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Maggie Holland is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the state of Washington. She has been practicing since 2018 and currently works in her own private practice. She specializes in working with women that struggle with anxiety, burnout, people-pleasing, perfectionism and perinatal concerns. She also has extensive experience working with survivors of narcissistic abuse and dysfunctional family dynamics. When she's not working you can find her cuddled up with a book and her two large dogs, Dipstick and Doodle. Welcome, Maggie

Allison Puryear (she/her): Welcome back to Not Boring CEs. I'm here with Maggie Holland, and we are gonna be talking about the mental load. You guys may have heard of this in like your social media accounts. She maybe heard it in some CEs. Hopefully, this is something we're talking about more and more. But Maggie is gonna walk us through the mental load. And why? It's important clinically for our people. So thanks for being here.

Maggie Holland: Absolutely thank you for having me, Allison, yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): So can we just start off with like, what? What is the mental load?

Maggie Holland: Yeah. Yeah. And you know, I think there's a lot of things that get lumped into this. So I think this is a really great place to start. So I think of the mental load is kind of encompassing all the cognitive work that it takes to do all the more non tangible tasks that are required for your household and your relationship and your family and your work life to function. And so, as we're thinking about this

Maggie Holland: a lot of times, this is kind of thought as as that endless to do list right like you get 3 things off of it, and 4 things appear. You know it. It's never really done. There's always more that has to get done and and so it's kind of all the cognitive work that goes with that. But as we talk about this, and as we look at our families, and as we look at our relationships

Maggie Holland: both with our partners and with extended family as well. I think it's really important that we also include the emotional labor that comes with things. Because that can kind of be something that isn't seen either. So

Maggie Holland: it kind of can encompass a lot of things. But it's basically like those things that mainly happen inside of your brain. And it's not always. Sometimes it can include a thing that you like to do right like

Maggie Holland: unloading the dishes is definitely some domestic work, and you have to think, oh, we don't have any clean dishes that needs to happen. But it's that the thinking portion of all of these tasks is really what that mental load is referring to. Yeah. Yeah. And I think sometimes what I see is, people talk about the mental load as the unloading of the dishwasher, not just the noticing that it needs to be done. And this is the distinct

Allison Puryear (she/her): piece of it where you may like I love. We'll probably talk about Eve Rodsky, at some point in here. Maybe we will. And I love her framework for how things get done. But it doesn't mean you don't notice that it needs to be done, even if it is the other person's task. Is there

Maggie Holland: their baby in the household? We still notice. And then we manage our feelings. So yeah.

Maggie Holland: yeah. And I think that portion of it. So there's a lot of names that come with this, right? So there's like emotional labor. And then there's the mental load. And you know, as we're talking about what we're talking about with the dishes. That's domestic labor, right? So there's lots of sub names for that. And I think a really important sub name that helped it click for me was when people when I heard the phrase, invisible work, because a lot of times this work

Maggie Holland: for a lot of reasons that we're gonna talk about is devalued. And when it's devalued, that means that then goes unseen. And then that being unseen is also unappreciated. And so then, if it's not conceptualized as work, then it's taken for granted, and people don't think about it a lot. But you still have to. You're still using brain calories to think about. There's no clean dishes, right? Or like

Maggie Holland: somebody wants macaroni and cheese tonight, and there's no pots clean in the house right? And like, so that's that is work that happens, too. Right? And so the thing that really helped it click for me was when somebody used the phrase, invisible labor. And yeah, cause it doesn't always get seen, some of it gets seen. And sometimes a part of it gets seen. But the whole process doesn't always get seen. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah. And I think about how like our culture in America is so

Allison Puryear (she/her): productive and capitalistic. And this idea that like because it doesn't fall under the kind of work that's paid because it doesn't fall under like this is a vocation or

Allison Puryear (she/her): like a job. Whether or not you're working outside the home. You're like, we're all working inside the home, too. There's always work to be done there. Yeah. And I think, as we talk about this, a big

Maggie Holland: issue, particularly in our society, is that we are a capitalistic society in queue grown from everybody. Right like this is where this is where we live and work right. And I think a big trap that people fall into as they consider the met. The mental load as work is as we start breaking work down into like

Maggie Holland: worthy work, or like paid versus unpaid work. Because we live in a capitalistic society. Of course, people often are thinking about the paid work, because that's what pays the bill. So we can stay in our home so we can put food on the table, you know. But this is still work, too, and it doesn't make it less important, just because there's not money that comes with it. Necessarily, you know, but I think sometimes people dismiss it because of that that dichotomy is is it paid or not you know

Maggie Holland: yup

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, so can we talk about like some examples of invisible labor so that people can really see how it's at play in their own life. And maybe some of their own reactions to

Maggie Holland: yeah, like absolutely these things and how it gets done in their own household. Yes, absolutely, you know. So I'm gonna give like a really tangible one. And everybody gets frustrated by it. So we're gonna start with a fun one first, right? So as I was preparing for this kind of closer to Christmas, I was watching Home Alone, and

Maggie Holland: that's just like the best example of a mental load that I think I've ever seen in a movie, right? Because, like all these kids are running around the house packing, and and Kevin, the youngest, is running around asking his siblings. I don't know how to pack a suitcase.

What do I pack like? What are the things that I need, and like the siblings are telling him. He's dumb, and, you know, doing sibling things. But then one of the siblings says, I don't know why you're worried about it. Mom's gonna pack it for you like, why are you even freaking out about it? Right?

Maggie Holland: So then they get together. Kevin obviously doesn't make it into the van. I hope I'm not spoiling Home Alone! But that's the premise. So welcome. And then, you know, the mom is sitting on this plane, and I think they're going to Paris. And the mom is talking to the dad. And she's like, I feel like we're forgetting something, and she starts checking down this to do list of, you know. Is it the garage door? Is it the coffee pot? Is it

Maggie Holland: whatever you know, and as she's going through things, her husband's like, Yeah, no, we did that. We did that. It's no big deal. Don't worry about it. And then, and then she's like.

Maggie Holland: Oh, we forgot, Kevin, you know that is the mental load right there. She's sitting on a plane. Her kids should all be on the plane. Her and her partner should have done that together. Her kids should be on the plane, and she should just be able to sit. Her husband's like reading a book, you know, and so like she should be able to sit on the plane to be on the plane. And so that's a that's an example of mental load that's not so close to home for everybody. So if you need to like, share that with a partner or a client, there's a good example.

Maggie Holland: but yeah, she should be able to sit on a plane and just read her book like the husband is. But instead, she's ticking down the to do list when she literally cannot do anything from a plane anyway. So

Maggie Holland: there! There's a cinematic example. I love to use those. Yes, yes, I like your point that it's less. It's less personal to be able to use home alone to ease into this conversation with a partner. Yeah, absolutely. Yes. And so let's do an example that's a little bit more close to home. Everybody. Hold your breath. This is a frustrating one. So

Maggie Holland: let's use an example, a huge domestic task that absolutely must happen every single day is we gotta eat dinner every night right? It's gotta. It's gotta happen. We've got to prepare it. We've gotta cook it. We've got to sit down and eat it. Otherwise everybody's gonna be unhappy right?

