

Family Life... You do too much

Situation:

Working in a school cafeteria requires some pre-preparation. It was the day before a seven day holiday break and I was tired and decided to skip the pre-prep on Thursday and do it the following Tuesday when I had to come in and check the freezers.

When I got home I talked to my husband about how tired I was and how ready I was for some time off and mentioned my decision to skip the pre-prep. He said, "you're always doing things that you don't have to do."

Symptoms:

His remark bothered me. "He doesn't understand. In his job if something doesn't get done, somebody on the next shift will pick it up. It's not that way in the day to day, one-shift world of child nutrition. I'm tired and cranky already. Why does he have to add to it?"

My whole body was tense, especially my shoulders. I felt like I was going to start crying. "Why is this happening to me again?"

Solution:

It wasn't until I talked to a good friend later that evening that I took the time to work on this incident. With her help I was able to see that I was questioning my decision to put off the work and that I was looking for my husband to say in effect: "That's OK honey, whatever you did was all right."

Once I told myself that I wasn't wrong, I was average for my decision, I didn't need outer approval for what I did, or in this case what I didn't do. The truth is that it is perfectly acceptable to do the pre-prep on Tuesday instead of the previous Thursday. The fact is that it will get done before the next scheduled in-session school day. Lots of people put off doing things when they're tired and when the can be done at a later time.

With the fearful thoughts, "I'm wrong," out of the way, I knew I also needed to work on the angry ones. My husband is not wrong, he is average for what he said. In his opinion, "I do too much." In my opinion, I do what needs to be done. With the temper gone, the insight arrived: "He's never worked preparing institutional meals on a daily basis. How could he know how things work?"

Once I excused him, I thought to myself that because of the tired, down mood I was in, probably nothing he said would have been the "right" thing. That's when I caught myself smiling to myself.



I also realized that I just didn't casually mention what happened at school that day, I was in fact complaining to my husband. What I was doing was increasing my agitation by sharing it with somebody else. By talking about it I was reliving it and working it up, one more time.

In the past:

Before I would not have seen anything humorous about the situation – then or ever! I'd go on for weeks, not just second guessing everything I did, but third, fourth and fifth guessing. Lots of times it would get to the point where I get really down about everything – work life, family life. I'd even start wondering if I should change jobs, or change churches. I'd burst into tears a lot. I'd feel trapped. Something had to change. Now I know I may not be able to change things outside me, but I can change my thoughts.

