HUSBANDS SPEAK OUT:

7 Pitfalls that Kill Off Love, Intimacy and Desire

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Husbands Speak Out: 7 Pitfalls That Kill Off Love, Intimacy and Desire

Thank you for downloading Husbands Speak Out: 7 Pitfalls that Kill Off Love, Intimacy and Desire. I hope that you will find this report interesting and useful.

Before you begin reading the first of the seven pitfalls, I’d like to offer some important advice: above all, be gentle with yourself as you read these pages. If you recognize that you may have fallen into some of these traps yourself, please keep this in mind: there’s nothing wrong; you have nothing to be ashamed of; you are guilty of nothing more than being human.

As humans, we tend to model the behaviors of the people around us, and especially so in our formative years. As women, we follow the examples of other women. You did not invent these common behaviors that are less than effective with men – you learned them, you accepted them, and you practiced them, because they were what you knew. If, as you read through the various mistakes, you begin to feel as though you could have done better, please forgive yourself, and allow yourself to move beyond the past.

A common question many women have asked us is; “what about him? Why do I have to do all the work?” This is a great question. In an ideal world, your husband would be an equal partner in generating a happy marriage. However, sustaining a romantic relationship is not the forte of most men, while the ability to grow and nurture a relationship comes naturally to most women. Men tend to be less interested and knowledgeable about building intimate relationships.

The fact is, women purchase 90% of the books and relationship workshops. In addition, your husband’s lack of relationship prowess isn’t even his fault. In recent studies of the male and female brain, scientists concluded that when it comes to relationships, men are at an extreme disadvantage. For instance, the ability to interpret emotions and non-verbal communication is housed in the right limbic area, a region where the female brain excels and where the male brain lags, resulting in a tremendous advantage for women in this critical relationship skill.

According to researcher John Gottman, in a happy marriage couples experience 5 positive experiences to every 1 negative experience. That means that the ratio of positive and negative is not balanced. A negative experience has far more impact and does more damage than you might think. It’s also why it can seem so difficult to turn it around.

I must admit that I’ve been guilty of contributing my share of negativity to past relationships. What I’ve learned in over a decade of studying men and women is that these behaviors rarely result in anyone’s desired outcome. Adopting a new way of interacting with men, one different from what I learned growing up, was necessary before I could enjoy a blissful marriage filled with love, joy, and satisfaction. You have far more power than you think to have kind of marriage you’ve always wanted.

What you’ll read in the following pages is a compilation of study, research, interviews, and workshops that Michael and I have participated in and conducted ourselves. We learned that there are similarities in the way that most men respond to certain situations. We obviously don’t know your husband, but where his responses are similar to those of most men, we believe you’ll find our suggestions helpful. We suggest you view any exceptions as an opportunity to do your own research, and a way to learn more about your husband than ever before.

Michael and I would love to know if you find this report helpful. You can reach us through our website at BlissfullyMarried.com.

I wish you love and happiness.

Your Partner in Bliss,
Bette Friedlander
PITFALL #1

Malevolent Martyr

What men have said:
“I hate it when she thinks she has to do everything herself. If she’d just ask for help I’d be glad to contribute.”

“My wife allows her family to take advantage of her giving nature, so much so that it’s making me resent them.”

“Janet’s doing, doing, doing for everyone else, but she never has time for herself.”

“I want my wife to put her own needs first. When she runs herself ragged for others it’s a drain on the whole family.”

Have you given up your passions to make room for paying the bills and chauffeuring your kids around? Do you spend time on sensible things instead of having fun? Have you lost your sense of humor along the way?

Sometimes we make assumptions about how much responsibility we need to take on. We work our butts off, and then wind up resenting other people, and in particular, husbands and children, for not pitching in. When that resentment is expressed, it often comes as a surprise to the target of our upset, who wonders at the cause of the anger. We feel martyred because no one else is helping, when, in fact, no one actually asked us to do everything, by ourselves, in the first place.

Playing the martyr is a very common role for women. At its root is the aspect of femininity we call the “MOTHER.” Regardless of whether or not you’re a mother, I’m sure that you know that motherhood and self-sacrifice go hand-in-hand. A mother sacrifices her sleep so her baby can eat. Being self-sacrificing is instinctive for ALL women. It’s perfectly natural for a woman to put off her own needs so that she can take care of the needs of others.

