

GETTING STARTED RIGHT

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About Dr. Karen Gail Lewis

My Philosophy

My Philosophy

With almost 4 decades of experience as a marriage and family therapist (social worker and consulting psychologist), I've been practicing long enough to know that what works for one person may not work for another. While I've absorbed techniques from a number of therapeutic styles, at my core, I am a family therapist.

As a family therapist, I "see" the whole family – even if only one person sits in my office. I think multi-generationally, recognizing people often carry within them unresolved issues and unspoken messages passed down through the generations. Sessions might include subsets in a family, such as siblings, in-laws, friends, even co-workers. Family therapy, then, is a lens for understanding how problems develop as well as get resolved in context of all the "families" in people's lives.

In addition, I pay close attention to the importance that friendships, extended family, and other support networks play in people's lives - and in resolving their problems.

The goal of therapy – for individuals, couples, or families – is to combine an understanding of the basis for the problem with specific behavioral change. To that end, sessions often end with "homework" assignments.

The goal of pre-marital consultations – available for everyone involved with the soon-to-be Newly Weds – is to help the transition go smoothly from life before marriage to the new configurations afterwards.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES



DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

Premarital Check Ups

I offer four different Pre-marital Check Ups. More are available upon request.

- *Soon-To-Be Newly Weds*
- *Bride and her Sisters*
- *Bride and her Parents*

A Serious Shower - Full of Laughs

Gifts for the Bridal Party

Premarital Check Up
With the Soon-To-Be Newly Weds

Article: Avoiding The Deadly Seven

Pre-Marital Check Up With the Soon-To-Be Newly Weds

If the soon-to-be Newly Weds are well prepared for the inevitable landmines of married life, they can smoothly maneuver around them. There are some obvious potential problems (dealing with money and in-laws) and many less obvious ones (different styles in folding laundry or bed-making).

The biggest landmines are usually around adapting how things had been done differently in each of their family of origin, and what they want for their newly created family. This might include rituals for celebrating holidays and seating arrangements at the table. It also might include, when you are together every day, how often you need to apologize for expelling gas or say “G-d bless you,” after a sneeze. There are a multitude of other minor issues that can end up causing conflict or tension. At a minimum, couples need to consider the Deadly Seven (see next page)

*The bottom line is for soon-to-be Newly Weds to **Not** end up in a marriage therapist’s office.*

Letter from Fred and Martha

“Martha and I are writing this together because we are both so pleased with the pre-marital consult we had with you. We had met with our minister, but that was no where as in depth as what we did with you. Who knew what things we might have over looked? We laughed when you talked about differences in how people fold towels, but we have bumped into a number of little differences that are right up that same alley. Without your preparing us, one of us would have certainly gotten annoyed and hurt.”

Email from Gloria and Stan

“We loved your idea of the Ritual Chart. As you probably recall, we’re in our mid-thirties and while this is my husband’s first marriage, it’s my second. Therefore, being older and wiser, we thought we knew what to expect. But, we had never considered establishing rituals for our marriage (even before children) – taking what we liked from our own family experience and then setting new ones just for us. This was a WOW experience. You are so creative and smart. Thanks for being there when we didn’t even know we needed you.”

Avoid the Deadly Seven

In getting married, if you are not prepared for these potentially deadly seven topics *before* they become a problem, you may suffer from assumptions, miscommunications, hurts and resentments. A few examples of each topic is listed.

Family Rituals

- Whose family rituals around holidays will you follow – yours or your spouse-to-be?
- How can you create your own holiday rituals as a new family without hurting your parents' feelings?

Arguments

- How did each of your parents handle differences of opinions around important issues? Around minor issues?
- What is your typical style for dealing with arguments – yelling, withdrawing, crying?

In-Laws

- If you see a problem between your spouse and your parents, how will you handle it?
- How will you handle your own parents' feelings if you spend more time with your in-laws?

Neatness, Cleanliness, Household Chores

- How will you handle your differences about what constitutes neat and clean, since two people rarely have the same opinions?
- What *unspoken* ideas do you have about the division of household chores?

Sex

- How can you discuss exploring different ideas about sex – without labeling the other a “prude” or “deviant”?
- How can you talk about what you like and do not like – without embarrassing or hurting the other's feelings?

Money

- How will financial investment decisions be made? Have you decided what to do if you don't agree?
- If you have different ideas about how to spend money on entertainment and other non-necessities, how will you handle this?

