

Talking to Boys, Girls, Men & Women.

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Communication is a tricky business!

The fine art of talking, getting your message heard & understood as well as converted into some form of action by another human being is an amazingly tricky business.

What makes it even murkier is that it often seems that men & women speak entirely different languages. The brains of boys & girls are reasonably similar but the way they use language is poles apart.

While there always exceptions to generalizations, it is very useful to know how most men & most women use language. As we go through these differences it will become clear that the fact that most relationships work at all is nothing short of miraculous.

Men are chasers & women are choosers & this is reflected in the way they talk to one another. Men use talk to gain attention & status, to be the chosen one. Women use conversation to connect & maintain relationships. They are vigilant to shifts in nuances & tones. Females are well adapted to spot men's lies, brags & exaggerations.

For men language is about status & independence. Men are highly vigilant for shifts in respect. The jostling & jockeying in males conversations is designed to answer the question, "do you respect me?" Jokes, stories & pranks are important to boys & men because they allow him to be centre stage & gain attention. It is extremely rare to see a woman at a BBQ call a few of the gals over & start sharing a joke to a group.

For women the art of conversation is about intimacy & connection. Behind much of their talking are the questions "Do you like me?" & "Am I part of your group? To build this connection through conversation, many women use discussions to emphasise similarity For example, " Oh yes I've had that problem too!"

Men & women talk about problems differently too. Women use problems to build similarity & closeness. If two women have a similar problem they appear to be alike & must be friends. Men look at problems as things to be minimised or solved. They might share problems & frustrations but will often bond over minimizing them.

Girl Chat/ Boy Chat.

Girls speak 2-3 times more words than boys per day. By 20 months of age they have triple the vocabularies of boys.

In schools, girls play games in which everyone gets a turn. Girls take turns 20 times more often than boys. Boys have games in which there are winners & losers.

Girls often form close-knit cliques with secret rules. They are on the phone with the door closed Gossiping becomes a favourite activity & helps them cope with stresses as they feel that are not alone.

Girls' react to relationship distancing, boys to challenges to their authority.

Men mainly use vasopressin for bonding & relationships while women use oxytocin & estrogen. Vasopressin increases attention, protectiveness & tracking in men.

Oxytocin is released in girls & women even with a 20 second hug –sealing the bond between huggers & trust. Boys need to be touched 2-3 times as much as girls to attain the same level of oxytocin.

There is an old saying that women & cats will do as they will, & men & dogs just need to learn to get used to it.

Advice for Women Speaking to Men & Boys

- * Ask them for advice & suggestions. Under no circumstance feel obliged to implement anything they suggest!
- * Try to see silence as contentment. Men are often quietest when they are happy.
- * Talk about activities rather than feelings or “ the relationship”
- * Use data rather than personal anecdotes.
- * Mention details but don't ask for them (they won't have them!)
- * Know that you will never truly understand the friendly world of rivalry & contest of boys & men.
- * Remember men & boys need 2-3 as much touch as girls to achieve the same gain in oxytocin.
- * Boys are fidgety & communicate in short bursts. Use short, sharp messages. Don't flood them with words or questions.
- * Know that conflict & difference do not always threaten intimacy.
- * Know that watching football is important & it is never an opportunity for a chat about feelings!

Advice for Parents Speaking to Daughters

- * Drama, drama, drama! The female teen brain loves it. Expect it & don't think you can avoid some of it.
- * Don't believe everything they say in arguments. As they are often more verbal than boys they can also say things to you that are more hurtful.
- * Sometimes listening & re-assurance is enough.
- * Let them know that you love them & suggest gently how they may be even more loved by them.
- * In the first 2 weeks of their cycle, the high-octane hormone estrogen fuels obsessions, looking at themselves in the mirror, chattiness, off the wall ideas & privacy paranoia.
- * In the last 2 weeks of your daughter's cycle, progesterone is high resulting in increased irritability & wanting to be alone.
- * These hormones come in waves but in the progesterone phase if some stress occurs you often get meltdowns including yelling & slamming doors. Learn the patterns.
- * Know her friends as well as you can. They will know her secrets & deals can always be struck if need be.

Advice for Men Speaking to Women & Girls

- * Listen to understand before suggesting anything at all. When in doubt DO NOT suggest anything at all!
 - * Girl's think if I just get IT right, I'll get the reaction I want. If I get IT right he will love me. If you can gently show them what they can do, anxiety lessens and affection grows.
 - * If a partner stops responding to a woman, she thinks he is distancing or she has done something wrong & may panic that he is leaving. If you are feeling unresponsive or needing solo time explain that you are feeling that way.
 - * Men don't read sadness in women well- ask for details, who, what, where, when & how do you feel about that- do not dismiss with a perfunctory 'it will be all right' or 'don't worry about it!'
 - * Disclose. Use personal examples. If you don't have any make them up.
 - * Details are important- earrings are not randomly chosen! Haircuts are for noticing.
 - * 20 seconds of hugging increases oxytocin in women.
 - * Inter-dependence does not threaten freedom
 - * In arguments don't defend yourself. Listen carefully for as long as it takes then apologise.
- ### **Advice for Parents Speaking to Sons**
- * Use unadulterated praise, don't qualify (eg you did well but you could do better). Don't add ideas or suggestions, just praise.
 - * Let him know that you love him & respect him- tell him. Then tell him again. Keep telling him.
 - * Give options or choices wherever possible.
 - * Boys more likely to have problems expressing feelings & be more liable to misinterpretation. Be direct. Be firm. Be fair and if you can, be funny.
 - * Always incorporate a wait time- so if you want something done by 5 pm start suggesting it about 2 hours earlier & use hit & run reminders.
 - * Boys are less resilient than girls & may be more romantic. Hurts run deep. Don't hover around them using a lot of words but stay nearby & be caring.
 - * Boys like to score! Competition is fun,
 - * More acne is a clue that androgen levels are high. Associated with less empathy, & more grumpiness Therefore this may not be a good time for talking about feelings.
 - * Boys are often most communicative when horizontal- bedtime can be a good time for a chat.