

What Do Men Want

What men want in a satisfying relationship may be surprising. In my counseling sessions, I have noticed that a major factor in the breakdown of communication is that often each person thinks they know what the other wants. What each person thinks their partner wants from them is often times inaccurate and causes resentment, hurt and hopelessness. What I have found to be true is that both men and women pretty much want the same thing. Research has found that men value relationships as much as women.

I looked at several national studies of what men most value and compared those responses to a small sampling of responses given by Wichita men aged 20 to 80.

In one study almost 28,000 randomly selected men aged 20 to 75, from the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Mexico and Brazil responded to standardized telephone interview about their attitudes of life and sex.

The results, published in the Journal of Sexual Medicine, showed men rated attributes of health, harmonious family life and being in good relationship with their partner as the most important factors in being satisfied with their life. Contrary to what women think, only two percent put a satisfying sex life as their top priority.

Julia Heiman, an author of this study and director of the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University says, the results of this study is very useful to both the media and research to demyth the stereotype of "all men want is sex."

In a most recent study, researchers analyzed results of a 2008 survey of more than 1,100 undergraduates at the University of Ohio, the University of Washington, the University of Virginia and Penn State University. The uniqueness of this particular study is that the results were compared to previous studies dating back to the 1930's.

In the 1930's, males indicated they were looking for a dependable, kind woman who was a good cook and housekeeper. In a 2008 study, men consistently rated love and mutual attraction as most important, which did not even make the top three a few generations ago.

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In Wichita, men's responses varied, but generally the top ten characteristics for a satisfying life in a relationship includes:

- Mutual attraction (Note: this means pride in her appearance, not a catwalk model or a trophy wife)
- Unconditional Love
- Trustworthy / Loyalty
- Deep Friendship / Companionship
- Nurturing / Good Mother
- Intelligent
- Humor / Fun
- Confidence
- Spirituality / Belief in God
- Supportive
- Appreciation

The following suggestions may help to promote a healthier relationship between men and women.

- Honest Communication

Tell your partner what you want without blaming or apologizing.

- Separate Identity

Take ownership for self-fulfillment without making your partner responsible for your complete happiness.

- Emotional Maturity

Channel emotions in a way that allows for resolution and intimacy.

- Appreciation

Validate and acknowledge how your partner positively contributes to the relationship.

- Respect

Be accepting of the differences between you and your partner.

*"I do not love you because I need you.
I love you because I need to love you."
Eric Fromm*

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My conclusion is that in the year 2009, men are not completely from Mars but rather they have been locked into a stereotype that has been generated by decades of misunderstanding. Men communicate their needs differently than women and as a result are often misjudged (mostly by women). For example, the men I approached in Wichita seemed somewhat hesitant to communicate by email their list of needs. However, when I was able to speak and listen to them directly, they were not only cooperative, but eager to engage in sharing their thoughts and values. Perhaps it is time for women to update their assumptions of "What Men Want" and be willing to be open to what the man is really trying to communicate with a different language.

Men and women have some basic differences and yet they have much in common. The following quote by Henry David Thoreau says this most eloquently:
"Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each others eyes for an instant?"