

Family Times

Meeting Men's Needs

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Quotable:

"Some men need more compliments than others. Some women need their husbands to provide more in the way of material things while others get by rather simply. Needs are unique and specific, and that is why it is important for husbands and wives to talk with each other and identify and define each others' needs. We may even need to help each other realize that some needs are rather frivolous and unnecessary. But, there are some needs that do seem to be more universal."

(Ogletree & Brinley, "Then Comes Marriage,").

A few years ago my nephew, Sammy, came and spent a few days at our home. At the time, Sammy was three years old, and an only child. It was also the first time his parents would be leaving him for an extended period of time. We weren't sure how Sammy would fare at our lively home with six children at the time. Sure enough, almost the first night Sammy was with us, I heard him walking around our home in the middle of the night. I'm sure he was looking for his mom and dad who were thousands of miles away. All of the sudden, little Sammy appeared in our bedroom. He was crying, and he was able to muster out, "I need somebody." It was almost as if he was saying, "Look, I've combed over this entire home and I can't find anyone awake. My parents are gone, and I need someone to hold me. You two [my wife and I] will have to do until I can find someone better."

The point is, we definitely need "somebody." Didn't Barbara Streisand sing that "People who need people are the luckiest people in the world?" We all need someone; specifically a spouse to meet our needs. Hopefully, you will also find a *need* to meet your spouses needs. Otherwise we could have bigger problems than we supposed!

Meeting your spouses marital needs is critical if you want your marriage to succeed. Fail at

meeting their needs, and lose the marriage— it's that simple. I was just visiting with a client not long ago in a counseling setting. As it looks, her marriage is about to end in divorce. The other day she said to me, "I guess we really never met each other's needs." From a clinical perspective, that is exactly what happened. Could you write down your spouses top five needs in your marriage? Do you know them? And, if you know them, can you meet them? If so, you will have a strong marriage! If not, your marriage will struggle. This is why meeting marital needs is so crucial.

Therefore, let us first talk about the needs of **men**. Next month we will address women's needs.

Before I begin, I caution you that these are what I refer to as "general" needs. They are not universal however, and as you continue reading, you may think to yourself, "This doesn't sound like me at all." That's ok! Don't panic, we're all different. However, generally speaking, most men need the following:

Need #1: Sexual fulfillment.

Most of you are probably not surprised that most men need to be involved sexually with their wives. For men, sexual relations is one of the key ways to express their love and affection for their spouse. Moreover, for a man, sexual relations validates the marriage relationship and

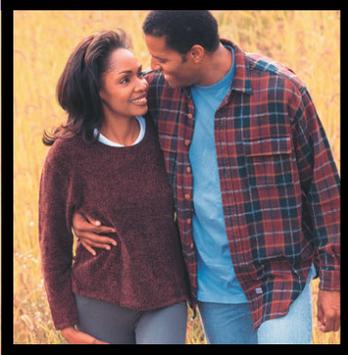
strengthens the bond between he and his wife. Willard Harley, the author of *His Needs, Her Needs*, wrote that "The typical wife doesn't understand her husband's deep need for sex any more than the typical husband understands his wife's deep need for affection" (Harley, *His Needs, Her Needs*, p. 49).

Brigham Young University professor Brent Barlow further explained, "I believe few wives realize the capability of sexuality to help keep their husbands close to them physically, emotionally, and even spiritually. When a husband experiences sexual fulfillment he feels very close to his wife in many ways. Because the sexual urge is so strong and constant in men, a wife should realize the high degree of fulfillment that comes to a husband when she helps him attain sexual satisfaction" (Brent A. Barlow, *What Husbands Expect of Wives* [Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1989], p. 53). Sisters, understand that if your husband wants to be with you sexually a few times a week or month, that he's not a "wild beast" with no self control, but more than likely a pretty normal guy.

Need #2: Recreational Companionship.

It is not uncommon for women, when they are single, to join men in pursuing their interests. They find themselves hunting, fishing, playing football, attending games, etc. After mar-

Meeting Men's Needs (Cont.)