Children

- Have you discussed the possibility that one of you might change your mind about having children?
- How will you prevent the children and work from becoming an “emotional affair?” (Get a copy of “Are You Having An Affair? Do You Even Know?” at www.DrKGL.com/affair)

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, called the *Relationship Rescuer*, has been rescuing couples for 39 years. A marriage and family therapist and author of numerous works, she writes about gender differences, marriage, and adult sibling relationships. She has offices in Cincinnati and Washington, DC. For more information, go to www.DrKGL.com

*Premarital Check Up
With the Bride and Her Sisters*

Article:

Sisterly Rivalry: How To Avoid A Wedding Fight

(Dr. Lewis is quoted in this Bride article)

http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/33498528/ns/today-today_weddings/

Premarital Check up With the Bride and her sisters

This preventive consultation keeps old issues from spilling over during this stressful time.

If there has always been tension between the sisters, with taunts like, "You are bossy/mean/such a baby/always wanting to be center of attention," the animosity may threaten to spoil the wedding.

If the sisters are close, the non-bride might feel abandoned or jealous as the bride moves her everyday life to her husband. The feeling can show up in her withdrawing, being mean, or even being annoyingly "helpful."

With the extra stress that always accompanies the planning of a wedding, it is often beneficial for sisters to clear the air before it pollutes the family at this high-stress time.

Letter from Ginny

"I'm writing for my sister and me since I can't wait until she returns from her honeymoon to thank you. I'm embarrassed to think how mean I had been to her for the months leading up to the wedding. I'm old enough to have known better, but somehow I missed this. You helped us see that I was just worried about being left behind. While she was engaged, I still felt real close, but with her marriage, I knew I'd be left out of many of the details of her life. Once you helped us understand that, she reassured me I would always be special to her in a way her husband would never be, but they had a specialness that did exclude me. I knew that, but somehow I had to have it put in my face before I saw how badly I was reacting. Thank goodness we met with you when we did. I could have really messed up the wedding and then would have suffered for years."

Letter from Yolanda

"I resisted coming to meet with you when Tina suggested we do this before her wedding. But, I'm glad I finally gave in. We have never been close and I know we never will be, but a lot her resentment towards me makes more sense now – to both of us. It always seemed she went out of her way to be cruel. We were both so surprised when you helped us see where it came from. I still have a hard time believing it, but it must be right because the air is definitely different between us now. What are you – A Genie we let out of a bottle?"

Premarital Check Up
With the Bride and Her Parents

Article: Wedding Planning Check List
(Adapted from I Do Boutique)

Premarital Check Up With the Bride and Her Parents

This preventive consultation with the bride and her parents is geared to reducing arguments during the wedding planning. Too often there are heated arguments about who is in control, who makes the decisions, who gets his or her way.

By dealing, in advance, with potential problems, everyone's tasks during the wedding planning will be clarified and agreed upon. This, then, becomes the backdrop for when arguments arise later.

With all the mixed feelings that are involved in wedding planning (mother, father, and daughter all have their own feelings), families can get into royal battle. Typical issues, for example, include (but certainly are not limited to):

- *Guest list*
- *Time and style of the wedding*
- *Location of the wedding and the reception*
- *Type of music*
- *How much money to spend*

Letter from Mindy and her parents

“And we thought we could do this on our own! Talking with my parents beforehand about all the possible ways we might be stuck or get in a fight was SO useful. The hard part was agreeing to do this. Once we sat down with you, though, we sailed through the whole wedding planning. And, each time we did get stuck in a bad fight, one of us remembered to go back to our original agreement. The fighting always ended immediately. This was fantastic. Thank you so much, Karen, for offering this opportunity.

Email from Charlene's Mother

“My daughter had heard about your pre-marital consults with parents and the bride. I said we had enough expenses without another one. This is one time I'm glad for her stubbornness. Thinking how relatively smoothly everything went, I can only thank you over and over. (And I thanked her for insisting we do this.)”

YOUR TO-DO CHECKLIST

You can use this 12-month Planner for ideas for tasks and responsibilities that need to be assigned. Make sure you identify who has the final say for each item.

A Serious Shower - Full of Laughs

Articles:

Women's Pre-Marital Relationship Quiz

Men's Pre-Marital Relationship Quiz

A Serious Shower - Full of Laughs

How about a really unusual Bridal Shower theme:

“Don’t Insult Your Partner (at least not unintentionally)”

After this brief and funny talk, Dr. Lewis leads the guests in word games about how men and women use language differently. A simple word or sentence can have entirely different meanings to men than to women. (Everyone knows this is true with the word “Intimacy.”) There are 80 such words and phrases that can turn a simple conversation into an argument without the couple understanding how that happened.

