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In Defense of Nagging

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There's nothing nicer than waking up and finding out that you're ruining your marriage. But according to the *Wall Street Journal*, I'm putting my married life in more danger than if I were [having an affair](#) with the tennis pro or spending our [retirement](#) savings on shoes.

I am a nag, and in a marriage, says the *WSJ*, that's just about the worst thing you can be. Well, the worst thing a woman can be, anyway. According to a study published in the *Journal of Family Psychology*, negative communication [patterns](#) (i.e. nagging) are strongly correlated with marital unhappiness and divorce.

Of course, I don't exactly see my behavior as nagging. I see it as calmly and politely asking my husband to pick up his socks, or to not leave dirty dishes in the sink when we have a dishwasher *right there*, or to please hang up his coat instead of tossing it over a chair. If it sounds as if I've made these requests a million times before, it's because I have. But they continue to be not fulfilled, so I continue to ask—calmly and politely, just like they tell you in the marriage advice books. I tell him how much it would mean to me for him to make the bed, and he lovingly ignores me.

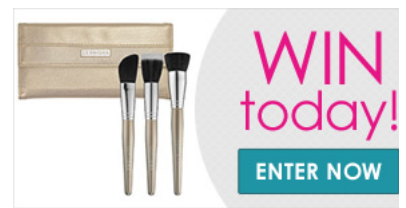
It's funny how calm, repeated requests are only considered nagging to the nag-ee. If I constantly asked my husband to please spend more time playing video games, something tells me he wouldn't feel nagged. But because my requests tend to be about housework, he feels nagged.

I'm not alone in this "dangerous" marriage behavior. According to studies, most nagging is done by wives about housework, which begs the question: What's really the problem—that women are nags or that men don't handle their fair share of the household chores and then get all bent out of shape when their wives call them on it? Women are still conditioned to feel responsible for picking up socks or washing dishes or any of the hundreds of other household tasks necessary to not live in a dump. And those chores aren't fun. No one said they were. When we ask our partners to help us do them, to share in the burden (which, wasn't that the whole point of marriage, anyway?), we aren't asking for a personal favor. We're asking for a fair deal. In fact, the whole accusation of "nagging" often feels like a big, fat deflection. It's a turning-around of the problem to make it look like the asker is the one being unfair, when it's the askee who's not holding up his share of the bargain. When my husband accuses me of nagging, it's hard not to notice that he's unable to offer a compelling reason for why my requests are somehow unreasonable or unfair.

WSJ gives lots of "helpful solutions" on how naggers can stop being so terrible. They suggest learning to live with lower standards of cleanliness, accepting that you're going to have to do more work yourself, and hiring household help so you can avoid the whole issue. In all the discussion on the deleterious effects of nagging and how people can get help, nowhere has anyone stated (what should, in my mind, be) the obvious—nag-ees should stop acting like entitled children and grow the hell up.

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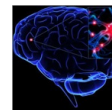


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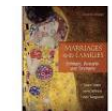
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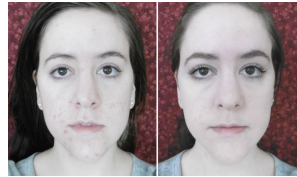
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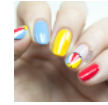
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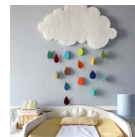
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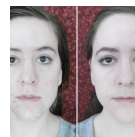
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