Maggie Holland: And it's a pretty big task in and of itself the tangible piece of that. And it's really visible, because, you all know, if you don't get your dinner like that's a pretty visible one. But let's look at the mental load that goes into this example. Specifically right? So

Maggie Holland: there is picking out the meal that we're going to be having right. There is checking the pantry and the fridge to make sure that you have all the ingredients that you need for that dinner to happen right.

Maggie Holland: Whatever ingredients are not in your house. You have got to add those to a list right? You have to make sure that list goes to the grocery store for you with you. You have to make time to go to the grocery store. You have to walk through the grocery store. You have to pick up all of those ingredients. And so this is some of that mental work that goes into that. And we're not even touching on like, do we have the finances to cover this meal. This is within budget like this isn't even touching on.

Maggie Holland: If you have somebody in your family who has really serious food allergies. You have to now check the ingredients. If any of those Allergens are in that food, you know. And so

we're just kind of touching on some of those off the top of my head. But hopefully, that's giving a picture of like, there's a lot more than just putting dinner on the table that goes into getting dinner on the table. And that process can start up to

Maggie Holland: a week sometimes weeks before that dinner ever happens. If you buy in bulk, or, if you're, you know, have a big family, you're needing to consider those things for. So there's a lot of work that goes on before that food ever gets pulled out of the fridge to be cooked. There's a lot of work that happens mentally before that.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. And I would say with that like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): There are people who love to cook the vast majority of people I know, and I used to love to cook. But the vast majority of people I know with families have gotten to the point where they hate to cook. And so there is this

Allison Puryear (she/her): task that isn't pleasurable, that has all these this mental load step stuff beforehand that somebody is on the hook for every single day.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and it takes time.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and it takes energy, and none of us want to do it. Almost none of us. And somebody's got to. So it's just kind of 1 one of those things with adulthood that

Maggie Holland: we have to tackle. Yeah, every day. Absolutely. Yes, yes. And then, okay, add in the piece, if neither of us like it. Now that comes into the research of what's an easy meal to cook? Right? What you know. Researching dinners in 30 min or less. Right?

Maggie Holland: That's work, too. And it's it's okay to not like cooking dinner. It's okay if neither. No one in the house likes to cook dinner, but that is something that then consider like. But somebody has to do it. And that can be pretty tiring to have to force yourself to do things you don't want to do every day.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you know, and we're not even talking about the emotional piece of like if somebody in your household doesn't like it and refuses to eat it. Now you have to cook a second dinner like that was already to bring that up for everybody. But that happens, too. Right? So that's now part of it. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Well, and because you've already done this one I'm just thinking about, particularly when my one of my daughters was smaller and she has some food aversions, and how like I would have already done this thing. I hated doing that I didn't want to do after doing lots of other adulty things that I didn't want to do all day.

Maggie Holland: and then to have her refuse the food. I know that is, you know, as a parent it's my job to make sure my child eats, and like sure I guess we can do Noodles and Parmesan again for you. But I already did all this other work, and so and so it as we're talking about it. I know this feels like something that as we highlight it can get like

Maggie Holland: man. This is really getting pretty big out of control pretty quickly. And I think that's why it's so important that we talk about. It is because you know, your daughter having food aversions that happens, whether we're acknowledging it or not whether we're acknowledging the work it takes to like, Okay, I'm I'm taking a break from my meal, and I'm getting up. And I'm going to start the noodles and Parmesan right? Like.

Maggie Holland: it's great to do that for your kid. And also, we just need to acknowledge that that's more work. Right?

Maggie Holland: Yeah, yeah.

Maggie Holland: yeah, so it can. It can pretty quickly grow and grow as we start looking at it. And I think that's that's why it's important for us to look at that. Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): should we talk about the mental load and how it's kind of stratified across our society

Maggie Holland: yeah, absolutely. So

so this conversation, I'm sure people have been talking about this

Maggie Holland: far earlier than the 1980s. But this conversation really started in the 1980s.

Particularly, there are sociologists, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, I believe, and

Maggie Holland: lot of work around invisible labor. That's kind of where that term comes from. And so again, coming back to this capitalistic standard of understanding work as focus on, you know, activities that you have to do and you get paid for them. That means just because of how things are separated by gender, which

Maggie Holland: let's definitely get into that in just a second. But women's "work" (quote unquote) is not just any job that you do outside of the house, but it does tend to fall on women more once you get home. And so all of this like

Maggie Holland: making the noodles with Parmesan right? That is, then kind of considered more women's work. I hope your partners not like that, Allison, but that's usually considered good. Good. But then that that work, when it falls to women.

Maggie Holland: tends to be devalued more and it's it's usually unpaid. It's limited by. You're limited by the demands of the unpaid work that happens in the home and and there's a lot of moral implications that go with this because it's divided by gender. So this kind of that's where that started. That was her kind of premise of invisible work in the 80s. But a lot of this comes down to how we view gender and how we assign worth. So yeah.

Maggie Holland: that's probably our next place to go. Yeah. Yeah. So let's talk about particularly because we're talking to clinicians right now. And so we have to kind of know who are we? Particularly on the lookout for this, for in our sessions. When does this typically show up in relationships? Let's talk about that stuff so

Maggie Holland: as of right now, I hope that this is shifting because of Eve Rodsky, and all the conversation around this stuff. But as of right now, all of our research is still showing that women still do a majority of the childcare and the domestic work at home

Maggie Holland: really hard to quantify emotional labor. But I don't think I'm going too far out on a limb to say that women do. A majority of the emotional labor in our households as well and in our relationships.

Maggie Holland: and something that's really alarming with this with modern women is that even when we have 2 earner families like, let's take a heterosexual relationship. Man and a

woman. They are both working outside of the house. They are working full-time. Women are still picking up a majority of the child care and domestic work on top of working a full time

Maggie Holland: paid job right? That society sees. And so, you know, as we're looking at this, this disproportionately affects women. And obviously this disproportionately affects heterosexual relationships, you know. And so

Maggie Holland: the level of that, though let's talk about that as well. So we had a recent study by the United Nations. I believe that

Maggie Holland: kind of quantified this for us, and showed that not only are women doing more work, you know, even though they're working outside the home, too. But they're doing almost 3 times as much unpaid mental load work as their as their male partners are doing. So

Maggie Holland: I'm just gonna let that sink in a little bit. So take a traditional heterosexual relationship. They're both working outside the house. They're working the same 40 h in a week.

Maggie Holland: and then she comes home and she's doing 3 times amount of work. Once she punches out at work she comes home. She's doing 3 times more work. That's a problem, huge problem, huge problem.

