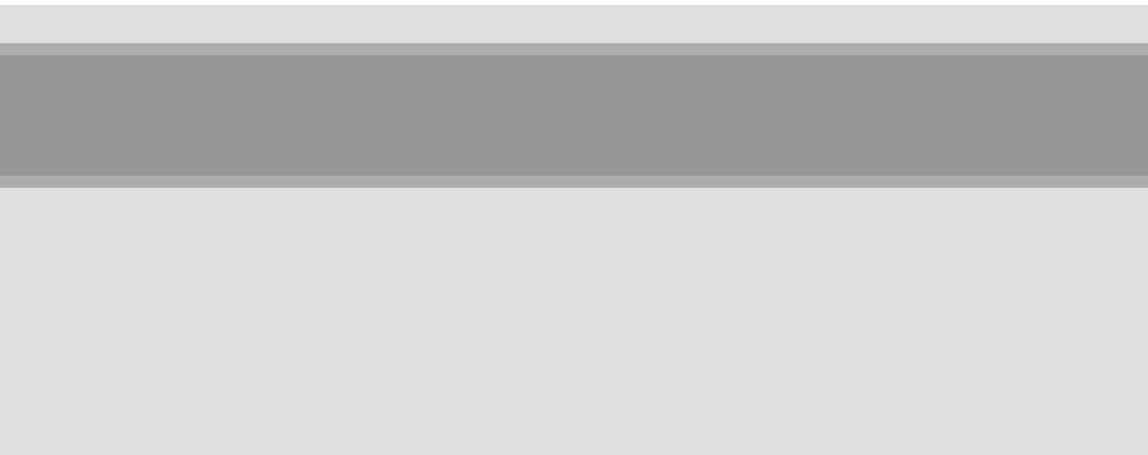


**7 THINGS HE'LL
NEVER
TELL YOU**



*but you need
to know*

DR. KEVIN LEMAN



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INTRODUCTION

What a Man Really Craves ...

It only takes three things to satisfy your guy.
(Hint: They may not be what you think.)



I LIKE BEING A MAN.

It takes a woman an hour or two to get her nails done at the salon. But I can do my nails at a red light in 10 seconds or less with my front teeth. I even make it a game to see how many times I can hit my speedometer with my fingernails.

(If you're saying, "Eww, gross," you're definitely a woman. If you were a man, you'd be saying, "All right, score! I've got a whole pile on my dashboard.")

I could wear the same pair of Bermuda shorts day in, day out. It would never dawn on me to change them, unless I saw another pair waiting for me on my bedroom chair . . . or unless my wife, Sande, handed a new pair to me, told me to put them on, and whisked the old pair off to the washer.

I think I'm dressed up and ready for anything when my shirt has only one spot on it, and I'm in my standard T-shirt, shorts, tennis shoes, and baseball cap. It's how I dress 95 percent of the time.

The other day, as I was taking my wife a cup of coffee in bed, as I do every morning, my daughter Krissy showed up with my two grandkids, Conner and Adeline. I was so excited to see them that I sloshed a few drops of coffee on the kitchen floor. So what did I do? I took my sneaker and rubbed the drops around on the floor a bit, so they would dry faster.

“Daaad,” Krissy said, rolling her eyes. “That is *so male*.”

And that’s exactly what I am. A male.

I don’t like to share my food with anybody. But I get first right of refusal on anything on Sande’s plate.

I am as color-blind as anyone can get.

I never ask for directions.

I get antsy when you launch into a really long story. I can’t help thinking, *What’s the point?*

Sometimes I act like a four-year-old who has to have everything now . . . including *all* of your attention. Other times I am my wife’s hero.

When I say things, I mean them. I like to say what needs to be said plainly. But when I’m quiet, I’m hoping you get the drift that I’m not crazy about what you’re saying, but I don’t want to hurt your feelings.

I’m a tough guy . . . but I’m tender underneath, especially where my family is concerned. (Just ask Krissy sometime how many times I cried when I found out she was engaged, when she tried on her wedding dress for the first time, when she walked down the aisle, when she told me she was pregnant with grandbabies one and two, and when I saw her holding those babies for the first time.)

Truth is, I’m no big puzzle. And neither is any man. We men and Simple Simon have a lot in common. The path to our heart is well marked, but it’s also narrow, for there are few that we trust with it. Because for a guy, sharing your heart can be awfully risky.

FOR A GUY, SHARING YOUR HEART CAN BE
AWFULLY RISKY.

If you have picked up this book, good for you. You care about the men in your life, and you want to improve your relationships with

them. Whether you are married, living together, dating, engaged, looking for that special someone, or you simply want to understand a son, brother, or father better, *7 Things He'd Never Tell You* will reveal the issues that are closest to a man's heart.

What makes a man tick.

What ticks him off.

And how you can have the most satisfying relationship with him possible.

When you date that special guy, you're always putting your best foot forward. Then you hook him, or he hooks you, and you decide you're both "keepers." You want to be in this relationship for a lifetime. You can't wait to never have to say good night and drive off to separate locations ever again. You envision romantic evenings together, wrapped in each other's arms, in front of the fireplace of your very own home.

Once the wedding is over, you concentrate on living life together. Settling into your careers, deciding who will do what around the house, who will keep track of the car's oil changes, pay the bills, etc. Somewhere in the midst of all this finagling is when you, a woman and a natural problem solver, get your first notion: *I don't remember that bugging me before. Did he always do that? How can I stop him from doing that?*

All of a sudden, there is a chasm between your expectations and the reality of living with your man. *Does he expect me to be his maid?* you wonder when you find the heap of dirty laundry under his side of the bed.

What's more important to him—hanging out with the guys or spending time with me? And if he likes "guy time," why does he act all hurt when I go out with a girlfriend?

I thought we talked about our budget. I've been sticking to it. And then he went and bought that plasma TV. We can't afford that. What was he thinking?

If he's an engineer, how come he never gets around to fixing our leaky faucet?

The list can grow. If you're not aware of the true needs of a man—what he dreams about, thinks about, and what motivates all he does—

What you put into
your marriage is
what you get out
of your marriage.

—Unknown

disillusionment can set in. Misunderstanding can grow to anger and bitterness. You can begin thinking, *This sure isn't what I signed up for.*

Studies reveal that about 50 percent of those who marry today will end up divorced. And of the other 50 percent who stay together, only half of those are satisfied with their relationship.¹ No wonder the average marriage lasts only seven years.

So let me ask you: How satisfied are you *right now* with your relationship?

If you had a magic wand and could change one thing—little or big—about your man, what would it be?

QUIZ

How satisfied are you?

- A. I could be with my man 24 hours a day and still want more. I never want to be away from him.
- B. I love my guy, but it's nice to have a girlfriend break every once in a while.
- C. The male testosterone fest in the garage is about to drive me crazy. Do I, a female, matter at all here?
- D. Anybody here want to switch spouses for a day, a week, a year?

For answers, see page 177.

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR MAN,
WHAT WOULD IT BE?

HOME IMPROVEMENT, ANYONE?

Have you ever watched one of those home-improvement television shows? The ones that tell you how to beautify your home in a snap—and on a doable budget? The experts make it sound so easy. . . .

“From mess to showroom kitchen in 10 minutes or less.”

“Eight quick ideas to make your family room more cozy.”

“Take your bedroom from '70s brown to 2007 chic in a weekend.”

But then what happens? You get all fired up to do the job . . . then find out it may be a little tougher than they made it sound. It may take a little longer than you thought. And it might be a little more expensive than you thought. But it certainly looks good when it's done. The time, expense, and any aggravation are worth it.

How about a different kind of home improvement? One that includes you and your guy? Most people in relationships live with an *expectancy* that they can change the other person. That if they just work hard enough, long enough, and if they nag enough, the other person will eventually change.