While this can be considered to be beautiful and noble, it can also leave you depleted, on-edge and really difficult to be around. Have you noticed that it is almost impossible to be generous, caring and patient when you are tired, resentful or upset?

What’s the big deal?
If you are self-sacrificing, as many women are, you may think that being self-sacrificing is the right way to be. But have you noticed that men are not self-sacrificing? Is your husband self-sacrificing? It’s not that he can’t be, but being self-sacrificing is not a natural way of being for a man. It’s more of an act of human spirit. It’s not instinctive.

This difference can wreak havoc on a marriage. The feedback we’ve received from many women is ‘MY HUSBAND IS A SELFISH JERK!’ But what if he’s not being selfish? What if it’s really smart? The feedback we’ve gotten from men is ‘I’m no good to anyone unless I get what I need.’ This makes a lot of sense. Look at it this way; is a car selfish for needing gasoline? Getting what you need is critical to your being happy and healthy in your marriage.

Some tips on what to do instead:
• Notice when you are being overly self-sacrificing.
• Make your own self-care a priority.
• Learn how to ask for help from your husband in a way that brings out his natural desire to want to provide.
PITFALL #2

Superwoman Syndrome

What men have said:
“My wife doesn’t know how to prioritize; everything is equally important, and receives 100% of her efforts – except me, that is. I don’t want to be married to Superwoman. I want the woman I fell in love with.”

“I only wish Susan would talk to me about what’s really important to us both. She’s killing herself trying to do everything and getting lost in the process. The kids want their mom, not Wonder-woman.”

“There’s no partnership in our marriage. She’s setting unreasonable goals for the family without letting us weigh in on what we need and want.”

It’s the twenty-first century, and a lot of women believe that they should be able to do it all, and have it all. “Why can’t I have an amazing career, a perfect family, a passionate marriage and energy to spare?” Have you heard something similar from your friends? Have they heard this from you? We don’t think anyone should place limits on another’s vision, but doing, being and having it all is as much a fantasy as the Cosmo woman. It’s just not reality.

Even if you’re not shooting for the ultimate trifecta of career, family and relationship, you may still be trying too hard to live up to society’s ideals in one or more areas. Putting gourmet dinners on the table may just be too much after a day’s work, or after trekking the kids from school, to ballet, to soccer, to who knows where. There are only twenty-four hours in the day. You have only so much time and energy, and those precious resources need to be assigned to what’s really most important to you, and not to someone else’s idea of perfection.

What’s the big deal?
Women suffer from doing too much. You may be tired and depleted. Your stress level may be through the roof. You could be putting your health at risk while your relationship falls apart before your very eyes. If that isn’t enough, since you realize you actually can’t “do it all” your self-esteem may be taking a hit. Women who buy into the superwoman fantasy focus on where they are failing and conclude that they are obviously not enough.

The stress level of women today is unprecedented. When a woman is under stress, the hormone cortisol is released her body. Over time, this can cause irreparable damage. Left unchecked, her body stops producing the hormones it desperately needs resulting in everything from low libido, to miscarriage and infertility. Her adrenal gland stops working properly leaving her chronically exhausted. Adrenal fatigue syndrome is common in women these days. Her stressful lifestyle can also contribute to causing heart disease, cancer, diabetes and many other killers.

Some tips on what to do instead:
• Decide what really matters.
• Check in with your family and be realistic about your goals.
• Strive to let go of perfectionism.
• Learn how to manage your stress levels.
• Make your own self-care a priority.
PITFALL #3

Bad Timing

What men have said:

“As soon as I walk in the door I’m bombarded a list of things to do. If I had just a little quiet time at home to decompress after work, I’d be a much happier husband.”

“I wish I could cope with the baby, cooking and talking on the phone at the same time, but I can’t do it. How she does it I’ll never know, but I’m in awe of how my wife gets everything done at the same time. She’s amazing!”

“I hate that she thinks I don’t respect her just because I don’t ‘jump to’ every time she wants to talk. I’ll be happy to sit down and listen; I just need a few minutes to finish one thing first.”

It may look like your husband isn’t doing anything important, but he is. You may think that you’re catching him at a good time, but you’re not. Or, you might think that just because you have something to say, he should stop what he’s doing and listen to you, but he doesn’t. You’ll know you’ve caught him at a bad time when it appears as though he’s snapping at you, getting irritated at you, ignoring you, or just not listening to what you have to say.

