

Even happy, healthy marriages involve some conflict from time to time. Conflict is a normal part of sharing life with someone else. Although couples experience conflicts, many of them are successful and happy in their marriages.

## Gourmet Marriage for Two

It had been a long day. One of those days in which appointments seemed to overlap with one another, blending together until I was no longer certain to whom



I had said what. The lunch hour had come and gone without my noticing, and now, as I arrived home, my stomach was talking loudly. Dinner would be well appreciated tonight.

We recently remodeled our kitchen and the outlet for the new stovetop exhaust fan is next to the driveway.

As I drove toward the garage in back, the aroma of the evening meal wafted through my open window. My wife is a culinary wizard and, even after five years of marriage, the variety of dishes she whips up for a single meal still boggles my mind.

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However, my eyes widened and my jaw dropped when I entered the kitchen. Dr. Seuss himself couldn't have imagined a more bizarre sight. Suzanne is a speed cook. There's no better description. She throws together a mouthwatering four-course meal in less than twenty minutes. Tonight, as usual, the table looks great. But the kitchen is a disaster zone. A vast array of pots and pans of all sizes are soaking in a sink full of cold, greasy water. All measuring cups and spoons have been taken from their usual hiding places and strewn along the counter. Never mind only two were required-they were all pulled down. A fine dusting of flour covers the entire kitchen, and the cooktop and much of the counter glisten with a film of splattered grease. The can opener has drippings on it and all of the countertop machines-mixer, toaster, coffee maker,



Set a specific time to work on the problem. It is very important to discuss problems when both spouses can mentally and emotionally prepare. Writing down the problem before discussion can help focus on specific issues.

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and so on-are coated with the same flour and grease. The uplifting effects of the marvelous aroma quickly fade as I feel depression setting in. Suzanne has outdone herself this evening. Our underlying marital agreement, which keeps our lives running smoothly (relatively speaking), is that each of us capitalizes on our strengths and, in turn, helps compensate for the other's weaknesses. Hence, Suzanne cooks (compensating for the absence of a skill I should have developed more fully during my bachelor days) and I... well, I clean.

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Opposites attract, or so I've heard. But, once attracted, can they really survive their differences? I'm a very clean cook. Yet my meals are as unimaginative as the kitchen is clean when I'm finished. I try to show Suzanne how to cook with less mess. It doesn't sink in. She, in turn, tries to speed me up (I cook like a mother turtle). Also, to no avail. We're not going to change each other's ingrained means of operation. Not that we won't continue to try, with a faint glimmering hope that someday I'll move faster and she'll clean as she cooks. But for now...

She looks up with an apologetic smile. "I'll help," she offers.

"What's for supper? Sure smells good," I reply.