



Maintenance

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| <p>We've been so busy building, we forgot the seasonal upkeep</p> | | | <p>What is invisible maintenance?</p> | |
| <p>I need to get ready for winter - when do I do that?</p> | | <p>How do we keep talking once we start the project?</p> | | <p>They made a lot of mistakes on the project - how do we fix them?</p> |
| | <p>Who's in charge here?</p> | | <p>How do we maintain the dream of our home project?</p> | |
| | | <p>They want to clean house, how will we get finished this way?</p> | | <p>Are we having fun yet?</p> |

Maintenance

Maintaining the dream – keeping the vision alive

Home & communication

structures will both need regular maintenance. You are building something – a home – that will have a presence of its own; and it will also call out to you for maintenance: cleaning, clearing gutters, placing winter protections, and more. You will need to heed these calls. Yet you also need to attend to the invisible maintenance of the communication structures you have created. These too will need to be remembered and repeated. Of course, you will develop your own special ways of addressing the points in this book – ways to check in on each other and the project plans; how to enhance each other's perspectives; and how to bring up and resolve differences.

But it all needs to be kept up. It is like housework of all kinds: it is effective only in its repetition, not just by doing the good act once. So, consider some of the visibles and invisibles that will sweep out the gathering dust of resentments, the cobwebs of neglected plans, and the flood of financial tides that can engulf the Home Team just as it is trying to get things nice and homey. Keep it up – notice what works and do it again; even try it a new way.



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You will get good results for your Home Team by moving on toward the improvement of the home. Look forward to using your new skills and routines with each other.

“Home Improvement” is also an action verb

Will you let the new Home reflect the real changes you are bringing out in your own Home Team? Yes? So, just keep it up! Make the new routines part of your scheduled maintenance plans. Let these become habitual. Let the kids remind you to do your personalized maintenance plans. Reread the book and recall how you solved these issues already, and then – do it again! Look through this chapter and see what activities you really need to plan for this week and even tonight!

How do you maintain the dream of a project?

The time you spend between work tasks may often be zoned for nonuse (or zoning out). But it can be viewed as time to gain perspective and to communicate about the project. Encouragement is an important maintenance task, especially when things are “mid-mess” and the team is tired.

If there is a sketch, model, or design to look at, it is good to hover near it while sipping that tea and giving that much-needed hug. You can point out how certain things are coming together or taking shape. This small comment about progress will bring joy to your partner’s heart. Let these comments seep into your own heart, and repeat them – it will nourish your spirit.

What about problems?

If things are getting out of whack, well, there's the rub. It is truly important to take a deep breath and use the utmost tact when bringing forward an overlooked detail if it is going to mean backtracking, waste, or (yes – yikes) opening up a wall that just got sealed.

Sometimes, this means a job delay or a change in the design. If an important tool was left inside the wall, figure out the cost in materials and time versus the cost of the tool. (Yes, I have done this more than once.)

The truth is, this can be a hot spot for couples working together on a job. But just remember that blame is about the last thing you both need.

If you need to take a time-out, do so.

It is 'some' good if the one who caused the error can apologize, but don't demand it of them, even in your own mind. Some folks are too embarrassed to admit their mistakes until they can see a solution. As for couples during this tense moment, that is why God invented prayer – gladly let others pray for you and do stop to pray yourselves anytime for difficulties like this.

Give the tension a chance to settle; remember that you are amateurs trying to construct a vision together. Think in realistic proportions. When someone makes a mistake in the construction business, they are usually not docked for the cost. Even professionals figure mistakes into their estimates. Don't get too wrapped up in the loss.

It is likely that your mistakes are natural and normal for the learning period on the job. And, hopefully, not too expensive. It will be important to both forgive and to yield to the process of learning from the mistakes you each make.

Rebudgeting and plan "B"

If you need to rebudget due to costly mistakes, it will require a re-envisioning of the design together. This will take communication and perhaps role redefinition; maybe even hiring some special help. As long as it is done without

A pile of Sheetrock can be a fun backdrop for creativity.
Try drawing with markers on the reverse side –
Maybe a mural of a fantasy island –
Or pretend place settings that reflect the characters that family members wish to portray.
(If you have children, do remember not to stack Sheetrock on its side, but lay it flat for safety's sake, or screw it in place while drawing on it.)

blame, and with forgiveness in the air, much can be learned in the sober moments of post-mistake conferring.

At this time, you will need to be more accepting of limitations, and more in focus about the realities of how to do the job and what tasks you should get help with. Out of a loving forgiveness comes acceptance. Acceptance allows us to see reality more crisply, and so make better plans. And you will find relief in knowing that your partner really does love you even after discovering that you can't cut sheetrock right – what a graceful realization.

Are we having fun yet?

It is truly important that the process of the family project reflect the tone and values of the family. If everyone is screaming at each other and being critical, nothing is gained. Notice **HOW** it is going, and talk about it. Do you need some ground rules to civilize things? You may need to revisit chapters such as Deep Communication or Roles.



Should there be a new routine for the schedule? Do kids need time or input? Are people tired and need rest? Perhaps you need to have dinner in a new way (yet another use for that pile of Sheetrock?), change chores, or move homework time.