Men are not wired the same way as women. While women can focus intently on a single task, most can only do so for a brief interval, and there’s a hormonal cost to boot. The more natural state for women is having their attention divided among a variety of tasks, what is generally referred to as multitasking. The natural state of being for men is to focus on a single task at a time, while pushing input from other sources out of his mind. It’s not that he ignored you. He didn’t even hear you.

The additional factor is that most men find it difficult, if not impossible, to switch focus to a new task when they are in the middle of something – even if that something is chilling out after a long, hard day. It’s the difficulty he will have in getting back on track, that causes the irritation a man feels when his focus is broken. It’s not you he’s angry or annoyed with you. It’s the cost he’s going to pay to get back to where he was when you interrupted his focus.

What’s the big deal?

One of the biggest complaints women have about their husbands is that they don’t listen. It causes upset, resentment and in some cases, divorce. If you feel he’s not listening to you then you may feel you’re unimportant to him. If he’s in the middle of something, especially some activity you on which you don’t place much importance, and he doesn’t give you the attention you feel you deserve, then again, you may feel you’re unimportant to him. It’s very unlikely that either assumption is correct.

Here’s the good news. The hurt feelings that result from innocently approaching your husband at the wrong time and saying the wrong thing can easily be avoided. When you understand how he works, accepts his need for periods of uninterrupted time, and learn the right ways to get his attention when you need it, things will go much smoother.

Some tips on what to do instead:

• Learn how to know when it’s a good time to talk.
• Make sure you have his full attention.
• Become proficient at learning the words that will get your man’s attention so that you can be heard and understood.
PITFALL #4

Stuck in Man-Mode

**What men have said:**
- “Femininity is like color in a black-and-white world”
- “I don’t understand why she would want to be masculine. It’s like taking a step down.”
- “I don’t want to be married to a man, I want to be married to a woman.”
- “What happened to the sexy, playful, passionate woman that I married?”

Have you become the man you always wanted to marry? Do you find yourself saying; “I don’t need a husband. I need a wife.” Many career women find themselves in this predicament. They are in charge – at the office and in the home. When they are home, they make all the decisions and do all the work while their husbands sit on the couch. The stronger they are, the weaker their husband becomes. Sex becomes a thing of the past, which is fine with her since she is exhausted from doing everything anyway. She no longer feels desirable, and he no longer views her as someone to pursue sexually.

Women survive through adapting. She will adapt to whatever she perceives is needed and valued. Producing results is perceived as being very valuable in today’s world. It’s only logical that women would focus a lot of time and energy on that. Not long ago it was considered a man’s job to ‘bring home the bacon.’ With more women in that role, they are spending far more time being masculine. We are not suggesting this is a bad thing. It does not mean that you shouldn’t pursue a fulfilling career if that’s what calls to you. Your husband likely married you because he perceived you as a strong partner. The problem comes when you continue to be masculine at home.

**What’s the big deal?**

Unfortunately, allowing the masculine qualities needed to succeed at the office to intrude into your marriage can be devastating. It isn’t your success that causes the problem – it’s your success plus the attitude: “What do I need you for?” That’s emasculating to your husband. He needs to feel needed and valued for who he is and for what he provides, especially if you are the major breadwinner. When it looks as if you don’t need him, he will not force the issue. He will simply become inert. You will lose everything great about him being a man. For your husband to be masculine, he needs you to be feminine when you are with him. It’s the feminine that inspires him to step up, be your hero and want to take care of you. It’s what makes it all worthwhile to him.

In addition, it keeps the attraction alive in a marriage. A man feels most turned on by his partner when she makes him feel like a man. Likewise, a woman feels most attracted to a man when he makes her feel totally feminine. Being feminine might take some practice. You might even need to re-learn what it means to be feminine.

**Some tips on what to do instead:**
- Create rituals for yourself to transition into your feminine.
- Find activities that nurture your femininity.
- Strive to be feminine with your husband.
- Find a balance between the masculine and the feminine.
PITFALL #5

Danger! Danger!

What men have said:
“lt couldn’t believe she would correct me that way in earshot of my boss and coworkers. I was almost too embarrassed to go to the office.”

“She thought criticizing the way I loaded the dishwasher was going to help. I’m done. If she wants it done her way, then she can do it herself.”

“I would never talk to someone I loved the way she talks to me. I’d rather stay late at the office or have a drink with a friend then go home.”