Activities will include words such as “Advice,” “Silence,” “Questions,” “Nagging.” As well as how to have a “Good Argument.” (Did you know that arguments can be one of the most intimate exchanges between couples?) Expect to laugh out-loud as you learn useful information.

Everyone, not just the Soon-To-Be Bride, will find useful tips to apply with partners, bosses, brothers even sons – as soon as they walk out the door.

Time: 2 hours

Typical comments from women who have participated in these events.

“I thought I’d fall off the chair when Sally laughed so hard she peed in her pants!”

“Wow. This is really useful stuff. I can’t wait to try some with my boyfriend.”

“After 4 years of marriage, I can tell you – this is no joke. You are right on. I can tell it will make a big difference for us – and I think we have a good marriage as it is.”

“I’ll call you next week to let you know if this really works with my 15 year old son!” (She did called; it was making a difference.)

WOMEN'S PRE-MARITAL RELATIONSHIP QUIZ

(Answers found in *Why Don't You Understand? A Gender Relationship Dictionary*)

1. Do you know why he gives you unsolicited advice when you only want his emotional support?

(See page 1)

2. Do you know why he sometimes gets defensive, as if you are criticizing or blaming him – but you are not?

(See page 10)

3. Do you know why he may sometimes find it hard to say "I'm sorry"?

(See page 4)

4. Do you know the difference between what you two mean when you talk about "Intimacy"?

(See page 31)

5. Do you know the four scariest words for most men?

(See page 53)

6. Do you know that conversation has a different purpose for each of you?
Do you know what the purpose is for him?

(See page 20)

7. Do you know how this phrase, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," can explain communication problems with him?

(See page 24)

8. Do you know how to avoid "nagging" him?

(See page 22)

9. Do you know the key to having him participate in a conversation about your relationship?

(See Page 21)

10. Do you know the double bind you may put him in when he is trying to please you?

(See page 40).

MEN'S PRE-MARITAL RELATIONSHIP QUIZ

(Answers found in *Why Don't You Understand? A Gender Relationship Dictionary*)

1. When she is talking about a work or relationship problem, and you lovingly offer a suggestion, do you know why she gets annoyed and doesn't appreciate your concern?

(See page 1)

2. Do you understand why you can make an innocent remark, but she gets upset, taking it personally?

(See page 10)

3. When you are having a relationship discussion, do you know why she thinks you are yelling when you are only talking intensely?

(See page 16)

4. Do you know she (and women in general) have been "trained" by society to worry about protecting men's "fragile ego"? Can you tell when she is doing this with you?

(See page 25)

5. Do you know why she does not like your giving her a shopping list of what you want for holidays or birthdays?

(See page 26)

6. Do you know the difference between what you two mean when you talk about "Intimacy"?

(See page 31)

7. Do you know that conversation has a different purpose for each of you? Do you know what the purpose is for her?

(See page 20)

8. Do you know why she says, "I'm fine," when you know she is upset with you -- and definitely not fine?

(See Page 30)

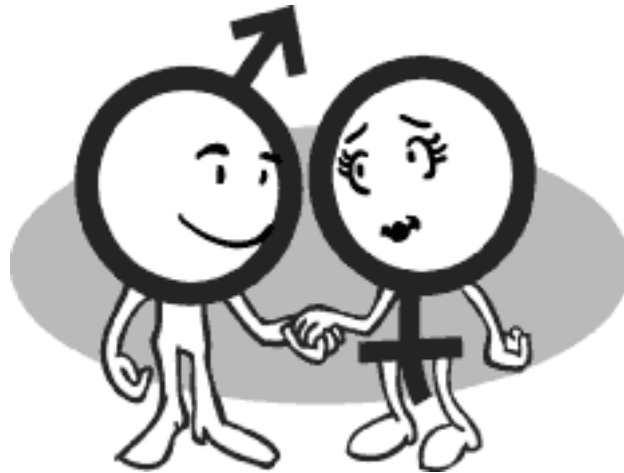
9. Do you know why she just can't gracefully accept a compliment?

(See page 17 and 51)

10. When you two are having an argument, you are angry but she is shedding tears, do you know what her tears mean?

(See page 50)

Gifts for the Bridal Party



Excerpts from

Why Don't You Understand? A Gender Relationship Dictionary

Gifts for the Bridal Party

Why Don't You Understand? A Gender Relationship Dictionary

This is a great, inexpensive gift for brides and grooms to give to their wedding party.

