

Are You a Candidate to Read This Book?

Take this quick quiz to find out. Simply mark Y for Yes or N for No.

- ___ You can't remember the last time your spouse gave you a real kiss or held your hand.
- ___ Experimenting in the bedroom means changing the color of the duvet.
- ___ Your conversations mostly have to do with who needs to pick up groceries and who should take the garbage out.
- ___ Sex is getting a little ho-hum. You're stuck in a rut.
- ___ You can predict the exact spot your spouse will touch you.
- ___ Hopping in the sack with your spouse is just a distant memory BK (before kids).
- ___ When your spouse gets that Bullwinkle the Moose look, you suddenly have to clean the countertop, the potty, *anything*.
- ___ Your spouse doesn't want to have sex unless there's no one within a five-mile radius.
- ___ You undress in the walk-in closet.
- ___ You're newlyweds, but you're not getting the bang for your buck you thought you'd get.
- ___ You don't mind crying or getting emotional over a tender moment on TV. But when the tender moment comes between you and your spouse, you're uncomfortable.

- ___ Your spouse looks at you blankly when you say, “I was thinking we could try something different.”
- ___ The get-up-and-go in Mr. Happy has got up and gone.
- ___ The last book you read about sex was for your premarital counseling.
- ___ You don’t talk about what you really desire in sex and intimacy. It’s too embarrassing.
- ___ You can only make love with the lights off.
- ___ The highlight of your day is watching sitcom characters kiss while you sit next to your spouse on the couch eating popcorn.

If any of these topics resonated with you and you marked even one Y, you need to not only read this book but share it with your spouse.

If you want a new sex life by Friday—and not just good sex but wow sex, intimate connection, and exciting communication—this book will help you with just that.

I promise.

Do you want . . .

- To fall into each other's arms and experience sex that's better than any romance movie or novel?
- To know why your spouse does what he or she does, and how to learn to talk so your spouse will listen?
- An intimate connection that extends all day, even when you're apart?
- Straightforward answers to the hottest questions about sex and intimacy you've been dying to know but are too embarrassed to ask?
- To build an exciting love that lasts and grows for a lifetime?

With just a little of your investment and attention to these doable strategies, *Have a New Sex Life by Friday* will reap dividends not only by Friday but throughout your entire marriage. It's the miracle jump start that can turn ho-hum, nonexistent, or even good sex into unimaginably wow sex.

I guarantee it.

Have a New
Sex Life
by Friday

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Have a New Sex Life *by Friday*



Because Your
Marriage Can't Wait
until Monday

Dr. Kevin Leman


Revell

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-0-8007-2413-9 (cloth)
ISBN 978-0-8007-2852-6 (pbk.)

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To protect the privacy of those who have shared their stories with the author, some details and names have been changed.

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Dr. Kevin Leman, *Have a New Sex Life by Friday*
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To my one and only,
Mrs. Uppington.
And to those couples
who long for something more.
May you never settle for “less than”
but pursue the gift of wow sex together.

Contents

Acknowledgments 13

Introduction

Vive la Différence! 15

Why men need women, why women need men, and why a good sex life is worth striving for.

Monday

Why Women Need Sex 31

Why sex is integral to a woman's life, what she wants most of all, and what stops her from wanting sex.

Tuesday

Why Men Want Sex 57

What men need the most, what they want the most, and why they need foreplay just as much as women do.

Wednesday

Someone's in Bed with You . . . 77

And it's not only your spouse. How to identify the intruders and reclaim the space for the two of you.

Thursday

Making Love with Words 103

Why the words you choose, and how you fulfill them, determine your marital intimacy and shape your sex life.

Friday

Spice It Up! 123

Why variety really is the zest in the marital recipe . . . especially when it comes to the bedroom.

Bonus Features

Romance on a Budget 141

Surprises Your Spouse Will Love 145

Ask Dr. Leman 147

Straightforward answers to the hottest questions couples ask about sex and intimacy.

