

## Whose turn is it to clean the toilet?

Reality has settled in and the relationship is not so new any longer. So now the biggest decision is no longer “where shall we eat tonight?” but “whose turn is it to clean the loo?”

Once the partners are living together and see each other warts and all, the prospect of an early night may have more to do with exhaustion from household chores than “was it good for you too, darling?”

Any major life change is going to require some adjustment. It’s all about expectations of everyday living and how you’re going to cope with the mundane aspects of life.

But don’t despair – help is at hand. And it all comes back to that C-word – communication.

Let’s take housework. If one person has a passion for house cleaning while the other is a fabulous cook and gardener, you might be able to happily allocate the various household tasks.

If you don’t derive spiritual satisfaction from household chores, you are going to have to sit down and work out an equitable, stress-free way of doing housework. If both partners are working, it may be wise to get a cleaner once a week.

Living together is about seeing the mundane as well as glamorous side of each other. If he wants to be a bit of a slob on Sunday morning, is this all right with her, when she is up and dressed and ready to hit the shops for coffee and shopping by 10am?

You need to work out how you can accommodate each other’s different expectations.

Living together also involves the issue of personal space. Now that you’re together more, do you need some space from each other?

This is the new road for both parties, and learning to negotiate effectively is a vital skill for happy co-habitation.

It’s easy to work out the good stuff, like where you’ll go for your next holiday, but deciding who should do the vacuuming doesn’t have the same romance about it.

Happily, the majority of people get a great deal of pleasure from their live-in relationship. A Relationships Australia survey found that 92 percent of people in defacto relationships were very satisfied with their partnerships.

But if your partner has habits you never expected?

Perhaps she likes to read until one in the morning while he is snoring by 11pm.

Again, communication is the key. You have to decide whether you can live with your partner’s irritating habit or whether he or she needs to change those habits.

Which road you take will depend on whether a habit can be changed and if the partner wishes to change. You won’t know unless you talk about it. If you don’t seem able to work out these difficulties in your relationship, counselling can help.

It can help you understand where your differences are coming from and with help you can often find a way through them.

Some couples will always struggle to find a way through their problems and realise they just don’t get on.

Even in this situation, the relationship has given you a valuable lesson in working out what went wrong in a partnership for which you had such high hopes.

For most dedicated lovers and partners, there are three C-words that will help them join the happy 92 percent who relish their live-in relationship – commitment, communication and consultation.

## Survival tips

- **Discuss ways to handle household chores, or employ a cleaner**
- **Everyone has habits that can irritate a partner – discuss them to see if they can be modified**
- **Keep communication lines open – effective negotiation is the key to happy co-habiting**
- **If you can't work out adjustment problems on your own, seek help**