

Need an attitude adjustment about messy dishes

November 7, 2019 | 4 upvotes | by [BePrivateGirl](#)

Background:

I'm 33/ he's 47/ his daughter is 20.

RPW award for 2+ years. RP aware for longer. He works more than full time running his own company.

Together with my boyfriend for 7 years, living together for about 1.5 years. When I first met him his house was always meticulous and clean. A couple things were different then: he ate out frequently, his daughter wasn't around on the days that I would be there, and I think he did what any decent guy would do and tidied up a bit before I arrived.

When I moved in I vowed to rise to his standards. I've used plenty of strategies to keep the house clean. I make the bed as soon as I get up. I always put my shit in the hamper (stupid, but this is an improvement for me) I always scan a room for things I can pick up and put away as I pass through other rooms. I try to clean while I'm cooking. I start laundry before I have my coffee so I can set some of the passive cleaning in motion.

I came from a very messy family and my mom did almost all of the cleaning. I realize that there is a healthy amount of karma going on here. And I can find the humor in this situation. My boyfriends home is so beautiful. It's large and clean, well maintained, beautiful backyard and furniture, nice neighborhood, ...I seriously have every comfort. Even though I make a lot of money I wouldn't be able to ever afford a living situation like this with a stranger/roommate at fair market value.

Problem:

So his daughter is 20 years old. She just doesn't help in the day to day tasks that I need her help with. A funny pet peeve of mine is that she fills the washing machine with dirty clothes and doesn't even run it. This is not a new problem. He's talked to her. I've talked to her. I've Venmo charged her \$10 or \$20 after angry texting her picture of the overflowing trash. She goes to college part time, works part time, and sleeps and watches anime full time.

I work 14h shifts three days a week. And I set the kitchen up to be clean the days before I go to work. I run the dishwasher, take out the trash, clean out the fridge, stock the fridge with groceries. My boyfriend and I split the cost of groceries and I take her requests and lists for things she wants, and I handle it.

But then I go to work. Nobody empties the dishwasher, they just open the racks and take the dishes or utensils they need and move on. Nobody takes out the trash. Nobody brings in their dishes from the coffee table in the living room. I especially love when she leaves her bowls and chopsticks directly on the couch. He's at work these days and he at least puts his dishes in the sink when he eats our leftover meals.

Sometime his daughter goes on a rampage, she cleans the kitchen top to bottom, dusts the insides or the drawers, wipes down the cabinets, cleans out the crumb trays, organized the pantry and wipes down the windows. This happens a few times a year. Awesome. These are all things that I would get to if I wasn't feeling bitter about playing catch up on my days off. Most days there are so many dishes that It's more than a single load in the dishwasher.

What I've tried to do to fix the problem:

I try to do my part to just stay in my own lane and not try to control other people.

I take genuine pride in keeping the house clean when I'm home.

We still use a housekeeper twice a month, though I initially resisted this.

He's talked to her, and she improves for a day or two and then goes back to her old ways.

What I want:

I want an attitude adjustment more than I want advice about how to change her. I was doing the exact same shit at her age and had a bunch of other problems that she hasn't dug herself into a hole with. She's my friend. I enjoy our relationship a lot.

I want to stop shedding all this negative victim attitude and I buckle down and spend the 30 minutes it takes to clean the damn kitchen. It isn't the end of the world and I'm trying to be joyful and pleasant.

I don't blow up about this problem but I do go through mental gymnastics about trying not to bring it up to her when I'm angry, versus trying to say something in a timely manner so I didn't wait for it to become a crisis before I say anything.

It just bothers me. Maybe I just needed to vent. Maybe I just need some positive affirmations. I don't know.

TL;DR My LTRs daughter is messy and I'm tired of feeling negative about it.

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Comments

Ragingdollface • 6 points • 8 November, 2019 03:43 AM

Does she not need improvement either? I think keeping it to yourself would honestly do her more harm than good, and if you care about her as a person and a friend perhaps a decent heart-to-heart is in order. But beyond that- if you truly wish to stop having it bother you, then make cleaning **your job** and **own it**. You need to stop expecting or hoping others will pull their weight or help out, and start telling yourself it's solely *your* responsibility.

