

Bridge the Listening Gap between Men and Women

It is common knowledge that men and women listen differently. You only have to be either a man or a woman who communicates with the opposite sex to know, men and women have different listening skills! This article shows you how to share so you will feel heard.

Women tend to use more words to communicate their thoughts, experiences, ideas, history, and emotions than men do. Men tend to narrow their focus down to one thing at a time while women tend to be big picture communicators. Men prefer to stay on task when communicating while women prefer to make sure they communicate all the various threads that connect to the point or points they want to make.

A classic break down in communication between a man and a woman occurs when she shares a problem and he wants to fix it. He can see a simple solution but offering it either annoys her or hurts her feelings.

When she is talking about a problem, she is in a process that includes sharing minute details and a variety of feelings. Offering a solution feels like the dismissal of her, her feelings, and the generosity with which she is sharing such a deep part of herself!

When he offers a solution and she rejects it, he feels disrespected for coming to her aid and trying to protect her. He experiences his masculinity dismissed as inappropriate and annoying!

People have advised women for years now to let their men know ahead of time to listen rather than fix. That is good advice. However, if she never allows him to offer solutions for any problem, there is a control issue at work there they both need to examine.

Another listening issue that arises between men and women occurs when they are simply sharing the details of each other's day, thoughts, ideas, even gossip. Again, men tend to get to the point quickly and decisively while women weave multiple threads of various stories together. Before long, both are slightly annoyed with each other because he quit listening fifteen minutes ago and she still has so much to share.

We have a dual solution, one for the men and one for the women. We will begin with the women. Ladies, you can speak less and be heard more! It is almost a spiritual discipline to put this into practice but the rewards are worth it. Let us explain.

Because your man prefers to focus on one thing at a time and he likes to get to the point and get on with it, share what you want to share with him in the way he can hear it. Then make sure you have women friends with whom you can have the luxury of weaving every single thread of every single story, thought, and feeling you want to share.

Just like breaking an old habit and creating a new one, when you practice this way of communicating, you will be filled with the creative tension that accompanies habit

breaking and forming. As you perfect it, you will be surprised with the emotional satisfaction you experience!

For instance, say you saw a movie that put you in touch with a memory from your childhood that gave you a profound insight about who you are and how you operate in the world. More than anything now, you ache to share all the nuances in the movie that brought you this insight, all the details from your childhood that came together while watching the movie, all the feelings the movie provoked, and all your hopes for the positive effect this insight can have on your life and his.

From a scientific standpoint, with the way his brain is put together, he can only hear just so much of what you now want to share. The most important parts are the insight and the positive effect the insight can have. Share a tiny bit of all the other things you want to share, but quickly get to the point and relish sharing the point with him. Then stop sharing and watch what happens.

Another way to do it is to get right to the point in this conversation. Then, in other conversations, add the other pieces here and there. In each of these conversations do not meander, keep the focus clean and to the point, and watch what happens.

One of two things will happen. If he is in the habit of tuning you out almost as soon as you begin speaking to him, your brevity will get his attention, even knock him off balance. Otherwise, you will experience his happiness for you and the joy of your sharing it with him. The more you communicate in this way, honoring the way he listens, the greater satisfaction you will experience, knowing you have been heard.

Now, for the men: remember when you fell in love with her and you could listen and talk to each other for hours? Being newly in love may have made it easier to listen to everything she wanted to share. However, if you could not keep up with her conversation, it likely did not matter at all. You gave her your attention anyway, happy to be in her company. You may not have been able to repeat details, but you got her essence, which is what she really wanted anyway.

You can still give her that occasionally. Bert Hellinger talks about “love at second glance.” Second glance love is that which has made room for paying the bills, caring for the children, attending to extended family members, keeping up with household tasks, etc. Love at second glance is when you finally let the rest of life seep in to your relationship and you see each other in a more human, realistic way.

One of the ways of keeping the love and passion alive in a marriage is to revisit love at first glance when everything was perfect and delightful. Just like every now and then she not only lets you offer a solution but also follows it; every now and then, you can be present with her and listen to everything she wants to share in the moment. When she follows a thread that does not seem to have anything to do with the main point; hang in there, loving her energy and who she is.

She will likely give you one of those looks of appreciation bordering on adoration that turned your world upside down when the two of you fell in love in the first place!

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