But that's a little like trying to rub the spots off a leopard. Sure, you can try to make that critter all one color by scraping his skin with a Brillo pad, but you won't wipe off those spots. You'll just irritate the leopard.

Makeovers work great with clothes, hair, and houses, but they don't work well with leopards or the men in your life.

Ever heard of the great reformer Martin Luther? His thinking and writings led to the Reformation, the transformation of much of church life and philosophy as we know it today. But his Brillo-pad personality also irritated a lot of folks along the way.

A woman who sets out to be a Martha Luther—a great reformer within her marriage—won't get very far before she irritates the man in her life enough to shut him down. So if you went into marriage thinking, *Well, I don't like that about him, but I can change that*, stop right there. Consider this truth: The boy or little girl you once were, you still are.

No one likes being told what to do . . . especially a man. If you want to catch a mouse, you have to put cheese—a mouse's favorite—in the trap. You can try pineapple, but all you'll be left with is an empty trap.

In the same way, you need to *understand* the male species before you try to change him. Otherwise you may have good intentions, but you'll be going about it the wrong way.

No matter how much society tries to make the two sexes androgynous, men and women clearly are different. Are they equal? Absolutely! But they are not the same.

When women talk about the man of their dreams, they use words such as *rugged*, *protective*, *handsome*, and *strong*. Yet the media is trying hard to turn the image of a man into a feminine, wimpy man-child. Someone who will be your girlfriend, who will go shopping with

you, always see eye-to-eye, and give you the verbal and emotional strokes you long for.

But a happy marriage is one in which both partners understand, accept, and celebrate their differences. They enjoy relating to each other and seeing the world through each other's unique eyes. They cut each other some slack during pressured or tough times. (Before you get annoyed with your husband, just think of how annoying you are during that "special time" of the month. It'll put a lot of petty grievances into perspective.)

Couples who work together learn how to take stress not as a personal attack but as a challenge they can take on together. The key to growth and enrichment in marriage is in discovering ways to convey, "I understand how you feel and I'm going to do my best to meet your needs. I love you, and I'll be around forever."

Exactly what are a man's top needs?

THE THREE THINGS HE WANTS THE MOST

Recently when I was speaking at a Women of Faith event, I asked women this question: "What do you think is the number one need in a man's life?"

"Food!" a middle-aged woman called out.

Everyone laughed.

"The remote control!" a redhead chimed in.

More laughter from the audience.

"Sex!" a brunette added.

Groans from the audience.

"Okay, I expected that," I said, "but that's not true."

There was a dead pause, some confused-looking faces, and more than a few uplifted eyebrows.

"I'll get to that in a moment." I grinned. "What else do you think a man needs?"

"Basic things, like me taking time for him," an older woman added. "Admiration."

I nodded. "Yeah, that's really important. But what else?"

After some more answers, such as having a career, money, and success—none of which hit the target I was looking for—I could tell that the women were getting a little frustrated. I understood. After all, you women are the relational wonders of the world. You love to figure

things out, and you're very good at it. You, of all people, ought to be able to figure out men.

Finally I said, "You don't need a PhD in analytical anything to decipher what makes him tick. Men are very simple to understand. But in order to do that, you need to know what's going on inside a man—at the core of the male psyche. It's only then that you'll be able to figure out ways to respond in a positive way to behaviors or words that may drive you crazy otherwise. But here's the deal: *You* are the ones who set everything in motion in your relationship. Because once you understand men, you realize that they are just little boys at heart. They want to please you and fear most of all hurting your feelings, because you might reject them."

Then I got down to brass tacks. I shared what a man's top three needs are—and said that these needs have everything to do with the woman in his life. You. These three needs have everything to do with the way your guy thinks, acts, and behaves. They are integral to the 7 things he'd never tell you . . . but you need to know. They are entirely accurate in 85 percent of marriages, for in 15 percent of marriages the couples' roles are switched. (If you are in that switched roles category, don't stop reading. You'll still find a lot of help in this book.)

So here they are: a man's top needs.

- to be respected
- to be needed
- to be fulfilled

What? Where's love in that mix? you might be asking. *Isn't love important to guys too?* Ask any guy if he'd rather be loved or respected and most would say respected. Because if a guy isn't respected, he doesn't feel loved.

IF A GUY ISN'T RESPECTED, HE DOESN'T FEEL LOVED.

Respect me.

Did you know how intimidating you women are? You're the schedule wonders of the world. What you manage to get done every day is paramount to climbing Mount Everest several times. Not only do you run

Marriage is like a three-speed gearbox: affection, friendship, love. It is not advisable to crash your gears and go right through to love straightaway. You need to ease your way through. The basis of love is respect, and that needs to be learned from affection and friendship.

—Peter Ustinov

our home smoothly, you make it look beautiful. You are an active part of school, neighborhood, community, and church events. You juggle my, your, and often our children's schedules effortlessly (at least it appears so to us). You remember birthdays, papers that have to be signed to go back to school, pets that need to be fed and walked, and doctors' appointments. Seventy-two percent of you also work outside the home—and get all that done too!

Frankly, sometimes what we men get done during the day doesn't seem to stack up to a whole lot when we hear the litany of what your day was like.

As the relational wonders of the world, women also seem to know everything that's going on in every arena you're involved in . . . as well as the latest gossip from the neighbors' houses. Because you have a need to talk and you love to talk, you get to know others quickly.

Here's what I mean: You get on a plane and sit next to another woman. Within the one-hour flight, you learn her name, what she's doing on that flight, the names and occupations of her two children, the best place to shop in Chicago for deals when you get off the plane, three stories about what her goofy husband has done lately, and much more.

Contrast that to this example: You get on a plane and sit next to a man. You try to engage him in conversation but it only extends to "Nice day, isn't it?"

The man bobs his head . . . once . . . and goes back to reading his newspaper. He has no need to go farther with a woman he has no relationship with.

If it's two men sitting next to each other, their entire conversation will be a simple nod over the newspaper. That's all that needs to be exchanged.

You see, a man has no need to talk. Because a woman, on average, uses three-and-a-half times as many words as a man every day, you are getting wound up to talk when your husband comes home from work. Contrast that to your guy, who has already used up his word count at work. Now he only wants to be silent. But that doesn't

mean he's not willing to listen to you. He still wants to hear from you; he just may feel no need to contribute something immediately to the conversation. He wants you to respect him by filling him in on your day—especially on anything that is key to your family's life. (He really feels dissed if he hears about something thirdhand that has happened in his own family.)

You also show your respect by respecting him as an adult (even when he may act like a little boy). My wife, bless her, is a firstborn child. She's living proof about what I believe about firstborns. Firstborns *love* to tell people what to do.

For nearly 40 years, I've sat in my leather chair every morning, drinking a cup of coffee and watching FOX News. I also read the local rag and *USA Today* and then very unceremoniously drop them at the base of the chair. For nearly 40 years my dear Sandra has insisted on telling me to pick up the papers.

It's not that she wants to read the newspaper. She has no interest in the newspaper. But she loves to tell me—to remind me—and she's been doing it for nearly 40 years.

Do the math on that for a second: 365 days (unless it's a leap year) x 40 years = 14,600. That means she has reminded me 14,600 times to pick up the newspaper. Does she think that if she stopped telling me to pick up the newspaper it would somehow lie there, neglected and a mess, at the base of the chair? Does she really believe that I wouldn't remove it and take it to the garbage?

Take this case in point. Sande was going to be gone overnight on a Friday for a women's retreat. As she was walking out the door that evening, she asked me to go to Marie Callender's to pick up two lemon meringue pies the following morning since she wouldn't be home soon enough to bake any pies for our family event Saturday evening.

Saturday morning I got up and found a note:

*Dear Leemie,
I miss you already.
Don't forget to pick up the pies.*

I smiled to myself. After all, I went to college for 13 years, so you think I could retain a thought from one night to the next morning. But that's Sande, God love her.