Introduction 149

Monday 159

Tuesday 189

Wednesday 207

Thursday 233

Friday 257

Epilogue 273

The Best Night of Your Life Awaits

It's time to jump-start the dead battery, revive the ailing engine, and rev up your sex life to full throttle. I promise it'll be fun!

Notes 279

About Dr. Kevin Leman 280

Resources by Dr. Kevin Leman 282

Acknowledgments

It takes a whole village to raise a child, and the same is true for getting a book into the hands of readers.

Grateful thanks to my editor, Ramona Cramer Tucker; the Revell team, including Lonnie Hull DuPont and Jessica English; and all my Facebook fans, loyal readers and listeners, and seminar participants for their honest, in-the-trenches questions.

Introduction

Vive la Différence!

Why men need women, why women need men, and why a good sex life is worth striving for.

There's a reason you're reading this book. You want more sex, more variety in sex, or, let's be honest . . . any sex at all! Do any of these thoughts sound familiar?

- Somehow I imagined sex would be more satisfying. That we'd be closer as a couple.
- What happened to the tingles I used to feel?
- I always dreamed of a spouse who would pursue me sexually instead of simply waiting until I initiate it.
- I thought romance would be a lot more . . . well, romantic.
- Sex doesn't have any of that va-va-voom I expected. I get more of a thrill taking the dog out for a walk.
- I can't help but wonder, *Is this all there is? Is this as good as it gets?*

- I'm convinced the only time my husband thinks of me is when he wants a little (you know what I mean).
- Whatever happened to all those nice things he did for me when we dated?
- It's hard to be in the mood with two kids running you ragged.
- Sex life? What sex life? I think the last time we had sex was . . . I'm not sure my memory goes back that far.
- I have this unsettled feeling that there's more we could have together—more intimacy. That we're missing out.

If you've thought any of the above, you're not alone. Thousands of men and women feel the same way. And you're right—you are missing out. Marital intimacy, including sexual intimacy, is designed as an incredible, personal act between two committed people that cements a relationship so tightly that no one can get in between you.

Right now what you're doing in your marriage either isn't working enough to satisfy you or isn't working at all. It's time for a change. You two deserve more, and you can have so much more—in just five days. Whether you have a sex life, somewhat of one, or none right now, *Have a New Sex Life by Friday* will reveal how to get the warmth, intimacy, and wow sex you desire.

Some of you are saying, "My spouse? Are you kidding me? To have a great sex life, or any sex life at all, I'd have to find a different partner."

Getting a new sex life by Friday doesn't mean you ditch your spouse. Far from it. In this book, I'll reveal the secrets to how you can have a warm and intimate connection, fabulous communication, and yes, even sizzling sex with the one you love.

That spouse you think is reticent about sex could become a tiger in your bedroom with even a little work on your part. It's amazing what can happen when you begin to see the world through your spouse's eyes, and when you use the principles in

this book to get to know that person more deeply than you ever have. As I've counseled couples over the years, using these same techniques, hundreds of thousands of marriages have been turned around. Previously reticent partners of all ages are now enjoying the exciting bonds of marital intimacy, including engaging in passionate sex. You younger readers can be like bunnies in a field in springtime. For those who are middle-aged, don't let anyone tell you that you have to slow down when you hit your forties. For those of you older readers, yes, sex is still possible and wonderful.

By the end of *Have a New Sex Life by Friday*, you'll understand why your spouse is responding the way he or she is and how you can talk so your spouse will listen. You'll have answers to the questions you've wanted to ask about sex but weren't sure who to ask. Five days from now you'll be well on your way to building the kind of love that is warm and satisfying and will last until you're both as wrinkled as raisins. When you're away from each other, you'll still have an intimate connection that drives you to text or call each other because you can't stand not to. And when you're together, you might not even need Netflix anymore for entertainment.

Isn't that a dividend worth investing five days in? And all the gusto you can give it?

