

7 Ways to Lighten Your Wife's Daily Load

It seems implausible that the same set of skills used for memorizing the stats of professional athletes and playing fantasy football don't seem to translate to household chores. Yet I am continually amazed by men who seem bewildered when it comes to domestic activities.

As easy as these tasks are, many men relegate them to their wives. Maybe it's cultural, maybe it's sexist, maybe it's just plain lazy. But whatever it is, it's about to change.

With a massive aging population of baby boomers, more and more caregivers of elderly loved ones will emerge in our society. The majority of caregivers are women taking care of a parent (or parents), and those caregiving women are going to need an extra help with family duties and chores.

With 47 percent of caregivers in the workforce, it is unconscionable to expect a woman to juggle a professional life, caregiving and then return home exhausted to serve her family. Every able-bodied family member can pitch in and help, but sadly many do not—or do such a poor job that the exhausted wife/mother throws her hands up and just does it herself rather than have an even greater mess made.

Rather than waiting for the crisis to hit, the time to learn these household skills is now—so for those men who have no clue on how to grocery shop, cook, clean or do laundry, there's no time like the present to learn:

1. Washing clothes (with fabric softener, bleach or color-guard detergents) is not that complicated. Separating clothes by color doesn't require much training and practice. Folding laundry is not only a simple task—it can even be done while watching sports.

Garment manufacturers go to the trouble of placing labels in their products. Reading those labels requires little if any effort. If there is any doubt on a blouse, skirt, pants or dress belonging to your wife, put it aside and take it to the cleaners—but by all means learn how to properly wash those items at another time. Don't overfill the washer or dryer, and always clean the lint tray of the dryer before starting a new load. A dryer sheet is not only inexpensive, it's easy to toss into the dryer and helps soften the clothes, reduce wrinkles and static cling, and improves the smell of clothes.

2. A short distance away, the dishwasher can be emptied and loaded with dirty dishes in only minutes, and is one of the simplest machines to operate. Simply scrape off food and so forth, and place the dishes in the washer in a way that corresponds with the shape of the rack. Glasses usually go up on top, and try to not to wedge glass material in too tight. The goal is not to win the award for the most dishes fitted inside, but to allow them to be properly cleaned. With a myriad of cleaning products, counters and appliances can be quickly (and thoroughly) cleaned, and grabbing a broom, the floor (and specifically under the cabinets) can be effectively policed and ready for mopping.

3. The bathrooms and other areas of the home are just as easy to clean, and only require a commitment to serve as a good steward for the castle where one lives.

4. Grocery shopping is not hard; you simply make a list. If your budget needs it, use coupons and buy generic. If you spend \$500 on your first trip to the grocery store, you probably went a bit overboard. Vegetables, cooking/baking supplies, cleaning supplies, paper products, meat, dairy, juice are the main things you will buy, and most grocery stores lay those products out in an organized fashion. Familiarize yourself with what's in the pantry, cleaning supplies' closet, and under the kitchen sink—and replace what needs replacing.

5. Cooking can be as joyful or as miserable as you choose for it to be. When it comes to preparing a meal, many guys opt for fast food, pizza or, at best, car-side to go from a favorite local restaurant. That's acceptable only in a pinch, but not to be bragged about like a mighty hunter who bagged a deer and brought it home draped across the shoulders.

Planning a meal requires just that: planning. Think about a favorite dish, and then make it. If you can imagine a dish, there's already a recipe online. Don't simply do steaks and potatoes with a sliver of broccoli. Make a well-balanced, heart-healthy meal. Orient yourself with the spice cabinet and the pantry, and remember where things go. Silverware has a place, and so do all the cooking utensils. Set the table properly, and after dinner—make sure the kitchen is thoroughly cleaned.

6. The iron is not a mystical or enchanted appliance. It has limited settings that correspond to the label inside the garment. Adjust the settings as needed, and then place the iron on the garment and move back and forth until wrinkles disappear. Steam can be used as needed (with distilled water found on the bottled water aisle of the grocery store), but if you see smoke—you're doing it wrong. Spray starch (look in the laundry room/cabinet) is effective when ironing shirts or other cotton or cotton/blend clothing.

7. Change the bed, put out clean towels, vacuum, mop and take out the trash. If your wife is taking care of her parents or working a stressful job, this is a great way to care for her. For teenagers/students living at home, don't wait to be asked—look for things to do.

It's kind of sad to see a grown man who doesn't know his way around these household responsibilities. The world has changed, and it's necessary for men to do so as well.

With a massive number of caregivers for vulnerable loved ones,

everyone will need to step up their game and pull together. If you aren't serving as a caregiver, then you can at least care for the one who is. {eoa}

*Targeting the vast population of America's 65 million volunteer caregivers of vulnerable loved ones, **Peter Rosenberger** compiles his lifetime of experience to offer a lifeline to his fellow caregivers. With an unparalleled journey as the sole caregiver for his wife, Gracie, for three decades through a medical nightmare that has mushroomed to 78 operations, the amputation of both legs, and \$9 million in medical bills, Peter brings an astonishing understanding of health care issues, a deep compassion for the heartache of caregiving, biblical principles, and an outrageous humor to bring the fresh air of laughter into the painful places faced by America's exponentially growing number of caregivers. Through his new book, Hope for the Caregiver, and his weekly radio show for caregivers (broadcast from Nashville's music row on 1510 WLAC /), Peter offers practical, faith-based, and compassionate help and understanding to the massive number of caregivers. Visit his website at .*