Maggie Holland: So

Maggie Holland: why, let's talk about that like, why might this be happening?

Maggie Holland: So we have. Where did I pull? I pulled a quote. I kinda wanna read about this

Maggie Holland: So I pulled a study, and I pulled a quote from that that I thought was really really helpful. And so that quote is that women have more favorable attitudes. This is literally what the study said. I'm not just saying this like

Maggie Holland: this. Study came out and said, women have more favorable attitudes towards cleaning, cooking, and childcare than do men.

Maggie Holland: rather than read this next part because they get frustrated by it. Women enjoy it more.

Maggie Holland: They set higher standards for it. That part doesn't make me mad. I think that's true, and they feel more responsible for it. I think that's probably true, too. The first part of women enjoy it more. I'm like, no, I don't enjoy this cleaning. No. But so then the rest of this quote is, furthermore, women's Women's favorable and men's unfavorable attitudes are associated with women's greater contribution to household labor.

Maggie Holland: Let's break that down, can we? Can I ask, when did this study come out, or the thing that this was quoted from. Let me

Maggie Holland: oh, my gosh. I it!

Maggie Holland: I didn't pull any research that wasn't within the last 5 to 10 years. So which one is this? What's the footnote? But I'm like I didn't pull anything that wasn't the last 5 to 10 years. I think the oldest study that I pulled was the 2009 study. So

Allison Puryear (she/her): okay, I won't throw anything. I'll just feel it.

Maggie Holland: That's exactly why we gotta talk about this. Right? I'm like, yeah, because as I'm going through this research, I'm like, okay, this is because at first it made sense. I'm going back to the beginnings. This is from the 1980s. No big deal like, well, that still is alarmingly recent. Right? Most of our lifetimes. But yeah, as I'm starting to pull research to like. Wait, what do you mean? This research came out in 2020, or this one came out in, you know, 2017. What do you mean? No, yeah.

Maggie Holland: So all of my, all the things that I'm pulling and quoting last 5 to 10 years, which is

Maggie Holland: horrifying.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, well, and I'm thinking about like, I mean, they got the data that said that women enjoy it more. They're not just throwing it in there right? So like, why would women be saying that we enjoy it more like if it's on a Likert scale, for instance, I don't know what their methodology was, but if it's on a Likert scale, like what

Allison Puryear (she/her): like socialization goes into that, how? I don't know anybody that

Allison Puryear (she/her): like, I know, some people who would like to clean one room and be done. But like the ongoing.

Maggie Holland: ever present job of cleaning. Yeah. Yeah.

Maggie Holland: Society. Yes, yeah. I'm just like, yes, society. All the feelings. Yes, yes, all the feelings I have to take deep breaths as I talk about this, as I think about this talk about this other clinicians to my clients like.

Maggie Holland: we're all in this together, everybody. This is why we're in this work, even for these frustrating pieces.

Maggie Holland: But yeah, a lot of this is societal conditioning. Right? So there is a lot of societal expectation. There's a lot of societal messaging, as we also consider like when you grow up. Don't forget that all important behavior modeling like watching moms and what moms do right, and how they're messaging and signaling to their children.

Maggie Holland: This is what mom does. This is what Dad does. Now, a lot of this, I just want to acknowledge we're talking about primarily heterosexual relationships. We're gonna talk about how this applies to same sex relationships in a little bit. But

Maggie Holland: yeah, there's a reason we're talking traditional, heterosexual relationships with traditional values of man, woman, mom and dad in households. So we'll talk about that in a little bit. But

Maggie Holland: yeah, so think about growing up as again watching, what does Mom do? How does she act about things like, what are the expectations here? And you know, I also really like to acknowledge the different reinforcements that come in from society, both positive and negative, right. So like as we're talking about positive that is praising for the housework, that is, you know a comment like, Oh, my! Gosh! Your house looks like it's straight out of a Martha Stewart magazine right?

Maggie Holland: Or oh, your kids are so well behaved as if you have any control over that when you're out in public. But it is praise for that work that you've been doing to raise kids that can, you know.

Maggie Holland: act however, people are praising in public, but with that positive praise. I think it's also really important for us to acknowledge the negative reinforcements that come with that, too. And we're talking mom guilt. We're talking, shaming that happens. And that can be really, really intense. Whether somebody has said it to you or they haven't said it to you directly. Doesn't really matter, cause it's I could probably pick out an example from a movie as well of, like, you know.

Maggie Holland: Let's go back to Home Alone right then her I don't know if it's her sister. Gosh, I should have watched that before more recently, but it's whoever is traveling with them, and she's sitting back around the airplane and the Mom Kevin's mom is literally saying, like, what kind of mother am I that I left my youngest child?

Maggie Holland: That's Mom guilt. and shame,  
Allison: the dad wasn't bemoaning what a bad dad he was.

Maggie: No, I'm pretty sure he went back to his book at this point that Dad seemed to actually care, but I'm pretty sure he went back to his book at this point he was like, it's okay, sweetie, like, there's nothing we can do on this plane right now, you know. And so that's that's also negative reinforcing. If you don't do these things.

Maggie Holland: you're gonna have a bad time. So there's a lot of reinforcing that happens on an adult level. But I think it's also really important for us to acknowledge that this starts much younger, that behavior modeling.

Maggie Holland: But also. if there are, you know. boy children and girl children. any combination of household stuff.

Maggie Holland: Disproportionately. The girl children get tasks to help Mom with more of the domestic load and the mental load than boy children tend to be. So, you know, that can include things like

Maggie Holland: cleaning or like honey. Can you go in and grab that grocery list off the counter because we're already all in the car. typically

Maggie Holland: girl, children tend to get 50% more tasks than their boy siblings do. And so this starts really, really young. And I you know it even starts with like.

Maggie Holland: you know, if Mom is cleaning, I mean, there are, you know, pink and purple little broom and mop sets that you can buy. You know that the concept of child kitchens like our children, mimic everything that their parents are doing, and that includes, you know, a missed division of domestic labor that includes mental load work as well.

Maggie Holland: yeah, cause, if and if you watch little kids playing with Barbie dolls or dolls like you're probably gonna at some point in time. Watch the like fight go through of like you didn't remind me of this, and you know the and that happens even in their play. So there it starts really really young yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I think about like, how that ends up

Allison Puryear (she/her): playing out with time, like when you say women are doing 3 times the amount of like household labor

Allison Puryear (she/her): that's spread out over the evenings and the weekends like it's our downtime.

Maggie Holland: Yup is disproportionately spent on maintaining the household. Yep, absolutely. Yeah.

Maggie Holland: And I think you know, we mentioned talking about Eve Rodsky. So what we're talking about there specifically. She's she kind of did this Fair Play book that talks really directly about, you know, dividing this domestic labor, working with the mental load stuff.

