



BUILD TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER

Advice for Couples in the Homebuilding Process



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Abstract

Building a new home is an exciting journey. But, with so many decisions to make and transitions to navigate, it's possible for disagreements between you and your spouse or partner to occur.

Here's how you can work together to build the home of your dreams — without the drama.



Getting Started

The formula that all couples should follow when they are caught in the home-building process is simple – you built together, you stay together. The construction of a new home and even the simpler process of finding a ready new house is an exciting, but challenging process for many couples as this can result in various disagreements. So, is there a way for a couple to go through the home building process without a drama? Follow the steps below and there is a chance you sort that out.

1 Clear Plans

The first thing that couples should do is to clear their plans and check if they have the same expectations and if these expectations are realistic. The couples should be open and speak about the things they want and matter to them most.

The couples should work as design partners and these things that are important to them must be present in the new home of the couple.

It is a good idea to look at color schemes, at photos in Internet, at various furniture packages, etc. The couple can list the things both people like concerning the size of the property, the materials used, the finish. There should be no pressure when the decision is being taken.

2 Keep the Good Communication Going

When buying a home, the couple should keep the communication flowing, allowing compromises, active listening, and respect towards the view of the partner. In case there is no good communication between the partners, problems are to occur and soon they will involve other people as well such as the realtor, the contractor, the workers.

3 Look at the Funny Side

In times of stress (and home-building process is such a period of time), the couples should try to look at the funny side. The unresolved conflicts can be very harmful to each relationship. Thus, the couple should allow at least two days a week when you do not talk about the home-building process. This time should be used for meeting friends, going out for drinks, watching a movie. The humor is the best weapon against the stress and is great for keeping the focus on the important things in life.

4 In case Things Get Bad

On certain situations connected with the home-building process things can get out of the way. Thus, in case of intense conflict, each side of the couple should try to cool off and then resume the conversation. The established expectation, the respect towards the other and the effective communication should reduce the risk of such situations.

I. Before You Build Your New Home: 5 Preparation Steps

The process of building a new home begins long before the foundation is poured. The construction process is most efficient and exciting if you first develop a good plan and find an honest, competent builder. To avoid costly mistakes during the construction process, start with these five important steps.

As you move from dream house to real house, be sure to ask questions and share your progress with people who have gone through the process.



- **Plan Your Budget**

Begin considering the budget from the very moment you start thinking about building your house. Develop a realistic idea of how much you can afford to spend and how much it will cost to build a new home. The budgeting phase is really about balancing your wants with a realistic assessment of what you can afford.

Chances are you will need a construction loan and a mortgage. It's not too early to find out how large a loan you can qualify for, based on your income and other financial obligations. Today, most banks and other financial institutions are eager to prequalify you for a construction loan, which will give you a ballpark idea of the maximum amount of money you can spend. At the same time, this early stage involves looking at what different elements of your new home will cost, including the land itself, the architect or designer, the general contractor who will manage the project, the construction materials, and appliances and interior features.

This is a complicated, time-consuming process that really should begin many months before construction begins. It's not uncommon to take as much as two years to thoroughly research the issues before you sign a construction contract with a builder.

- **Tips for Budgeting**

Beware of banks who want to lend you more money than you can afford—this was one of the reasons behind the 2008 financial crisis. There is no reason to build a house that costs the maximum loan amount the bank approves. In fact, it is a very good idea to stay well under that amount. Talking to an independent financial advisor is a great way to determine how much you can comfortably spend to build your house.

Plan for cost overruns. Virtually all construction ends up costing more than initially planned. This often occurs because the costs of building materials change or because of changes you request during the design and construction phase. Make sure you build in a buffer to your budget so that the inevitable overruns don't break the bank.

- **Hidden Costs of Building a New Home**

First-time homeowners are often startled when they begin to recognize the hidden costs of owning their own homes. There are many one-time start-up costs to building your first home, such as furniture, lawn and garden equipment, window treatments, and Internet and media wiring. And, home ownership comes with ongoing monthly expenses that can catch you off-guard if you're not prepared for them—expenses such as homeowner's insurance, property taxes, and lawn-care services. If you've been a renter up to now, these expenses can be a shocking surprise.

