

What Women Want Most From A Husband And What Men Want Most From A Wife

Courtesy of eHarmony Marriage

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 does not 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 offer less respect 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. Husbands, that is why it is so vital for you to take special care of your wife's need for respect.

There are a number of ways to show respect to your wife. To begin with, respecting your wife means not trying to change or manipulate her, but rather honoring her needs, wishes, values, and rights. I know a husband who disrespects his wife almost daily. She values the tradition of having her door opened for her by her husband. She grew up in a home where Dad always opened Mom's door, and she wants her husband to do the same. She knows it's kind of old-fashioned, but it means a lot to her and she asked her husband to do it. He never took her seriously. "You're kidding, right? Nobody does that anymore. That's why we've got power locks on the car."

Opening her door was a small request, but by laughing it off, this husband weakened his opportunity to meet one of his wife's deepest needs - not to have doors opened for her, but 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, a man who makes all the decisions, regardless of what his wife thinks. I have even known some men who will make decisions about relocating to a new job in another part of the country without even consulting their spouses. 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 feel a compulsion to prove herself as an equal, but will automatically feel and be equal. What a wonderful way to live with a woman.

He Needs To Be Admired

"Oh Scott, these look great. You did a wonderful job." Kari's eyes lit up with excitement as she surveyed the planter boxes her husband had just made for their deck. "You really have talent."

"I enjoyed making them," Scott said, "but it's not that big a deal."

"You underestimate yourself, honey. You're good."

Scott didn't show it, but he was relishing his wife's praise. It felt great. No one could make him feel as admired and appreciated as Kari. And Kari knew it. She had tapped into this primarily male need and gladly filled it at every opportunity she could. It wasn't insincere or overdone. Kari's admiration was genuine. She was Scott's biggest fan, and their marriage benefited in untold ways from her vocal admiration.

Being appreciated is a man's primary need. He measures his worth through his achievements, big and small, and needs them to be recognized. A woman's need for admiration and appreciation, while certainly important, is rarely as strong. When a woman seeks appreciation, she is more accurately wanting to be understood, to be validated. You see, there is a significant difference between men and women when it comes to being admired. Men derive their worth more from what they do; women derive their worth more from who they are.

Look at it this way. When women do not receive admiration from their spouses, they tend to be more motivated than ever to earn it. But when a man does not receive admiration from his spouse, he begins to lose motivation to try. Without a feeling of being admired, a man's energy is drained. He soon feels inadequate and incapable of giving support. Without being admired, men lose their will to give.

You have no idea how damaging a critical statement is to your man's personal power. He responds to not being appreciated the same way you do when he invalidates your feelings. It is demoralizing.

I counseled a woman who became confused when, after criticizing her husband, he did not try harder to earn appreciation from her. She mistakenly assumed that she could manipulate him to give more by withdrawing her appreciation. But that rarely works with a man. Admiration is the fuel a man needs to get going. It gives him power.

Now, before you begin heaping words of praise on your husband, I need to give you a word of caution. Never fake your admiration. By simply saying flattering but empty words, you can do more harm than good. To have any value, praise must genuinely reflect your feelings.ⁱ

ⁱ A study of one hundred and thirty healthy, strong couples revealed that almost all of the husbands reported that their partner knew how to make them feel good about themselves. Laswell, M. & Lasswell, T. *Marriage and the Family*, Lexington, MA: Heath, 1982.