

She Divorced Me Because I Left Dishes By The Sink

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Matthew Fray

It seems so unreasonable when you put it that way: *My wife left me because sometimes I leave dishes by the sink.*

It makes her seem ridiculous; and makes me seem like a victim of unfair expectations.

We like to point fingers at other things to explain why something went wrong, like when Biff Tannen crashed George McFly's car and spilled beer on his clothes, but it was all George's fault for not telling him the car had a blind spot.

This bad thing happened because of this, that, and the other thing. Not because of anything I did!
Sometimes I leave used drinking glasses by the kitchen sink, just inches away from the dishwasher.

It isn't a big deal to me now. It wasn't a big deal to me when I was married. But it was a big deal to her.

Every time she'd walk into the kitchen and find a drinking glass by the sink, she moved incrementally closer to moving out and ending our marriage. I just didn't know it yet.

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But even if I had, I fear I wouldn't have worked as hard to change my behavior as I would have stubbornly tried to get her to see things my way.

The idiom “to cut off your nose to spite your face” was created for such occasions.

Men Are Not Children, Even Though We Behave Like Them

Feeling respected by others is important to men.

Feeling respected by one's wife is essential to living a purposeful and meaningful life. Maybe I thought my wife should respect me simply because I exchanged vows with her. It wouldn't be the first time I acted entitled. One thing I know for sure is that I never connected putting a dish in the dishwasher with earning my wife's respect.

I remember my wife often saying how exhausting it was for her to have to tell me what to do all the time. It's why the sexiest thing a man can say to his partner is "I got this," and then take care of whatever needs taken care of.

I always reasoned: "If you just tell me what you want me to do, I'll gladly do it."

But she didn't want to be my mother.

She wanted to be my partner, and she wanted me to apply all of my intelligence and learning capabilities to the logistics of managing our lives and household.

She wanted me to figure out all of the things that need done, and devise my own method of task management.

I wish I could remember what seemed so unreasonable to me about that at the time.

Men Can Do Things

Men invented heavy machines that can fly in the air reliably and safely. Men proved the heliocentric model of the solar system, establishing that the Earth orbits the Sun. Men design and build skyscrapers, and take hearts and other human organs from dead people and replace the corresponding failing organs inside of living people, and then those people stay alive afterward. Which is insane.

Men are totally good at stuff.

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Men are perfectly capable of doing a lot of these things our wives complain about. What we are not good at is being psychic, or accurately predicting how our wives might feel about any given thing because male and female emotional responses tend to differ pretty dramatically.

'Hey Matt! Why would you leave a glass by the sink instead of putting it in the dishwasher?'

Several reasons.

1. I may want to use it again.
2. I don't care if a glass is sitting by the sink unless guests are coming over.
3. I will never care about a glass sitting by the sink. Ever. It's impossible. It's like asking me to make myself interested in crocheting, or to enjoy yardwork. I don't want to crochet things. And it's hard for me to imagine a scenario in which doing a bunch of work in my yard sounds more appealing than ANY of several thousand less-sucky things which could be done.

There is only ONE reason I will ever stop leaving that glass by the sink. A lesson I learned much too late: Because I love and respect my partner, and it REALLY matters to her.

I understand that when I leave that glass there, it hurts her — literally causes her pain — because it feels to her like I just said: “Hey. I don’t respect you or value your thoughts and opinions. Not taking four seconds to put my glass in the dishwasher is more important to me than you are.”

All the sudden, it’s not about something as benign and meaningless as a dirty dish.

Now, it’s a meaningful act of love and sacrifice, and really? Four seconds? That doesn’t seem like the kind of thing too big to do for the person who sacrifices daily for me.

I don’t have to understand WHY she cares so much about that stupid glass.

I just have to understand and respect that she DOES.

- Then, caring about her = putting the glass in the dishwasher.
- Caring about her = keeping your laundry off the floor.
- Caring about her = thoughtfully not tracking dirt or whatever on the floor she worked hard to clean.
- Caring about her = taking care of kid-related things so she can just chill out for a little bit and not worry about anything.
- Caring about her = “Hey babe. Is there anything I can do today or pick up on my way home that will make your day better?”
- Caring about her = a million little things that say “I love you” more than speaking the words ever can.