Based on some of the concepts in Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, this is the world's first dictionary for helping men and women understand Male-ese and Female-ese.

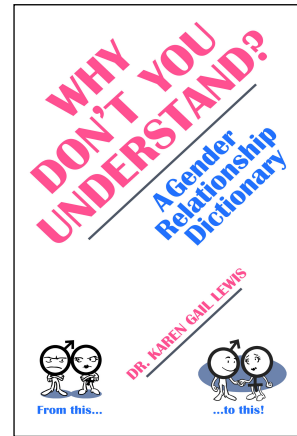
In fact, men and women often unintentionally hurt each other, have miscommunications, get into unnecessary arguments. To often their good intentions go unnoticed because they are not understood by the opposite sex.

The dictionary also includes a grid for checking how many of the 80 words cause problems in your relationships with the opposite sex (i.e., partners, siblings, parents, bosses, children).

There are practice exercises for men and for women, and guidelines for having a "Good Argument." This is a great gift to give people you care about since it is fun (with cute pictures) as well as totally serious. And, it and can be incredibly helpful.

EXCERPTS FROM

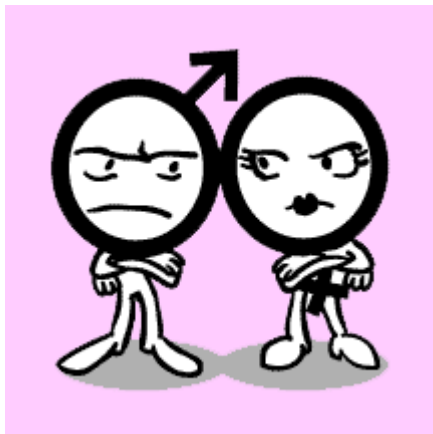
Why Don't You Understand? A Gender Relationship Dictionary



ADVICE

Men express their affection and let their partners know they love and care for them by being helpful (see I Love You). This shows up primarily in giving advice and suggestions about how to do things or resolve problems. Regarding gender and communication, however, it also tends to contribute to the relationship problem.

Women, however, do not perceive unsolicited suggestions as a sign of love. When a man offers this gift, the woman may think he is telling her what to do (see Pleasing the Other). She may feel like a child with her father, or that he is belittling her, assuming she can't figure out what to do on her own. Thus, his caring comes across as condescension. While not intentional, his unsolicited advice contributes to the gender conflict.



These days, most men know women don't like unsolicited advice, yet they continue to offer it. (See my article, [Men: You Know Better, But...](#).)

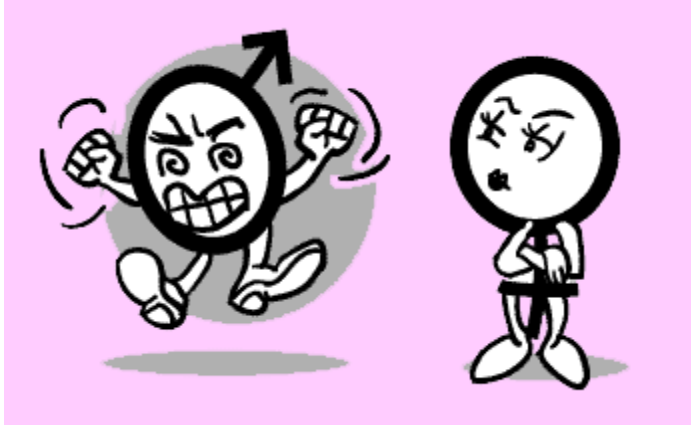
This is because in Male-ese, not to do so would mean they are being unloving and unkind. This is part of the gender conflict - where gender and communication do not mix well.

Instead of giving unsolicited advice to express caring, there are two things men can do for women that will be appreciated. One, they can listen. (Yes, men, that is "doing something.") And two, after listening, they can ask, "Would you like a suggestion?" The asking, rather than just giving, allows the woman to make the choice as to whether she wants a suggestion or not, and if she does, whether she wants it now or later. It also gives her the chance to say no, she just wanted to know the man was listening. (see Epilogue- Men: An Alternative to Giving Advice)

Even if she turns down his offer of advice, she will appreciate his effort, and he will have the satisfaction of having offered his help. That will make it easier for him to say nothing else.