- **Choose Your Lot**

If you have not yet purchased a building lot for your new home, talk with realtors to get a rough estimate of land costs in the areas you are considering. Land costs vary greatly depending on local land costs.

Whether you are building your home in a suburban development or a site with sweeping ocean views, you will almost always need to choose the land before you select floor plans or other details. You (and any pros you hire) will need to

investigate factors such as soil condition, drainage, zoning, and building codes in the region. Costs will be higher if your house design needs to be customized to fit the lot. If the house can be built on the lot using stock blueprints, it will help your budget.

- **Pick a House Plan**

Many new homes are built using stock plans from a printed catalog or an online source. Finding the right plan can take some time. One place to begin might be deciding on your favorite house style. Get ideas from the many catalogs available, and if necessary, have a builder or another building professional—an architect or designer—help you choose the best stock plan for your needs. A home designer can also make minor modifications to the stock plans in terms of room size, window styles, or other details. Some builders can make slight modifications to stock home plans.

A custom-designed home, on the other hand, is created specifically for the family who will live there and the site it sits upon. In most cases, custom-designed homes require the services of a licensed architect. They ask questions like "Where is the sun in relation to the lot? Where do the prevailing breezes come from? How can we save money on long-term heating and cooling costs?" The architect should also ask exhaustive questions about your lifestyle and preferences.

Whether you opt for a stock or a custom design, it's wise to choose a plan that will meet your needs for many years to come. A young couple may want to plan for more family members, for example, while an older homeowner should anticipate aging-in-place needs.

- **Line Up Your Team**

Once a working budget, a building site, and home design are selected, you can now begin assembling the team of experts to design and construct your house. Key players can include a builder, an excavator, a surveyor, and a home designer or an architect, if needed. In most cases, homeowners begin by selecting the builder (general contractor). That pro then selects other members of the team. However, you may also opt to hire an architect or designer first.

The big question is this: How involved will you be (can you be) in the process? While most homeowners hire a general contractor/builder to coordinate most

or all of the work, it is also possible for a homeowner who wants to be deeply involved in the process to serve as his or her own GC. In this case, you will be hiring and supervising all the subcontractors—excavators, carpenters, concrete contractors, etc.—yourself. Working this way is not for the faint-of-heart, but for the right person, it can be a rewarding way to build a house, as well as one that saves money.

- **What About Nontraditional Construction?**

What your house looks like does not necessarily dictate how the house is constructed. Traditional frame construction is not the only option. Many people have become intrigued with straw-bale houses, rammed earth construction, and even cob houses. But you cannot expect traditional builders—or even all architects—to be experts in everything. Building traditional houses using a nontraditional method requires a team that specializes in that type of construction. Do your homework and find the right architect and builder who can realize your vision.

- **Negotiate a Contract**

Be sure to get written, signed contracts for each building professional involved in building your home. At the very least, this means a contract with the general contractor/builder, as well as the home designer or architect, if they are part of the process.

What goes into a building contract? A contract for new home construction will describe the project in detail and include a listing of all the parts to be included in the house—the "specs." Without detailed specifications, your house will likely be built with "builder's grade" materials, which can be on the cheaper side. Be sure to hash out the specs as part of the negotiation before the contract is written—and then make sure everything is clearly listed. Remember to amend the contract later on if you or your contractor makes any changes to the project.

The time spent completing the preliminary steps to building a new home can be an exciting period, but this is also a time to evaluate if new construction is the right choice. The process is a lot of hard work and it brings disruption in your life and the lives of those around you. You may well find that it is less stressful to shop for an existing home—either a pre-existing home or a newly

constructed home that has been built "on-spec." Or you may find that remaining in your existing home and remodeling it is a better option.

The decision to build your own home is sometimes undertaken for the wrong reasons. Building a new home rarely "fixes" a troubled life or a relationship. An important first step is to analyze your motives. Are you building a house because somebody else wants you to? Is it a diversion from some other life problem? Can you handle the additional stress in your life? Why do you want to build a home? Self-reflection may bring about self-awareness—and save you from many headaches.

But if your self-scrutiny passes these tests, then carefully following five key preparation steps will ensure that your project produces the home that you and your family deserve.

