



How do you ask your partner to share the mental load?

Cut out the card along the dashed line (6 by about 4 inches). Say one line, then stop and listen. Use your own words when they come.

Asking for help with the mental load

1. Show the list: "Here's what's in my head this week."
2. Hand over a whole job, including the noticing and follow-up.
3. "What can I do?" is still work for me. Pick something and own it.
4. Let them do it their way. Step in once, only if it matters.
5. Not keeping score: name how tired you are, not who does more.

All the lines, and when to use them

Can I show you what's in my head this week? I want you to see the whole list, not just the parts that turn into chores. (Before you ask for anything. Your partner may genuinely not know the list exists, and seeing it is often more persuasive than any argument.)

When you ask "what can I do?", I have to stop and make a plan for you. Could you look around and pick something? (Your partner is willing but waits for instructions. Being the manager of the help is still part of the load.)

Would you take over birthday gifts for both our families? All of it: remembering the dates, choosing, ordering and the card. (Handing over a whole area. Naming every stage spells out that the anticipating and the follow-through come with it.)

Could you be the one who reads the school emails this term? I'll unsubscribe so it's really yours. (A recurring stream of information you are always tracking. Removing yourself from the loop keeps you from quietly monitoring it anyway.)

I'll stay out of it for a month, even if you do it differently from me. If something big is about to drop, I'll say so once. (After you hand something over. Letting go of the checking is part of the deal, and agreeing in advance on when you will step in saves arguments.)

I'm not keeping score. I'm tired in a way that sleep doesn't fix, and I think it's the planning. (Your partner hears your request as an accusation about effort. Describing the effect on you moves it away from a contest over who does more.)

I don't need you to tell me I'm doing a lot. I need some of it to stop being mine. (Your partner responds with sympathy or praise instead of change. Kindly redirecting to the actual ask keeps the conversation from ending on a thank-you.)

You carry things I never think about either, like the car insurance and the gutters. Could we each write our lists down before we change anything? (Your partner feels unseen too. Comparing both lists makes the conversation fair and often surprises you both.)

Phrases to avoid

"I shouldn't have to ask.": It may feel true, but it leaves your partner with a complaint and no request. Ask anyway, then talk about the noticing.

"Just help more.": It is too vague to act on and tends to produce a burst of extra tasks with you still doing the planning.

"Let me know if you need anything.": From the other side, it sounds generous but hands the thinking right back. Offer to own something specific instead.

"Never mind, it's faster if I do it.": Faster today, heavier forever. Taking jobs back confirms the split you are trying to change.

"You're hopeless at this stuff.": It turns a fixable division of work into a verdict on your partner, and people rarely take on jobs they are told they are bad at.

If you are afraid of your partner, scripts are not the answer: call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. In danger, call 911.