

## Clash over cleaning, making mommy friends, and too tired for date night

**Q** My husband and I work full time, and we have two kids. I've suggested we hire a twice-a-month cleaning woman (we can swing the cost), but he says no way. How can we resolve this?

I just read your question, twice, and although I'm generally able to see two sides to a story (you're right, but he's also got a point, blah, blah, blah...), in this case, I'm stumped. Let's try this one more time. You both work full time. You have two children and a house that gets dirty. (Dang houses! When are they going to invent self-cleaning homes?) You have figured out that it's feasible to pay a cleaning woman every two weeks. And he says...no? Based on what? That's the unanswered question. Does he not

believe you on the budget? Show him the numbers and where the cuts would come from. Is it that he doesn't think an outsider can clean to your or his standards?

**I DON'T WANT TO LIVE WITH THE DUST BUNNIES!**

And here's the biggie: if not a cleaning woman, who's doing the dusting and scrubbing normally, if infrequently? You? If that's the case, tell him to pony up or pick up the vacuum himself.



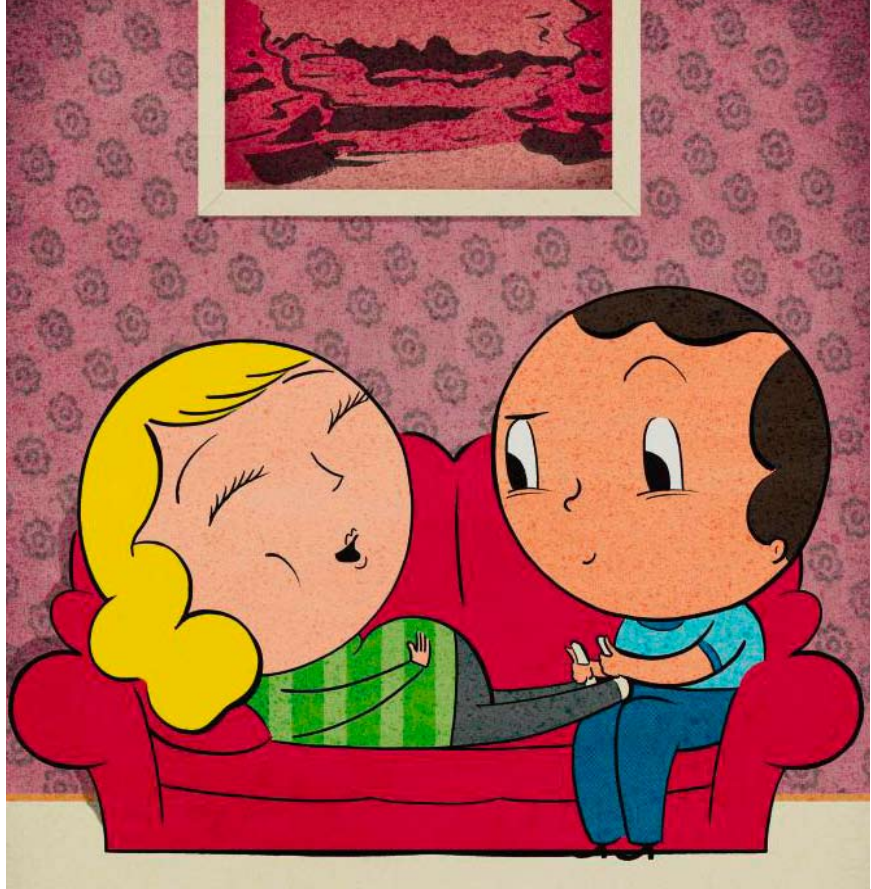
**Q** I would love to make some new friends, but breaking into mommy cliques is tough. When I go to the playground with my daughter, for instance, I find it hard to talk to other moms. What can I do?

Become a stalker. I'm only half-kidding. I did exactly that when I was new to my neighborhood, when my oldest was about 1. I'd seen the same woman at the park, with a daughter who looked around my boy's age, but it took a while to work up the nerve to chat. I spotted her several times before I took the plunge. One day, as our tots bumped past each other, I smiled and asked that perfect parent-to-parent opener, "How old is she?" We're still friends, and our kids are now in first grade.

My advice: approach a parent traveling solo, so you're not interrupting a conversation. (Later,

when you've made a friend or two whom you like and trust, you'll gain entrance into groups of like-minded parents.) Slap a smile on your face, walk up to the mom (or dad!) in the park who looks the most promising, and just...say hi.

Stuck for conversation starters? Ask a question about her child. "I love that hat! Where did you get it?" Or chime in with, "Wow, your son is such a good climber." Try to remember that in all likelihood, the other mothers (especially those who are also alone) are probably as eager as you are to find a grown-up to talk to while they push junior on the swing.



**Q** I'm pregnant and really tired, so I like to stay home. We're only in our 20s, and my husband is going stir-crazy. I don't want him to leave me home all the time, but I don't want him to be a bitter homebody either. Advice?

Oh, do I remember those too-tired-to-get-off-the-couch days! I understand your desire to stay home. Pregnant or not, I've always hated going out when I'm not in the mood. I end up feeling like a party pooper. That feeling is intensified if you're the one sipping OJ instead of screwdrivers. It's not even the drinking—it's being too tired to be any fun. Why should you prop yourself on a bar stool or struggle to make conversation when all you really want to do is let your eyelids droop as you read that stack of pregnancy books?

I get that you feel somewhat sorry for your husband, whose life hasn't changed as drastically as yours has (yet). I get that you don't want him sitting beside you, stewing over his lack of a social life. And I know you don't want

him heading out with pals while you're home in front of *American Idol*. But I want to give your husband a little shake. *Your wife is growing a person inside her belly. You can't do that without expending enough energy to run a marathon, for heaven's sake. Let her lie on the couch, and sit there with her. Rub her feet; treat her like the queen she is.*

But don't worry, you won't be this tired forever. In fact, probably in your second trimester, you'll have a burst of energy. Act on it and get yourself out of the house with your husband. Once the baby arrives, your opportunity (and energy) for date nights will grow awfully slim for a while. Enjoy while you can!

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Have a question for Ask a Mom? E-mail us at [abletters@americanbaby.com](mailto:abletters@americanbaby.com).