You can of course accept help here and there, but stop **expecting** it. Do you expect others to help you wash your hair? Probably not. So think of tidying up and chores as the same. I know it's easier said than done, but the fake it till you make it formula does work. Every time you get angry at someone not helping, take a deep breath and tell yourself it's **your job**. That's basically how I handle it and it works for me.

BePrivateGirl[S] • 2 points • 8 November, 2019 04:04 AM

I am trying. I even say to myself as I clean the kitchen, "I am proud of this kitchen" "this is the kitchen where I nourish myself and my loved ones" "keeping this kitchen a warm and loving space brings me joy" That's why it irritates me even more when I put on my gloves and sigh. I am happy to do these things. If it was already tidy, I would still go in there and polish it.

I want to hold the attitude that's it's my joyful realm, not a nuisance, but sometimes my positive thinking just doesn't get me there.

Ragingdollface • 7 points • 8 November, 2019 04:25 AM

Does considering it your proud kitchen or joyful realm not make it more aggravating when others mess it up? Considering cleaning my job instead of calling it my space tends to help me disassociate better when people dirty things, because it feels more like a personal insult to me otherwise. You can also look at each mess as an opportunity to be useful and needed, which is also what I do.

BePrivateGirl[S] • 3 points • 8 November, 2019 04:31 AM

This is really helpful. Maybe if I stop personalizing the space I could be less offended. Great advice. Thank you so much!!

[deleted] • 3 points • 8 November, 2019 12:27 PM

I'm a reformed slob and it drives me nuts dealing with other people's messes. You'd think I'd be sympathetic, but in fact, I get really frustrated...it's like, I'm trying SO HARD to be good and neat and clean, I can't stand it when other people mess up the house.

Maybe with time, it'll get easier to be tolerant. Meanwhile, do your best not to make this into an emotional issue. You have the right to ask your boyfriend and his daughter to be neater, but they'll probably hear your message better if you keep it calm and direct.

gdobssor • 5 points • 8 November, 2019 11:23 AM*

Don't venmo charge her. That's really petty and will just breed resentment.

I think I'm repeating this too often on here, but this technique does work.

3 levels of muscle. Level one, y'all to her again. Nicely. Explain exactly why this is a problem for you and

exactly what you need her to do from now on. Draw up a chore list, something she can see and remember to do every day, if you think that would help her remember.

Level two: explain again, nicely, but say, look, we have already talked to you about this lots of times. You need to start doing this. If you don't, then we will (insert consequence here).

Level three would be to impose the consequence for a week, and explain why, and also say that the next time it is two weeks. For example, you could not get her requests from the supermarket. You could have a week off from cooking and tell her that she will need to cook for herself. You could not vacuum or dust her room or tell the cleaning lady not to do it. You could take away her access to your car, or change the password to the Netflix account for a week.

In an extreme situation, you could tell her to find somewhere else to live, but in all honesty, that would have to be your partner's decision, and I wouldn't push that on him. That should be an extreme last resort.

BePrivateGirl[S] • 1 point • 8 November, 2019 06:36 PM

I think this is really good advice. The only thing is I don't parent her. We don't have that sort of relationship. Neither her, or her dad, or me are desiring me to be a parent to her. So I think he would have to be the one doing any disciplining.

I stopped doing the Venmo thing and I don't think anybody took a lot of offense. She's Venmo charged me about silly things. And in general we get along famously. We sit and chat. We do fun things with the dog. I give her advice about college and dating (only because she asks for my opinion) so yeah, I don't really play any sort of role where I could go past just talking to her about my concerns.

szsunshine • 5 points • 8 November, 2019 12:56 PM

I would do natural consequences for BOTH of them. Your BF is as much to blame as his DD (I say this as a mom with a sloppy teen of my own).

You do not owe your BF any amount of housework because you are living in a house you couldn't afford on your own. His house is his choice - you could afford your own place if you lived by yourself.

Buy a bin for the laundry room and if her dirty clothes are in the washer take them out and leave them in the bin for her to handle. She'll wash her clothes when she needs something to wear.

The next time the kitchen is a mess, call / tell your boyfriend "I can't cook in a messy kitchen. It stresses me out. Let's eat out tonight until you and daughter (both of them, not just him and not just her) figure out what to do about the dirty kitchen." (Don't say "clean up" say "figure out what to do" because this is not a 1x problem). Repeat as long as the kitchen is dirty and every time the same problem happens again. Just tell him "I can't cook in a messy kitchen, it stresses me out." You don't have to add that it's not your job to clean up after two grown adults unless someone mentions that you can / should clean the mess on your day off. (My assumption is that he pays for dinner when you don't cook. If you split bills for going out to dinner then tell him you're just getting takeout for yourself and letting him and letting him and his daughter fend for themselves).