II. Creating A Home Together Is An Intimate Act: 4 Essential Strategies For Success

Creating a home together is truly an act of deep intimacy. It is about personal desires and aspirations. It is about fantasies and wishes from as far back as you can remember. It is so much about all your hopes and dreams, and how you will make memories together. When partners take on the complex challenge of creating a home as an honest team effort, their experience cannot help but increase intimacy.

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "... we shape our dwellings, and afterwards our dwellings shape us." Too often in my marriage therapy practice I see couples who's dwellings have shaped them in ways they would never have imagined -- ways that are not conducive to healthy and happy married life.

Our homes are a respite from the rest of the harried world. They are a sanctuary for the individual, as well as the relationship. A marriage depends on and desperately desires this. So whether your sanctuary is a colonial on a cul-de-sac, a New York City apartment or a small cabin in the woods, it needs to be able to comfort you as an individual, and as a couple. Here are four strategies I have come to believe are essential for creating a home together, and would urge any couple to follow:

1. Contemplate your fantasies about the space you will live in. Share your fantasies aloud with each other. Ask questions. What did your partner love and

hate about the home(s) they grew up in? What have they loved about any home they've made for themselves? Consider together all your important scenarios. Let your visions expand and go wild. For example:

Where will you listen to music together? Or practice your instrument alone?

Where will you look out a window together?

Do you want to be able to take showers together?

Where might you read a book, alone?

What do hope your bedroom will feel like?

Where might you play a game together?

Do you need a place for projects?

Do you need some separate space for each of you?

What kind of atmosphere do you envision?

How will you entertain?

What is your wildest dream for this space called home?

2. Take the time to understand your spouse's perspectives just as well as your own. Designing space, decorating space, and using space is not as obvious as we might think. Our implicit expectations can just be all wrong. Later we find ourselves surprised to find out how differently our partner feels about what is evolving or has already been completed.

So, never make assumptions; we need to get explicit. Ask your partner questions that flush out all the implicit expectations you might be embracing: from color choices and cabinet designs, to bathroom layouts and budgets. Allow for wide-ranging dialogues on what is significant for each of you. Don't assume your spouse gets it.

3. Never relinquish your part in creating a home as a team. Collaborate. Negotiate. Give and take. Your sanctuary can only become a reality through a process that respects and honors each other's differences.

4. Use and trust in the creative brainstorming process. If you're not familiar with the key behavioral components of being a good brainstormer, it is worth

reading up on what I consider to be the number one set of skills for all couples. A few basic components: get all ideas and goals on the table, nothing is considered crazy; provide inspiration; ask questions; play devil's advocate; and do it all with a good dose of patience and a smile.

Invest some time to take advantage of any technology that will help you to help your spouse appreciate your visions and how you imagine them implemented. Research and do it in pictures; bring a collection to the table. Sit together and provide a website tour of your favorite ideas.

III. Couples Survival Guide To Building A House Together

For any couple building a house together, some challenges may be more frustrating than rewarding. There will be a number of situations you'll encounter that will be stressful, including:

- BUDGET
- DEADLINES
- FLEXIBILITY
- DECISION MAKING
- PREFERENCES
- SCHEDULING CONFLICTS
- BALANCING LIFE

Surviving the process requires healthy communication between both the two of you and your builder.

How To Survive DIY Projects As A Couple

You know that saying? "If you ever want to test your relationship, try hanging wallpaper together"?

That is no exaggeration. At all.

But sometimes, that wallpaper has to be hung. Sometimes those cabinets need to be painted. And sometimes in the excitement of making a home together, an argument can ensue with one little DIY gone wrong.

So often, when I post one of my and Robert's big home improvement projects, I get the comment, "You two are such a great team together!" Lemme tell ya. It

doesn't always come easily. (Plus, the internet makes everything look easy, so there's that.)

We've had our moments when projects didn't go according to plan. When we had to grit our teeth and bite our tongues. When we just had to walk away from the home improvement scene for the sake of maintaining our sanity. It's normal.

DIY projects can be tough to begin with. But when you throw your relationship into the mix, things can get heated. I can confidently tell y'all that Robert and I do make a rockin' DIY team now (he's my better half for sure), but it took a lot of learning.