Maggie Holland: and something that you know really struck me as I read through that was, how she did a ton of interviews for this. She's not a mental health therapist, but she did her work. It's a really great book, and she interviewed hundreds and hundreds of couples. Fine tuning. She's got a she's got this card deck that you can divide the work out. We're gonna talk about that more later. You can divide the work out. And so she did all of this fine tuning. She had all of these beta testers, and then she interviewed them.

Maggie Holland: and a theme that she pulled from all of her research, for this was, and I quote, "there is this notion that men's time is finite, and women's time is infinite," like women can just come up with more time right? And but as we're talking about it, it's just, you know, women have to. Someone has to do it, and women just do it and figure it out. And so it's after work. It's in the middle of the night.

Maggie Holland: It's on their mornings. It's on the weekends. Sometimes it's in the middle of their work day, you know, like a teacher calls and says, You know.

Maggie Holland: So and so it doesn't have lunch money. And you're like, Okay, here's my credit card

Maggie Holland: that is mental load work, and that's domestic work. And so, as we're looking at it, all of those things, I know it. That that piece doesn't sound really big, like, okay, here's my credit card to reload. That phone call maybe takes 5 min. But if you have a 5 min call every single day of your work day. You all of sudden spent a half an hour doing work for your family while you're at work.

Maggie Holland: So it adds up really, really quickly, even these small little chunks of ones. But coming back to that like the valuing of time. Yeah, there is this notion that men's time is finite, and women's time is infinite, like they're just. They have. They

Maggie Holland: have this like magicians pulling flags out of their hand. Infinite time. They just pull time out of the cosmos somewhere.

Maggie Holland: Yeah, yeah, because

Allison Puryear (she/her): it all still needs to get done. Right? So it appears as such. It seems as though. But really there's this huge consequence to us around our

Maggie Holland: like, our well being because we prioritize these things that do need to get done. Yeah, at our own expense. Yes, absolutely. And you know, and we're talking a lot about I'm using a lot of examples with kids that is not accidental. And that's not like

Maggie Holland: a bias. I'm just playing on that. I have not looked at the reason I keep bringing up kids. Obviously, there's a lot more work when there's more people in the household right?

But our research also points to that. Even men who did closer to their fair share of things before having kids

Maggie Holland: kids is like the great game changer, when it comes to mental things, can still absolutely be imbalanced before having kids. Or if you never wanna have kids, a client never wants to have kids. Things can still absolutely be in balance because of these social learnings and stuff. But

Maggie Holland: our research shows that once kids come into the equation that even if a partner was doing fairly equitable household work, that they significantly cut back after kids come into the picture.

Maggie Holland: And so some of the some of the stats I was seeing on this is up to 5 hours a week, right? And so less work, less work than the female partner.

Maggie Holland: and some of that's, you know. You can't really help it, because if you're doing breast feeding, breast feeding like

Maggie Holland: he can't do that right. A male partner just can't do that.

Maggie Holland: but it's not being compensated for for the things that a male partner can do just across the board. Not all partners are awful in this way. Don't get me wrong, but it's just acknowledging that bias that comes in. If just research shows across the board, it's pretty stark after kids, it's most noticeable. After kid or kids come into the picture and the more kids obviously that a family has

Maggie Holland: typically the more imbalanced, it gets.

Maggie Holland: yeah. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): So

Allison Puryear (she/her): how does this play out for same-sex couples

Allison Puryear (she/her): i'm, curious, if there's a better split there, I really want there to be there is there absolutely is. Yeah. So research on same-sex couples tends to show that it is much more egalitarian with the assigning of tasks, and it just tends to be that there's more communication around it.

Maggie Holland: You know. My gut says that this is also some societal learning around, like how male versus female should be, quote, unquote, communicating. And so in same sex

Maggie Holland: marriages, relationships. they're closer to the same page.

Maggie Holland: usually doing things better. But for the most part our research shows that it's much more equitable as they're dividing by labor. And same sex marriages tend to actually divide, based on their strengths. Pretty a lot more naturally and so there tends to be

Maggie Holland: when it comes to mental load. All relationships have their issues. But when it comes to mental load and domestic work tends to be less resentment around those tasks, because there's better communication about it, and just already more equitable division of labor. And there's and then they come back and talk about it as well.

Maggie Holland: based on strengths, weaknesses, working with each other with that.

Maggie Holland: Okay? Awesome. That's good to hear. So that. And that's that's primarily why I'm talking about heterosexual relationships is because that's primarily what we're talking about today like this doesn't tend to impact same sex relationships as much. But it can still happen right? Anything can happen in any relationship. Frankly, but just

Maggie Holland: across the board. For the most part this is primarily impacting female women who have a male partner, particularly more so when they have children; a kid or children. Yes.

Maggie Holland: yeah. So yeah. Good news there. So if you primarily work with same-sex couples. It's definitely something to be aware of. It's definitely something to look at, because it can still happen. But it just doesn't tend to happen as often.

Maggie Holland: So a little little sunshine of good news, a little ray there, so i'm thinking about like how we

Maggie Holland: bring this up in session with clients, particularly like, I mean, some people are coming in for relationship struggles. Some people are not coming in for relationship struggles. They're coming in because they're overwhelmed because they feel like, no matter what they do, they can never catch up. How do you approach this with clients? Absolutely. So.

Maggie Holland: I'm a little bit biased. I'm gonna go ahead and say that I pretty much only work with women, and I pretty much only work anxiety. So, as you're saying like, I'm overwhelmed. Yup, that's exactly what I see all day every day right. And so I think some of this is

Maggie Holland: most of the time. We're pretty good interviewers of like, okay, what else is under here? What else is going on? You know, we've worked these things. You're doing these coping skills. And you're still overwhelmed like this is an environmental issue. Is this something bigger? Right? And so big things that tend to be red flags for me to look for do we need to adjust? Some of this mental load is overwhelm that doesn't seem to go away

Maggie Holland: spinning thoughts like, where like, we cannot go to sleep at night because we can't turn our brain off. Usually we're tic'ing through a to do list and like, Well, what are you thinking about at night? Now, if it's fears, we're talking a little bit different anxiety work. But

Maggie Holland: like I'm thinking about, I have to get up and pack the kids lunch and this and this. We're talking mental load there, right? So so overwhelm we're talking can't get your brain to shut off, particularly when you need to sleep another big one that comes up is resentment. You start hearing resentment for a partner creep in, and that could happen in a couple of sessions. You start seeing man, there's some resentment I can't get a finger on here, or if you just start hearing like, can I just complain about my partner for a second, and then starts talking about these things.

Maggie Holland: We're talking mental load there. So those are kind of my red flag ones that I look for, there can be more depending on the individual person, and how they

Maggie Holland: handle things. But those are the 3 that I look for so overwhelm that we just can't quite seem to work through and to regulate, and no matter what we do, it's there

Maggie Holland: Spinning thoughts that we just cannot get that brain to turn off and resentment toward a partner. Those are the 3 things where I then start asking bigger questions about mental load and domestic labor division, emotional labor division. Those are your cues?

