

Gender Differences

Two-thirds of our relational problems cannot be resolved, many of which tie into gender differences in one way or another, since it's like speaking two different languages. And increasing the volume doesn't help any more than speaking loudly to a foreigner does, in a language that they don't understand. From boardrooms to bedrooms, understanding and successfully negotiating those gender differences can facilitate just about any liaison. Herewith, top ten gender differences that influence most relationships by and large – of course there are always exceptions to every rule!

Top Ten Gender Differences

1. Why We Communicate: Women believe in rapport talk, men in report talk – i.e. women talk to connect, men to convey information. I can't tell you how many couples I've seen, where she claims that he just sits there and doesn't care to talk with her, while he says, "I have nothing to say – what do you want me to say!" If he has nothing to add, he truly has nothing to say.
2. How We Communicate: There are three primary differences.
 - o Women use twice as many words as men in a given day, since they like to think out loud and talk through things. Men are more direct and to the point, so they often get lost and frustrated when a woman conveys a lot of information, and can miss the point entirely.
 - o Women transmit a lot of communication between the lines; men have nothing between their lines. But since each party assumes that the opposite gender communicates exactly the way they do, women try to read between men's lines and plant stuff that isn't there; and men completely miss what's between the women's lines. Needless to say, this causes a lot of misunderstandings.
 - o What makes it even more challenging is, since women have a hard time asking for favours, they do so indirectly. So when a woman says, "Would you like to do such and such" what she means is "Let's do such and such". men equate the former to someone asking their opinion and the latter to direct instruction; so they feel "no" is a legit answer when given a choice. Of course this just infuriates women since they feel dismissed by a flat out refusal to their polite request.
3. What We Communicate About: Being action oriented, most guys like to talk about sports, how things work, performance, ability, fixing things, etc. Being people

centered, women love to talk about people, relationships, philosophy, and finding ways of being more supportive. I've had many furious women share that their partner has a bigger reaction to sporting events than sick relatives or divorcing friends, which is interpreted as him not caring. As before, guys will talk only when they have something to comment on in a given situation – yes, armchair coaching counts.

4. What Drives Us: Men are goal oriented, women process oriented. A guy will not attempt anything unless he knows there's a chance of succeeding; and then, he'll try to find the fastest way to achieve his goal. A woman will not be afraid of attempting something without a specific goal, as long as it allows her to explore new possibilities and/or ensure that everyone's feeling good.

A man's goal oriented nature also extends into arguments. When a couple starts to go around in circles, the man feels there's no point, since there doesn't appear to be a clear-cut goal; and even when there is, if he doesn't get it or he doesn't have a shot at winning, he stops and goes on to do something else. It doesn't mean he doesn't care, he just doesn't see the point; but this is really hurtful to women, because they feel dismissed when they're still really upset.

5. How We Focus: Compared to the male brain, the female brain has a lot more connections across the two hemispheres, and their neurons have a significantly farther reach. This allows women to multi-task, and men to have sharper focus on one thing at a time. It ties into the hunter-gatherer mentality, because focusing on too many things at once could distract a hunter in a way that could cost him his life in the jungle. As such, when a man has to focus on something, his brain needs to shut off to everything else. He truly can't hear when he's watching TV, reading, on his smart phone, or working on something. FYI, this extends into relaxation time as well. When men are relaxing, 70% of their brain shuts off, when women are relaxing, over 90% of their brain stays on.

6. How We Express Love: While we all have a primary love language that we use to express love – words of affirmation, acts of service, touch, quality time, gifts – women have an easier time showing love by saying the right words, men by doing things (remember his action oriented nature?). If you want to please your partner, the golden rule definitely doesn't apply. Best thing you can do is, find out their love language, and factor in the significance of communication vs action.

