

When a Woman Tells a Man He isn't Doing It Right

Joseph & Sarah Elizabeth Malinak

Not so long ago, I had the privilege of attending a workshop for couples that used the Tango to illustrate points about masculine and feminine energies. It was a two-hour workshop held within the body of a weekend-long conference and it was fascinating!

While it wasn't a dance class, we did do some dancing and what the dancing revealed was educational. As might be expected, there were more women than men present. But everyone got to pair up for every dance exercise. No one was excluded and the men present didn't have to work overtime to make up the difference for all us women.

I got a chance to step into his shoes --

For the majority of the class, I danced with other women. We started out slowly. After deciding who would be the man and who would be the woman, we faced each other and, without touching, the men led the women in simply walking around the room. Then we switched roles. Whoever had been the male energy was now the female energy and visa versa. Whether participants were actually a man or a woman, roles were switched!

Feedback during the initial exercises from the men sounded like this, "It was hard to give up leading in order to follow her. I had to remind myself to follow. Even so, I found myself wanting to protect her." After women got the opportunity to be the male energy they said things like, "That was amazing! I felt responsible for her! When she didn't keep up with me, I felt I had failed her." We discovered that everyone in the male energy felt protective of their partner, regardless of their actual gender. Some people preferred leading and others preferred following.

It takes as much courage to follow as to lead!

It also became crystal clear that the Tango isn't a chauvinistic dance at all! It takes as much courage, discipline, and leadership to be able to follow as it does to lead. In fact, it takes courage, discipline, and leadership to be *willing* to follow. Following was a choice, not a submissive act.

But then I had the most remarkable, if humiliating, experience! Every once in a while, we would be asked to switch partners. A woman and I wound up together. I smiled at her and she asked, "So, do you want to be the man, or what?" I said, "Sure." The directions changed and the dance got a little more complicated. Now the man was responsible for walking the woman around the room in time to the music while touching her hands. However, there was this basic rule that when you (as the male) "lost" your partner – when the rhythm wasn't quiet there or you were stepping on her – to just move side to side until you, as a couple, got your rhythm back, and then move on with the demands of the exercise.

Well, I kept losing her! I would step forward, she would step forward instead of back, and we would bump into each other. So, I would step back and she would take such a halting step forward that I felt certain I wasn't doing a good job of communicating with her. So, I'd start moving side-to-side to help us get in sync, all the while avoiding bumping into other couples.

At one point, she said something to direct my efforts, taking the lead in this dance partnership. I teased her back (gently, I thought), smiled and asked, "Who's leading?" She answered with what I felt was disdain, "Yeah, but you're just doing the same thing over and over again. We're supposed to be walking."

She essentially told me, "You're not doing it right."

I could not believe how humiliated I felt. I started to defend myself and explain why I kept going back to having us move together side-to-side but opted not to. I was chagrined. I couldn't wait for the dance to be over (even though once it was over, we'd switch energies with her being the male and me the female)! I wanted to point out to her that from the beginning she seemed intent on leading me instead of following. But I was stymied by how badly I felt.

As a woman, I was shocked to have this experience because I certainly have told my share of men, even the one I love most, "You're not doing it right." Usually, I deliver that message by trying to take over whatever it is they are not doing right! I was doubly chagrined to be in the man's shoes, experiencing what that behavior does to the masculine energy!

Well, my dance partner and I switched roles and I became the female. You can bet, I made certain I followed her and did not lead or in any way try to direct her. When we were done with that dance she smiled the first genuinely warm smile she'd directed my way and sincerely thanked me for the dance!

I thought, "Yes! It's nice to actually be followed, isn't it?!"

From other feedback given and received during the workshop, it was evident that both this particular dance partner and I believed we were especially feminine women. However, I knew better! When lead came to follow, following did not come easily or naturally!

A healing place for a woman to be is relaxed, open, and receptive. It doesn't have to be a 24/7 kind of existence. The more a woman can add times of relaxation, openness, and receptivity, the better for her. The point is this: for most of us, living, loving, and being in the feminine energy is a choice we have to have the self-discipline to make. Knowing that, we can make our set-aside time in the feminine as yummy-delicious as possible!

A healing place for a man is to be in the flow of purposeful, meaningful activity. For men who find themselves stuck trying to please the women in their lives, getting in the flow of purposeful, meaningful activity has to be intentional, active, even scheduled. The pay offs are worth the attention and energy it takes to make it happen.

An awesome place to be in is to be able to say (if you are a woman), "I *get to* be in the feminine today. Where and how am I going to allow that to happen?" And, if you're a man, to be able to say, "I *get to* be intentional about expressing my masculinity today. When and how am I going to make that happen?"

Have fun making it happen!

Bio:

Sarah Elizabeth Malinak, and her husband, Joseph, are the authors of "Getting Back to Love." The advice book on romantic relationships that is changing lives before people finish reading it! See <http://www.GettingBacktoLove.com> (FREE DVD when you order). For FREE newsletter, visit <http://www.IdealRelationships.com>.