The Miscommunication Cycle

When a woman is upset with a man, she tells him why and expects him to explain himself, apologize, or at least give his opinion. She waits for his response for what seems to her to be a long enough time for him to say something if he wanted to. When the man remains silent, she thinks she must not have explained herself well enough, so she continues, sometimes going on



to other complaints (see Conversation-Silence, Time/Timing).

The man, however, doesn't experience her pause as stopping. To him it seems just a moment, just enough time to catch her breath. So he sits silently, waiting for her to finish. For him, the indicator of her being finished would be a question he can answer. Without that question, he doesn't know what she is looking for. So he waits. For men,

conversations are about reporting information (see Conversation- Purpose). Without the question, he thinks she is simply reporting information and not looking for anything from him (see We Have to Talk. About What?).

This cycle — the woman talking, waiting for the man to respond, when he doesn't, she continues — can go on for a long time, with her talking for longer periods and him sitting and waiting for longer periods of time. Over the years of being together, couples often have reinforced each other's patterns. He no longer expects her to stop talking and ask him a question; she no longer expects him to respond to her.

I Love You

Men and women need to hear the words, I love you, but they need to hear it in their own way. When you tell your partner about your love, you are giving a gift, and gifts need to be given in the language of the Receiver (see Gift Giving).

When a man tells a woman he loves her, it needs to be in Female-ese. This means he tells her with words and compliments; he should use physical touch, not intercourse. He could do small



personal things for her, like bring flowers, or leave notes or small surprises. He could buy her gifts. In fact, women have a wide range of how a man can show his love. Giving advice, a Male-ese way to show love, is not a substitute for the way she needs to hear it (see Advice).

A man is less fussy about how a woman can show she loves him. Words are fine, but making love with him may be the best way. He may also appreciate her buying him a tool he has always wanted, or doing some other concrete task (see Cultural Roles).

Related Articles

By Dr. Karen Gail Lewis

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- *The Newly Wed Life Cycle: From Glow to Stress to Glow to Glower to the Best Glow*
- *Twitter Me: Does Getting Married Mean Dropping Facebook Friends?*
- *6 Types of Kisses: From Passion to Empty Air*
- *5 Tips For Productive Arguments and Improved Relationships*

The Newly Wed Life Cycle

From Glow to Stress to Glow to Glower to Glow

Emotionally, newlyweds pass through a variety of stages including various glows, stresses, and glowers. But if done well, they end with the best glow of all, a healthy mature married life.

Glow The life of a newlywed starts with the planning for the wedding. The Glow comes from the excitement of getting to know each other, falling in love, and planning their life together.

Stress It's common knowledge that couples can anticipate lots of arguments during the wedding planning phase. The intensity sometimes has couples questioning if they should be getting married. Wedding planning stress, though, is understandable because there are so many conflicting agendas and interests.

(NOTE: of course, not all of the following fits for everyone)

- Mother of the bride is intent of having the perfect wedding – perhaps to keep up with the Joneses, perhaps to make up for the perfect wedding she never had.
- Father of the Bride, stereotypically, has two primary concerns. Making sure his little girl will be well taken care of and being assured his business associates and extended family will be impressed by the wedding. When his daughter and wife hit rocky points, he may either step in as peace maker (which rarely is successful) or remain on the sidelines.
- Mother of the Groom, especially if she has not already been a mother of a bride, may want more say than her role typically allows. It is her son's wedding, and she may not want to be just another invited guest.
- Father of the Groom wants his son to be a responsible husband and good provider. Beyond that, stereotypically, he is fine with just being an invited guest where he only has to show up and have a good time.

- Sister(s) of the Bride may be quietly in the background, helpful to the bride. Or, she may be resentful and angry, causing bitter confrontations. The intensity may be as strong as when they were little kids, with the same old squabbles re-packaged, but appearing with vengeance under the stress of the wedding.
- Bride-to-Be may step back and let her mother's desires shape the wedding, or she may hold to her own desires which causes tension and arguments. She may feel caught between wanting what she has envisioned and being an appreciative daughter, not wanting to hurt her parents' feelings.
- Oops, almost forgot the Groom-to-Be. He may feel left out, forgotten, having less invested in the details of the wedding. Or, he may be delighted to be left out of the stress whirling around him. His biggest stress is making sure he doesn't react to his beloved's stress as she dumps some of her anxiety on him with nit-picking complaints.

GLow The stress passes and magically, the morning of the wedding arrives with everyone returning to the excited glow of this big event. (Well, ok, many don't until the bride actually starts down the aisle.) The music soothes, dissolving old stresses, as if turning the page from all that went before to the start of a new life.