1. Discuss a plan.

If one of us gets an idea for a project, we show each other photos we find for inspiration so that we have the same vision. It's all about the communication. I usually figure out the cost with a materials list, and Robert often handles the technical end of things with measurements. I try to draw up a diagram to help visualize our project too. Our DIY wood beam doorway took weeks of discussing beforehand to make sure we both understood what our steps of the project would be.

2. Set aside the time.

A lot of times, if we get aggitated during a home improvement project, it's because we're feeling rushed. Go into it knowing a DIY will probably take longer than you plan. Don't try to squeeze in a big project on a Sunday after church and before an evening outing. Be ready for that time commitment.

3. Go into it knowing there will be mistakes.

Do all things with grace. Including DIYs. If a piece of wood ends up cut too short, a piece of wallpaper rips mid-hang, or paint is splattered on the carpet, shrug it off and persevere.

4. Encourage each other.

That positivity will carry you through together.

5. Get excited about it together.

In the middle of a home improvement project, we like to take a step back and appreciate how things are taking shape. Celebrate with a little victorious booty shake and a fresh energy to keep working.

6. Use good manners.

People don't respond well to barked orders...or at least I don't. Robert and I try to say, "Will you hand me that screw driver?" or "Go grab the tape measure for me please." A "thank you" never hurts either. It just communicates that mutual respect for each other and creates a positive atmosphere. When we're wrestling with some complicated aspect of a DIY, kind words help.

7. Breathe and hold your tongue.

When you hit a snag (which you will), keep your cool. Don't fly off the handle at a mistake the other makes. They already know they messed up. Breathe, power through, and don't sink to name-calling. If you have to utter a four-letter word, at least don't direct it at your spouse. I mean, hammering your thumb can do that sometimes.

8. Be problem solvers.

When a DIY doesn't go according to plan, we talk about solutions to fix it. And yeah, we get mad when things don't run smoothly. But we try not to pout about it; we find a plan B together instead.

9. Know when it's time to take a break.

If tempers rise, walk away from your project for a while. Most of the time for us, we start to bicker because we're tired or hungry. Go grab a bite to eat, take a rest, or go walk around in the fresh air. Then tackle that DIY again refreshed and ready with a better attitude.

10. Laugh it off.

Make it fun! Turn on the radio and jam out. (Our favorite right now is the "Don't Stop Believin'" station on Pandora.) Sing loudly and dance awkwardly. Joke around sometimes. Make it a date but with power tools. It's not hard for me to laugh with this crazy guy around...

(Bonus) 11. Be proud together of what you accomplish.

When our DIY adventure is over and we step back to survey our finished “masterpiece”, we breathe a sigh of relief and get excited all over again for what we accomplished together. The more projects we do, the more camaraderie it builds. Thank each other for the hard work you did.

IV. Arguing With Your Partner About Housework? Experts Share Their Advice

Housework can be a point of contention for many couples. Perhaps you feel that you do more than your fair share of the cooking, or that you constantly have to ‘nag’ (read: ask) your partner to do simple tasks like picking up their dirty laundry. All these little annoyances can build up to make you feel irritable and resentful. Sound familiar?

But the good news is that this period of intense time at home can actually be a great opportunity to overcome any issues surrounding housework, and come up with a better set-up that works for both of you. Here’s how to do it...

Divide and conquer

Have you ever actually had a proper conversation about who is responsible for what, when things need doing, and how they should be done? No? You're not alone. But it's so important to sit down and really work out your plan of action. Set aside time for a conversation to unpack any issues you're having and work out solutions in order to balance household tasks.

Having your own, clearly-defined, separate tasks and responsibilities can be a really useful starting point for many couples.

“You could begin by thinking about the things you each actually enjoy doing, and then go from there,” Susan Quilliam recommends. “Perhaps you feel a sense of satisfaction from doing the laundry, while your partner prefers cleaning the kitchen. Starting on a positive footing is always helpful.”

Sally Howard recommends avoiding dividing tasks into traditionally ‘pink’ (female) and ‘blue’ (male) chores. “‘Blue’ jobs – mowing the lawn or putting out the bins – tend to be occasional, compared to the daily and necessary ‘pink’ tasks, such as rustling up meals against the clock with a toddler screaming at your feet,” she says.

