Volunteering and community activities
- Veteran Family Program

Contact us:

418-844-6060 ou 1-877-844-6060

Other Resources

Operational Stress Injury Social Support Program(OSISS)

1-800-883-6094

Valcartier Psychosocial Services

418 844-5000 extension 5802

Member Assistance Program (MAP)

1-800-268-7708

Chaplain Services

418 844-5000 extension 5473 (business hours)

418 844-5000 extension 5777 (after hours)

Veterans Affairs (VAC)

1-866-522-2022

Valcartier Health Promotion

418 844-5000 extension 4677

Suicide Prevention Centre

1-866-277-3553

Quebec Crisis Centre

418 688-4240

Jeffrey Hale Community Services in English

(Health and social services for the Quebec City area English-speaking community)

418 683-9274

VALCARTIER MILITARY FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Building 93
PO BOX 1000, stn Forces
Courcellette (Québec) G0A 4Z0

418 844-6060
Toll free: 1 877 844-6060
Fax: 418 844-3959

info@crfmv.com
www.crfmv.com



[CRFMValcartier](#)