Right? So once it comes up and we identify. Okay, there might be a mental load thing happening. What do we do? Right?

Maggie Holland: I always start with psycho education. That's the biggest one of like, have you heard of the phrase mental load? Okay, what do you know about that? What don't you know about that. Let's talk about what that is how it happens. The societal things that come into it really removing the shame from that and then kind of talking about, hey? Let's talk about the toll this takes on you. So as you're talking about, your brain is not turning off at night. That is probably because you are responsible

Maggie Holland: for more than your fair share in this household, like your brain, is like, we cannot go to sleep. I have to continue working like my brain has to continue thinking right. And so talking about the toll it takes divided attention, struggle, concentrating right? Because no matter what we say as women, you cannot multitask. Your brain is not built for that. You're just doing 2 tasks like at less than 100.

Maggie Holland: so it reduces your concentration. It increases your stress levels, it builds anxiety as we're talking about it decreases the likelihood that you're gonna take care of yourself and do self care. And it absolutely increases exhaustion and fatigue. So sleep issues, tension issues. You might even start seeing people have like physical symptoms like psychosomatic symptoms of like tension and shoulders or headaches, or you know things that they're struggling to put a finger on of like, where is this coming from?

Maggie Holland: All of that can be part of that toll that it takes. Umhm. Yeah. So kind of talking like. really, because it's unpaid and unseen work. Sometimes the ramifications from that are like

Maggie Holland: unseen as well. And if we don't have anything to connect it to because it's invisible, it really feels like it's coming from nowhere. And there is true psychosomatic stuff coming that can come up for people. But sometimes it's also something that people can't see. That's our jobs, right?

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm thinking about how the presentation of this information is so important. I'm thinking about the way I've presented it to friends in the past versus clients.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and partly I'm very careful with the way I present it to clients because of the way it totally threw a bombshell in one of my friends marriages, because I was like

Allison Puryear (she/her): talking of. We just read Fair Play in my family. We've gotten the play cards. We had kind of divvied up. Who does what currently and my amazing partner was like

Allison Puryear (she/her): holy shit like this. I had no idea that you were taking on so much. I'm so sorry. How can we make this more equitable, like perfect response. Right so, and and did, and follow through. And now he has more cards than I do. But, my, I had a good friend who doesn't have a husband with the same

Allison Puryear (she/her): values, we'll say, and

Allison Puryear (she/her): she's not a big reader. So I was like, here, just take these cards home.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Just throw my cards. It was bad, it was really bad. And it caused this huge fight for them. It caused stress in my and strain in my relationship with her cause. She felt like I caused this problem in her relationship. That wasn't nearly as bad as

Allison Puryear (she/her): postcards it was. And so versus like the way that I will bring it up with clients is, I'll often be like. have you read this book?

Allison Puryear (she/her): I wanna warn you that it's gonna piss you off, but it is. Gonna provide some solutions for the things that are gonna piss you off in this book. So like

Maggie Holland: for people who are I would recommend any therapist who is going to work with people and women to read Fair Play all the way through like listen to it. I don't care how you read, but like, do the whole thing before you start pointing clients to it. Yeah, absolutely. And you know, example very close to home.

Maggie Holland: I also just pulled the cards, and, like my my partner, is super equitable. He's gonna be great with this right? And because we didn't read the book first. It also turned out to be a bit of a like. Well, are you just trying to tell me I'm a crappy partner? It wasn't intending to, but like, I guess here we are, right. And then you buckle down.

Maggie Holland: highly. Highly suggest book first and then cards, because really the book it

Maggie Holland: it talks about. So the Fair Play book talks about this issue a little bit. It talks about some of the research I'm talking about, but it also brings up some really other other good resources, particularly if you're like, okay, we're pretty equitable with the domestic load. But like the emotional labor. Not on the same page. She's got other things that she talks about in that book, so I highly recommend it.

Maggie Holland: But a big part of the book is talking about how to reframe biases that you come into this with, so that bias of like men's time is finite and women's time is infinite

Maggie Holland: big thing this book talks about is like everybody's got the same amount of minutes in the day, you know. And so it's really just about valuing them. The same and another big thing she talks about is that word value comes up.

Maggie Holland: Big thing that she talks about is values of like, why do we want to do this? Right? Well, we wanna model healthy relationships to our kids. We wanna model that you need to be cleanly, that you need to do things on time and punctual. You need to take care of yourself all of these things that are really important. She helps you zone in on identifying some of that. But it is so important how you talk about it the first time, because it can go like

Maggie Holland: I have had clients that now their male partner is like the biggest proponent of this card deck and tells all of their couple of friends like, you've got to get these cards to change my marriage right? So much better. Me and my partner on the same page run a team because it

Maggie Holland: done well. It can empower a male partner that's not contributing as much to understand how to do so. And it can help a female partner to let go, particularly if they're perfectionists or they're like, I'll just do it myself. It's it's faster and more efficient, like efficiency mindset. But how we talk about it is so important, particularly talk coming back to talk about reducing that shame that comes with it right? So

Maggie Holland: as I present this to clients, it kind of like to bring up, hey? I really suggest this book for anybody who's looking at this book to like a large like the last 30 of the pages are her research in bibliography and talking more about the cards in depth. So it looks like a regular size book.

Maggie Holland: It's not gonna take you as long to read as a regular book so highly suggested. It goes really quickly. Particularly as therapists. You can probably skip through a lot of the sections, because.

Maggie Holland: yeah, you won't need all of them, as in depth, as you know, a client might, but really bringing up like, have you read this book? I highly suggest it. It goes with these cards. This gives you the outline of how to play with it, play the cards together, but

Maggie Holland: also really coming back and acknowledging the societal piece to reduce shame like your partner. Likely isn't doing this because they think that you are not worthy, and they want you to be working. More than that they probably just don't see it, and that is societal training, and like you probably don't see it because it's societal training, and that doesn't make

Maggie Holland: you an overachiever probably are, but that doesn't say anything about you, and that doesn't say anything about him that says something about our society and our parents doing the best that they could, raising us in the society that they

Maggie Holland: had access to. And like. These are the messages you got. You don't have to keep them if they're not working for you. But you know, really talking, I like to specifically hammer home. That's societal messaging that you didn't get to choose. But you grew up with that doesn't make your partner the bad guy that doesn't necessarily make you the hero, although it can feel like you're the martyr, but

Maggie Holland: it never does any relationship any good. No, no, it just feels awful, but it does give you kind of like

Maggie Holland: something to stand behind of like, look how much I'm doing. But I like to specifically emphasize, as you bring this up with clients, the societal learning that this comes from so that that can reduce them the shame like this. It didn't start with you. You didn't give your child self these messages.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Okay, we can unlearn them. You can give your kids if you have kids new ones. Yeah.

