

# The Work Of Marriage Is The Hardest Work There Is

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By Babble.com

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The day ends as it began: in a cold silence, a lingering sigh breaking the air.

I contemplate reaching out, his warm body tense in the dark. But my mind flits over the million and a half slights of the day -- dirty laundry left on the floor, words muttered under our breaths, resentment simmering -- and my heart hardens.

Carefully, I turn on my side, the space between us widening.

Every day I tell myself that it's silly, there's nothing wrong. *There are real problems in the world*, I chide. *Get it together*.

But the day limps on haphazardly, like an old engine sputtering and starting, filling the air with a dark smoke.

I try to put my finger on it, to put into the words the lingering tension under the surface but I can't.

*Is something wrong?* I venture. Blank stares, head shakes, *I'm fine, I don't know why you keep asking me, that's the only thing that's wrong*.

But something is wrong, even if I can't pinpoint it. I marvel at the ability of what is unspoken and unseen to be so tangible, so palatable I feel like I can poke the air and find it, a gelatinous mass that quivers in my touch, unyielding and stubborn.

*I can decide for myself how to be a "good wife," thanks*

I know everyone says that marriage takes work, but what exactly does that mean? Does it mean that I, as the wife, need to add "keep marriage chugging along" to my to-do list? Am I my marriage's caretaker? What if I'm too tired to do the work? Then what?

Probably a date night is what we need, says every article known to man. But my man is not a planner and if I'm the one doing the "work" of a date night is that really helping?

I ponder what exactly the "work" of marriage is, wishing for a simple  $X + Y = \text{marital bliss}$ .

I wish I could approach marriage like I do my quest to get my body "back" after four kids -- exercise every day, lean protein, guzzle that water. And I think of the solace I find in my work. Tasks line up before me, waiting to be tackled, satisfaction emerging when they are done.

But marriage?

Marriage is not so clear-cut. There is no formula to follow, no way to unearth the exact cause of slights and hurts and disappointments that spiral and snowball until you're left shivering in the cold, unsure of how you got there without a coat.

I suspect that I am one of those slightly annoying, highly-sensitive people and I feel the nuances in our relationship at a deep level. And yet, I am the most stubborn person in the world, while confrontation is my husband's arch nemesis. So there the issues remain, brick by brick growing until a laugh or a cry crumbles their flimsy foundation.

I guess you could say I've been in the marriage game long enough to have faith to believe in life and love over the peaks, even when I'm trudging through the valleys.

But getting through those valleys?

I'm starting to realize that those hikes are the "work" that everyone was talking about.