The same woman who nine days ago bought paint for the guy who is trying to restore our deck that was trashed by the floods. Where is that paint now? Still sitting on the brick steps next to the entry of our home where she left it when she removed it from her car. The rollers are there too.

Each day I walk by, see the paint and rollers again, and laugh. My newspaper has to be removed from the floor on the date that it's published. (In fact, right now it's 9:35 a.m., and I've already read through the paper and deposited it in the recycling bin. This is a norm in the Leman house.) Yet my dear wife's paint and rollers can sit there proudly, right by the entrance of our home, without bothering her.

Women, indeed, are a mystery.

But because I love Sande and understand those kinds of things about her, I sigh inwardly and let her tell me what to do . . . one more time. She certainly puts up with enough of my quirky personality for me to let the paper thing slide. And I get a chuckle each time I walk by her unfinished project.

The important thing is to give each other respect, even with the quirky things that could drive you crazy. Like dirty socks under the bed. Toothpaste on the sink. Phones that always travel from their base. Glasses that get left on the patio. As the old adage says, "Why major on the minors?"

We guys may look tough on the outside, but we're fragile on the inside. If we feel disrespected or put down, we'll get quiet and shut down. We'll begin to bury ourselves in work. We'll come home less and less. We'll seek other sources of respect—like working lots of overtime in the evenings and on the weekends, away from home.

WITHOUT RESPECT, THERE IS NOTHING TO BUILD YOUR
RELATIONSHIP ON. NO FOUNDATION.

Without respect, there is nothing to build your relationship on.
No foundation. Without respect, a man does not feel loved.

The number one need of a man is to feel respected . . . especially
by you.

Need me.

Did you know that your guy is dependent on you? Because guys are less “relational,” we tend to have a lot fewer friends. Sure, we have computer-game buddies, hunting, jogging, and at-the-gym-for-a-workout buddies, but they’re more what you would call “acquaintances.” Those of us who have one good buddy—my buddy Moonhead and I have been pals from way back—count ourselves fortunate. Consider this: In all the years we’ve known each other, Moonhead and I have only once talked for 36 minutes in a row. And that was when we were discussing a serious subject. But to have such a long-winded conversation is extremely rare for us . . . or any man.

Yet you, as a woman, don’t consider it a real conversation unless it’s at least three hours and 55 minutes long, and you’ve discussed multiple subjects from multiple angles!

Because men have fewer friends, you figure much higher in your guy’s thoughts than you might think. In fact, the one person your husband cares most about is you. Although his ego may seem wrapped up in what he does professionally, don’t let that fool you.

YOU FIGURE MUCH HIGHER IN YOUR GUY’S THOUGHTS THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

Although men identify with their work—promotions, raises, backslaps for a job well done are immensely important to them—where your man really wants to succeed is at home. Underneath all his bravado, his grunts, his noncommunication at times, your man needs to be your hero. And what woman wouldn’t want that for an end goal?

In fact, if you want a man who shows his love for you by surprising you with flowers, a man who is a great father, a man who always shows up for his kid’s baseball games, a man who will be a warrior for you and your family, then here’s the secret. He needs to be needed *by you*. He needs to hear that in your words and see that in your actions. He needs to hear you say to a girlfriend on the phone:

“Did you know what my wonderful husband did last week? The house was such a mess, and I really needed help. I was feeling overwhelmed since I have a project that’s in crash status, and I’ve been

working nonstop at the office. By Wednesday I was so tired I just wanted to cry. I didn't have the energy to even go grocery shopping before I headed home. I figured we'd be having soup out of a can for dinner.

“But guess what! When I walked in my front door, our living room was straightened up, the dirty breakfast dishes were in the dishwasher, and I could smell my favorite Chinese takeout. Oh, I love that man! He knew how much I needed his help.”

He needs you to be efficient and independent . . . but not too efficient and independent. He needs you to allow him to do things for you, even if he doesn't do them quite the way you would do them.

HE NEEDS YOU TO BE EFFICIENT AND INDEPENDENT . . .
BUT NOT TOO EFFICIENT AND INDEPENDENT.

You may be making a six-figure salary. You may be in charge of an entire day care. You may be running the lives of all four of your children—ages five through eighteen. You may feel like you're doing quite admirably on your own. At least most days.

But beware of being too independent, because then the message you're subtly giving the guy you love is *I don't really need you*. And what red-blooded guy wants to stick around when it's clear that he's not needed? That his contribution to the family—as a provider, a husband, a father—is not appreciated?

Men are a strange breed, I'll admit. If you treat us right and stroke us, we will purr like kittens and want to do everything to make you happy. And, unlike most cats who treat people like staff and not family, most of us will be loyal to the end of our days if you respect us and show that you need us.

If a man knows that his role in your family life can be played by no one else, he will be okay even when his company suddenly downsizes and he's out of a job. Even when his 20-something physique moves to 40-something flab. Even when he forgets your anniversary or makes a costly mistake with your finances.

The number two need of a man is to feel needed . . . especially by you.

Fulfill me.

When your guy picked you as his soul mate, he picked you for a reason. Here was his thinking: *I just met the woman of my dreams. I'm going to marry her, love her forever, and have her forever. She belongs to me. We'll have great sex forever.*

Then reality hit after the romance, the wedding, and the honeymoon. Life returned to “normal.” He got busy with his job (or finding a job). You started to feel like Velcro woman—with everybody and everything sticking to you, wanting a piece of you. You became drained emotionally and physically, trying to meet everyone’s needs all at once.

Because he had “gotten the marriage job done,” he now turned his attention toward succeeding in his career and providing for his family. All of a sudden, you received fewer red roses, less romantic attention, and, let’s be honest, sometimes started to feel as if you were his property but not his love.

Then, if and when kids entered the mix, your life as a family became even more complicated. You sometimes found your husband eagerly eyeing you and you knew exactly what he had on his mind. But you can’t exactly put dinner on hold for a quick romp in the sack like you used to, since now you have a two-year-old screaming for food. Then there’s the science project your fifth grader needs to finish by tomorrow.

By nine o’clock, when your kids are tucked in bed, you’re exhausted. The last thing on your mind is satisfying anyone else’s needs. After all, isn’t that what you’ve done all day?

So once again, the man you married, who considered you “the woman of my dreams,” is left with the leftover pieces of you. The I’m-too-pooped-to-whoop pieces.

And to your husband, sex is the third most important need.

Surprised? I doubt it. What you may not know is this: Sexual fulfillment is important to a man. But there’s a difference between simply having sex and being sexually satisfied. Your attitude toward sex—whether assertive, aggressive, fun-loving or cold, noncaring, rote, let’s-just-get-this-over-with—makes all the difference to your man.

Simply said, your husband needs sex—and he needs you to love

I chose my wife,
as she did her
wedding gown, for
qualities that would
wear well.

—Oliver Goldsmith

it too. He longs to be intimate with the one person he trusts above all others, and that's you. If he feels fulfilled in his relationship with you, he will seek no others.

IF HE FEELS FULFILLED IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU,
HE WILL SEEK NO OTHERS.

Sex is an important ingredient in how fulfilled a man feels in life. But it is not the only ingredient. Your guy also needs to know that, in your world, he is the number one priority. That nobody else—including mother, father, girlfriends, or children—holds a candle to the importance he holds in your heart and life. He needs to hear you say on the phone to a girlfriend, “Oh, Anne, I’ve got to go. Jim just walked in the door.” And he needs to not only hear your “Welcome home!” but feel your arms around him and your warm kiss . . . even if it is a quick one because your pot of water for macaroni and cheese is boiling over.

When you take time just for him (and not the leftover, bedraggled pieces of yourself that you have by late evening), a man feels treasured by you emotionally *and* physically.

The number three need of a man is to feel fulfilled . . . especially by you.

STRAIGHT TO THE HEART

When you look at your man, what do you see first? Do you see the kind of shoes or suit he’s wearing? Do you critique whether he used the right belt as his accessory in his business-casual attire?

