

## What Every Husband Should Know About His Wife

By Les Parrott

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, said, "Despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, I have not yet been able to answer the great question: What does a woman want?"

Well, Freud, may not have been able to identify the deepest needs of women, but modern research has. A wife's most basic needs in marriage are: (1) to be cherished, (2) to be known and (3) to be respected.

### **She Needs to be Cherished**

"I can't understand it, Doc." Doug was talking before he even sat down in my counseling office. "Lisa has everything she could possibly need. She doesn't have to work, she buys lots of clothes, we live in a great place, we take wonderful vacations, I'm faithful-but she's miserable." Doug shook his head and said, "I just don't get it."

We talked a bit more about his seven-year marriage and how he tried to express his love for Lisa. "I'm not the talkative type, Doc," he said. "I show my love by providing the very best I can for her." This poor husband didn't realize that his love-starved wife would have traded all the clothes and vacations in the world for a little tenderness from him.

Without meaning to, a husband can completely miss one of his wife's most important needs: to be cherished. This need is too often overlooked by husbands because we don't feel the need for it as deeply as women do. But that doesn't discount its validity. Your wife needs to be cherished.

She needs to know she is number one in your life. If it came down to an evening with your buddies or a night with your wife, she needs to know you would choose her - not because you have to, but because you want to.

What can you do to cherish your wife?

Consider how often you say, "I love you." Some men don't feel the need to say it with words, but every wife has an insatiable need to hear it.

Your wife also needs evidence that you are thinking about her during your day. A small gift or a quick phone call to say, "You are on my mind," can mean the world to her.

As a man, you probably have no idea of the effect you can have on your wife by being gentle and tender, making her feel cared for.

Does cherishing your wife mean sacrificing golf games, success at work, or nights out with the boys? Believe it or not, the answer is no. When your wife is satisfied in knowing

that she takes first place in your life, when she knows she is the most important thing in the world to you, she will encourage you to do the things you enjoy. It is part of the mystery of marriage: When a woman is truly, genuinely cherished, she feels free to encourage her husband's independence.

Before Doug learned to cherish Lisa, she would complain about his fishing trips. In fact, Lisa wanted a separation because "standing by a lake was more important to Doug than I was." But once Doug genuinely made Lisa number one, once he began to express true tenderness, Lisa pleasantly shocked him: "I'll cover for you at the meeting next Thursday so you can get an early start on your fishing trip if you want." Lisa made this offer because she now felt secure in her position of importance.

"To love and to cherish" is more than a phrase from your wedding vows. It is one of the most important needs your wife will ever have. By meeting it, you are sure to build a partnership that brings you both pleasure...

### **She Needs to be Known**

For a woman, being understood means having her feelings validated and accepted. That's not as easy as it sounds. I'm a psychologist. I often spend my day doing just that with my clients. I know how to empathize with a person's pain, to feel his feelings and convey understanding. But when it comes to my marriage, something makes me want to solve Leslie's problems instead of understand them.

She will tell me about something and I will passively listen until I have heard enough and then, as if to say I'm ready to move on to other things, I will offer advice. I'll lecture instead of listen. To this day, it often takes every ounce of self-control I can muster to bite my tongue and actively listen.

At least I'm not alone. Consider this fact: Men say three times as many words in public as they do in private, while women say three times as many words in private as they do in public.

Women like to match experiences, to draw one another out, to volley in conversations. But when it comes to talking to their husbands, many women feel like the wife who told me, "Talking to my husband is like playing tennis with no one in the other court."

To meet your wife's important need to be known, you need to actively listen to her, reflecting back to her what she is saying and feeling, and genuinely wanting to understand her. This point cannot be overemphasized: Women need to have their feelings validated and accepted. They need to have you see and experience the world the way they do, instead of explaining to them why they shouldn't see it that way.

Men have a tough time realizing that offering a listening ear is all a woman needs at times - or a comforting hug, a loving statement like "You are hurting, aren't you?" or "You are under a lot of pressure, aren't you?"

Listening to your wife talk without offering quick solutions is the only way to meet her need to be known.

### **She Needs to be Respected**

Men are usually quite unaware of how much women need to be respected. Why? Because when men are not respected they react very differently. A man who doesn't feel respected, for example, is apt to become self-righteous and indignant. He feels even more worthy of respect when others don't respect him. He may even give less until he gets what he feels he deserves.

Women operate differently - when they are not respected they feel insecure and lose their sense of self. That is why it is so vital for you to take special care of your partner's need for respect.

There are a number of ways to show respect to your wife. To begin with, do not try to change or manipulate her, but rather, honor her needs, wishes, values, and rights. I know a woman who, because of her upbringing, valued the tradition of having her door opened for her by her husband. She knew the custom was kind of old-fashioned, but it meant a lot to her, and she asked her husband to do it.

Her husband never took her request seriously. "You're kidding, right?" he'd say. "Nobody does that anymore. That's why we've got power locks on the car." By laughing off his wife's request, this husband weakened his opportunity to meet one of his wife's deepest needs-to be respected.

Respecting your wife also means including her in decisions.

I am always amazed when I find a husband who wields all the power in a marriage and makes all the decisions, regardless of what his wife thinks. I have known men who will make decisions about relocating to a new job in another part of the country without even consulting their wives. I don't know of a quicker way to tear down a woman's sense of self and ruin the possibility of a happy marriage.

Build your wife's self-esteem and sense of security by asking for her input whenever you can, even on the small things. When you make a decision that might affect her, say: "I'm thinking about... What do you think of that?" or "I'm thinking we should... What would you like?"

Respect says, "I support you, you are valuable to me, and you don't have to be any different from who you are."

In return for this respect a woman will be able to relax. She will not have a compulsive need to prove herself as an equal, but will automatically feel and be equal. What a wonderful way to live with a woman.

*From the book, [Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before and After You Marry](#), by Dr. Les Parrott and Dr. Leslie Parrott, [RealRelationships.com](#)*