When a husband experiences sexual fulfillment he feels very close to his wife in many ways— Brent Barlow

riage, women tend to tail off their interests in these areas, and reveal their own interests. For me, my wife went jogging with me all of the time before we were married. We would even work out at the gym on the BYU campus, and play basketball. It wasn't until a few days after we were married that I was getting ready for an early morning jog, and I noticed my wife wasn't showing any signs of life. So, I asked, "aren't you going jogging?" It was then that I learned two things I had not known before: 1) my wife is not a morning person, and 2) she hates exercising and only did it so she could spend time with me. In her mind, now that we were married and hanging out 24-7, she spent enough time with me and certainly wasn't going to log any extra hours jogging the streets of Provo. It was about the same time I was introduced to her real passion— not exercise, but crafts— ceramic scarecrows, wooden Santa Clauses, macramé knots, pottery wheels, toll painting festivals, etc. Excuse me for digressing, but I had to get that off my chest.

There used to be a beer commercial years ago— a bunch of men in the mountains, sitting around the campfire saying, "It doesn't get any better than this." Well, actually it does. It can be much better. "In fact, among the five basic male needs, spending recreational time with his wife is



second only to sex for the typical husband" (Harley, His Needs, Her Needs, p. 82). So, wives, all of those things you did with your husband before marriage— the walks, the hikes, watching games, participating in sports, and cheering him on— try that again! He'll love it! Remember, the couple that plays together, stays together. Find some fun recreational activities that you can enjoy together.

Need #3: An Attractive Spouse.

I'm reminded of a lady who decided it was finally time to get married. She joined a health club, went on a diet, and lost 60 pounds. In fact, after all of that diet and working out, she actually looked very attractive. Of course, her new looks turned a few heads, and within a short time she married Steve. Within a month or two, she decided to quit her job and stay home. She ate and ate all day long, and blew up like an oversized balloon. Several months after marriage, she had gained 100 pounds. She was fat and happy. Steve was miserable. Moreover, because he was a devout Christian, he did not believe in divorce. Life with Amber seemed like a prison sentence. She insisted that if he really loved her, he would take her as she was. Steve wanted her to lose weight for him. Pretty soon, "Weight-gate" had taken its toll on the marriage. Amber failed to see how important it was for Steve to have an attractive spouse.

One expert shared the following insight: Women, "if you don't keep up those important appearances, you take the chance that your partner may become disenchanted, and may even look around for more attractive scenery, making him— or her—a prime target for Cupid's misguided arrows. Even marriages made in heaven have been known to go

sour when one or the other partner lets down on his or her appearance" (Judith Rasband, *Provo Daily Herald*, 8 February 1982).

Women, remember when you were engaged? You used to take a shower and spend an hour fixing your hair just right so that you could go **jogging** with your fiancé. And men, remember how before you were married, you would spend hours deciding what to wear before a date with your bride-to-be? You would ask your roommates if your shirt matched your pants; you would brush your teeth three times a day; and you didn't miss a work-out. Now look what happened! We've got women going to bed with 27 curlers attached to their head and nice dab of Vick's Vapor Rub inserted in each nostril. The men often aren't much better. We don't even care if our socks match anymore, much less matching our pants. We go to bed for the evening in our sweat pants, with a breathe-right nose bandage spanning from cheekbone to cheekbone. We don't even brush our teeth anymore unless we are hoping for a romantic evening. Some men have sent their wives to emergency rooms across the country with facial lacerations — because they gave their wives a peck on the cheek before they shaved the jungle of whiskers off their face. What has happened to us?

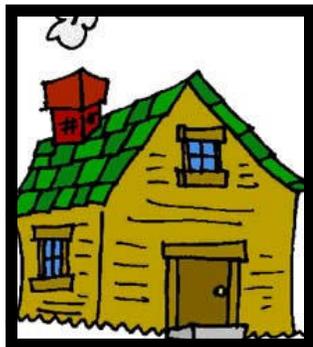
Sisters, I don't think your husbands expect you to be super-models. That's not what they're looking for. They want you to do the best with what you have. Just take care of yourselves if you haven't done so. Take vitamins, exercise, dress nicely, wear some perfume every now and then, and occasionally get your hair styled. Most men would take that in a heart beat.