When you get upset with your husband, are you disrespectful to him? When you want him to behave differently, do you emasculate him? If you do, please understand that it is not because you are a bad person. It probably happens as a reaction to something he said or did. The response is automatic. It is likely supported by other women you know, reinforced by our culture, encouraged by the media and it is what you have seen and been taught by those around you.

Here are some common ways women have told us that they dis-empower their husbands: criticizing him, making contemptuous remarks, invalidating his opinion, comparing him unfavorably to others, correcting him in public, not honoring what’s important to him, yelling at him, blaming him, talking about him behind his back, and trying to fix or change him. Verbal attacks may also be accompanied by facial expressions like “the eye roll” or noises such as “tsk-tsk” that are also intended to diminish him.

Withholding is also a common way for a wife to show husband that she is upset with him. There are all kinds of ways you can withhold. And it’s very efficient; you don’t even have to do anything. You can withhold sex. If he does something that displeases you, let him know that he’s not going to be getting any tonight. How about withholding attention? Just don’t pay him any mind - ignore him. How about participation? One woman told us that she stopped laughing at her husband’s jokes. You can withhold appreciation and admiration. The list goes on and on. Just make sure that he doesn’t get what he needs from you.

What’s the big deal?
Women may not interpret these behaviors as being disrespectful, while men almost always do. A good way to tell that he feels you are being disrespectful is if he responds negatively or becomes defensive. If he is defensive, it is because he feels he has been attacked. Being disrespectful will result in a negative reaction from him and can create a downward spiral in your marriage.

Typically, this happens because something he said or did wasn’t what you expected. It may be your attempt to correct his behavior. If it happens often enough he will feel like he’s always in trouble. Having him walk on eggshells may keep him in line (or not), but it’s never a good idea and it can do real damage to your marriage. It’s also really ineffective. It will only end up causing distance rather than intimacy. He will be defending himself from you, instead being focused on taking care of you and making you happy. It may make you feel temporarily superior, but it really doesn’t give you any real power. After all, powerful people do not need to diminish those around them.

Some tips on what to do instead:
• Distinguish what and why something triggers you.
• When it happens, resist the urge to be disrespectful.
• Ask for what you need in a loving respectful way.
• Let him know when he says something that hurts you (ouch).
PITFALL #6
Happily, Never After

What men have said:
“There’s no pleasing her. No matter how hard I try, she’s never satisfied.”
“I stopped trying to impress her a long time ago. It didn’t seem to matter what I did, nothing was ever good enough.”
“She used to be so much fun to be around, so alive, so happy. I’m at my wits end. I don’t know how to make her happy.”

When your husband decided to marry you, it’s very likely he was convinced that he could make you happy. He was probably successful at doing so when you were courting, and he saw no reason why things would change. Unfortunately, expectations and priorities do change after marriage. What was good enough before marriage may be less than satisfactory once the honeymoon ends. Trouble may be brewing if you’ve found yourself thinking some version of “I’ll be happy when...” or “I’d be happy if...”

We call this state of being “unhappy-on-principle.” In other words, you won’t allow him to see you as happy with what he’s currently providing. Many women do this is because they think it will make their husbands try harder. It doesn’t. It makes it impossible for him to win with you, and it makes him feel like a failure. If you’ve ever heard you husband say, “Is there no satisfying you?” take this as a red flag.

Another common expectation that many women have is that he be able to read her mind. What they have told us is; “If he were paying attention, he would know what I want.” This applies to gifts, support, what she needs, and what will make her happy. As much as you might wish that it was so, your man cannot read your mind.

What’s the big deal?
We’re not implying that you shouldn’t have standards. But, your husband needs to win with you. Your being happy is critical to him. Using your unhappiness to manipulate him into “trying harder” will backfire. This is one more way that men and women are different. If someone is displeased with a woman, she may very well respond by trying harder. A man will not. Eventually, he will stop trying all together and he will go away – if not physically, then emotionally. The fact is, men leave women they can’t make happy. They leave with the words; “You deserve someone who can make you happy. I can’t. Goodbye.”

Some tips on what to do instead:
• Take responsibility for your own happiness and choose to be happy NOW.
• Engage in things that make you happy.
• Don’t make him guess – tell him what will make you happy.
PITFALL #7

Mothering, Smothering and Hovering

What men have said:
“Why does she feel like she has to control everything?”
“I wish she would get off my case.”
“I feel like it’s never enough.”