Every person's views on sex and his or her background differs. No matter what yours are, this book will expand and challenge your thinking about sex and marital intimacy. Decide right now that you will set aside any preconceived notions you have about what sex is and what it's not. Give these principles and ideas your full attention. Forge ahead for your own sake, your spouse's sake, and your children's sake (if you have them), because this relationship deserves your best.

Not only that, but fine-tuning your connection is a great way to affair-proof your marriage.

Ready to plunge in?

Men and Women—So Tantalizingly Different

What makes men so different from women—other than the obvious male and female body parts? Here are some differences that have everything to do with how men's and women's brains naturally work. They can both tantalize and frustrate, unless you understand how they work and use them to your benefit to deepen your marital intimacy.

The way we process language and emotions

Psychology professor Richard Haier of the University of California, Irvine, and his colleagues from the University of New Mexico, who studied brain imaging technology, say there is a big difference between how men and women process language and emotions. When males listen to someone talking, only their

When males listen to someone talking, only their left hemisphere is activated. With females, both left and right hemispheres are activated.

left hemisphere is activated. With females, both left and right hemispheres are activated. Such activity, they believe, results in females having stronger language skills.

Male brains are about 10 percent larger than female brains (then again, many men are bigger physically than women) and contain about 6.5 times more gray matter (sometimes called “thinking matter”) than female brains. But does that make them smarter? Not necessarily. Female brains have more than 9.5 times as much white matter, which connects the various parts of the brain.¹

It makes sense, then, that females use language to build relationships and are usually better at multitasking than men since both left and right hemispheres can be simultaneously actively

engaged. Men in general find it easier to focus on a single task since mainly their left brain is activated.

When navigating, women are more likely to say, “Turn right at McDonald’s and then left at the corner market.” Men are more likely to say, “Go east one block, then north three blocks.”

Those brain differences apply not only to thinking but also to the way men and women process emotions. “Women are faster and more accurate at identifying emotions,” says Ruben Gur, a neurologist at the University of Pennsylvania. Women can also change their expressions and tone more easily.²

Is it any wonder that sometimes you and your spouse can feel like you are complete opposites? You truly are. If you’re a woman, you can bounce from one hemisphere to another or engage both without batting an eye. If you’re a man, you’re entrenched mainly in one hemisphere and can only see from that side of the brain . . . until your lovely bride helps you engage that other hemisphere she’s so good at navigating.

God Almighty certainly had a sense of humor when he created men and women as polar opposites, didn’t he? Yet we’re drawn to each other because we need each other in so many ways.

I want to be clear here. I believe with all my heart that men and women are of equal social value and are equally loved by God. However, some people transform that statement into, *Men and women are the same*. If we were the same, there would be no need for one of us. Men need women’s multitasking natures in order to make their world go around and to remember key events even in the midst of all-consuming work. Women need men’s ability to zero in on a single problem or issue and tenaciously pursue it until it’s resolved.

What we focus on and the risks we’re willing to take

Men are possibility thinkers and problem solvers. They tend to focus on the present (*What’s the issue that needs to be fixed?*)

and the future (*What if I . . . ?*). Because they focus mainly in one hemisphere, they tend to evaluate what needs to be done and take swift action. They take risks more easily because they are targeted on getting the job done and don't allow relationships to stop them from their trajectory. What family members or co-workers think of their decision doesn't tend to enter the picture as a top priority. Getting the job done is their top priority.

Over lunch, men either think about what they're eating or, if they eat on the job, may continue to focus on the project they're in the middle of. Think of it this way: A man juggles events in life by tossing one apple up in the air and catching it as it comes down. Then, when he has finished with that one apple, he selects

another apple, tosses it up in the air, and catches it. With that method he makes his way through all the apples in the bushel basket.

We men are simple, streamlined. Much easier to understand and navigate than the more complex, multifaceted female.

