Most couples agree that household chores and parenting responsibilities should be shared, but many fail to find a split that actually works. Here are some tips that could help couples win the domestic war.

Traditionally, women have assumed the role of the caregiver, while husbands sought to provide financial support for their families. Society has come a long way since and women are now leaders and working professionals in their own right.

Increasingly, the domain of marriage is becoming a partnership between husband and wife. Household responsibilities and domestic affairs are no longer a one-way street, but are managed together and shared.

Benefits of sharing household responsibilities

There are many benefits when you and your spouse share your responsibilities at home. Some of them include:

- Easing family stress, resulting in fewer arguments at home
- Giving couples more time for activities that both enjoy
- Breaking away from gender stereotypes (e.g. men go to work, and women stay home to watch over the kids and manage household chores)
- Giving couples an opportunity to achieve a fair balance at home

**Did you know?**

A new study done by the University of Missouri and Utah State University has revealed that husbands and fathers who helped out with household chores have happier marriages. Marriages were happier when couples worked together on their responsibilities, regardless of the type of house chores they were working on.
Sharing and caring

While many couples would agree that household chores and parenting responsibilities should be shared, few actually find a split that works. Here are some tips on how couples can manage their house chores efficiently and effectively:

1. Decide who does what. There will always be bills to pay, dishes to do, dirty laundry and kids to run after at home. Determining what needs to be done and who does what, will help couples get a clearer picture of the workload distribution. Draw a roster if you have to. This will help you even out your responsibilities, as well as to plan your daily schedules in advance. So if you have always been doing the dishes while your spouse does the laundry, perhaps you can switch your responsibilities every once in a while.

2. Don’t practice the 50/50 split. Splitting your chores right down the middle makes your marital relationship more of a business relationship than an intimate one. According to a recent Norwegian study, couples who adopt the 50/50 approach are more likely to end in divorce. So avoid keeping score on your household chores. Instead, work together as a team. For example, if the kitchen needs cleaning, you can start with the cupboards, while your partner mops the floor.

3. Take turns to care for your child. If you have a baby, caring for him is a round-the-clock adventure. Many couples can get tired and frustrated from their endless baby duties. Work out a schedule that will allow you and your spouse to both rest and care for your baby. If you are breastfeeding, perhaps your partner can handle night-time diaper changes. If you’re using a bottle, take turns feeding the baby.

4. Stay united. The presence of a child in your home can create conflict between you and your spouse. Having grown up in different environments, you are bound to have different sets of values, expectations and discipline methods when it comes to parenting. However, when it comes to your child, they need to see that both their parents are a united front. The trick is to learn how to meet in the middle on your ideals on parenting, discipline and child-raising, and come up with a plan that both of you can agree on and follow through.

5. Be open to changes. As with the trials and tribulations in life, remember that nothing is ever set in stone. If your roster does not fall into place at first, be prepared to make the necessary changes to accommodate with both your busy schedules. Do not be discouraged by setbacks. Instead, use them as fodder to assess what may or may not work, and gradually improve on your roster.

6. Turn up the music. Whether you are dusting or vacuuming or teaching your kids how to cook, a little bit of music always helps to lighten up the mood. Listening to music also reduces stress and anxiety, so be sure to turn up the music while you engage in your chores.

7. Make a habit of thanking each other. Ever heard of the saying, “A little thanks goes a long way?” A simple “thank you” can speak volumes of your gratitude and appreciation towards your partner. Recognising his or her hard work in maintaining a functional household will likely breed efficacious behaviours in the long run. This makes navigating through the endless enormity of house chores just that much easier.

Breaking old habits and redistributing the workload at home requires commitment and often involves lots of trial and error. But the effort you put into sharing responsibilities with your spouse will foster a relationship in which both of you will feel like equal partners.