

I WAS RELUCTANT TO DO THE WHOLE DRAMA OF ASKING MY HUSBAND TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ME AND HIS MOTHER.

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I often wonder whether men and women really suit each other. Perhaps they should live next door and just visit now and then," said late actress Katharine Hepburn, who is credited as being the pioneer of Living Apart Together, or LAT, with partner Spencer Tracy. LAT is an arrangement in which committed couples choose to live in different houses, but continue to have a stable, happy and fulfilling relationship. The whole idea of the lifestyle emerged from the struggles of committed partners who sought alternatives to the traditional idea that two people must live together. The trend is popular across the world, with pages and hashtags dedicated to it on social media. It's so popular that there is even a book written about it.

SPLIT-WEEK HAPPINESS

Communications consultant Shubha Narayanan has been living apart from her husband for three years and says that it has helped her marriage. The two tied the knot after dating for 12-13 years, which is why she found it a little hard to slip into the traditional wife role. For the south Indian Shubha, the cultural differences with her Bengali husband and mother-in-law, with whom she shared a house, was very evident. "My mother-in-law and I are very headstrong. After three years of marriage, I found that I had become a different person; I was doing things that were weird to me, like wearing a *chuda* and *sindoor*. My husband and I had a very active

Is living apart in the same city the key to a happy marriage?

ANY RELATIONSHIP IS ALSO ABOUT ACCEPTING EACH OTHER FOR WHO THEY ARE, WHICH YOU CAN ONLY DO ONLY IF YOU LIVE TOGETHER.



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CELEB LAT COUPLES

- > Arundhati Roy and Pradip Krishen
- > Helena Bonham Carter and Tim Burton
- > Woody Allen and Mia Farrow (used to live apart when they were married)
- > Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy
- > Margaret Drabble and Michael Holroyd

social life and didn't want that to change only because we were living with his mother. I didn't really have too much of a problem with her, so I was reluctant to do the whole drama of asking my husband to choose between me and his mother. I was happily married and my mother-in-law deserved my husband's time as much as I did," she says. One day, due to some reason, Shubha moved into her mother's house and realized that the arrangement worked really well. "It wasn't meant to be long-term, but living apart has worked for us. My husband spends 3.5 days with my mother-in-law and 3.5 days with me, and I go there sometimes as well. What is amazing is that my mother-in-law was very mature about our arrangement and I faced no resistance. When I fell ill recently, she took really good care of me. When my husband's relatives come to town, they come and meet me in my house, so it hasn't negatively affected our relationship."

INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

When asked if such relationships work and are healthy, marriage counsellor Veena Chakravarthy says that it is an individual choice. But she adds that a couple must spend time together, understand each other, accept the things that they may not like about the other and work around them. "Everyone is different, so, such an arrangement could work for some, but not for others. This is perhaps a good idea for people who find it easy to get into a confrontation with each other."

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Several things to be considered before Living Apart Together

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"But any relationship is also about accepting each other for who they are, which you can only do only if you live together. When you live apart, you are only looking at what is good and avoiding the bad things. I feel that Living Apart Together is more of a convenience," says Veena.

THINGS TO REFLECT UPON

While stressing that it is an individual choice, making it inappropriate for her to say if LAT is right or

wrong, psychotherapist Meera Ravi suggests that couples should ask themselves the following questions before considering the arrangement — How do you define a marriage? What is it that you want from the marriage? How long will this arrangement work? What could be the long-term effect of this kind of relationship? What happens if the underlying main issues are not addressed? Are there no other options? What's the final outcome? What are your conflict resolution skills as a couple?



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Any relationship is also about accepting each other for who they are

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