Women tend to focus on the past and the present. What happened in the past affects their emotions in the present because they have amazing recall, especially when it comes to details that happened in relationships. That's why, gentlemen, women will remember the one time you forgot their birthday, so you better make it your priority not to do so again this year.

Since women use both left and right hemispheres of the brain simultaneously, they tend to think in realistic detail about multiple tasks that need to be done. A woman lives with a continual checklist in her head.

If she's a stay-at-home mom and wife, over lunch she tends to think, *What should I feed my kids for dinner?* What she eats is often little bites of what the kids eat, in between meeting their

Men tend to focus on the present and the future. Women tend to focus on the past and the present.

multiple needs. Most of the time she's used to eating cold leftovers later, in between the kids' next demands and the calls from her husband, who needs her to pick up something for him when she picks up the kids from school. As she's driving, she's ruminating on what's next on her to-do list: *Do the laundry, go jeans shopping with the kid who grew overnight, put gas in the car, buy a brownie mix and ice cream for the neighbors' get-together . . .*

If she's a wife and mom who works outside the home, she's considering all of those same to-dos, plus she adds her professional workload to that list of concerns: *I have to get that big project done. Maybe if I work a couple of hours every night this week after the kids are in bed . . . No, I'll see if he could take the kids to the park Saturday afternoon. If so, I could finish right on schedule.*

Because women have many plates spinning at once, they are usually more cautious in what they do and take fewer risks. They are all too aware of the toll it will take on their family if they aren't as available. Yet, since many women are pleasers, they'll still tend to take on too many projects, because they don't want to disappoint others by saying no. As a result, many women live with guilt for not being able to "do it all."

A woman juggles multiple apples, oranges, and bananas—projects of all shapes, sizes, and flavors—simultaneously and manages to catch them before they hit the pavement and splatter. Truly, women are amazing creatures. I admire them and marvel at all they accomplish every day. But that ability doesn't come without some heavy costs to women personally, especially if the men in their lives are unaware of what they truly do, don't support them, and don't show their appreciation.

Use of "I" versus "we" language

From the minute boy babies emerge from the womb, they are primed to be independent. That independent edge only becomes sharper as they grow older.

Stop by a park sometime and listen to little boys and little girls interact on the playground. The boys are flexing their muscles, pushing each other around, wrestling to see who's stronger, and saying things like, "I'm bigger than you are" and "My daddy will whup your daddy. And I'm gonna whup you." Girls are playing house, holding hands, giggling, and saying, "What should we do today?" or "We could pretend we're . . ."

Notice the difference between the language? Males use "I." Females use "we." Males are all about getting to the top of the food chain, no matter what it takes. They're not concerned about feelings or emotions; they're focused on getting the job done. Females want to relate to others along the way in life; they're concerned about what others might think of their actions and how they might feel.

*Males use "I."
Females use "we."*

It's not hard to see where clashes might come as the two genders relate to each other, is it?

How much we're cued in to multisensory information

Because males are more intensely focused and tightly wired, they become bored more quickly. Their left hemisphere moves faster from object to object (they're not distracted by having both hemispheres moving at the same time, as women are), so they can grasp the full scope of any single project—as well as click the remote control on the television—more rapidly than females. However, it also means they can miss cues or pieces of data along the way, since they take in and sift through far less sensory information than females.

Is it any wonder, then, that males sometimes misinterpret what females say? They haven't taken the time, as females have, to process both the verbal and physical cues to see if that person really means what she's saying. Males take words at face value; women look for meaning and cues behind the words.

Our preferred time for sex—morning, night, or . . .

While giving a couples seminar once, I asked, “When do you think men prefer to be intimate with their wives? In the morning? Or in the evening?”

I asked for a show of hands first for morning and then for evening. Interestingly, many of the women raised their hands for evening. The men? They raised their hands for both! When I insisted they pick one, the majority chose morning.

The ladies’ jaws dropped, and they stared at their husbands.