Maggie Holland: I love that really. Shame. Get out! Get out in front of that shame big time. And if you suggest the cards, please emphasize the book should come first, because that's like really the main. The cards come with a manual.

Maggie Holland: But really the book is the manual.

Allison Puryear (she/her): absolutely.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And I think for people who are very motivated to make change, it's easy to hop into the cards.

Maggie Holland: so, and dangerous very dangerous. So I'm thinking about like the finite time for men and the infinite time for women. And that's kind of just creating the time to get these things done that absolutely need to be done, and some of the sacrifices that come as a result of that, the the things that fall by the wayside, the the

Allison Puryear (she/her): time with friends, the things for our own passion projects, the things that like we, I mean, I don't know

Allison Puryear (she/her): the percentage of women I've talked to, but probably like 99% of women that I talk to

Maggie Holland: in middle age who are like, I don't even know what's fun like. I don't know how to have fun anymore, because there hasn't been time for it. You've been shoving in tasks that needed to get done. Yes, Yup, absolutely. And that kind of like sitting at the end of the day. What did I do tonight? Right? Like you probably looking at mental load stuff there, right? But yeah, some of the big things. First thing you mentioned right there was. You know

Maggie Holland: you're you don't have time to take care of yourself. Right? So self care is one of the first things that starts to go by the wayside. Let it let alone these other really wonderful things like adult friendships, and like just going out with with a girlfriend. It just

Maggie Holland: talk, you know, the 2 of you as adults. And so, you know, self care really goes out the window. Adult friendships really go out the window. I know we've been talking about Eve Rodsky a lot. She's also got a secondary book that she expanded from the fair playbook that's called, Find Your Unicorn Space and unicorn space is that fun you're talking about, that is pursuing passion projects, that is, you know, doing things that light you up, which.

Maggie Holland: like the crap of it, is, then your partner's more attracted to you right like. And so if your partner helps you with these things more, they find you more interesting, and and then, you know you, you get lit up and they get lit up about it for you. And then all of a sudden they get to cheerlead you with something, but I know that that feels like a way far away dream for a lot of women. But those are the 3 big ones that really start going by the wayside as far as like self work goes. But then there's also a real

Maggie Holland: societal and economic implication. To this, too, of like, there's a huge pay gap. And actually the pay gap between mothers and non mothers is actually bigger than the pay gap between women and men just in general like it's it's a bigger pay gap because a lot of mothers.

Maggie Holland: because of these societal conditionings of who takes over the childcare end up leaving the workforce. And even if that's just for 5 to 10 years you know, when you get back into the workforce. It is really hard, if not almost sometimes impossible, depending on your job to get back in at the same level that you left at. And so then you're starting closer to the beginning than where you left.

Maggie Holland: And so that pay gap is actually bigger between mothers and non mothers than men and women in general.

Maggie Holland: and then just thinking about the the economic and societal implications that you know. That's a big reason why we don't have women on more boards to decide

Maggie Holland: different, really big things. And that's why we don't have more women, CEOs. There's been a change in that in the last 5 to 10 years love that. And also this is a big reason why we don't have more of that, and why it feels like the pace of that changing is pretty slow. So there's also really big societal and economic, you know, implications. Now, if women wanna stay home and take care of their kids cause that gives them. Joy absolutely do that. But the implication is, you know, if a woman maybe doesn't necessarily want to do that, but she kind of feels she has to.

Maggie Holland: Yeah, that's really hard on her mental health. It's really hard on her financial independence. Which creates, as you're saying, this has ripple effects as we don't talk about mental load stuff. It. Just

Allison Puryear (she/her): you bring up any new thing, and it gets bigger and bigger. Yeah, yeah, so like, what are some ways to

Allison Puryear (she/her): problem. Solve

Maggie Holland: this situation. Yeah, you know. And I think

Maggie Holland: for those of you out there that do couples therapy

Maggie Holland: first of all. Bless you, we talked about couldn't do it.

Maggie Holland: Glad there's people that do it. So this is something you can kinda bring up a little bit more directly. You can bring cards in the session. You can talk about it a little bit more directly. I'm an individual therapist, and I work with women. So I'm gonna go through that side of things. But but do know, this is a really great thing to bring to couples sessions. You know, and I have colleagues that have successfully brought partners in and talk to them about it, even when they do individual work. I don't do that, but

Maggie Holland: I don't have enough training to adequately do that. I refer out to a couples, counselor, but

Maggie Holland: you can directly talk about it in the relationship, and and do those cards together, and and talk about the domestic load. But let's talk about how we do this with individual clients. Right? So first of all, coming back to like really doing a ton of education on it. Right? So a big piece of of doing this is helping her understand? Again, my bias, I work with women. So I'm coming from this perspective. You can do it the opposite way with men of, you know. But really, first understanding what is mental load

Maggie Holland: really working on like defining it. What does that look like? What is the impacts for you? And that can look like? Let's go through the symptoms that I'm seeing with you that could be impacted by this, not say, this is the root cause of everything. But let's look at the symptoms that could be impacted by this.

Maggie Holland: Let's look at how this impacts your values of like, okay, I really wanna be a good mom. Or I, wanna be a engaged mom, like, let's say, that's one of your clients values. Okay, looking at how you actually have the ability to be better and more engaged. Caretaker, when you take some time for yourself. When this stuff is balanced, you know. And so, really, looking at, how does this impact you specifically

Maggie Holland: with your symptoms with what's going on in your life? How does this align with your values? Really bringing it home with lots and lots of

Maggie Holland: not shaming. So lots of this is societal stuff. This doesn't mean that you've been a bad mom, because you haven't noticed this up until now. We're just working to help you strive towards those values more and more, we're always growing right? So that's a big thing that I talk about as we talk about mental load. I say that phrase a lot. We're always growing. You are always growing. Your partner's always growing doesn't mean that this is malicious or intentional.

Maggie Holland: It's just something that's been invisible. So let's make it visible. So we can be really intentional about the choices we make with it. So first thing, always coming back to education with lots of anti shame. Language. That's the first place, that I start right.

Maggie Holland: and then I think the second place, I like to go with that of, you know, creating your own language around some of it, because, like.

Maggie Holland: you know, sometimes, you really don't mind some of those domestic tasks. And this is not like the hill that you're gonna die on right, and so creating some common language for you and any partner that is struggling with that saying you.

Maggie Holland: I'm in client mode right now, so to help your clients create some common language that they can talk to their partner about right, and that can you can use Eve Rodsky's Fair Play deck cards. It can be something else totally different. I've also had clients. That kind of took this idea, and then they pulled their own note cards and made their own set. It can kind of be, however, but creating common language around it, and bringing consciousness for both of you to it

Maggie Holland: is really really important. So common language, talking about it, getting it on the table, we can mention it. We can manage it right and keep working that together. Yeah.

