

How to tell your other half you're leaving the rat race.

Many of us are aware that communication plays a vital role in any relationship. That doesn't always mean that it's easy, of course! When we are approaching a major change in our lives or perhaps have changed our priorities, as is often the case when we are thinking of leaving the rat race, it is important to be able to convey that information to the ones we love. We've decided we've had enough of leading a high pressure, high stress lifestyle and feel that the rewards do not justify the costs in terms of our health and wellbeing. It's at times like this when we most need our partner's understanding and support. And they need to know how and why we've changed and how that affects them. How do we communicate this in a way that maximises our chances of success?

Prepare the ground – open up discussions. Get the discussion started by asking your partner to set aside some time to chat through something that's important to you. This does not need to be a long discussion to begin with. It's just to introduce the ideas and see what their reaction is. If they show signs of actively wanting to know more at this early stage, point out a few relevant books, courses, websites, magazines, but not so much they that are overwhelmed! Then ask questions to find out where you other half is with it first. What are their opinions on what you've just said? Focus on understanding their point of view on the situation.

Sow the seeds – in the context of your partner's situation and understanding, explain your thoughts. Let them know that you are serious about it and that it means a lot to you to at least investigate the options together.

Apply some nourishment – discuss how you will investigate the realities of a possible new lifestyle together. Respect your partner's right to take time to adjust to the ideas. Accept that, whilst they may be supportive, they are likely to have different perspectives on the situation. View this as another opportunity for learning together rather than a sign of possible problems. Whilst there may well be some heated discussion and difficult conversations, remember that working your way through these times is likely to lead to a deeper level of intimacy and sense of connectedness.

What if your plans don't thrive? – you may need to accept that your partner does not share your enthusiasm for downshifting. If this becomes evident, don't panic just yet. There may well be other solutions open to you both that will make you happy. Explore the possibility of your downshifting and your partner continuing as they are alongside you. You could perhaps agree to downshift but take just a few small steps and re-evaluate the situation. Some may find that they are faced with a stark and challenging choice – what is more important to you, your relationship with your partner or your own wellbeing and authenticity?

Watch it grow – set aside time on a regular basis to discuss your research, plans and progress made. If your partner is actively engaged in your ideas by now, make downshifting a joint venture, even if you're not each doing an equal amount of the work in the beginning.

Harvest time – take your first steps together on your downshifting journey. Remember to offer each other support when mistakes are made and to celebrate your successes at each stage.

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