Women, remember, men are not necessarily hoping that you

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Meeting Men's Needs (Cont.)



Home Sweet Home!

will be Julia Roberts with a testimony. As was just stated, do your best with what you have. Elder Joe J. Christensen once said, "Occasionally, look in a full-length mirror. Certainly we should not become obsessed with how we look, but we should work to improve our physical appearance.... The Lord expects us to do the best we can with what he has given us. President McKay said, 'Even a barn looks better when it's painted.'"

Need #4: Domestic Support

The ultimate fantasy for a man is a home life free of stress and worry. After work each day, in his imaginary world, he comes home to an impeccable lawn, surrounded by a white picket fence, and walks in the front door. There, he is greeted by his wife with a passionate kiss, and his well-behaved, perfect children are singing "I'm so glad when daddy comes home." Next, he walks into their immaculate home, and his wife urges him to relax before dinner. He sits in his Lazy Boy recliner and begins watching *Sports Center* while his wife rubs his neck and shoulders. Then, the family eats a steak dinner with conversation at the table that is enjoyable and conflict free. Later, the family goes out for a brief romp in the park, after which they come home, and put the kids to bed with a story, song, and prayer, without any complaining. Then he and his wife head into the bedroom and read, talk, and relax for a while, then off to bed (not before some prime-time romance) and go to sleep by 10:00 p.m.

Now, most of you women are thinking: *Dream on*. Most men are still dreaming.

The first counseling case that I worked on many years ago involved a couple who constantly argued over the way she kept, or didn't keep, the home. The father worked two jobs so his fam-

ily could live in a nice home. Because his two jobs kept him away from home, he began to resent his large house with an equally large payment. But, at least his home was his castle to come home to, well, sort of. Every day, after working a 12-13 hour day, he would walk into his home and almost gag. You see, his wife was the *messiest woman in the Church*. Upon arriving home, he would walk into dirty laundry strewn all throughout the house. In fact, the family couldn't even eat on the kitchen table because of the junk she had piled on it. Dishes were practically overflowing into the street. There was never any dinner made. In a nutshell, this husband felt like he walked into a war zone every evening. This lack of domestic support caused a deep wedge in their relationship. Ultimately, husband decided that he would rather work longer hours at the office rather than come home to such chaos. At least his office was neat and orderly, and he had some control of how he kept his work station. He could relax there. Because his wife refused to change and meet this legitimate need, their marriage never did improve.

Jerome Chodorov wrote:

"I'll tell you the real secret of how to stay married. Keep the cave clean. They [husbands] want the cave clean and spotless. Air conditioned, if possible. Sharpen his spear, and stick it in his hand when he goes out in the morning to spear the bear. And when the bear chases him, console him when he comes home at night. Tell him what a brave man he is. And then hide the spear so he doesn't fall over it and stab himself."

Today, the largest cause of family disagreements is household responsibility. It is not finances, it is not sexual relations—it is household responsibilities for both men and women. Why?

Because more women are in the workforce now than at any time in our nation's history. Nevertheless, if a man has needs his home to be his castle, then figure out a way to make it so. Don't let household responsibilities become a major source of contention in your marriage. Husbands, you may also have to chip in here so that your needs may be fulfilled. A husband barking directions from sidelines that the house needs to be cleaner needs to quit shouting and get into the game.

#5: Admiration

Most men have a need to be appreciated and admired. This sounds a little egotistical, but it is true. Of course, women have the same need. But in fact, honest admiration may be an important motivator for most men. It is not as negative as it sounds. "When a woman tells a man she thinks he's wonderful, that inspires him to achieve more. He sees himself as capable of handling new responsibilities and perfecting skills far above those of his present level... Admiration not only motivates, it also rewards the husband's existing achievements. When she tells him that she appreciates him for what he has done, it gives him more satisfaction than he receives from his paycheck." A wife can be a great motivator for her husband. A man's need for admiration can be met as his wife lifts him up, motivates him, and inspires him to greatness. In a sense, she becomes his therapist, his biggest fan, his largest supporter. All too often, this need for admiration goes neglected. Like other needs, when this need goes unfulfilled, the marriage relationship deteriorates. It's like the old adage: 'If you want a man to do something, tell him maybe he is too old to do it---and it will be done.'

