

Parenting Solo: Housework Allergies

Written by Michelle Greenlee Harris, Columnist
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I have a housework allergy. I'm not allergic to the dust or the chemicals; I just can't stand the monotony of it. After about ten minutes of sweeping or mopping my eyes glaze over and I fall into a catatonic state.

That's why I was surprised when I felt the overwhelming urge this past weekend to change the liner on my shower curtain. Who wakes up in the morning with their shower curtain on their minds? I was having such a spasm that I kept right on cleaning until I had scrubbed the entire bathroom.

After I was done, I had the strangest feeling – a sense of satisfaction. Were these endorphins going off in my head? Is this what other people feel like when they finish cleaning out the attic or vacuuming all the rugs? It's all new to me. I had done housework for years, but I never felt good about it.

My domestic allergies were a major source of contention in my marriage. Statistics show that most couples fight over money, sex or the kids. It may surprise you to know that housework is on many top ten lists of marital disputes. The issue is more about respect and equity in the relationship than it is about the actual chore. That was always the issue for me. I always questioned why if we both worked outside the home, the pleasure of scrubbing the toilet was only reserved for me?

I remember resenting my ex because he expected me to "want" to take the lead on the housework. We fought about dirty dishes and loads of laundry more than we did about sex and

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parenting - all within earshot of our daughter.

I felt like a housework suffragette. But, protesting for my right to what, not mop the floor? Okay so let's just say I'm no Susan B. Anthony. The funny thing is, since I've become the captain of my own ship, I see the necessity of swabbing the deck on a regular basis.

My main concern is the effect my misguided civil rights campaign has had on my daughter. Children can't help but react to the negative traits they see in us. They mimic our bad habit, form the opposite habit or come up with some odd mutation of our habit. Since our canned goods are not colored coded and facing front in the cabinets, I know she doesn't have OCD, so the best I can hope for is one of the other two possibilities.

How do I fix a lifetime of being a bad example? Experts say you're supposed to start young. Seventeen is a little late but I decided to just start. Does she have a chore resistance? Sure, but so what. We've started small with simple things like clearing the dinner dishes or picking up her clothes off the floor. Lots of eye rolls later I'm seeing some progress. I want to give her one less thing to fight about with my future son -in-law. When I'm old and I need to come live with them – I want him to be on my side.