

From John Gray, *What Your Mother Couldn't Tell You and Your Father Didn't Know*

Complied and edited by

David E. Carlson, LCSW, M. Div.

708-705-6711, Ext. 14

Feminine Skills for Talking So a Man Will Listen: Pausing, Preparing, Postponing and Persisting.

1. Pause

- A. Check it out. Ask him if this is a good time.
- B. Don't interrupt him if you know he is in the cave.
- C. Remember talking in a logical and focused manner is primarily how men communicate.
- D. If a woman wants to get a man to understand what she really needs, she should avoid ever saying "You don't understand," even when she means it, because the phrase is so accusatory that it is hard for a man to hear her. p. 164
- E. Do a reality check. Is it true that he is doing nothing, doing nothing right?

2. Prepare, By making clear up front how she wants him to support her, she can relax and share her feelings without having to worry about upsetting him or losing his attention. p. 156

- A. Set a time limit. Tell him how long it will take. When a man doesn't know where the conversation is going, he begins to panic. When he knows there is a time limit, then he can relax.
- B. Give him a clear job description. Tell him that he doesn't have to say anything or make other supportive comments, nor does he have to solve her problem.
- C. Encourage him. Occasionally remind him that he is not being blamed or that you understand it is hard to listen. One way to prepare a man to hear advice at those really important times when you have to give it is to react in a very accepting way at those times when he makes little mistakes. p. 170
- D. Appreciate him. Each time when you are finished talking let him know that you really appreciate his listening and that you feel much better because of his support. The more a man feels appreciated and trusted as competent and capable, the more he can openly hear your requests for more. p. 171

3. Postpone

- A. When he is in his cave, postpone sharing your needs for another time when he is more available and able to give.
- B. Put off expecting him to do more until he has become proficient in listening more to feelings, then begin to ask for more physical help in small increments.
- C. When you are feeling blame or criticism, talk to someone else first to become more loving and centered and then talk to your partner.

4. Persist, a skill of assisting him to be successful in supporting you, not a process of trying to change him.

- A. Continue giving him the support he needs to support you. Don't expect him to always remember.
- B. When he resists conversation, persist in asking him to listen even if he has little or nothing to say.
- C. Overcome the tendency to give in and not communicate with him. Patiently persist in practicing these skills.

- D. When you don't know how to say it, tell him you don't know how and you want don't want it to sound like criticism or blame, but you would also feel really supported if he knew what you were feeling. p. 172
- E. Anticipate How Men React to Feelings, p. 204
 - 1. He offers a solution rather than listens supportively and empathetically. The art of listening does not entail solving problems or offering advice, p. 44.
 - 2. He minimizes her problems and takes her expression of them personally, as blame and criticism, rather than take them seriously and non-defensively.
 - 3. He invalidates her feelings rather than affirms, validates and recognizes them as expressions of her process to forget.
- F. Develop the three steps to draw a man out of his cave, p. 209-10
 - 1. Give him lots of alone time and let him see that you don't mind. Be warm and receptive when he comes home.
 - 2. Let him repeatedly experience success in fulfilling you. When you ask him to do specific little things for you, express your gratitude when he carries them out and gently ask him again when he forgets "as if you are asking for the first time".
 - 3. At chosen times, ask him to listen to your feelings, remembering that this is not his instinctual way of being in relationship.

That a woman can forget the problems of her day by remembering them is a concept foreign to most men, who generally banish the problems of the day by not talking about them. To bring them up in conversation, a man would have to address himself to solving them. p.43

Any man can learn to listen if he is approached in an appreciative, welcoming manner. p. 43 However, when a man loves a woman, it doesn't mean that he will be motivated to initiate conversations, nor will it be any easier for him to listen. p. 181

Masculine Skills for Men to Listen Without Getting Upset: Ducking, Dodging, Disarming, Delivering. See Ch. 5 Masculine Skills for Listening Without Getting Upset p. 132-156 (Interestingly, Gray has not written a neat outline for these like he did for women, so these ideas are gleaned from his book.) Learning these skills require a man to reconnect to his ancient warrior skills.

