

(Upcoming book excerpt):

As a psychologist, through my work with individuals, couples, and families I have noticed a pattern that many women have in their relationships with their men. It's a striking pattern since we have come "such a long way" now that more of us can get equal pay for the same work, can own property, and we all have the right to vote. However, many women still struggle with making requests of their partners and getting their needs met within an intimate relationship.

There seem to be many reasons women give for hesitating to be clear about their needs (even when there is not significant mental health or addiction problem present in their partner). In the movie: *The Break Up*, Jennifer Aniston's character, Brooke, said to her partner, Gary; "But I want you to **want** to wash the dishes." Have you ever seen a bumper sticker that said: "I'd rather be doing the dishes?" Personally, I don't want to do any chores. That's why we call them chores. (I recommend, when you remind your children of their chores that you use the "chore" word when referencing your household activities, as well. Otherwise your children will think you LIKE to do them).

Another reason I frequently hear is that we "shouldn't have to ask." Now, I know many of us feel like mind readers, especially for those we are close to, but our partners may not be as good at mind reading as you are, especially if he's a man. They aren't as interested in reading body language, as we are (unless it's appreciating the body shape!). So, please, do ask. A warning, however, is in order. When you ask, be specific. If you speak too generally, as in asking him to help more around the house, you are asking him to decide when and what to do to help. That's risky because he may do a chore that is not on top of your priority list.

Of course, we all know about our lists of things to do. They seem unending and it all needs to be completed yesterday! We feel overwhelmed and irritable with all our responsibilities with work and home. But men, being as task oriented as they are, seem just as concerned about getting things accomplished but have a greater need to step back and appreciate each completed task along the way. The expression of appreciation, may seem to take time away from doing the next thing on the list, from our point of view. However, if we want our partner to know how much we appreciate their participation, we do need to tell them.

Many women seem surprised and in disbelief when I remind them that their husband wants to please them (forgetting the benefits to them when we are pleased). "Well, he doesn't act like it," they respond back. Many husbands have acknowledged that they have given up. To them it seems no matter how hard they try it doesn't seem to be enough. They work, help around the house (take out the trash), help with the kids' homework, yet she's unhappy and irritable. A common problem is without the reinforcement that the things the men have done are appreciated it's hard for a man to tackle the other things on "the list."

These few tips are common knowledge for some couples and wives but are common patterns I see with troubled couples in my office. For those who struggle with these issues I encourage you to practice making your requests clear and specific, express appreciation when he does participate in an activity and know he does want to please you.