7. Why We Have Sex & How It Impacts Mating: There are three primary differences.
 - o Sex is about pleasure, connection, being desired, etc. with women; for men, it fulfills those purposes in addition to tons more; which is why a guy may want sex more often than a woman, not just because of his likely higher sex drive. Among other things, it's validating, comforting, reassuring, makes him feel

significant and desired, makes him feel cared for, and so on. A woman must never assume that guys are just horn-dogs, objectifying them to get off.

Since sex can mean a lot of different things to a guy, as previously mentioned, things could be going to hell in his life, but if his partner wants to have sex with him he's okay. For most women, everything else has to feel okay before they can jump into sex, which may feel like a guilty pleasure versus something that needs to be prioritized like a necessity, if they crave it.

- o By and large, a woman generally needs to feel emotionally connected to have sex, a guy has sex to connect.
 - o Mating with a man can be a huge investment for a woman (20+ years if she gets pregnant), but not so much for a man. So when she puts out a mating call, she can take a long time showing interest (up to 45 minutes) while she assesses his mate potential, whereas a guy can do a yes-no assessment at first site. This is why a man can often over-estimate a woman's interest in him, while a woman can under-estimate his interest in her.
8. How We Deal with Our Problems: When women have a problem, they feel better just talking about it and supporting each other. Men rarely feel better talking about their problems and prefer to be left alone to find a solution to deal with a disappointment on their own; if they're at a low point, they don't want witnesses. So if he pulls away or is in a bad mood, it's his problem – she shouldn't make it hers and add to it
 9. How We Feel About Getting Help: When men are in a jam, they want to be left alone to figure things out for themselves; they'll discuss it only if they need help. When women are in a jam, they like to vent. But since a guy assumes that means she wants his help, he jumps in to tell her what to do, which frustrates the heck out of her, and may even offend her deeply, because she feels that he doesn't trust her to have the skillset to take care of it on her own. This always baffles men, because they're thinking, if she didn't want my help then why did she talk to me about it?
 10. How We Handle Our Mistakes: When either party makes a mistake, women tend to apologize way too much, men hardly at all. The right balance is once for each mistake. A misunderstood female will repeat herself (following him from room to room to room, if need be) until she feels understood, whereas a guy may check out once he feels there's no point – remember his goal oriented nature?

If there's one thing that couple work has taught me, it's that while there are many things that are unique to each couple, there are gender-related similarities in every single couple, independent of race, culture, religion, socio-economic status, level of education, and value

systems. They're so consistent in fact that I'm now convinced that each gender similarities outrank all other similarities that may seem bigger on the surface.

Here's an example of how gender differences can take something innocuous and spiral it out of control, regardless of couples' backgrounds.

Her: Guess what? Jimmy's cheating on Donna.

Him: Hum.

Her: You don't seem surprised. Did you already know about this?

Him: Kinda.

Her: And you didn't SAY ANYTHING?

Him: What did you want me to say?

Her: How wrong it is for one thing ... unless YOU don't think it's wrong.

Him: Does it really matter what I think? ... So, how did she find out?

Her: So that's it – all you're concerned about is her finding out? ... Would YOU tell me if YOU were cheating ... or just do your best to not get found out?

Him: But I'm NOT cheating!

Her: Hypothetically speaking.

Him: Hypothetically, it's called cheating because it's kept secret.

Her: So HYPOTHETICALLY, you could be cheating RIGHT NOW, and I wouldn't know it.

Him: But I'm NOT cheating!

Her: But if you were....

Humor aside, it's clear that misunderstandings can develop in a heartbeat, because of how each gender assumes that the other gender feels exactly the same way. But most individuals fair a lot better when they can recognize those moments and try to look at alternative explanations.

A case in point: Anger is a secondary emotion for men, in response to feeling inadequate, guilty, impotent, or feeling bad about letting someone down, and wanting to redeem themselves in their eyes. When women realize that, the next time a man gets angry, they try

to look for a less obvious reason, and experience what therapists call an “aha moment”, which calms them down versus causing a major reaction.

Bottom line, knowing how gender differences work can make versus break a relationship – or at the very least, save you a lot of heartache!