Or do you see your man’s heart? What he tries to do for you and your family, even when sometimes he messes up? The expression on his face when he walks in the door—is he eager to tell you news, deflated because of something that happened, or feeling tired?

WE MEN ARE SIMPLE. IF OUR THREE BASIC NEEDS ARE
FULFILLED, WE’LL BE BETTER HUSBANDS, BETTER DADS,
AND BETTER LOVERS.



Is it easy for you to put your husband first? Or is it a struggle because of stresses in your relationship, a heavy workload, or too many commitments?

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure your man out. His three needs are basic—to be respected, needed, and fulfilled. If you understand these needs, and seek to fulfill them, you'll get a man who will protect you with the toughness of a pit bull but also one who will have the softness of a teddy bear toward you and your children (or any children you might have down the road).

You see, we men are simple. If our three basic needs are fulfilled, we'll be better husbands, better dads, and better lovers. And we'll be happily around for a lifetime. With just a little effort on your part, it's the best package deal around!

“MANSPEAK”

A MAN’S TOP THREE NEEDS

1. to be respected
2. to be needed
3. to be fulfilled

I JUST REVEALED A MAN’S THREE BASIC NEEDS.

These needs will affect everything about a man—how he feels about himself, his career, his home life, you, your relationship, and your future together.

But ask any man, “What do you wish the woman you love knew about you? What would you tell her if you could?” and he’ll clam up.

Why is this? Because often the things that matter most to a man are also the ones he’s afraid to verbalize. He’s wary—often rightfully so—of how those statements will reflect on himself or how they’ll affect the attitudes and responses of the woman he loves.

Yet deep within every man are the 7 things he’d never tell you...but you need to know. And each of these 7 things is intertwined inextricably with a man’s three basic needs.

So on behalf of men everywhere, I’ll be bold . . .

#1

THING HE'LL NEVER TELL YOU

***“It’s Thursday, and I’m out of words already.”
 (“But if you want to keep talking,
honey, go ahead.”)***

Why men want the Cliff’s Notes, and women want the whole novel.



IT WAS ONE of those evening social events I hate. The ones where you have to dress up, look your best, and try to act social even when it’s not your thing and you’re feeling strangled because your tie is too tight.

But because I love my wife, I agreed to accompany her . . . although, after we got there, I didn’t see her for most of the evening.

I wandered around for a few minutes, giving others the nod and a smile, and finally ended up at the punch bowl. Somehow, when you’re not feeling quite comfortable, it helps to be holding something.

After I had poured my punch as slowly as possible, I stepped back to scan the room and take the tiniest of sips.

Just then another man stepped up to the punch bowl. I gave him “the nod.”

A nod is the universal man language, and it’s easy to do. When you see another man, you raise your head half an inch. He raises his head half an inch back. You’ve just exchanged a whole conversation, and

you're both satisfied. You've both said, without saying it, "Hey, how are you doing? Great party, isn't it?"

But this guy at the punch bowl looked as lost as I felt.

Suddenly a streak of vulnerability came over me. I extended my hand. "I'm Kevin."

He shook it. "Rick."

"Great party, huh?" I added.

And then, right there, I'd run out of words. After all, this guy was a stranger. I didn't need to go farther with him.

Still we stood at the punch bowl.

So I tried again. "So . . . what do you do for a living?"

That little exchange filled another 30 seconds.

We'd run out of words again. What do you say when there's no recent ball game to talk about?

Then Sande walked by. A vision of loveliness in my eyes and, even better, my social rescuer. "Rick, this is my wife, Sande," I said, grasping my wife's arm.

The awkwardness was suddenly over. Sande stuck around and filled in the gaps for a few minutes with her lively personality, then whisked me away to introduce me to a couple other people.

I felt like a fish that had just been landed, flopping wildly and with bug eyes, on the deck of a boat. Then some kind soul said, "Oh, look at him" and had mercy on me and threw me back in the water, where I could breathe and be comfortable again.

Now let's say that you are a woman and you meet another woman named Carol for the first time at a party over a punch bowl.

"Hello," she says. "I'm Carol."

You introduce yourself and add, "Cute shoes."

"Oh, I got them at Macy's," she begins, and then the two of you are off and running. Even if you are a quiet woman by nature, within your 45-minute conversation, you'll talk about shoes, your dresses, where you love to shop, your favorite punch recipe, the places you visited this summer and what you loved about them, how you miss a friend who moved away, etc. And you know what? Although one of you is the vice president of a local bank and the other a nurse at a city hospital, what you do for a living doesn't even come up. You don't tend to talk shop.

But you both walk away with phone numbers written on nap-

kins, waving good-bye and saying, “Hey, I’ll call you.” And what’s more amazing to us men, you often do!

HEARING ≠ ANSWERING

Are we men just relational clods? Sometimes, yes. But consider that because women on average use three and a half times as many words as men (as I stated in the introduction to this book), when we get home from work, we’re *done* with our word count. That means anything in the evening (when many social events occur) comes at us when we’re feeling the *least* relational. Seriously, because we’ve had to exchange words all day to get the job done, a relationship with the remote control is looking awfully good. It doesn’t ask us questions or get mad at us if we don’t have a task done or if we don’t answer a question a certain way.

That’s why when you talk to us about anything, it’s not that we don’t want to *hear* you. It’s often that we’re not equipped to *answer* you at that very moment. But most of the time, even if we are in that easy chair, flipping channels with the remote control, we do hear you. It may just take us a while to process.

WHEN YOU TALK TO US ABOUT ANYTHING, IT’S NOT THAT WE DON’T WANT TO HEAR YOU. IT’S OFTEN THAT WE’RE NOT EQUIPPED TO ANSWER YOU.

Remember that we’re used to you running relational circles around us. Sometimes it takes us a while to catch up with you! But often what we hear mid-process is the “big sigh,” then an irritated “Are you listening to me?” Frankly, it has taken twenty minutes to “detox” from work and figure out the next step on the project for tomorrow, and now we’re starting to catch on to the fact that at the end of your long diatribe, there’s a very important point. And it’s something we definitely should know about . . . maybe even do something about.

Because women in general have a need to talk, to communicate, to process, sometimes a man will tune you out when the flow of words becomes too great. You know what I’m talking about—and exactly when that happens with your guy! His eyes start to glaze over, he focuses even more on the newspaper or the TV, and he starts to say “Uh-huh” to

everything you say. What usually happens? You grow frantic to be understood, so you talk more, and the gap between you widens further.

Meanwhile, your guy is thinking, *Would you just stop talking and let the air recirculate in the room?*

The difficulty with marriage is that we fall in love with a personality, but must live with a character.

—Peter DeVries

It's no wonder this kind of scene happens, when you consider the differences between what men and women long for.

A WOMAN'S TOP THREE NEEDS

When I ask women what they want the most, I get responses like this:

“I want to be loved. I want to not only *know* I'm loved, I want him to tell me and show me that.”

“I want to talk and know that he's hearing me.

Sometimes I don't want an answer; I just want to process.”

“I want him to be there for me and the kids. I want us to be his top priority.”

“I want to be his soul mate.”

“I want to hear about his day, and I want him to hear about mine . . . and care!”

“I want to know he is thinking about me during the day.”

When I asked men at a recent marriage seminar what women want the most, one man blurted out loudly, “Visa!”

As his wife gave him the elbow, laughter broke out from the other men in the audience.

When you get right down to it, a woman's three basic needs are, in this order,

1. affection;
2. honest, open communication;
3. commitment to family.

Affection

More than anything, a woman needs affection. To a guy, affection means sex. To a woman, it means hugs, kisses, handholding, back



rubs, a flower, or a sweet note for no reason. It means her man giving to her without having to have something back. She needs affection as *affection*, not simply as foreplay.