When his daughter DOES clean, use positive reinforcement and tell her how great it looks. You don't have to thank her for cleaning, but do NOTICE and gush about it. Don't have the attitude that you could have done it yourself....you didn't have to. Positive reinforcement.

Could it be possible that the daughter is bipolar? (yes could just be a typical teen who sleeps all day then gets bursts of energy, but I thought I'd ask....)

cassandraro39 • 1 point • 18 November, 2019 12:59 AM

Usually I would write just clean it because my kids aren't that messy. Today however I came home to a disaster

that even I couldn't over look.

We had gone grocery shopping so the kids got their favorite food. I said dad and I are going out so put the food away and make yourself snacks. My husband and I went on a mile in a half walk and a drive.

I came back and everyone was watching tv or playing games and the kitchen looked like it threw up on itself. They left all the cabinets open, the microwave someone didn't even bother closing it after getting their food out, the grocery bags where all over the floor, wrappers on the counter ect.

I did the same thing you did, I snapped a picture and sent it to them. Then I called a family meeting where I said everyone stand in the dinning room and look at the kitchen! This is just unacceptable! (Angry mom face here)

This caused my dear children to not say a word but to quickly pick up the kitchen, the dinning room, and the family room.

It's not your attitude it's you haven't earned the moms mad we better shape up mode from your step daughter. Which is a type of respect that's going to be hard to earn at this juncture. You have to develop some kind of friendship with her to get to the point of her taking what's upsetting you seriously.

hana-bullyn • 2 points • 8 November, 2019 07:39 AM

She's not your daughter. It's bad enough when a step-parent imposes themselves onto a child's life but then to also demand natural family harmony & respect as if it's owed to them... Sorry, but she has no obligation to you and never has. You have no right to make any demands of her.

gdobssor • 5 points • 8 November, 2019 11:08 AM

You're completely wrong. It doesn't matter whether someone is your parent or not. If they are nice enough to let you stay with them and cook for you, you have respect for them and respect for their home. Regardless of whether you live there or are just staying there temporarily, you absolutely shouldn't leave dirty dishes/clothes lying around and take up the washing machine like that. That's lazy and rude to your hosts, and just bad manners, and also super unattractive if she's hoping to get a nice boyfriend/husband one day herself.

Also, if you had a roommate that was constantly leaving out smelly, dirty clothes and dishes on sofas and the floor, expecting you to pick up after them and not doing their share as an adult living there, I bet you would feel imposed on, especially if you paid rent/mortgage while they lived there rent free or for low cost rent, which it's very likely the daughter does if she's a student. She's a young adult, but still an adult, and needs to respect the house she's living in.

Teaching her anything else would put her at a complete disadvantage for when she one day moves out and gets married herself.

LateralThinker13 • 3 points • 8 November, 2019 03:34 PM

BZZZZT. Wrong. The moment she moved in, she gets, at a MINIMUM, roommate-rights to cleanliness. And as the owner of the house (father) agrees, it IS an issue to be fixed with the daughter. She has an obligation to do what her father says, at the very least... or pay the consequences.

Reframe the original post to "I'm renting a room from..." and see if your advice changes. Also, consider that OP's daughter wasn't around much in the beginning. So now the behavior is slipping, the quality of life is slipping, to the point that even an occasional housekeeper isn't doing enough.

That's an issue, not something for OP to "suck up and drive on" as your attitude suggests.

Zegiknie • 0 points • 9 November, 2019 07:53 PM

It's the little things in life that make you happy... And the little bowls on the couches that can drive you over the edge.

Consider it great practice for stoicism.

This, too, shall pass. When she leaves the house. Where I am from, we have a tradition where you get to write scolding poetry for your loved ones about how bad they have been on a certain holiday. Hope you have a similar way to let off steam and not have resentment build up.

Maybe a few extra hours of housekeeping can come out of her wages?

BePrivateGirl[S] • 1 point • 9 November, 2019 10:14 PM

Great perspective to try to find joy as easily as it is to come to annoyance. I'll try to practice that today.