

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

By [Kirsten Cronlund](#) on January 14, 2010 – 2:41 pm [40 Comments](#)



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For years, I have seen men roll their eyes and exclaim, “Women! I’ll never understand them!” I have always been at a loss for how to respond to this outburst, since I have always found myself and other women completely understandable. I’ve tried to find out just what it is that men can’t comprehend, but – either because they don’t know what to ask for clarification on, or because I am too steeped in my own female perspective to understand the source of the confusion – the conversation has never gotten off the ground.

But recently I’ve developed a better understanding of the male psyche, and I have some ideas about how to explain women to men. In particular, my women friends have emphasized and repeated two key needs and concepts also corroborated by research findings in positive psychology.

Secret #1: Women feel nurtured when men assist them with tasks.

Secret #2: Women long for their men to welcome their influence.

It’s all about assistance and openness.

### **It’s Astounding What Goes on Inside a Woman’s Head** (See Secret #1)

Men, if you think it’s scary to watch a woman go into a cleaning frenzy, you would be wise to stay away from the inner workings of her brain. Hidden within the confines of her skull is a personal 12-ring circus, complete with dancing bears, trapeze artists, and raucous music.

This is how she is able to talk on the phone, do her nails, and oversee the kids’ homework all at the same time – and while she’s driving! Managing the many roles women embody is an intricate dance. We are amazingly adept at keeping many plates spinning at once. Most of us do this as a matter of course, and can forget that not everyone functions in the same way. When we occasionally hit overload — when there is one task too many on our to-do lists — we (sometimes emotionally) react in proportion to the entire load we are carrying. If we have reached the point of asking for help (even if it comes in the form of bursting into tears), it probably means that we have already maxed out our energy reserves.

At that point, what we want is for our partners to do one of two things: 1) Give us a hug and tell us he loves us, or 2) Offer to take on some of the work load that we have created for ourselves. Although option #2 might not seem fair – after all, you didn’t ask us to take on all the jobs we must complete, and it probably seems to you like many of those jobs are unnecessary (see Secret #1 from the article For Women Only) – but your offer signals love and support at a critical time.

Think of it this way — you know that comfortable home you live in, where sheets are clean and food is in the fridge? Well, the creation and management of that home, as well as the complexities of modern family life, is largely thanks to the brilliant 12-ring circus inside your partner’s head.

### **Women Long to Feel That They Matter** (See Secret #2)

Have you ever noticed this pattern in relationships between men and women? As the husband walks out the door, his wife says something like, “Honey, don’t forget your umbrella; it’s supposed to rain later today.” He may react in several ways, but one that leads to trouble is the sigh of exasperation followed by “It’s perfectly sunny out. What are you talking about?” Or worse, he completely ignores her.

Not being a man, I can’t really say what motivates a reaction like this. Perhaps it has to do with feeling controlled, or a desire to reduce complexity in life (see Secret #1 in For Women Only). Maybe he’s thinking, “I don’t want to have to carry an umbrella all day, and I’m already late for my meeting. If I get wet it’s not that big a deal anyway.”

But the man in this scenario is not acknowledging something important: his wife’s suggestion comes from a place of genuine care. When he rebuffs her, she feels shut out and hurt. Relationship researcher [John Gottman](#) has found that marriages in which the husband accepts influence from his wife are far less likely to end in divorce than marriages where he is closed to her suggestions.

Here is a more successful reaction to the scenario above: after the wife suggests her husband bring along an umbrella, he pauses. He thinks, “Hmmm... I don’t think I’m going to need this, but I can see that she is trying to help me.” He thanks his wife and takes the umbrella.

If it starts to rain later in the day, he pulls out the umbrella and feels nurtured by his wife. Or, if it doesn’t rain, he can appreciate his wife’s caring nature, rather than label the effort was a waste of time. If he gets home and makes the effort to thank his wife for her suggestion, their relationship is strengthened.

Men, we aren’t trying to control or nag you. This is our way of showing we care.

### **From Languishing to Flourishing**

What is the smallest change you can make that will create the biggest difference in your relationship?

Small efforts can make a huge difference in showing your partner that you care about her. Next time your wife asks for help on a task that you don’t believe is important, consider the benefits of dropping what you’re doing for 10 minutes and pitching in. She will feel supported and cared for because what you’re really doing is helping her manage the 12-ring circus in her head. That’s huge! Or, if she dissolves into tears when a relatively small adversity strikes, rather than think she’s simply overreacting –and worse, then attempting to explain to her why it’s not that big a deal — try simply holding her and letting her cry. You will benefit in spades. The same goes for accepting her influence — take the umbrella to work. Try it and see.

### **References**

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