TO A GUY, AFFECTION MEANS SEX. TO A WOMAN,
IT MEANS HUGS, KISSES, HANDHOLDING, BACK RUBS,
A FLOWER, OR A SWEET NOTE FOR NO REASON.

I doubt there is a woman alive who would say, “I just love it when my husband grabs me!” A woman wants to be petted, caressed, embraced. And there is an unheard question that she asks of her man every day: “Do you really love me?” If her husband only shows her affection during sex, it won’t be long before a woman will feel unloved. *After all*, she thinks, *he’s only sweet to me when he wants sex*. And she’s going to feel used—as if she’s his property or an object, rather than the woman of her man’s dreams . . . the woman he loves and cherishes more than anyone else on earth.

How does a woman feel cherished? When I asked a few women, here’s what they said:

“When he tells me what a good mother I am.”

“When he takes out the garbage without being asked on trash day.”

“When he cleans up the mess I made in the kitchen.”

“When he tells me I’m beautiful to him, even on the days I’m feeling fat and ugly.”

A woman needs to know that she is loved for who she is, not simply for what she does. She needs to know her guy is thinking about her with affection and love at home and when he is away from home. As one woman told me, “Because I know he loves me, I can manage even the hardest of days and come out okay. His love gives my life purpose.”

Honest, open communication

Did you know that scientific studies prove why a woman tends to be more “relational” than her male counterpart? A woman actually has more connecting fibers than a man does between the verbal and the emotional side of her brain. That means a woman’s feelings and

thoughts zip along quickly, like they're on an expressway, but a man's tend to poke slowly, as if he's walking and dragging his feet on a dirt road. Eventually his thoughts will catch up with the woman's, but it may be miles down the road.

In the miles in between is where women tend to get exasperated. After all, you're so good at expressing your feelings and jumping from topic to topic, who can blame you for rolling your eyes when all you get out of your guy is "the grunt"? To make matters more exasperating, he might call a buddy a minute after he's given you the grunt in response to your questions and launch into a 10-minute discussion about the size of the trout they caught last summer, what software program just went on sale, or that Cingular Wireless stock just went up.

Male-female communications expert Deborah Tannen, in her classic book, *You Just Don't Understand*, calls male-female communication "cross-cultural communication." She explains it this way:

If women speak a language of connection and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status and independence, then communication between men and women can be cross-cultural communication, prey to a clash of conversational styles. Instead of different dialects, it has been said they speak different genderlects.¹

Tannen goes on to say that when a husband and wife are sitting at a breakfast table and the man is reading a newspaper, there is a big difference in what women and men think talk is for:

To him, talk is for information. So when his wife interrupts his reading, it must be to inform him of something that he needs to know. This being the case, she might as well tell him what she thinks he needs to know before he starts reading. But to her, talk is for interaction. Telling things is a way to show involvement, and listening is a way to show interest and caring. It is not an odd coincidence that she always thinks of things to tell him when he is reading. She feels the need for verbal interaction most keenly when he is (unaccountably, from her point of view) buried in the newspaper instead of talking to her.²

How do the different genders respond to this situation?

To this man . . . a woman who objects to his reading the morning paper is trying to keep him from doing something essential and harmless. It's a violation of his independence—his freedom of action. But when a woman who expects her partner to talk to her is disappointed that he doesn't, she perceives his behavior as a failure of intimacy: He's keeping things from her; he's lost interest in her; he's pulling away.³

Are guys capable of talking? You bet. But the time to catch them is usually not the instant they walk in from work, when they're in front of the television, or when they're reading a magazine or newspaper. All three of those activities are saying, "I need my space."

If you want to converse with your man, pick your time wisely. You don't want to pick Sunday afternoon, during the fourth quarter of his beloved Bears game, to try to launch a conversation. One of the best ways is to watch something he's in the process of doing—such as building something out of wood in the garage—and say, "Wow, that looks interesting. Tell me more about that." Now you've got his attention. You've shown interest in one of his projects, and he'll be more than happy to talk with you.

If there's something you need or want to tell him, a great way to get his attention is simply to touch him. To your guy, your touch is powerful, and it can wonderfully open up communication lanes between you. As you're touching him, say, "Honey, I've got a really important question to ask you. You seem to be in deep thought, so now may not be the best time. If so, just let me know, and I'll wait until the time is right."

By touching him, you got his attention. By addressing him with respect, you secured his attention. And by giving him the choice of talking or not, you're almost guaranteed to have a captive listener!

Commitment to family

Children are pesty little buggers sometimes, and they can really get in the way of marital intimacy. But how much time your husband spends with your children and how he treats them has a lot to do with

a woman's marital satisfaction. Generally, a woman feels comforted and loved by her husband when he goes out of his way to spend meaningful time with the kids. Why is this? Because those children and what happens in their days and their psyches are an extension of a woman's self.

Yet what often happens is that men are so busy pursuing their role of being breadwinner (we'll talk more about why this is so important to a guy later) that they are home less than you'd like them to be. They may even get home after the children are in bed . . . all because they are so committed to fulfilling their God-given drive to provide financially for their family.

Sadly, many men are not a significant part of their family's life. They may either feel like "that's not my job" or they may be unaware of why they feel so driven to succeed. They may even think subconsciously, *She does such a good job with them that she doesn't really need me*. Behind the scenes, he may feel like the little boy who doesn't have a place to go, so he's killing time by scuffing his shoe in the dirt, hoping to find some more pennies to bring home.

But nagging him will go nowhere. "If you *cared* about this family, you would have been at Jack's game!"

Instead, why not try this approach? "It means a lot to Jack that you took the time to be there today. Thanks for doing that!"

What guy wouldn't try to make it out of work early for the next game after hearing that?

For those of you who don't have children to think about in your relationship, think about how you feel when your husband goes over to your mother's house and helps her with a task she can't do on her own . . . without you bugging him about it. Doesn't that give you warm, fuzzy feelings for your man?

WE MEN ARE REALLY LITTLE BOYS AT HEART.
WE WANT TO PLEASE YOU.

When your guy goes out of his way for the family, tell him about it. Tell him how much you appreciate what he did. Remember that we men are really little boys at heart. We want to please you.



WHEN YOUR THREE BASIC NEEDS COLLIDE WITH HIS

Take a quick look at the needs of a man, and the needs of a woman, side by side:

A MAN'S TOP THREE NEEDS

1. to be respected
2. to be needed
3. to be fulfilled

A WOMAN'S TOP THREE NEEDS

1. affection
2. honest, open communication
3. commitment to family

Is it any wonder a woman's basic needs can conflict greatly with a man's basic needs to be respected, needed, and fulfilled? A woman wants to cuddle; a man craves sex. A woman wants to talk; a man has run out of words. A woman longs for the family to do everything together; a man longs for some independence.

THINGS YOU'LL NEVER HEAR FROM A MAN

- "Honey, can we just cuddle tonight and talk?"
- "If I took Friday off, could we go shopping and make a weekend of it?"
- "Is there any way we can get your mother to stay a week longer? She's only been here a month."
- "Of course, I'll go with you to the ballet. I love seeing those men in tights."

SHARING IS NOT THE KEY TO YOUR HUSBAND'S HEART,
AS IT IS FOR YOURS.

One of the hardest things for a woman to realize is that sharing is not the key to your husband's heart, as it is for yours. You love words, sentences, complete thoughts, and paragraphs. You're in great command of your words, feelings, and thoughts. You are the Energizer Bunny of communicators who keeps going and going and going and going. . . . Your husband often feels like the bunny who has the wrong kind of batteries, lying mute on his side.

Here's the kicker: I wholeheartedly believe that your success or failure in marriage depends on how good you are at knowing your spouse's needs and meeting them.

And you, as a woman, can set all kinds of things in motion with the words you use with your husband. Your words can bring him joy

and confidence, even when he feels like he's failed in some area, or they can shut him down. Then he'll be like Harry the tortoise, who hides under his enormously thick shell. He'll pull his arms and legs in. You could get the biggest pitchfork in the world and poke at him, to get him to move, but he'll refuse. He'll ignore you completely. In fact, he won't come out of that shell until you go away!

YOUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN MARRIAGE DEPENDS ON HOW GOOD YOU ARE AT KNOWING YOUR SPOUSE'S NEEDS AND MEETING THEM.

WHY "WHY?" IS SUCH A CONVERSATION KILLER

All women love to ask questions. You're designed to ask questions.

But guess what? The best way to get into a man's mind and heart is *not* by asking questions. If you ask a man why, you shut him down because you put him on the defense.

"What do you mean?" you may ask. "I was simply asking nicely about his day, and he was starting to tell me what had happened over lunch. Because I wanted to know more about it, I asked him, 'John doesn't usually join you for lunch. Why did he join you today?'" Then Kevin frowned, clammed up, and didn't say anything else. I just don't get it!"

The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said.

—Peter F. Drucker

Any guy who opens up to tell you something is already putting himself on the line to be ridiculed for a dumb move or for feeling the way he does. It's hard enough for a male to open his mouth to explain. Because you're such a natural information gatherer, and you want to know every detail, you ask why. But asking why makes your husband feel like *Oh, so you think I'm a loser because of the way I handled the situation? Do you think I'm stupid?*

Asking why is an immediate turnoff for a guy. Instead, the best thing you can do is to depress that "have to know" instinct. Simply listen, nod, show concern, and touch his arm in empathy or sympathy as he tells you what happened. If he's angry and he uses words you've never heard before, don't judge him. Don't say, "I can't believe you said that!" Don't judge his emotion. Instead, listen quietly as your

husband struggles to put into words his thoughts and feelings about what happened. Don't jump immediately to say, "Well, I would have . . ." If you hear him completely out, you may be surprised to hear from his lips a depth of feeling you never knew was there: "I feel like such a failure. I'm not sure I can ever make it right. I don't know what got into me to say that to John. I'm worried I might lose my job over it."

When you are upset, do you always want answers? to be told what to do? Or do you sometimes only want to be heard? to process what happened by talking through it and having someone listen compassionately? Then give your guy the same benefit of your listening ear, minus the judgment.

Couples who listen without judgment are those who, step-by-step, can move their communication level from the typical clichés to sharing what matters the most. Those are the couples who will feel the ultimate fulfillment in marriage and will become each other's soul mates. Those are the couples who will stay together in the long haul.

Couples like Leon and his wife. I met Leon via the radio when I was in Medford, Oregon, to do a seminar on understanding marriage. My dear friend Perry Atkinson, the owner and general manager of the radio station KDOV there, asked me to call in to his radio station at 7:30 a.m. and give a little promotion for the seminar.

I was listening to KDOV, trying to figure out the right time to make the call, as Perry interviewed a guy named Leon about the weather. Just as I was about to dial the station, Perry said to Leon, "Kevin Leman is in town tonight, and he's going to talk about marriage. You've been married 59 years now, Leon. What's the one thing you'd suggest as most important to couples?"

"Mutual respect," Leon said.

Perry asked him something else, but it was obvious to me that Leon didn't catch everything that was said.

"Oh, and one more thing," Leon answered. "Just get one hearing aid."

One hearing aid? I thought. *What's that all about?* So I called in

The genius of communication is the ability to be both totally honest and totally kind at the same time.

—John Powell,
The Secret of Staying in Love

and said, “Hey, I want to talk to Leon. . . . Wait a minute! You say you’ve been married for 59 years—in a row?”

“You bet,” Leon said and laughed.

“You said, ‘Just get one hearing aid.’ What did you mean by that in regard to marriage?” I asked.

“I’ve only got one hearing aid because I just don’t want to hear it all,” Leon replied simply.

Mutual respect and not hearing it all—wise advice for the longevity of a marriage. Especially with a verbal woman and her out-of-words-by-Thursday husband.

Leon and his wife have been married for 59 years, and they are still going strong. You and your husband can be one of those couples. And you can love your marriage along the way too!

QUIZ

How are you communicating?

There are many types of conversations you can exchange with your spouse.

- Clichés
- Facts
- Ideas/opinions
- Needs/feelings
- Complete personal truthfulness

Categorize each of the following statements with a *C* for Clichés, an *F* for Facts, an *I* for Ideas/Opinions, an *N* for Needs/Feelings, or a *P* for Personal Truthfulness.

___ “Good morning, honey!”

___ “Could you be home right after work on Wednesday? I need your help to get things thrown together before the Lewises come over for dinner.”

___ “I miss Sadie. Could we get another dog?”

___ “I’ll be home at five o’clock tonight.”

___ “Francine just told me that Jordan joined the military. She and her husband were shocked.”



- ___ “Since I saw that TV program about breast cancer, it’s been on my mind. I worry that I might get it sometime. Then what would happen to you? the kids?”
- ___ “Do you think we should set aside some money for a special vacation next year since it’s our tenth anniversary?”
- ___ “And how was your day?”
- ___ “It’s going to be cold today.”
- ___ “I’m taking Angie shopping for a new coat. She’s growing.”
- ___ “Ever since mom died, I can’t shake this lonely feeling I have. I feel like I’ve lost not only my mom, but part of myself.”

For answers, see page 179.

Which of the types of conversations are most common in your relationship? Why?

“MANSPEAK”

TALK HIS LANGUAGE

If you feel compelled to tell your guy something, try these:

1. Tell him what a great husband he is.
2. Tell him what a great dad he is.
3. Tell him what a great job he does as a provider for your family.
4. Tell him what a great lover he is.

ON MOTHER’S DAY I ALWAYS TRY TO DO THINGS UP RIGHT. One year I really did things right. I made reservations at the nicest resort in town. The bill I received would choke a horse, but it was worth it. And as Sande said, she loved it because there was no Jell-O in sight.

As part of my tribute to my wife, I decided on the spur of the moment to say to our kids, “This would be a real appropriate time for you to share with your mom what you appreciate most about her.”

“Food!” my secondborn said immediately.

That was it. She didn’t say anything else. Just food.

Well, this isn’t playing out very well, I thought. So much for the sweet things I was hoping my kids would say on such an occasion.

But when I thought about Krissy’s response later, I realized that it was truthful and a great compliment. After all, Krissy was then a rapidly growing 15-year-old and an athlete, and she’d come home ravenous after school and practice. Sande is not just a good cook, but a great cook. So Krissy was simply showing her appreciation for one of her mother’s skills that meant the most to her right then.

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

That's exactly what your guy needs to hear from you—your appreciation. But in order for him to hear it, you need to be able to speak his language.

Can people change their conversational styles? Yes, they can—to an extent. But those who ask this question rarely want to change their own styles. Usually, what they have in mind is sending their partners for repair.

—Deborah Tannen⁴

Let him detox.

Why not give him a few minutes to “detox”—even a half hour—when he first gets home from work? Then he'll be happy to hear about your day and any concerns. When he steps into the house, what he really wants to do is take a leak. He needs time alone . . . to decompress. Often the best place to do that is in the bathroom, where he's less likely to be interrupted.

Dads, especially, need to decompress before they arrive home. It's why I suggest to men that on stressful days they choose their radio station or CD appropriately. They need to find some elevator music to wind them down.

One couple we know has changed their strategy twice already in their 15-year marriage. When they were childless and both held full-time jobs, they agreed to take a “quiet half hour” after each got home before they began to talk and make dinner together. But when children came along, they agreed that when he'd had a particularly intense day, he would arrive home half an hour later from work. In-between he'd go to a local park and would take a half-hour walk to get any work questions out of his

brain so he could be “home centered” when he got home.

Their children are now three and five. It's important that the kids who yell “Daddy!” and swarm him as soon as they see him do indeed get their daddy's immediate time and attention.

Just the facts please, ma'am.