Maggie Holland: yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I think about like there's flexibility and

Allison Puryear (she/her): what like. You don't have to go by the book with whatever. However, Eve Rodsky, or whomever lays it out like, I'm thinking about how

Allison Puryear (she/her): last Christmas.

Maggie Holland: I'm the one who decorates for the holidays, cause I love to decorate right? So I decorated. and I'd also been keeping like I had an in my notes app just writing down over the last several months random things the girls said that they wanted for Christmas, or just like, Oh, I love that about something one of their friends had. So I'd been keeping this list.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And then I just started buying those things like it online just real quick while I had the time. No big deal we've got, you know, we have like a pajama thing on Christmas Eve. So I like got us all our pajamas, and I had

Allison Puryear (she/her): all the wrapping out so soon as things would come in I'd wrap it and put it under the tree, and

Allison Puryear (she/her): by the time we were done hosting the 17 people, I think that came over. I like the next morning. I'm an early riser. I just like I woke up and started taking everything down, and was just furious.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Cause like I did everything and this is like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you know, including getting my own presents, and my partner came down. He came down at like maybe 6:30 in the morning, and he's like, Oh, wow! You are taking these down.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm gonna sit and have my coffee, which, of course, further infuriated me, and I was feeling extraordinarily self righteous about all of it. And then my husband who, like is totally unafraid of any confrontation was just like, Hey, can we talk about what's happening right now? And I was like, he's like, Okay, are you willing to hear about it from my perspective.

Maggie Holland: Sure.

Maggie Holland: I didn't know who's getting what presents.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I didn't know

Allison Puryear (she/her): what to like, what they came in the mail was for, you know, putting it all together versus not. You're just like a Lone Ranger over here doing all of it. You didn't ask for help one time I would have helped. And I know.

Allison Puryear (she/her): like you don't want to have to delegate a thing that you're already doing, but

Allison Puryear (she/her): you didn't give me an opportunity.

Maggie Holland: Yeah. And all of that was 100% true. And I had just like taken responsibility for over functioning during a busy time. Because that's how I handle busy times is I just do more. Which

Allison Puryear (she/her): what we decided, instead of one of us being solely responsible, which is part of Eve's thing is like, you're the one like thinking through it. You're the one executing on it, you know. I'm planning all of that

Allison Puryear (she/her): like in my notes. App, my good friend notes app. Christmas, 2024. I have like. Here's the fritata we made. That was so good. Here's the recipe for it also. Sit down with Joel, and order all the presents at once, and wrap them all together when they come in. Just put them in the hiding spot and

Allison Puryear (she/her): set a date to wrap them all together, the 2 of you.

Maggie Holland: Yes. So that I don't

Maggie Holland: resent him for things. I did basically like, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Maggie Holland: absolutely. And you know, I think some of this to have like holidays are a big one, right? Because as we're talking about, there's already a lot of daily things that have to happen. That's a ton of work, and then you add a holiday on top of it, and we put a lot of really big holidays together in the last 3 months of the year. We have like 4 major holidays, right? We've got people who do, Halloween. We've got Thanksgiving, and then we've got the December holidays, and then we have a New year that starts right. And so

Maggie Holland: that is like a Marathon sprint time. You don't get to pick one, it's both and so yeah, as we look at these, I think a really big one is, you know, also helping our clients to understand what the commitment to doing some more domestic labor division is, and mental load labor. What does that look like? Right? This is the biggest thing is like telling your clients, hey? We've got to commit to really open communication right? So that.

Maggie Holland: hey? When someone says, Are you open to hearing what's going on for me right now. We have the emotional regulation to say.

Maggie Holland: yes, right? And then also, we have the commute. Your clients have the communication skills to be like, okay, how can I hear you and actively listen in a way that means that your partner that your client can hear their partner right? So there's a ton of work that goes into this that we already do as therapists, right? Like working regulation skills,

working insight, working values. You know as a regulation communication stuff, and and the communication has to be really regular with it, too. Right? I think this does work best

as we we check in, and we talk to our partners. Let me practice that communication.

Maggie Holland: Because, you know, quote cognition is slow when emotions are high, right? Like, I'm not thinking about it. My head has burst into flames, and I'm decorations, and I can't hear you through the flames quite frankly. Right? And some of that, too, of like as we're talking about this. I know this feels like a mountain of tasks as that you would have to talk to your clients about. But holidays are really great. Example, right?

Maggie Holland: I love wrapping gifts. I don't know why, obsessed with it. If I could just wrap gifts every day for the rest of my life. That's what I would do.

Maggie Holland: But so some of that of like my partner, cannot wrap a gift to save his life. Like

Maggie Holland: sorry to call him out like that, but he can't like he wraps my gifts, and I'm like

Maggie Holland: you tried like. There's paper all over this, and I can't see what it is. Right

Maggie Holland: funny, just a funny thing, right, but like I love to wrap gifts.

Maggie Holland: Therefore delegating gift wrapping to my partner doesn't make sense. I take delight in that right? And so if there's things that we can, you know, kind of pull back to like, how do we delegate this in a way that plays to our strengths and weaknesses. How do we delegate this in a way that the crap work? There's things that none of us like when it comes to like holidays or any task.

Maggie Holland: can we divide that up of like? Okay, I'm holding, you know, the task of I'm going to cook dinner every single night, but I'm we both hate it. So I'm going to hold it 3 days of the week, and that's going to be my less busy days of the week.

Maggie Holland: That takes a lot of communication right there, right? But when your partner knows okay, you have a lighter workload day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and so you can realistically have the brain power to do the meal, cooking or prepping, or whatever then your partner knows. It's really clear all of a sudden. And then we kind of like nip that resentment in the bud. And we kind of

Maggie Holland: cut out a lot of that argument. So like, I thought you said you're gonna do it and like, well, now, what are we having for dinner? Right? And then that last minute franticness adds more stress.

Maggie Holland: But as we work with our clients being really honest about this is a pervasive issue, it's going to take time you're gonna have to commit to redividing mental load labor. You are going to have to.

Maggie Holland: I'm thinking, talking to my female clients. You're gonna have to do some education at your partner, you can totally give him this Fair Play book. And like he just was not raised to look at these things. And so you're gonna like, you just have to realistically know that that can be kind of frustrating. And so how do we recognize that frustration and regulate it right? How do we keep that

Maggie Holland: breathe through it, communicate really healthy and calmly right? And so I think a lot of as we talk about this as therapists, we're already doing a lot of these skills,

coaching and and right emotional regulation. But we're just applying it to a very touchy subject which

Maggie Holland: we already do. Everybody is equipped to talk about this. We already do this, but it does take a huge commitment to work this as a team, and I like to emphasize that this makes your makes any relationship or marriage better in the long term, like.

Maggie Holland: when you feel like you're on a team with your partner, then you can kinda do anything. You tackle the world right? And this is a really foundational way to begin building trust. Have a client build trust in their partner that you know, saying he, but he's capable, right, and that can that can begin building that for our brain to learn a new message.

