

For Women Only: Two Secrets about Men that Can Transform your Relationship

By [Kirsten Cronlund](#) on January 14, 2010 – 3:02 pm [17 Comments](#)

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My dear friend, even though I do not write for [Cosmo](#) magazine, my advice truly could reignite passion and connection in your relationship. In my five years of post-divorce dating, I have gathered valuable information about men from men. They have described what led to their own divorces, as well as what they most value in a woman.

This anecdotal evidence, combined with positive psychology research findings, leads me to the following conclusions:

Secret #1: The goal of men is to reduce complexity in their lives.

Secret #2: What men want most from women is to feel truly appreciated.

It's all about simplicity and appreciation.

Why Do We Make Things So Complicated? (See Secret #1)

Simplicity

Do men share our conviction that all relationships must be honored with birthday gifts? Do they really care if the curtains perfectly match the bedcovers? And do they dissect conversations after hanging out with friends, unraveling the hidden meanings in their friends' statements?

There are exceptions to every rule, but most men would emphatically answer **No!** to all of the above. In fact, nearly every single man I have dated in the last 5 years has told me — almost verbatim — “I am just a simple guy, with simple needs.”

What are men trying to tell us when they say this? I wondered about this for a long time, until I recently had secret #1 plainly spelled out for me by a good male friend. Suddenly, it all made sense. Of course! When men slip into problem-solving mode with us, they are doing what they are hardwired to do: apply their ability to cut through the morass to arrive at the simplest possible solution.

We resist this, mistaking their efforts to help as oversimplification of very real concerns. We suspect that they're hiding their real selves from us. We try every possible way to get them to reveal what they must really be thinking. We get offended when they don't empathize with the intricate webs of complicating factors that we outline to them. I think Jerry Seinfeld summed it this way: “Women always want to know what men are thinking. You want to know what we're thinking? Do you? Here's what we're thinking:.... Nuthin.”

The Power is in the Attitude (See Secret #2)

Many women are consumed with “getting things done.” We excel at coordinating schedules, making sure details are attended to, and succeeding simultaneously in business and domestic environments. I have frequently heard two women talking and sharing this sentiment: “It's a good thing I'm paying attention to the details, because my husband would have no idea how to accomplish everything I attend to in a day.” While this may seem true, I want to offer an alternative (albeit controversial) viewpoint: How important are all those details and – more importantly – what is sacrificed to make sure it all happens, just so?

Think back to the early days, when you and your significant other were first dating. Would you have prioritized your every responsibility above time spent with him? Did you devote time and energy on how you were going to dress the next time you saw him? Did you spend time talking (ad nauseum) to your friends about the wonderful qualities in your new beau?

In the first stages of courtship, your appreciation and acceptance of a man for who he is is what attracts a man, and with good reason. Put yourself in his position. Would you rather hang out with someone who openly thinks you are wonderful or someone who focuses on what you're doing wrong? My guess is your husband would feel he'd died and gone to heaven if you were to bring that fresh, frisky, appreciative attitude to your long-term relationship.

From Languishing to Flourishing

I recently heard a man say that the worst thing possible is to have two mothers: one living with your father, and one in your own house. The nagging and hassling behavior women often feel reduced to is deadly to connection. Relationship researcher [John Gottman](#) describes this as “negative start-up by the wife,” and has found it to be severely detrimental to marital happiness.

Conflict in relationships is unavoidable. I'm not advocating that you keep quiet about things that need to be said, but consider how you are saying them. Curb the whining and the nagging. Also, don't let yourself be consumed with the things you want him to improve upon.

Instead of giving in to irritation when he forgets to stop at the store, or doesn't clean the bathroom as thoroughly as you would, why not take a deep breath and consider all the efforts he does make? Picture him through new eyes, ones that see all of his amazing qualities. Men want to be appreciated and accepted. They want to know that their efforts are noticed. They may be attracted to achievement in the professional arena, but in the wee small hours of the night they want to have a soft place to fall, where they know they will be accepted.

This may require that we women set aside our complex view of the world. We have to let our guard down and set aside our agendas, a challenge when attention to detail signals love to us. But the cost of maintaining unreasonably high expectations is disconnection that erodes the integrity of the relationship.

Gottman's has also found that couples who maintain a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions fare far better than those whose ratios tilt more in favor of negativity. I urge women to take this statistic seriously, since much of what I hear from men is a longing for more upbeat interactions with their partners. Humor and joy are critical to flourishing relationships, and you can choose to cultivate these positive emotions and experiences.

Remember back to the time when you knew that how you looked at a guy determined whether or not he returned your glance, and shoot that magic look your husband's way. It's subtle, but it matters. If you bring to your long-term relationship the engagement and flexibility, as well as the appreciation and playfulness that you brought to your dating relationships, the rewards will be well worth the investment. Your partner will notice, and I'm guessing you'll have some fun, too.

References

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