Realize that he is designed to want “just the facts, ma'am.” He doesn't need all the nuances, details, emotion, or who said what when, and a repeat of the entire conversation that upset you. He needs the facts:



- You're upset.
- You had a conversation today with X.
- The main point.
- What you want him to do about it (if anything).

If you are desperate to share every detail, talk to a girlfriend! But don't talk to that girlfriend first if it has anything to do with your guy, being upset with your guy, or something that happened in your family that he should know first.

Say what you mean; mean what you say.

We guys are simple folks. When we talk, we say what we mean. Perhaps that's one of the reasons why we get so befuddled by a woman's words.

Consider this recent conversation in our house. Keep in mind that Sande and I have been married for 38 years:

My wife and I and several of our kids were sitting around the dinner table. We were having pork and applesauce, one of my favorite meals. I'd been smelling it for the last hour and, I tell you, there are few aromas more heavenly to me.

Right after the blessing, I said to Sande, "Honey, pass me the applesauce, will you?"

She paused. "Oh. You don't want that applesauce."

I wrinkled a brow. "Why not?"

"Well," she said slowly, "there's too much sugar in it."

Mmm, I was thinking to myself. If I don't want it, why did I ask for it? And if it doesn't taste good, why is it on the table? It's homemade applesauce too. Not that excuse for applesauce you find in the store.

After all, we're the kind of house where all the cookies are made from scratch. (Store-bought are Satan's cookies, in my humble wife's opinion.)

What was my wife trying to say under the surface? I could figure out only two options:

1. Was she trying to tell me I'm too fat and don't need all that applesauce?
2. Since she's such a perfectionistic cook, did she mistakenly add too much sugar and feels bad about it not tasting "just right"? But then it wouldn't be like Sande to put a failed effort on the table.

You see what I mean, ladies? We men often find ourselves scratching our heads, trying to figure out what your words are really saying.

Communication
isn't just talking.
It's talking in
a way that the
other person can
receive it.

—Unknown

There's a tradition in the Leman house. It began when my children complained about me being so hard to buy for because I have such distinctive tastes. One year, tired of listening to the complaints, I decided that around Thanksgiving, I'd go to the malls and stores and buy myself Christmas gifts: sweaters, aftershave, a shirt, a belt, cologne, and any other stuff I could find that represented a wide variety of gifts and prices. On Thanksgiving, when my family gathered together, they could draw straws (the kids, that is) to see who got to go first in "Dad's store" once it was officially open. By Dad's store, I mean that the items are strewn very lovingly on the couch, chairs, etc., in our living room. The only rule is that you can buy one gift at a time. That makes it fair for everyone.

Dad's store was such a hit that we've done it every year since. The kids were so relieved not to have to shop for me. But this last Thanksgiving, I was left holding the bag (literally) for one gift that didn't get bought. It was a V-neck, red cashmere sweater. I'd been so proud of that purchase because I got it for a real steal, so I figured somebody would snatch it up from Dad's store. But nobody in my family seemed interested in purchasing that sweater. So it hung around in the living room.

Just before Christmas, the local women's Bible study groups had their closing session. It's always a luncheon. This year, they asked me to be their speaker. So I said to my wife, "Uh, honey, come in here a moment." By "here" I meant the living room, where the red sweater was still draped over the sofa. "Do you like this sweater? Should I think about wearing it to the women's event?"

Sande shuffled her feet and didn't quite meet my eyes, "Well, you need a Christmas sweater."

Now I *know* there's not a man in the universe who *needs* a Christmas sweater. Most of us have way too many of those offerings stuffed at the back of our closets or under our beds because we're too afraid to take them back and offend somebody.

So I asked her, "Do you like the sweater?"

She still didn't meet my eyes. "You go ahead and wear it."

So now I've asked her twice. She's told me I need a Christmas sweater and that I could wear it to the function, neither of which is what I want to hear. What I want to know simply is, does she like it or doesn't she?

If she said to me, "I don't like it," I'd take it back and be 70 bucks richer. No big deal. I just want to know.

But Sande gave me what I call the typical woman's response. She didn't want to say bluntly, "Leemie, I do *not* like that sweater."

This is the same lovely bride who, when I have a rough day doing a TV show and get a lot of nasty letters from people who don't like anything I said from the time I said hello to the time I said good-bye, will read the letters I share with her. Then she'll look up and say bluntly, "Hey, Leemie, it's easy to love the people who think you're wonderful. It's difficult to love those people who think you're a jerk." Talk about telling it like it is! I don't always like to hear that—part of me wants to wallow in anger for a while. But Sande is always right to speak her mind.

So what did I do with the sweater? I took it back. I'm a frugal guy who can't imagine wearing something just once. I didn't want or need a sweater like that. I wanted something I could wear all the time. And I wanted something that my beloved bride would also like seeing me in. So why didn't she just come out and say she hated that sweater?

When we men ask a direct question like that—especially about clothing!—we're looking for a direct answer. So do us a favor and save yourself the frustration. Simply say what you mean!

Just don't do it in the middle of the Super Bowl.

SAVE YOURSELF THE FRUSTRATION. SIMPLY SAY WHAT YOU MEAN!

You say: "Do you want to stop for ice cream?"

You mean: I'm craving a triple-scoop, hot-fudge sundae with one of those cherries on top right now, but I don't want you to think I'm a pig. Even if I have gained a little weight lately.

He says: "No, thanks."

He means: I'm not really hungry for ice cream right now.

You think: *What a jerk! I really need that ice cream . . . now. If he doesn't change his mind and pull over in two seconds . . .*

You say: “Oh, isn’t that cute?”

You mean: Hey, I’m thinking about where that might fit in our house. Maybe in the bedroom? No, that one corner is too crowded. But in the foyer, hey, that might work!

He says: “Uh-huh.”

He thinks: *Oh, great, she wants to buy it. Don’t we have enough stuff around the house?*

You think: *Oh no, he hates it. And just when I figured out a great place for it too. Well, I’ll just have to figure out something else to put in that spot. It’ll look so empty.*

Shoot it to me straight!

Not only does he want you to say what you mean when he asks you, he wants you to shoot it to him straight. No emotion, no making him guess at nuances.

Here’s another Leman family example.

Sande always looks so nice. She’s always dressed perfectly for an occasion. When we go on a trip, she insists that she’s packing light. But she brings one entire suitcase just for shoes because every outfit has to have matching shoes.

Then there’s me—your oh-so-male kind of guy. I have a simple rule: inside shorts get changed; outside shorts you can wear for five to seven days. When we decide to go out to dinner with our kids, I’m ready in two seconds flat, because I don’t have to change anything.

Sande takes longer. And when she sees what I’m wearing, she gives me the once-over. You know that look. She looks . . . most particularly, at my shorts.

I’ve known her for long enough to know what’s going on in her head. I can see her weighing her words: *Do I really want to say something about those shorts? Is it worth it? Let’s see . . . what kind of restaurant are we going to? If it’s classy, I’m going to have to say something. But maybe that family place could be okay.*

Finally she reaches a decision. “Honey, how many days have you worn those shorts?” And I get the picture. Back into the house I go to change, so I’ll be socially appropriate (though I can guarantee you that there will be other men at that restaurant who will have worn their outside shorts for five to seven days).

Or sometimes one of our kids starts in on me. (Wonder where they

learned that?) “Dad, are you really going to wear those outside?” (meaning, outside the house).

So back into the house I go once again. I’m all about making my family happy.

But once I really blew it. I showed up at my daughter’s school wearing my bedroom slippers, shorts, a T-shirt, and a baseball cap. I should have known by the look of horror on my 13-year-old daughter’s face that I’d done something terribly wrong, but then I’m a male. I can be clueless sometimes. But did she tell me outright? No.

When I got home, Sande took the direct route. “You are never to show up at school like that again. It’s important to your daughter.”