Women, Keep the Cave clean!



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Meeting Men’s Needs (Cont.)

On this note, Sue Bohlin has written: “Wives, if you want to trash your marriage, ignore his need for sex and that you [need to] be there for him in leisure time. Blow off his desire that you look your best and he can be proud that you’re his wife. Make your home as stressful and chaotic as you can, *and never, ever tell him what you admire about him.*” But we’re not talking about ruining marriages here. We want your marriage to succeed. Husbands, do you need to be appreciated? Do you have a need for recognition and approval from your spouse? Most of us do. Does your wife know that? Does she know that you appreciate her acknowledging the good things you do as a husband and father? In our private conversations, it would not be amiss to let your wife know that you appreciate her letting you know when you do good things. We all do.

To meet this need of appreciation, a wife could express a compliment to their spouse this way: “You know what I appreciate about you? You are so good at conceptualizing a problem,” or “You can think through issues that throw me.” For physical admiration, wives could praise their mates by saying something like, “I love to see you in that color; those pants and shirt;” or “You look great in that outfit.” Socially, a husband might like to hear something like “You sure are good with people,” or “You are so good to listen to what others have to say.” Regarding spiritual admiration, a husband might like to hear, “You know what I love about you---the kids in your Sunday school class think the world of you. They seem to really look up to you,” or “I admire how faithful you are with scripture study.”

It has been said that behind every great man is an admiring wife. Wives, how do you show your husband that you admire him? Do you tell him why you admire him? Why you love him? The most meaningful praise and

show of admiration will center on what your husband *really values*--the sweet spot of praise. Find out what matters most to him, and praise him in those areas, and genuinely so. For instance, you may often tell him that does a great job mowing the lawn. That may be well and good, but what he really wanted to hear was that he is an effective father. Make sure your arrows of praise and admiration hit the target.

So, wives, here is an assignment. Do you wish to build up your husband? Do you want to strengthen his resolve to be a better spouse and father? Do you want to make him feel like you are glad you married him? Write him a note and share with him the things that you admire most about him---other than on his birthday or your anniversary. After he reads your personal message of love and appreciation, you’ll notice that his feelings for you will increase. You may need to pick him up off the floor, or wipe a tear from his eye. You just may watch him grow right there on the spot. Men love to be complimented by the person they love the most-- their own spouse.

I recognize that I have discussed these issues in a stereotypical fashion. I know there are other needs that we have not addressed and realize that sometimes men and women have similar needs. It would be impossible to chronicle all of the needs of your husband. Just do your best to help your husband identify his needs, and then try the best you can to meet them. In case you think this isn’t fair, wait until next month! That is when I will discuss the needs of women.

In order to help with this, complete the following “Wish List.” After giving the exercise thought and consideration, share your list with your spouse. Discuss with each other how these needs can be met.

<u>Wish List</u>		<u>How To Make A Deposit in this Area?</u>
<u>My Needs:</u>		
<u>1.</u>		<u>1.</u>
<u>2.</u>		<u>2.</u>
<u>3.</u>		<u>3.</u>
<u>4.</u>		<u>4.</u>
<u>5.</u>		<u>5.</u>
<u>6.</u>		<u>6.</u>
<u>7.</u>		<u>7.</u>
<u>8.</u>		<u>8.</u>
<u>9.</u>		<u>9.</u>
<u>10.</u>		<u>10.</u>

On the next column, write down how you think your spouse could fulfill your needs in this area. These are called deposits. This is also what we call a wish list, and don’t expect to get everything on this list. However, meeting just several of these key needs is a great beginning!