

Red alert when the talking stops

We all know the line about men being from Mars and women from Venus. There are often gender differences in how we think and behave, and even in what we value.

But because we all live on earth and choose to form intimate relationships together, it is important that we learn to understand and manage some of the differences.

If we take the archetypal woman – Eve - she is likely to say the most important thing for her in a relationship is to feel loved and connected to her partner.

Ask the stereotypical man – Adam - the same question and he might say he needs to feel respected and appreciated.

Eve connects to people she cares about by talking and knowing what the other thinks, feels and does, and by sharing her own experiences with them.

Adam believes actions speak louder than words, and often has limited tolerance for talking.

There are probably a lot of Adams out there who inwardly (or audibly, if they are brave enough) groan when Eve says the words that strike fear in the average Aussie male's heart; "We need to talk."

But Adam needs to realise talking is important to Eve, and he needs to do enough talking with her for her to feel connected.

But Eve must also realise she can't rely totally on Adam to supply all her talking needs; she has to call a girlfriend for a chat, rather than expect Adam to be all things to her.

However, if men stop talking to their women, and don't bother to share news about their respective days, a woman will feel she is losing her connection with him, and will work incredibly hard at trying to let him know what issues need to be addressed in their everyday lives, their family and their relationship – which he may sometimes see as nagging.

But men need to realise that it is when she stops trying to communicate that the relationship is really in trouble. In 65 percent of separation cases, it's the woman who decides to leave, and the man is often shocked, saying, "why didn't you tell me there were problems?"

So if men are going to keep their women happy, they have to talk to them enough to make them feel loved and important. And women have to resist nagging, and learn when to shut up and call a girlfriend for a "deep and meaningful" and let they guy have some space.

Sex is another area that is often seen completely differently by Adam and Eve. If Eve is feeling connected and intimate in her relationship with Adam, she is happy to have sex. But Adam often needs sex as away to establish closeness to Eve. They are both aiming at the same end result, emotional intimacy, but their paths to it can be very different.

But a word of warning for Eve: if she decides to totally control their sex life by withholding it, she may be setting Adam too high a test of their monogamous relationship. They need to do some serious negotiation so both partners get something of what they want.

Men often worry that women are never satisfied with what they have, and their long list of things to be done around the house can seem overwhelming.

What they need to remember is that women are not usually looking for big gestures, but are happy with a series of small ones. A single flower spontaneously picked from the garden may impress as much as a large bunch from the florist.

Men, on the other hand, think in terms of big gestures. If he works long days, he feels he has done a huge thing by being a good provider for the family, and expects appreciation for this, while she has been working before running the kids around to tennis, then cooking dinner.

Both contributions are important and each partner needs to give credit to the other for the effort they put into the relationship, rather than turn it into a game of one-upmanship. That's definitely a romance killer.

Survival tips

- **Men and women can have different approaches to relationships, but they can also find common ground**
- **Being different isn't wrong. It's valuable, and a challenge**
- **Achieving an acceptable balance of what each partner needs is the key**