One woman raised her hand again. “Seriously, morning? But that’s the time when I have morning breath, I’m thinking about the million things I have to do to get out the door, and all I want is a shower. And he wants it then?”

“Exactly,” I said. “One flash of your feminine curves as you get out of bed, and he doesn’t want to let you go. Think about it. That’s a pretty big compliment.”

Another woman raised her hand. “We’ve been married for 17 years. You mean he still thinks that every morning?” She lifted one eyebrow and nudged her husband beside her.

I nodded. “Yup. Every morning.”

“Wow,” she said with loud enthusiasm, and the other women laughed. The men in the audience gave me a thumbs-up.

When I asked the women when they preferred to be intimate, the men leaned forward, eager for their answer. All the women’s hands raised for evening. Not a single one said morning.

Now it was the men’s turn to gaze at their wives in shock.

One man, egged on by a couple of men behind him, asked, “So, are you saying that we have to compromise somewhere in the middle, like 3:00 in the afternoon?” He shrugged. “I’d have to take time off work.”

“Well,” I said, “that would be a fun reason for a vacation day, wouldn’t it?”

He grinned. “Yeah, but it would be hard to explain to my boss.”

I continued, “All I’m saying is, change it up. Be intimate sometimes in the morning to please you, and sometimes in the evening to please your wife. But really, any time at all works, including 3:00 in the afternoon. If you decide to go for the morning, why not brush your teeth and take a quick shower so you’re both comfortable and pleasing to each other? Women have sensitive noses and also want to look their best. A few minutes of preparation are good for both of you. Better yet, shower together in your own intimate water park. Mornings are perfect for quickies to draw your hearts together during the day. They don’t have to take long, but you’ll both head out the door smiling.

Men and Women, Simplified

See Dick. See Jane. See Dick and Jane together.

One is nothing like the other.

But each needs the other.

And that’s what makes life’s merry-go-round so fun.

“If in the evening, the same rules apply, but you might be able to take things more slowly, especially if you don’t have kids, if Grandma has them, or if they’re safely tucked in bed and asleep. Dim the lights and add some candles. Remember, the evening is the woman’s preferred choice, so, men, think *romance*. I know it doesn’t

come naturally, but do it for the sake of your wife. I promise you don’t have to admit you even thought the word *romance* to your buddies, but your wife will sure appreciate it . . . won’t you, ladies?”

Resounding applause broke out.

Later that night and the next morning, a lot of happy couples discovered a whole new perspective on lovemaking. I knew the principles had worked, because many of the couples showed up late for my first session the next morning, and their clothing was wrinkled and slightly askew. They wore ear-to-ear smiles, many were holding hands, and nearly all were sitting a lot closer to each other than they’d been the previous day.

That made me smile all over.

Two Can Indeed Become One

It would be much easier for both genders to be on the same page if the top three needs of men and women were the same, but they're not. As you learn about the top needs of each gender in the chapters to come and how those can be met on a daily basis, you two can develop a deep intimacy as both friends and lovers—the kind of sizzling relationship that lasts for a lifetime. Two people can indeed become one—the goal you were shooting for when you said your marriage vows.

Is it easy? No, it's not. Then again, does anything truly wonderful in any relationship come with a snap of your fingers? However, the journey can certainly be a lot of fun.

There isn't a day that Sande, my beloved bride of over four decades, and I don't laugh hilariously over our differences. Not only are we different genders, but she's a detailed, perfectionistic firstborn, and I'm a happy-go-lucky baby of the family. She likes things lined up in a row and doesn't like surprises. I enjoy going with the flow and love surprises. The more, the merrier! She's a play-by-the-rules sort of woman. Me? I like to break the rules . . . or at least invent some new ones.

*You two can
develop a deep
intimacy as both
friends and lovers.*

Sande can also find anything in the refrigerator in two seconds. I'm the one with my head stuck in the fridge door for five minutes, yelling, "Honey, where's the mustard?" for the umpteenth time this week.