Yes, It’s That Simple

The man capable of that behavioral change — even when he doesn’t understand her or agree with her thought-process — can have a great relationship.

Men want to fight for their right to leave that glass there. It might look like this:

“Eat shit, wife,” we think. “I sacrifice a lot for you, and you’re going to get on me about ONE glass by the sink? THAT little bullshit glass that takes a few seconds to put in the dishwasher, which I’ll gladly do when I know I’m done with it, is so important to you that you want to give me crap about it? You want to take an otherwise peaceful evening and have an argument with me, and tell me how I’m getting something wrong and failing you, over this glass?”

After all of the big things I do to make our life possible — things I never hear a “thank you” for (and don’t ask for) — you’re going to elevate a glass by the sink into a marriage problem? I couldn’t be THAT petty if I tried. And I need to dig my heels in on this one. If you want that glass in the dishwasher, put it in there yourself without telling me about it. Otherwise, I’ll put it away when people are coming over, or when I’m done with it. This is a bullshit fight that feels unfair and I’m not just going to bend over for you.”

The man DOES NOT want to divorce his wife because she’s nagging him about the glass thing which he thinks is totally irrational. He wants her to agree with him that when you put life in perspective, a glass being by the sink when no one is going to see it anyway, and the solution takes four seconds, is just not a big problem. She should recognize how petty and meaningless it is in the grand scheme of life, he thinks, and he keeps waiting

for her to agree with him.

She will never agree with him, because for her, **it's not ACTUALLY about the glass**. The glass situation could be ANY situation in which she feels unappreciated and disrespected by her husband.

The wife doesn't want to divorce her husband because he leaves used drinking glasses by the sink.

She wants to divorce him because she feels like he doesn't respect or appreciate her, which suggests he doesn't love her, and she can't count on him to be her lifelong partner. She can't trust him. She can't be safe with him. Thus, she must leave and find a new situation in which she can feel content and secure.

“The wife doesn't want to divorce her husband because he leaves used drinking glasses by the sink. She wants to divorce him because she feels like he doesn't respect or appreciate her...”

In theory, the man wants to fight this fight, because he thinks he's right (and I tend to agree with him): The dirty glass is not more important than marital peace.

If his wife thought and felt like him, he'd be right to defend himself. Unfortunately, **most guys don't know that she's NOT fighting about the glass. She's fighting for acknowledgment, respect, validation, and his love.**

If he KNEW that — if he fully understood this secret she has never explained to him in a way that doesn't make her sound crazy to him (causing him to dismiss it as an inconsequential passing moment of emo-ness), and that this drinking glass situation and all similar arguments will eventually end his marriage, I believe he WOULD rethink which battles he chose to fight, and would be more apt to take action doing things he understands to make his wife feel loved and safe.

I think a lot of times, wives don't agree with me. They don't think it's possible that their husbands don't know how their actions make her feel because she has told him, sometimes with tears in her eyes, over and over and over and over again how upset it makes her and how much it hurts.

And this is important: **Telling a man something that doesn't make sense to him once, or a million times, doesn't make him “know” something.** Right or wrong, he would never feel hurt if the same situation were reversed so he doesn't think his wife SHOULD hurt.

“I never get upset with you about things you do that I don't like!” men reason, as if their wives are INTENTIONALLY choosing to feel hurt and miserable.

When you choose to love someone, it becomes your pleasure to do things that enhance their lives and bring you closer together, rather than a chore.

It's not: *Sonofabitch, I have to do this bullshit thing for my wife again.* It's: *I'm grateful for another opportunity to demonstrate to my wife that she comes first and that I can be counted on to be there for her, and needn't look elsewhere for happiness and fulfillment.*

Once someone figures out how to help a man equate the glass situation (which does not, and will never, affect

him emotionally) with DEEPLY wounding his wife and making her feel sad, alone, unloved, abandoned, disrespected, afraid, etc. ... Once men really grasp that and accept it as true even though it doesn't make sense to them?

Everything changes forever.