Maybe uninterrupted times for work and for play are needed. Maybe finding a method to interrupt when you are needed elsewhere would bring more peace of mind to all.

Home Team Leadership

The grown-ups need to remember that they are in charge and can change the ground rules to suit the occasion. If your family needs more order, you can get more structured. If the old routine is too confining, you can make new, looser rules. Just be sure that the new conditions still afford you good supervision of the kids and their activities with friends, and give you opportunities for little talks and times to share each other's lives.

Leadership is also evidenced by the tone you set as you tackle these new projects. Are you meeting them with the type of sportsmanship you would like to see your kids use when they join the track team? Even if it stretches you, you will grow, and so will they, as you tackle these new projects at home. The kids will pack these lessons for lunch when they go to school and meet their own challenges.

Maintenance is a growth industry

It is in the small moments and the corrections of mistakes that we grow. As a couple, you will learn to accept yourselves and each other, to show your faults, admit them, and move on. This vulnerability has a wonderful impact on the unconditional love we hope for in a marriage. It makes for the best foundation for the family's growth.

House maintenance

Weekly and seasonal chores -- the not-so-forgotten tasks

We often figure as we are building a project that it will get done -- once and for all -- and that is it. But that is not it. It will be important to schedule in maintenance time on a regular basis. Protecting what you just built is important and will pay off. Good maintenance will keep finishes up to par, will keep moisture from destroying structures, and will keep things tidy. And as you build more, you will need to add those new structures to your maintenance lists.

On longer projects, plan to spend 25% of the work time available doing this type of task. Taking debris to the dump, putting up seasonal weather protection, repairing the roof -- all are still going to need their time. Even the simple tasks of housekeeping need to be figured into the work schedule.

If you ordinarily do those tasks yourself and instead you spend your time on a project, who else will do them? What happens when they are not done? Having things pile up and not get put away or cleaned is difficult on the family. It is hard to keep a perspective on the importance of chores in the midst of a vigorous project, but it pays off in family contentment.

So, keep up with the chores or teach/pay others to do them. And of course, promote family harmony by encouraging rather than expecting.



Maintenance schedule to keep Communication going strong

Weekly Check-ins are important to review plans and preview upcoming efforts, and how these fit into everyone's lives that week. What is the family schedule? How is everyone doing? How is the project going? Do we like the results? Are we having fun yet?

Planning for activities ahead can help allay worries that people's needs could be overlooked. A child who sees their school concert in the line-up will feel more included – even if they must deal with no after-school guests due to construction debris that week. The Home Team adults can work out the basic plan as decision makers, and then share the plans with the rest of the family, open to modifications. The children will be grateful to be included and feel more a part of the project. After all, they are living with it too.

Monthly budget review. As you pay your bills, it is a good time to also review your project. Refer here to the Budget chapter. Notice the bills for the project and set them aside into one pile. Review them a few days later together. Ask yourselves, are we on track with materials? Are things being delivered on time? Do we need to send out for bids? Can we cover these expenses or should we look at another way of funding the project? Does spending on another front need to be held back? This talk can bring anxiety, but all people feel that way about money. It works when the team's decision makers share



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the information and make decisions together that will benefit the family.

Daily awareness of your partner. Be mindful of your partner's attitude and need for encouragement throughout the day. Give them a kind boost to help them step into the tasks ahead. This awareness of your partner includes compassion and assistance, and may include prayer for each other and for the family. Assistance can be shown in little ways – like preparing a cup of tea or a special dessert. Or it may be shown by rubbing their neck and putting a kiss where needed. Such gestures mean a lot within the family team.

Unforeseen needs. You may suddenly become aware of problems with materials or tasks that surpass your skills or your partner's. These moments often have feelings associated with them. Breathe slowly and deeply and refer to the steps for giving and receiving feedback in the Chapters on Communication. Gently engage your partner and tactfully embark on the feedback process. It may be a bit tense, but following the road maps in this book may help considerably to reduce tension and help your family learn ways to get back on track after unpleasant surprises.

Evening review. Time to wind down. Just talk and share about the project and the day. There may have been surprises, but they have been handled well enough. Share with each other. What was hard? What was easy? Maybe some muscles are sore. This is where replenishers come in – rubs, tea, quiet baths, and so on. But while you share – make no changes in plans, please. This is just time to let each other know how it is going. You are probably too tired to face new decision making at this time anyway. Table all of that until you can face it fresh and with more options. Listen and have compassion – no fixing, just caring.

Notes from Maintenance

There are many little pieces in this chapter like a scrapbook

Visit your Communication area and scan this chapter together

Put marks on the things that pertain to your situation; be gentle and non-blaming

Don't figure you must sort all these out right off the bat

Pick a few easy ones and make a date to address them with ease

Any seasonal maintenance needs?

List them and share with each other, figure on when they can be done so you are not surprised when they disrupt the construction flow

Thinking about HOW the project times have gone, consider - what is the tone of your project? *(check all that apply)*

Light hearted - fun times

Work -like, we start on time and achieve our goals

Frustrations and challenges

Tempers are tested

New discomforts but with hope bursting through

Take some time at your Communication Table to talk about the tone of your project and how you want to maintain it or change it in your home life