Instead, think about which tasks are most unpleasant, which ones take up the most time, and which happen most frequently. It could be helpful to write these down in different categories, so you can work out how to create an even split.

Get it in writing

Both Quilliam and Howard advise against tick-lists and rotas, as they say this can exacerbate the 'emotional labour' being carried by one person and can also result in point-scoring, which can give you more reason to argue. But Quilliam says that when you're forming a negotiation, it really helps to write down what you've decided.

"You can refer back to it, so you don't forget," she says. "But also, don't be afraid to suggest making adjustments as time goes by. If you're finding a task particularly exhausting or difficult, calmly suggest renegotiating, rather than carrying around simmering resentment. You might find that your partner is happy to come up with an easy solution to benefit you both."

Listen, understand and compromise

While you negotiate, ask them what it is about housework they struggle with. Rather than assuming the worst – that they're just lazy or disrespectful – find out what is really going on, says Quilliam.

"Work out whether there are certain times you both prefer to do housework – maybe you always like to do things in the morning, while they prefer to set aside time in the evening," she says. "Explain your point of view, listen to their point of view, and prepare to negotiate and make some changes."

Make it fun

Some couples might find that dividing tasks into set responsibilities doesn't work for them. It could be that you actually prefer to take on some tasks, like cooking, together.

"Find ways to make it fun, so you can turn monotonous household chores into quality time," suggests Quilliam. For example, you might want to play your favourite songs and dance while you clean – you might find you both enjoy it!

"Or you could set aside time in the evening to do a blitz of the house, and ensure you reward yourselves by snuggling up on the sofa to watch your favourite box-

set,” she says. Having some kind of reward or motivating factor - for both of you - can be really useful.

Pick your battles

One common sticking point in couples, says Quilliam, is that your partner may be happy to take on their fair share of the housework, but the way they do things isn't up to your standards.

“Keep one or two things for yourself if you know it would make you feel comfortable,” she recommends. “For example, if they always goes shopping and come back with the wrong items, you might want to make the shopping one of your 'things'. But with other chores, it can be easier to think, ‘does this really matter?’ For example, if they stack the dishwasher wrong, can you choose to let it go? This doesn't mean you should keep sweet and never raise your opinions – it's just about choosing your battles so you can both feel happier and more content.”

Remember housework isn't proof of love

According to Quilliam, one of the most common reasons arguments occur in relationships, as a whole, is that you often have ‘I want’ vs ‘I don't want’.

“The problem is that this often tips over into proof of love,” she says. “So you might say, ‘if you loved me, you would do this’ while they might say ‘if you loved me, you would stop pushing me to do something I don't want to do.’ But if you view certain actions (or inactions) as proof that they don't love or respect you, it intensifies the problem and can worsen the way you feel about it.”

Ultimately, having individual desires, needs and preferences doesn't mean you love each other any more or less. You just have to find some way to meet in the middle, says Quilliam, by maintaining communication and empathy.

V. Here's How The Happiest Couples Split Up Household Chores

In an effort to find out how the happiest couples divvy up domestic duties, we asked experts to share some of their secrets. Here's what these couples do differently:

1. They communicate clearly — and in great detail — about what needs to get done and how.

2. They schedule time to have these conversations weekly.
3. They play to each other's strengths.
4. They recognize that sharing domestic labor is about more than just the tasks themselves.
5. They can rely on each other to execute their duties.
6. They don't micromanage each other.
7. They adopt an 'us vs. the problem' mentality.
8. They're flexible.
9. They know "fair" doesn't always mean splitting things 50/50.

VI. A Simple Cleaning Schedule For Working Couples

Maintaining your home can be challenging when you and your partner have a busy working schedule and are out of the house for at least 40 hours a week.



But with careful planning and collective action, you and your partner can ensure your home stays clean and dust-free. The nature of cleaning has now changed, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as there are now over 62% of households where both partners go to work. This means that it is no longer expected that only the wife will do the cleaning and house chores as she is also earning an income and is busy.

So, therefore it is now only fair that both partners take up cleaning tasks and divide the work equally or by equity. Here are some ways you can divide your cleaning tasks with your partner and then create a simple cleaning schedule:

1. Breakdown Your Tasks

You should start by breaking down all your cleaning tasks into daily and weekly tasks. You can schedule easier and quicker tasks that will take less than 15 minutes as daily tasks and more focused and complex tasks as weekly tasks.