And, this new life requires redefined relationships – from daughter to wife, from parent to in-law, from boyfriend to husband. The wedding glows, despite the expected snafus, such as the mother of the bride anxious or angry the food is cold, or the table setting is wrong. Everyone else, though, has a great time.

The wedding night may glow (if one or both of the couple hasn't drunk too much, flirted too much with guests, fallen asleep before their first married-life-love making).

The glow of the honeymoon may last through the return to their marriage home (if one or both of the couple doesn't drink or flirt too much due to delayed anxiety about what it means to be married now). And, the glow remains, even though there often is (by everyone who has already been down this road), the temporary terror of, "Oh my goodness, what have I done."

Glower During the first week or month back from the honeymoon, as the anxiety subsides and the couple settles into married life, there may appear short snaps or silent huffs. Small glowers begin with the less-than-polite, "Why did you do that?" What did you mean by that comment?"

The newlyweds are prepared to be loving. What they are *not* prepared for is the daily stresses that arise from two very different people with different ways of folding the laundry. Before marriage, even if they lived together, they may have made a significant effort to accommodate and please the other. After the wedding, as the newness wears off and with the awareness that this is forever, they begin to speak up more about their tastes, their ideas, their differences.

This, unfortunately, leads to what often causes the biggest glower -- the fear of getting entangled in an argument. They may not have learned that the most intimate moments couples can share are at the conclusion of a Good Argument (see www.GenderDictionary.com).

Best Glow Once the couple lets go of the fantasies of two becoming one, never going to bed mad, avoiding disagreements, they embark on the best glow of all – a healthy marriage requires two separate adults with different ideas but who've learned to fight cleanly, to negotiate and compromise. They will discover the surprise that this marriage has had a dress rehearsal years ago with their childhood siblings. That was the "first marriage," where they learned (or didn't learn) to love, fight, and then continue loving (see www.DrKGL.com/siblings.aspx).

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, a marriage and family therapist, provides pre-marital consultations. She is also the author of relationship books on being married, being single, and having adult siblings. Since gender differences in language can cause problems for newly married couples, get free excerpts from her Gender Relationship Dictionary: Why Don't You Understand, GenderDictionary.com. And for more about her services, go to DrKGL.com

Twitter Me: Does Getting Married Mean Dropping Facebook Friends?

Before you are married, your social networking was your business. You could twitter or chat with anyone you wanted, whether or not you knew the person.

Once you are married, though, your social networking, like other aspects of married life, has a joint ownership. If you do not accept this concept, you may be headed for unnecessary conflict. Your new spouse may be jealous or feel insecure if you are twittering anyone of the opposite sex. This is particularly problematic if your contact is with a former romantic partner (regardless how long ago you broke up and even if that person is now married).

This does not mean you must avoid networking; it just means you need some guidelines to protect your marriage, to help avoid arguments, resentments, and hurt feelings.

1. Be clear about your agenda. For example, do you wish to remain in touch because the person makes you feel sexy or desired? If so, ask yourself why you need that from someone other than your spouse.
2. Consider frequency. If you are chatting more than weekly or every other week, you are increasing the potential for an intimacy that goes beyond friendship. And, even if that is not your intention, it may be the intention you are sending the other person.
3. Share with your spouse. If your spouse knows who you are writing and what you are saying, there is less chance for jealousy, resentment, or misunderstandings. Leave the messages available so your spouse can read them, too.
4. Monitor what you share. Sharing intimate feelings draws two people closer. Therefore, when you share these with someone other than your spouse, whether you intend to or not, you are sending the message that you want a more intimate relationship.

5. Do not meet in person. If you want to meet a social networking friend in person, go with your spouse. This makes it clear that you and your spouse are a team, that you share friends. It also prevents the other person from getting the wrong message.

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, a marriage and family therapist, provides pre-marital consultations. She is also the author of relationship books on being married, being single, and having adult siblings. Since gender differences in language can cause problems for newly married couples, get free excerpts from her Gender Relationship Dictionary: Why Don't You Understand, GenderDictionary.com. And for more about her services, go to DrKGL.com

6 Types of Kisses: From Passion to Empty Air

A kiss. Four letters but packed with multiple meanings. The dictionary definition of a “caress with lips,” doesn’t account for the different types of kisses – from the most casual to the most passionate to the most intimate. I’ve designated five categories of kisses.

