

DON'T LET A BAD DAY COME BETWEEN YOU

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How's your day going? Maybe everything's going your way. You hit all green lights on your commute, got great feedback from your boss, and tonight is date night. Or maybe it's been one of *those days* – can anything else go wrong? You overslept, spilled your entire mug of coffee, and snapped at your spouse, all before leaving the house, and it didn't get any better from there.

We've all been there. A bad day – or even just a bad start to your day – can throw you off, affecting not only your own mood but your relationship with your spouse as well. One bad day here and there seems harmless, but if we're not cognizant of the way we handle them, negative patterns can begin to take hold. So how can you prevent a bad day from coming between you? Here are five tips to consider.

1. Examine your work-life balance.

Work is a common cause of stress. If you find that you're carrying bad days at work into your home life, you might want to look at whether your work-life balance is out of whack. Do you need to set some boundaries? Is there a way to incorporate some buffer time between work and home? This can give you space to decompress and ease into a better mindset, consciously leaving bad vibes behind for the time being.

2. Take a time-out.

Sometimes you might be feeling overwhelmed and unable to interact with your spouse or family in a way you feel good about. In times like this, the best thing might be to simply give yourself a time-out. Go for a walk alone or retreat to a quiet part of the house, but let your spouse or family know you just need a few minutes to clear your head. Take a few deep breaths and try to gain some perspective.

3. Allow do-overs.

You might snap at your spouse or be overly critical simply because you're grouchy from a bad day. Even as the words are coming out of your mouth, you know it's not really what you want to say or how you want to say it. All is not lost. Ask for a do-over, a fresh start. *"I'm sorry, that's not how I wanted to talk to you. Can I start over?"* It might seem cheesy, but it shows your partner that your true intentions were not to hurt them, and that you want to repair any damage. If you're on the receiving end, give your spouse this chance to right the ship. Instead of feeling at odds with each other, it becomes a moment of connection.

4. Exercise emotional intelligence.

Understanding your emotions is the first step in learning to manage and regulate them. Instead of pushing down or denying strong feelings, let yourself feel and acknowledge them, and begin to figure out what helps you neutralize them. Maybe that's getting outdoors or going for a run when you're stressed, or irritable. Perhaps journaling can help. On the other side, lean into your empathy skills if you sense your spouse has had a bad day. Maybe you offer a hug instead of asking why they didn't fill up the car with gas or bringing up that contentious topic.

5. Learn how you can support each other.

Have a conversation about how you can handle bad days together. How can you signal to each other that you're having a bad day? How can you communicate what you need? Is there a certain way you'd like to be supported on those days? It may seem like kind of an odd conversation to have, but it can prevent a lot of misunderstandings and hurt feelings down the road.

A bad day every now and then is a normal part of life. How we handle them is what makes all the difference. By learning to manage our emotions productively and prioritize basic relationship skills, you can make a bad day an opportunity for connection instead of driving a wedge between you.