Do you like to be the one in control? I have heard many women say their husband’s act like children. Perhaps it’s because they treat their husband like a child. Is it really that he can’t do anything for himself or is it that he might not do what they want the way they want it?

Mothering is when you try to control what he does, when he does it and how he does it. This can look like telling him what to do and how to do it. It’s taking over a task because he might not do it the way you want it done. Telling him what to wear and what to say. Trying to control how he comes across to others. Giving unsolicited advice because you think you know better than him. What she might consider a helpful suggestion will come across as nagging. Attempting to manage his free time by leaving him a honey-do list - as if his time is yours to manage. Invading his private space without his permission under the guise of cleaning and organizing. Checking up on him to see if he’s doing what you asked. Needing him to stop what he’s doing immediately and attend to your needs, rather than finding a time that works for him.

What’s the big deal?
The need to control comes from fear. It’s the fear that things will not turn out unless you intervene. The truth is, you can’t control another human being, especially your husband. Your husband will resist any attempt to control him and it will cause distance and resentment in your marriage. Home will no longer be a safe place for him so he will likely seek refuge elsewhere.

Treating him like a child will never turn out well. It shows him that she doesn’t trust or respect him. A husband needs trust and respect, even if his wife feels he hasn’t earned it. Not having trust and respect will bring out the worst in him. He will either be irritated and uncooperative or give up trying altogether.

There are men who will submit to a woman’s control. The price will be emotional distance. A domineering woman will attract the weak and the wounded. She will lose everything great about him being a man. He will not step up and be her hero. He will not be compelled to provide for her and make her happy. Instead, he will put all of his energy into staying out of trouble. This is a poor substitute and will not lead to a happy, fulfilling marriage.

Some tips on what to do instead:
• Give him space.
• Learn to let go of inappropriate control.
• Focus on your own life.
• Learn how to ask for what you need in a way brings out his natural desire to want to provide.
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About Bette and Michael

Falling asleep in-love, and waking joyful next to the person you love is Bette and Michael Friedlander’s wish for every couple. They know it’s possible because they experience it in their own life every day.

If you and your husband have grown apart, if you long for some way to reclaim your happiness and rekindle your love, the skills they teach can make all the difference. Just as they have helped thousands of women transform their relationships with the men in their lives, and they can help you to as well.

“I took your workshop, but my husband’s the one who changed,” “Last night, he shared his deepest feelings and dreams for the first time in years,” and “A bookcase I’d wanted for years went up by the end of the weekend” are a sampling of what women have shared after practicing what they learned in the live workshop Bette and Michael led.

Although Bette and Michael are happy and in love today, their own story hasn’t always been so bright. When they married in February of 2000, Bette’s closest friend Karen warned her it probably wouldn’t turn out. Bette had survived one failed marriage and several unsuccessful relationships, and Michael had, count ‘em, THREE, ex-wives. Michael’s attempts to save each marriage by seeking counseling always ended the same; DIVORCE. Bette was in love, but still prayed for a way to stack the odds in favor of long-term happiness.

One year into her marriage, Bette’s prayers were answered when her friend Linda told her about an amazing workshop created by relationship expert Alison Armstrong. She signed up, and hat she learned took the everyday struggle out of her marriage, produced deeper intimacy, and helped her relationship grow closer over time. Michael noticed an immediate difference. “It was the first time I didn’t feel like I was broken,” says Michael.

Bette and Michael’s desire to make a difference for others inspired them to become certified in teaching this information. In 2007, they began three years of training consisting of research and teaching. Through live workshops, speaking engagements and teleseminars, they have helped hundreds of women gain deeper and more satisfying relationships with the men in their lives.

It was Bette’s passion for bringing everyday bliss to married women that fueled the birth of “Blissfully Married” in 2015. Blissfully Married is dedicated to helping couples live in a happy, fulfilled and joyful marriage. Their first workshop, *Everyday Bliss - A married woman’s guide to more love, joy and satisfaction* is a ten-week online journey that helps married women set aside frustration and resentment while building more love, intimacy and satisfaction. Throughout their course, Bette and Michael provide the perspectives of both wife and husband in teaching the same skills they practice every day in their own blissful marriage.

Bette and Michael firmly believe that there is a hero in every husband, and that the wife holds the all keys to drawing him out. This means that if you are married to a man who refuses go to counseling or attend a workshop, you no longer need to worry. Just like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, you have had the power all along.

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