I got the message. I didn’t have to guess at any nuances because she shot it to me straight. She stated it quickly. She didn’t drag out the facts, examine them 20 times, or make me feel like a bonehead.

I knew the case was closed. But I’ve never showed up at my daughter’s school like that again.

You see, we guys are dumb as mud . . . but we are also very trainable. We want to please you. Because all of us are still little boys at heart, and you are the ones we look at with secret awe as the center of our world.

THE BEST WAY TO TELL HIM HE MESSED UP

1. Get him alone behind a closed door.
2. Touch him as you’re talking to him. Because your guy is so touch oriented—and he especially likes to be touched by the love of his life—he’s much more liable to pay attention to you. And the little-boy part of him will be saying, *Well, she’s touching my arm, so she still likes me even if she doesn’t like what I did.*
3. Soften his defenses by looking him straight in the eye and saying something like, “Hey, honey, I could be dead wrong/out in left field on this, but when . . .” Admitting up-front that you could be very wrong will make your guy relax, instead of feeling edgy or competitive.
4. Then slip him the commercial—what you *really* want to get across in a nutshell: “It seems to me that what happened today at lunch with your sister might have been taken differently than you really meant it. . . .” Explain what the other person (or you, if he hurt your feelings) might have thought. Remember that you are the relational person—that you have the advantage because you, as a woman, can see the “whole” of relationships much more clearly than he, as a man, can.
5. Always, always gently tell him when he messes up. Contrast that to, “Hey, Bubba! You really messed up! What is wrong with you? I can’t believe what you said to your sister at lunch today. I was so embar-



rassed, and the people at the next table heard and rolled their eyes. You . . .” Such an approach will make your guy crawl into his shell and stay there.

The key is to always think, *If I messed up, how would I want to be approached?* Then give the same consideration and respect. The Golden Rule of Relationships is “Treat others as you yourself would want to be treated.”

QUIZZES & QUIZ ANSWERS

FROM BACK COVER

What your man wants the most:

- A. Sex
- B. Dinner
- C. More of A
- D. Respect
- E. Money and success

Answer: A, C, D in part. But a man's top three needs are to be respected, needed, and fulfilled (and being fulfilled means much more than just sex) *by you*.

How often does a man think about sex?

- A. As much as you
- B. 10 times as much as you
- C. 33 times as much as you
- D. Every day but April 15
- E. Only on days that end in the letter Y

Answer: C

FROM INTRODUCTION

How satisfied are you?

- A. I could be with my man 24 hours a day and still want more. I never want to be away from him.
- B. I love my guy, but it's nice to have a girlfriend break every once in a while.
- C. The male testosterone fest in the garage is about to drive me crazy. Do I, a female, matter at all here?
- D. Anybody here want to switch spouses for a day, a week, a year?

Answers:

- A. You're still on your honeymoon. Just wait until your husband gets the flu.
- B. Good for you. You're thinking straight. Guys need guys as friends, and women need girlfriends. If you both get that kind of time, your marriage will be stronger for it because you won't be tempted to try to turn your tough guy into a girlfriend.

- C. Sounds like your boy is being that—a boy. You may need to remind him (gently) of a few of his grown-up responsibilities. If all else fails, wave a pair of your slinkiest panties under his nose when he pokes his head into the kitchen to get a soda. You’ll be amazed by how fast those boys will disappear from your garage. And after your own little “fest,” your husband will be much more willing to pay attention to you and the tasks you need done around the house.
- D. You need to talk with your spouse. Note that I didn’t say *confront* your spouse. As soon as you can, and in a warm, inviting environment (free of dogs and children), tell your husband how much you love him. Pour it on. Tell him how much he means to you and how important he is in your life. Tell him how much you respect him and need him. Tell him how important it is to you that he feels fulfilled in your marriage—and that you do too. Then carefully broach the subject that is bothering you, using “I” language. “I could be misreading the situation, but I feel hurt when . . .” Keep away from the “you” accusing finger or tone. Realize that we men are sometimes “dumb as mud” about relationships. We need things spelled out for us, but *always, always* with respect.

FROM #1THING HE’LL NEVER TELL YOU

How are you communicating?

There are many types of conversations you can exchange with your spouse.

- Clichés
- Facts
- Ideas/opinions
- Needs/feelings
- Complete personal truthfulness

Categorize each of the following statements with a *C* for Cliches, an *F* for Facts, an *I* for Ideas/Opinions, an *N* for Needs/Feelings, or a *P* for Personal Truthfulness.

___ “Good morning, honey!”

___ “Could you be home right after work on Wednesday? I need your help to get things thrown together before the Lewises come over for dinner.”

___ “I miss Sadie. Could we get another dog?”

___ “I’ll be home at five o’clock tonight.”

___ “Francine just told me that Jordan joined the military. She and her husband were shocked.”

___ “Since I saw that TV program about breast cancer, it’s been on my mind. I worry that I might get it sometime. Then what would happen to you? the kids?”



- ___ “Do you think we should set aside some money for a special vacation next year since it’s our tenth anniversary?”
- ___ “And how was your day?”
- ___ “It’s going to be cold today.”
- ___ “I’m taking Angie shopping for a new coat. She’s growing.”
- ___ “Ever since mom died, I can’t shake this lonely feeling I have. I felt like I’ve lost not only my mom, but part of myself.”

Answers:

- C “Good morning, honey!”
- N “Could you be home right after work on Wednesday? I really need your help to get things thrown together before the Lewises come over for dinner.”
- N “I really miss Sadie. Could we get another dog?”
- F “I’ll be home at five o’clock tonight.”
- F “Francine just told me that Jordan joined the military. She and her husband were shocked.”
- P “Since I saw that TV program about breast cancer, it’s really been on my mind. I worry that I might get it sometime. Then what would happen to you? the kids?”
- I “Do you think we should set aside some money for a special vacation next year since it’s our tenth anniversary?”
- C “And how was your day?”
- F “It’s going to be really cold today.”
- F “I’m taking Angie shopping for a new coat. She’s growing.”
- P “Ever since mom died, I can’t shake this lonely feeling I have. I feel like I’ve lost not only my mom, but part of myself.”

Which of the types of conversations are most common in your relationship? Why?

FROM #2 THING HE’LL NEVER TELL YOU

Why won’t a man stop for directions?

- A. It’s beneath him.
- B. He’s got to figure it out himself.
- C. He knows where he’s going.
- D. He doesn’t like to ask others for help.
- E. Because he doesn’t have to go to the john yet.
- F. He thinks, *I can still pull this off.*

Answer: None of the above. It’s because he worked so hard to pass all those cars.

NOTES

Introduction: What a Man Really Craves . . .

1. D. Mace and R. Mace, "Enriching Marriages: The Foundation Stone of Family Strength," in *Family Strengths: Positive Models for Family Life*, ed. Nick Stinnett et. al. (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 197-215.
2. Peter Ustinov, "Points to Ponder," *Reader's Digest*, October 1992.

#1 Thing He'll Never Tell You

1. Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand* (New York: Quill, HarperCollins, 2001), 42.
2. *Ibid.*, 81–82.
3. *Ibid.*, 82–83.
4. *Ibid.*, 297.

#2 Thing He'll Never Tell You

1. For more information on this, see my book, *What a Difference a Daddy Makes* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000).
2. For more on this topic, see my book, *Making Your Children Mind without Losing Yours* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 2000).
3. Paul Candon, "Brain Structure May Influence Male-Female Behavior Differences," *Cerebral Cortex*, December 1999.
4. Jane Everhart, "Male, Female Differences Can Impact Treatment Regimens," *New York Times* Syndicate, December 28, 1999.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Genesis 2:18
7. *The Quest Study Bible*, New International Version, commentary on page 5 for Genesis 2–3.
8. For more on this topic, see my book, *The Birth Order Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1985, 1992).

#3 Thing He'll Never Tell You

1. Matthew 10:8
2. Luke 6:38
3. Proverbs 21:26