Set realistic goals so you and your partner can finish all your tasks on time. You should also hire cleaners who offer budget end of lease cleaning in Melbourne to deep clean your home once every two to three months so that it is easier to maintain.

2. List All Your Tasks

It is always a good idea to write down all your tasks and place this list in a visible spot in your home. This will ensure that you and your partner remember which tasks have been completed and which still need to be done.

3. Divide Tasks

You can both conquer and complete many tasks together, especially if they are complex. But it will also be faster if you divide some tasks between the two of you so that you can get more accomplished.

For instance, let your partner do the laundry if you are doing the dishes. This will take care of two essential cleaning tasks and keep you motivated to complete all your other tasks.

4. Rotate Chores

You can make cleaning more interesting by rotating the tasks every day or week so you don't get bored and stuck doing the same thing. You can also put on your favourite tunes while cleaning to make it more fun.

5. Don't Be Too Harsh

It is also important to realise that you and your partner both have different ways of cleaning and, therefore, you should not judge their work. If you feel your partner can use a different method to clean, you should tell them politely rather than criticising their work.

6. Declutter Your Space

Another tip to help you and your partner clean your home more efficiently is to declutter your space first. Pick up any mess and sort and organise your things so that you can reduce your cleaning time and also get rid of any mental clutter.

7. Keep A Cleaning Caddy

Lastly, keep a cleaning caddy with all your essential cleaning tools and natural cleaning solutions in the main room. This will make it easier to start cleaning at any time, and you can keep cleaning wipes in each room to clean up spills on the spot.

Now that you know how to divide the tasks, you can create a simple cleaning checklist for your homes to ensure they are spick and span.

Create A Simple Cleaning Checklist

Once you have decided how to divide your chores between you and your partner, you can create a simple cleaning checklist as such:

Weekly Tasks

Monday-Laundry Day

One partner can do two loads of laundry, and the other can fold the laundry and put it away. You can keep rotating these tasks every week.

Tuesday- Bathroom Day

You should divide your tasks into vacuuming and mopping floors, wiping all the mirrors, cleaning the toilet bowl and sinks, wiping and disinfecting the shower and tub and taking out the trash.

Wednesday- Rest Day

Take a day off your weekly tasks to rest and spend time with your partner.

Thursday-Kitchen Day

Divide your kitchen cleaning tasks into cleaning and disinfecting dirty spots in your kitchen, vacuuming the floors, wiping the countertops and appliances, cleaning the sink, wiping the fridge and throwing out any expired food.

Friday- Main Areas

Spend time dusting and vacuuming the carpets in your living room and bedrooms, dust all your shelves, clean your upholstery and wipe down all the windows and doors in your main areas. You can leave the more complicated tasks for bond cleaning experts in Melbourne, who will help you deep clean your home every once in a while.

Saturday- Laundry Day

Do two loads of laundry, and the other partner will fold and put away the clothes. You can also iron and hang the clothes up to save time later.

Sunday- Declutter

Every week, you should declutter one part of your home. For instance, in Week 1, you can declutter your kitchen. In Week 2, you can declutter your office, living area, etc.

Daily Tasks

There are specific tasks that you and your partner should try and complete daily to maintain the cleanliness of your home, such as:

Make your bed as soon as you wake up, or one person can do both beds in rotation. If you have kids, encourage them to make their beds when they wake up.

You should load the dishwasher at night, and the other person can unload and wash all the dishes in the morning.

Spend at least ten minutes tidying different parts of your home and picking up any clutter.

You should divide the sinks between you and your partner, and each person can quickly wipe their sink at the end of the day.

Before you sleep, you can quickly take five minutes to dust the shelves and countertops.

You and your partner should try and complete as many of these tasks as possible, but if it is not possible, you can always call bond cleaning experts in Melbourne to help you out. These experts will use advanced tools and cleaning techniques to make your home look spotless and easy to maintain.

Final Words

Not every couple has the time or energy to integrate new relational skills during the homebuilding process. For them, using a simple, single concept helps establish peace. By communicating effectively and establishing expectations beforehand, the homebuilding process can be the dream you've always imagined it to be.

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