

Sunday Night Stress Relievers!
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Today Contributor

Okay...is this your home on a typical Sunday night football evening—kids needing supervision to take baths, clean up bedrooms, complete homework assignments? Do you feel stressed that so much has to be accomplished in so little time? Are you getting a bit testy due to the pressure and the seemingly unending list of little things that have to be accomplished? And...is your spouse just sitting in the recliner, oblivious to the chaos, watching the game and enjoying himself while you're about to pull out your hair? Well, join the club as spouses disagree on Sunday night etiquette—often leading to Monday morning misery! What to do...well, take a look at the following suggestions:

Expectation:

It's important to realize that you and your spouse may have very different perceptions about what is to be accomplished on Sunday afternoon or evening. You may see it as the time to prepare for a nice family meal and relaxed evening. Or, perhaps, it's the prelude to a busy work/school week involving lunches to be made, baths to be taken, and homework to be completed. Your spouse may view this very same time period as the relaxed end of a hectic weekend—full of soccer games and lawn mowing. It may be his time to relax with his buddies, or at least with the remote control in front of a few football games. Knowing each other's expectation for the end of the weekend is imperative in coming to terms with what are reasonable expectations of each other and the kids. Discuss your individual desires, note where you both agree on activities (or lack thereof!), where you disagree, and what compromises can be made.

Delegation:

If one of you feels like the Sunday night nagger (and you'd like to lose this not so coveted title), consider delegating chores. Let him take first pick in terms of chores to be completed. For instance, he may not mind folding laundry in front of the tube while you herd the kids off to the bathtub. In this way you are garnishing his help but allowing him to have a choice in the matter, not having been nagged into helping out. Try to delegate some chores to the kids also. Older ones can check the younger ones' homework completion, tooth brushing prowess or even help to supervise younger sibs putting away toys. Children don't usually mind doing pet chores if this involves watering, feeding or walking the dog. Save your time for the chores that are either not chosen or are more up your alley in terms of interest or skill set.

Organization:

Stop setting yourself up for grief by letting things go until the end of the weekend. Of course kids will put off homework and playroom pickup until the last minute—that's the nature of children! But, use kid human nature to help you out—insist that all homework is completed by noon on Sunday, before the kids are allowed to play. Consider having them put their school clothes out by noon also. In fact, think of all of the things that can

be done earlier in the day, or the weekend, and strive to have those completed. This not only lowers the stress level in your home on Sunday night, but also teaches the children to plan ahead and to complete work before play. In addition, they just might notice how good it feels to stay ahead of the game and how organization and planning frees up their weekend for fun times. Also, think about whether you are over-scheduling the family for too many activities—learn to pick and choose and to let the not-so-important stuff go. Your kids may not even notice, and you'll probably have more time to complete the things that really matter to your family.

Cooperation:

Cooperation is key when it comes to dealing with tough situations. If you and your spouse differ greatly in terms of motivation for chore completion you two have a lot of compromising and communicating to do. Let him know that you're not trying to be a commercial-grade nag, but that certain things absolutely need to be done, and you're not willing to take on the full responsibility. Most likely he thinks that you're being too picky or obsessing about unnecessary chores. Listen to what he has to say—there's probably some truth to it! Do the lunches have to be gourmet-quality or can some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches do the trick? Do your kids' clothes really need to be ironed, or if hung or folded correctly can you avoid this time consuming task? Really do listen to him, and make some changes if you can. Then, with the number of chores culled to the minimum, explain how and why these are necessary and that you need his help. If he sees that you're trying to be cooperative by limiting the chores set for Sunday afternoon or evening perhaps he'll be motivated to help you knock out the others more quickly.

Motivation:

Getting someone interested in helping out is a tricky maneuver, but one that you can master with a little practice! Generally people are more motivated to perform an action if they perceive that there's something in it for them. In the case of the Sunday night stressors, your spouse may need to be reminded that a little bit of his help will go a long way in terms of your mood with both he and the kids, as well as how pleasant you'll tend to be the remainder of the evening. Describe how you'd like to watch the game with him, and can do so if he helps out to get the chores moving along more quickly. On another level, figure out what is rewarding to him, and try to employ that in your requests for help. If he's a chow hound send him to the grocery store to pick up the makings for dinner. If he likes his work clothes to be nicely ironed for Monday morning, remind him that you'll be glad to do the ironing...just while he's supervising homework and baths. Employ an understanding of human nature...don't fight it!

Communication:

The bottom line is that you need to communicate your desires to your spouse...and not just when the situation is getting testy! Pick a "neutral" time to bring up the subject. Use "I" statements ("I get frazzled on Sunday nights when there's so much to do...I really need your help") rather than "You" statements ("You don't help out on Sunday nights when there's so much to do...you just sit there and watch football!). Now, which one would you rather listen to, and which style of communication would motivate you to best cooperate? Hey, folks get defensive when the finger is pointed at them...it's smarter to,

again, work *with* human nature rather than *against* it. No one wants to feel criticized, and often you can get your point across in a firm, yet positive manner, if you pick a neutral time, use an “I” statement, and are a good listener yourself.