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“Bringing our Family Together” Best practices everywhere

Dear Colleagues,

“*Bringing Teams Together*” seems to have inspired some colleagues to make similar improvements in their home environment. For sure, the administration, and perhaps you, will be pleasantly surprised to read that our colleagues have transferred best practices from their workplace to their home.

The text we publish below was sent to us by a colleague – we would like to thank the anonymous author(s) for sharing it with us.

The Central Staff Committee

Bringing our Family Together

Dear colleagues,

I would like to inform you myself, before rumours start spreading around:

I have just asked my husband to move out of our family house where he's been living with me and our small children.

First, he was shocked and wanted to know why. Then I explained to him that:

- 1.) This will decrease our family's environmental footprint by 1/8 (12.5%). In order to make use of our family house in a sustainable way, we need to avoid leaving large areas of our house empty by reorganising our daily lives. By discarding one place to sleep and moving closer together, the top floor will be cleared and from now on remain empty. Thereby, power consumption will be reduced. In light of our family's commitment to environmental sustainability and the efforts to reduce our energy consumption, it is neither viable nor socially responsible to leave large areas of our family house left empty. All of us can make a difference for the environment. We should work together towards a more

sustainable future.

2.) This is part of our new family concept, which I call "Bringing our Family Together". I told him that moving him out has the added benefit of keeping our family house vibrant and strengthening our sense of belonging by bringing our whole family together. It also gives us the flexibility to adapt to our changing needs.

I furthermore told him that preparations for this reorganisation are in full swing. Accommodation plans for the remaining family have been reviewed and as of 25 March, our children will begin to relocate within the house. The plans for his move out are to follow in due course.

When I showed him our "bringing family together" relocation plan with all our family member's names filled in except for his name (which was evidently missing), he looked at me with this blank look, a mixture of unbelief and despair.

I assume that's normal. Change is never easy. Being a loving and caring wife, personally, I actually do have some sympathy for him, of course. But as a family, we need to be professional. We need to adapt to our family's changing needs. And we need to keep in mind our common goal, namely improving our effectiveness in order to strengthen our commitment to our family life. We all have to focus on what is best for our family and for our environment, not only as self-centered individuals but in a holistic, collaborative way.

Even though I had just informed him about the upcoming changes in a very kind and supportive manner, he nevertheless seemed negatively surprised and unsettled. He asked me whether the past 15 years spent together meant nothing to me and expressed concern that this change would exclude him from our family life.

Of course I found some warm-hearted words and kindly reassured him that he should not worry about any of this. I told him that:

1.) I really appreciate his past contribution. Here, I made a strong effort in listing all his achievements and contributions in house cleaning and years of childcare, so that he knows that his contribution is very much valued.

2.) He will continue this contribution in the future. I made it abundantly clear that his move out will neither affect his household responsibilities, nor the required level of cleaning performance. I informed him that from now on, he will come to our house in the morning and leave as soon as he has managed to finish all his household tasks for the day. I furthermore informed him that in addition to his previous tasks, he will get an increase of 15% additional tasks. Expected future improvements of our household devices warrant it. When he looked puzzled, I told him that he can do it. And that he will do it.

3.) Regarding his concerns that he will not have a place to be, I reassured him that while he is neither cleaning nor washing (which shouldn't happen anyway, as there's always plenty of work to be done), he can spend a few minutes break in one of our rooms, if not occupied by someone else. It will be his responsibility to check for time slots when the children are away from home, in order to find out when empty rooms are available. Evidently, child's approval to make use of the room is to be obtained every time in advance, as a matter of courtesy.

4.) He was informed that he will be provided with a locker in the cellar where he can keep his house-cleaning tools (such as his vacuum cleaner and swiffer). He might even temporarily store some of his personal belongings there while doing the housework.

His reaction did not meet the expectations. After all the convincing and empathic explanations which I had provided to him, he still insisted on his presumption that he might not be a full-fledged member of our family any more. He even dared to ask me whether I might reconsider my decision (can you imagine?).

I told him that I would like nothing better. It's just that I don't have a choice. As much as I would love to reconsider, that is beyond my scope of decision. In order to achieve our common goals, his move out of our family house is inevitable. It is conditioned by our holistic goals of environmental sustainability and bringing our family closer together. It's not my personal choice. There is nothing I can do about it. Things are the way they are.

When he looked at me in disbelief, I reminded him of how grateful he should be for having such a great family and me as a loving and caring wife.

I also reminded him how good we have it that none of our children needs to move out. It is an inevitable fact that we have to reduce the number of space occupied in our family house. There is nothing we can do about that, it is a fact. But we can make the best out of it. So through his move out, all our children will be able to stay in our house. After all, they are all pretty young, 5 years in average. So I reminded him to be thankful that together, we have found such a people-friendly and sustainable solution, which best accommodates the wishes of all family members. Now it is time to adapt. Together, we will create a vibrant and energizing collaborative family environment.

After I had said that, he became silent. He just looked at me with an incredulous expression on his face. Then he turned around without a word and left the room.

So I did not even have opportunity to tell him that any potential lack of personal contact with our children will be more than compensated by mandatory family meetings, which will greatly improve the team spirit and the personal relationships within our family.

Sometimes he is just so resistant to change. As I said before, somehow I even understand him. Change is never easy. But being responsible for our family, I cannot be sentimental. I need to ensure that he delivers according to expectations. So I will be very clear that this must not negatively impact his performance.

And he will maintain and increase his cleaning performance, of that I am sure. He knows exactly what will happen if he does not. We both know. So there is no need to explicitly remind him.

Instead, I can focus on my future communication. After all, I should be perceived as the caring and loving wife who I actually am.

Fortunately, I have learned effective communication methods. First, I will give him time to speak and to raise his concerns, such that he will gain the impression of being heard. This, I have read between the lines of my communication training, will make him feel even more valued and respected and therefore will drive him to clean our family house even more.

Of course, any arguments put forward by him might not lead to actual changes or reconsiderations, as I am only a small being in the face of the universe, therefore always being bound by the circumstances that prevail. So my husband and I are both aware that nothing he might say will ever be taken into account, nor make any difference. Then how can I ensure to be perceived by my children as the caring and loving wife who I actually am?

I think I will just start repeating:

"How can I support you? What can I do for you?"

This is what I will say to my husband at every occasion, after he has been moved out of our family house in order to bring our family together. I am sure he will understand.