1. Hand Shake Kiss

This kiss is a neutral way to say hello. There may or may not be any affection between the two people. A variation is the Air Kiss. Everyone recognizes this, when women lean into each other, opposite cheeks may or may not touch and then kiss – not the cheek – but the air.

Another variation is the Double Cheek Kiss. This is the European style of greeting someone with whom you have at least a minimum level of connection.

2. Cross-Generational Kiss

This is the affectionate kiss of parents, grandparents, and other relatives or close family friends when greeting young children. This kiss is usually on the cheek, but may be placed on the mouth.

A variation is the Baby Kiss, which can be noisy and often placed anywhere *but* on the mouth.

3. SWAK

As kids, do you remember sealing your envelopes with SWAK, “sealed with a kiss.” This was used when writing to the opposite sex, but many pre-teen children used it with each other, regardless of sex.

Another version of the SWAK is the Wedding Kiss. A marriage is sealed with the "I do" and the culminating kiss. This kiss is a public statement that the two people are committing themselves to each other. It is intense, passionate, but not meant to be sexually arousing.

4. Pseudo-Intimacy Kiss

This is a kiss of passion shared during the infatuation period of a new relationship. Kissing usually is the first step of a courtship. Then, if both partners are willing, the kiss leads to the next step on the path to lovemaking. This kiss reflects the arousal that often is mistaken for emotional intimacy; it is a pseudo intimacy, though, because it comes from the physical excitement and the hopes and expectations of the new relationship, not from a deep intimacy that comes only with time and commitment.

5. Old Married Kiss

This is the saddest of the kisses. This is the kiss that has become a habit and has less meaning than even the handshake. It's a kiss, sometimes used several times a day, saying hello or goodbye or good night. But, there is no significance in it. It has become part of a routine: get up, get dressed, get breakfast, get the kids ready, kiss spouse goodbye, start your day. Many couples report they even do the ritual goodbye kiss when they are angry or feel totally numb towards their partner.

On the other hand, this kiss can be very comforting in its routine physical contact.

6. Forgotten Kiss

Statistics confirm that couples together for many decades do continue to make love. Researchers look at how often, and

they rate satisfaction. However, there is hardly any attention to the most intimate part of love making – the Kiss.

It's been reported that women who do sex for pay will do whatever a man wants – with the one exception of a mouth to mouth kiss; sex is a business, kissing is intimate.

In my clinical practice with couples, women say a slow tender kiss of deep passion causes a quicker arousal than any other action during intercourse. Yet, couples forget this after years of togetherness. They may spend time with foreplay, but they forget there is a pre-foreplay – the Kiss.

And, for menopausal women, it can be a particularly important part of arousal. Since there is no physical explanation for that, it probably is the emotional connection, the passion that lies within, despite the years of daily life. But, this is a kiss that *should not* be forgotten.

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, a marriage and family therapist for 39 years, is author of *The Secret to a Solid marriage: Understanding Gender Differences* (www.WomenAndThePeopleTheyLove.com) and other books on marriage, single women, and adult siblings.

5 Tips for Productive Arguments and Improved Relationships

During my 35 years as a therapist, The # 1 complaint I hear from married and single women is poor communication with their male partner/spouse. I'm forever hearing comments like: He just doesn't understand; he never says he's sorry; he won't share his feelings. Or, when a woman is trying to make a point, he yells or walks out of the room.

Women's list of communication complaints about men they love goes on and on.

The truth is that, typically, women spend more time than men thinking about their relationships and worrying about what they did to cause a problem and what they can do to make it better. You read books, talk with friends, and think of all the ways you can make things better. Right?

On the other hand, when a man is angry or hurt, he typically puts it away and moves on. Like a client said in my office just yesterday, "I suck it up. Isn't that what couples are supposed to do?"

Well, no. That's what men do; but women do just the opposite. Men and women are governed by different rules for dealing with relationship problems. For men, it's a simplistic "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." They believe if you mess with something small, you risk making it worse.

For women, though, it's just the opposite. "If there's a problem, even a small one, I better fix it now so it doesn't get bigger."

You see the problem? They both want this journey of the relationship, but it's like one is waiting at the train station while the other is at the airport. So, what can you do about it?

Here are some guidelines you can use to make your "discussions" more productive:

1. Set an agenda. Let him know the topic you want to discuss. Agree upon a specific time to talk; don't just bring it up randomly.
2. Be specific in your complaint/request. Know what you want to say and use no more than 3-5 sentences. Men tend to get lost in women's words.
3. Remove your emotion. As Dragnet said, "Just the facts, ma'am; just the facts." Tears and yelling scare men and distract them from hearing what you are saying.
4. Set a goal of coming to a joint resolution (even if that means agreeing to disagree). If you both have that as a goal at the onset, you can come back to that if either of you are getting defensive or attacking.
5. Remember you love each other; you are on the same team.