1. Ducking and 2. Dodging, is emotional self-defense, a mental strategy of receiving the woman's message non-defensively, with calmness and acceptance. A man can prepare himself to listen, overcome his natural resistance to stay in the conversation by reminding himself:

- A. that an emotionally upset woman is not demanding agreement or submission but merely wants to feel heard; (It sounds worse than it is, getting louder is her way of saying "You're not listening", just the act of talking brings up an instinctual feeling of security and there is often a loving message behind her harsh words);
- B. that she is feeling abandoned, rejected, neglected, not listened to;
- C. that when she is upset, the most powerful means of assisting her in feeling better is to listen without getting upset that she is upset;
- D. that learning that what a man hears as blame, mistrust and criticism is not meant or intended personally, she has only temporarily forgotten how wonderful her man is;
- E. that it creates a new dimension to please, protect, and provide for his wife and ensures that they both get the love they deserve;

- F. that women want an emotional climate in which they can safely explore and express their feelings (a reflection of their need to be protected);
- G. that practicing this new ability and strength of not getting upset not only helps a woman to feel protected but ensures that the man too will get the love he deserves;
- H. that when a woman feels secure enough to share her feelings with the man she loves and he can listen without being wounded, the relationship will thrive;
- I. that ducking and dodging is the ability to draw out a woman's feelings;
- J. that invalidating arguments and interruptions sabotage the relationship and prolong the woman's upset;
- K. that sometimes a woman doesn't understand her own feelings until she freely talks about them. If she doesn't have to worry about her man's losing control or withdrawing his love, she is doubly relieved and deeply grateful;
- L. that a strong emotional reaction is usually a signal that past unresolved hurts are involved, not just the subject at hand;
- M. that conversations will repeatedly turn into fights, one or both partners will close up and passion will start to fade if the man doesn't use the non-defensive listening skills;
- N. that a woman can handle a man's anger and upset when he can contain his gut reaction and respond respectfully; that a woman admires a man if he has the strength to control his emotions and the sensitivity to respectfully consider her point of view as a valid perspective.
- O. that if a man respects a woman's primary need to be heard, she will respond by becoming equally respectful of his wishes.
- P. that women today have a much greater need to talk in a "Female" way (unfocused and emotional) with their male partners because they are deprived of it at home and work. A modern man is required to be a warrior but now must defend himself without retaliating. p.123 This is accomplished by responding respectfully to a woman's need to talk and share.

3. Disarming by listening and understanding: the skill of asking women questions, rather than defending or answering back, thereby sending a soothing message that the man cares and that he is there for her. A man wins by asking more, he loses by talking about his gut reactions before the woman feels heard.

- A. Correctly interpreting the woman's message as a cry for intimacy, esteem and help not blame, criticism, control, demands for change.
- B. The worst move a man can make in discussions with a woman is to invalidate her feelings and point of view.
- C. When a man doesn't attempt to explain the correctness of his point of view but listens and understands.
- D. A man should delay answering an emotional woman's questions by asking her to talk more about her feelings and point of view.
- E. Remember, feelings are not to be taken literally. They are poetic expressions to indicate a person's passing emotions. They are not intended to be taken as factual statements. Nor are they about the man.
- F. Most men fear that if they don't correct a woman's statements, she will continue holding on to them as facts.
- G. The more a woman feels the right to be upset, the less upset she will be. If she isn't criticized or blamed, she is given the opportunity to release any negative feelings she may be harboring.

- H. An overwhelmed woman talks about her feelings the way she shops. She is not expecting you to buy a particular feeling any more than she is necessarily going to buy it herself. She is basically trying on emotional outfits to see if they fit. It doesn't mean she's going to take it home and wear it forever.
- I. A man who doesn't demand masculine pinpoint accuracy from an emotional woman allows her to reach objectivity with greater love, trust, acceptance, and appreciation.

4. Delivering support, the skill of watching and waiting for the right moment to deliver a word or phrase of support that will contribute to ending the battle.

- A. When you suspect she is upset, don't wait for her to initiate the conversation (when you initiate, it takes away 50 percent of her emotional charge). When she doesn't feel responsibility for initiating conversation, she can much more efficiently move through her feelings.
- B. As you let her talk, keep reminding yourself that it doesn't help to get upset with her for being upset. Tell yourself that your wife needs an opportunity to talk about her feelings without focusing on solving them. By responding with empathy, sympathy and understanding, you nurture her female side. This results in her throwing off her feelings of being overwhelmed and allows her to shift back to appreciation and love for you. p.55
- C. Whenever you feel an urgent need to interrupt or correct, don't.
- D. When you don't know what to say, say nothing. If you can't say something positive or respectful, keep quiet.
- E. If she won't talk, ask more questions until she does.
- F. Whatever you do, don't correct or judge her feelings.
- G. Remain as calm and centered as possible, and keep a lock on your strong reactions. (If you lose control and "spill your guts" even for a moment, you lose and have to start all over at a disadvantage).
- H. Equal respect is a soothing ointment that nurtures the wounded female soul.
- I. Delivering support is accomplished by simple gestures of nodding one's head in agreement, giving her a hug, maintaining eye contact and making sympathetic sounds and phrases.
- J. For a man, listening attentively without getting upset or frustrated when a woman is upset takes a lot of practice but eventually becomes second nature.
- K. Learn that your characteristic way you react to her feelings sabotages the relationship, and practice new skills that will make life better for both of you, p. 204
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