Maggie Holland: I can task him with things, and he can do it like to our standards. And then I'm less stressed. And wow, that's pretty cool, right? And I love your point about our standards, because that's that's the thing I had to get used to. Your earlier point about. Women often have higher standards around like these household tasks. Yeah, the wrapping. I would never. I love my partner, and like

Allison Puryear (she/her): you would dinosaur ribbon with snowman wrapping paper, I would never. But yeah, that's just a little one, but a good, a light hearted example. Yeah, yeah. But I remember there was a point where I was feeling like things might must be inequitable, because there were things that I was not.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I didn't see done that I wanted done, but they were done just not the way I would do them. I had a good conversation with a friend who was like

Allison Puryear (she/her): it was all about like dishes being in the dish, being in the sink when I got home, which I do them immediately. He's in charge of dishes at that time, and my friend was just like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Does it? Who gives a shit? Yeah, does it matter? Does it really matter if they get done? Yeah, is it worth

Allison Puryear (she/her): like creating stress in your marriage? Is it worth like. like, basically like, how would you feel if you always got it done? You just didn't do it exactly the minute he wanted you to like how, and I appreciated her kind of

Allison Puryear (she/her): calling me out gently. I'm like, if you wanna if you want it done like that so badly you need to take that on. Yeah. And so it's looking at like your own stuff around it, because ultimately it also does come back to the woman. If the house isn't perfectly clean, nobody nobody walks into your house and thinks.

Maggie Holland: man, this guy really doesn't take care of his home. Yes, yeah, yes, absolutely. Yeah. And I love the example like, I don't know, if you've seen

Maggie Holland: there's like a funny video on Instagram, it's like a little reel. But this person that is like my biggest fear going to the OBGYN, and she's gonna run in, and she's gonna like, undo my pile of clothes and be like, look at these underwear like nobody does that coming into your house or not like that pillow is out of line, and this is a pig sty, and your your house is a failure. But

Maggie Holland: but we do have those fears. And as clinicians as we poke at this, this can really highlight for us, like some rigid thinking, some really big fears. This can highlight, you know. Is there childhood stuff around? How did your mother conceptualize other people's

perceptions? Right? This can bring up a lot of really great work as we poke into it. And I know that this is one of those. I say, with couples like, we're not really fighting about the dishes, right? We're fighting about like you respecting my time and all these other things that go on under it.

Maggie Holland: but likewise with us as clinicians. We're not really talking about the dishes. As we talk about the standards for dishes, we're not really talking about whatever that task is. We're talking about something deeper for each person. Right?

Maggie Holland: Yeah, really great clinical work as we poke at this mental load. Stuff. And and I, you know I find a lot of times that it is really important for clients to hit standards. And and there's a lot of things that go into deciding what those standards are.

Maggie Holland: but as we poke at those, it can also be really fruitful conversation for deeper stuff that feels less intense than me like, let's talk about how awful your mother is right. It's like, where did this come from? Let's get Q. It's a little more curious because it feels non threatening like it's just the dishes right? And so. But us saying, and lots of a lot of society saying it's just the dishes. Sometimes our clients can then approach it a little bit of like

Maggie Holland: I know it's just dishes, and there's more to it for me. Right? So then, that brings up really great clinical work that we can work on rigid thinking and perfectionism. And you know, external validation needs that are out of proportion for functionality. And all these kinds of things that we work with. Anyway, this can be a way for us to poke into some of those

Maggie Holland: absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. So

Maggie Holland: yeah, so a lot of this, I know we're this is like in a topic that we don't talk about a whole lot, but for the most part, as clinicians, we're very equipped to handle these things already. Here I would guarantee everybody watching. This is already in some way, shape or form, whatever modality you use equipped to work mental load stuff from whatever framework.

Maggie Holland: but yeah, just specifically it can be real. I've watched it be very validating for a lot of my female clients of when this gets highlighted, that this is a thing this is enough of a thing that there is a name for it. There's a lot of research on it. You are not

Maggie Holland: making something up and like you're not an outlier here of feeling like this is, it can be really validating to get that label on it, not label necessarily, but to bring this up and bring it to consciousness and be like. No, you are not

Maggie Holland: crazy out of your mind. You're not an outlier. Any of those things that our clients can say to themselves, You're not Naggy we might need to just kind of reapproach how we talk to your partner about it and redivide it, and you might need to change some things too, and then you can do that work with your client. What needs to change for them?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Absolutely. And I think, also having resources. If you have a client who has resources to outsource some things, there's so much we don't need to do ourselves. If we do have the resources to hire out like I have a big group of girlfriends who are using this laundry service. It's like 20 bucks to do. All your laundry. Is it worth 20 bucks

Allison Puryear (she/her): if you can afford it? Yes, cause that's like you're not having to

Maggie Holland: fold. You're not leaving anything in the washer too long like. Yes.

Maggie Holland: finding those kinds of things that can help take some things off the family's plate, not just

Maggie Holland: trying to reallocate all of them. Yes, yes, example I love to use is we have a pretty. I have a pretty big yard where I'm at, and some things came up. My partners like, I can't mow the yard this year. It's just not like feasible with our schedule where it's sitting. Right? So I'm like, okay.

Maggie Holland: let's hire somebody for the yard work right. But the yard work is not something I've typically, really ever done. I do the gardening. I don't do the yard work. Stuff. Right? My partner handles that. And so I'm like, okay. But as we talk about this as we talk about bringing in outside help, we gotta be really consider that mental load right? Because

Maggie Holland: it's not just about hiring. The person is researching who is gonna come in. It's calling for quotes. It's scheduling time. So they can come. Look at your yard of like, how big is this yard, and what should I quote you right? It's being home so like I have my backyard is fenced. So it's being home to let them into the yard because it doesn't open from the outside for safety stuff. So it's being home to let them in right if they have to change scheduling.

Maggie Holland: Are they calling me, or are they calling you right? And so then we're talking about all that mental load that goes with it. And so if your if your partner or a partner is typically responsible for the lawn care right.

Maggie Holland: then all the mental load work that goes with hiring somebody we have to divide that equally to, and you can totally divide that I know. So Eve Rodsky system like, has one person so like my partner would hold the entire lawn care task. If if we're doing Rodsky system. But if you have good communication, I do think we can split things up a little bit, and that can be healthy, too. But

Maggie Holland: yeah, as we think about bringing in outside help like who's dropping the laundry off. Who's preparing it? Who's like remembering? What's the pickup? Drop off day? Right? So that's the mental load piece that goes with that domestic task that.

Maggie Holland: Yeah, we just have to make sure our clients continue to see that we have to make sure we continue to see that and just communicate about it and advocate for it. Right? Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, Maggie, thank you so much. This is really helpful. I hope that this is not just helpful for clinicians with their clients, but also in their own homes. Yeah, absolutely. I think this is some really powerful stuff. So thank you for having me today, Allison.

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