If you want more ideas about what you can do before you get to this point, sign up for my teleseminar MEN! Are They Teachable? Should You Do It? In addition, get your free copy of 13 Tips For Avoiding Miscommunication at www.WomenAndThePeopleTheyLove.com, look for Special Gifts and use the Code: Tips.

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, The Woman Who Helps Women And The People They Love

PUBLICATIONS

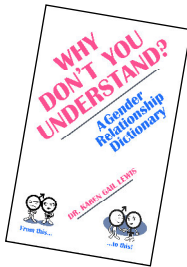
And

Videos

PUBLICATIONS

This is a partial list of my publications:

RELATIONSHIPS



Why Don't You Understand?

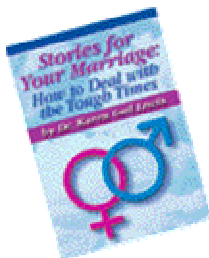
A Gender Relationship Dictionary



The Secret to a Solid Marriage:

Stories for Understanding Gender Differences

(Ebook)



Stories for Your Marriage:

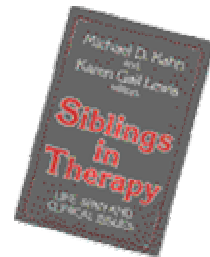
How To Deal With the Tough Times

(Ebook)

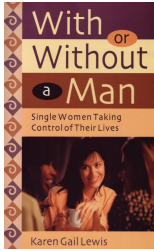
SIBLINGS

Removing Ghosts From Your Past:
Understanding Sibling Conflict
(CD)

Siblings in Therapy: Life Span and Clinical
Issues
(co-edited with Michael Kahn)

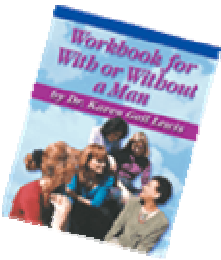


SINGLE WOMEN



With or Without A Man:

Single Women Taking Control of Their Lives



Workbook for With or Without A Man

YouTube:

Purpose of Conversation

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ogzm4_3rIf4

Women Are So Indirect When We Speak

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WnRQFqtLLY>

The Miscommunication Cycle

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3ldmnXIaxo>

ABOUT

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis

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Dr. Karen Gail Lewis 39 years experience as a marriage and family therapist. While she has a master's degree in social work and a doctorate in consulting psychology, she has been active in the family therapy field since its early years in the 1960s.

Author of seven books, Dr. Lewis's most recent is *Why Don't You Understand A Gender Relationship Dictionary*. Some of the others are *The Secret to a Successful Marriage: Stories for Understanding Gender Differences, With or Without a Man: Single Women Taking Control of Their Lives*, and *Siblings in Therapy*. She is currently working on a book about sibling relationships in mid-life.

Called the Relationship Rescuer, she speaks nationally and internationally on wide range of themes: couples' relationships, single women, mid-life issues, women's friendships, and adult siblings. She has been interviewed by the all forms of the media dozens of times, including New York Times, USA Today Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal, NBC, as well as internet news sites.

Her academic history includes having been on the faculty of University of Cincinnati Medical School, Virginia Polytechnic Institute Family Therapy Program, Johns Hopkins Medical School, and University of Santiago, Chile. She has also served on the editorial boards of three professional journals and past book review editor for another journal. In 1997, she was honored with the Visionary Award by the Washington, D.C. Rape Crisis Center.

In 1996, she founded Unique Retreats for Women. Since then, she has included specific retreats for women ready for change, single women, sisters, mothers adult daughters, and couples. These retreats are devoted to personal growth relaxation, pampering, and fun. Throughout the year, she designs retreats for organizations and other specialized groups.

Dr. Lewis has a psychotherapy practice in the Washington, DC area and in Cincinnati, Ohio. For four years she wrote the "He Said, She Said" column for the Cincinnati Downtowner Newspaper. She is available for speaking engagements, workshop presentations, professional supervision, and training.

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Professional Association Memberships

- *American Family Therapy Academy*
- *American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy*
- *International Association of Collaborative Practice*

I am licensed as a Marriage and Family Therapist in Ohio and in Maryland and have the required licenses and malpractice insurance.

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