Enter *Sandra*, alias "Mrs. Uppington" for her classy ways, who sashays in like a queen and announces, "It's right there. On the second shelf, to the right." The mustard has never moved from its usual spot, she claims.

"But honey, I still can't find it," I spout.

There's an exaggerated *hmmmmfft* from behind me. *Sandra* reaches a long, slender, elegant arm around me, moves one item an inch, and voilà! She reveals the once-hidden mustard.

Men, just accept the fact that women will always win at the game of hide-and-seek because of their multitasking nature. We men will continually fail to find objects if they have been moved a quarter centimeter from their original spot. Go ahead and blame that fixation on the fact that you're only thinking with your left hemisphere at that moment.

But you can certainly enjoy the game of hide-and-seek when you chase your bride into the bedroom. You might even want to give a little Tarzan jungle roar to add to the ambiance of the evening.

Bet you anything your Jane will love it.

Don't Settle for "Good"—Go "Designer"

In your search for that intimate connection, don't just go for good. Go for fabulous, sizzling sex with the one you love.

But there's a catch to getting that kind of sex, and I have to say it up front. The only safe, mutually satisfying sex is between two people committed for a lifetime and within the bounds of marriage. It's what I call "designer sex."

Yes, I know some of you could hardly keep your hands off each other before you married. The intensity and thrill of what was to come probably had a lot to do with the fact that it was "forbidden fruit" in your mind at the time, especially if you came from a background where your parents believed sex was for marriage only. However, when you got married, you experienced a big letdown. Your spouse was not the romantic partner you'd experienced earlier, and that has caused dissonance in your relationship. Even more proof, to my thinking, that there's a reason we're better off being monogamous.

Sex was created by God Almighty to be something wonderful between a husband and a wife—as a way of becoming one in every possible way and solidifying a lifetime commitment. If you don't believe me, check out the Song of Solomon in the Bible—the story of two lovers that details intimately what they think of each other. Read it sometime together with your spouse, follow the road map, and I guarantee it'll heat things up in your bedroom. The fact that God himself is the inventor of passion blows the myth right out the window that sex is dirty or something you don't talk about. God planned sex not to be merely a little bump in the road but a body, mind, and heart-melding experience of “hang on to the sheets!”

So why would you choose to have only good sex when you could have wow, designer sex?

I know it's fashionable these days to live together before you get married. In fact, couples tell me all the time, “We've been married for five years but have been together for eight.” And teenagers and twentysomethings have told me, “Why would I want a dating partner or sexual partner who is a virgin? I want someone who is experienced, who knows what to do and how to make it feel really good.”

But let me be clear. I believe that God intended sex—the most powerful glue a couple can have—to take place within the safe boundary of marriage. Stepping outside of that safety zone comes with a price tag that you often don't see until much later in your relationship.

In today's society of live-in relationships and “easy divorces” (now there's a misnomer, because no divorce is easy—someone, most often the woman and children, pays the price), that original and

God planned sex not to be merely a little bump in the road but a body, mind, and heart-melding experience of “hang on to the sheets!”

pure purpose is often thwarted. The sad and traumatic results are all around us—STDs, children without fathers in the home, teenage girls with a father hunger who fall into sexual relationships, and lonely spouses with workaholic or emotionally absent mates who find themselves in the middle of affairs. And there is little mention of the emotional and psychological effects of that betrayal of trust, and what that does to a person's relationships both now and in the future. Once you've been burned, it's hard to trust again, isn't it?

You may be married for the first time. Or this may be your second time up the aisle, or even your third or more. You can't change the past. There is no do-over in life. But there is a do-it-smarter-this-time. You can choose right now to change your actions in this marriage. By identifying the minefields of the past and evaluating how you stepped into them, you can map the road ahead with positive strategies for growing your marital intimacy.

This relationship deserves your best; your spouse deserves your best. And an important part of that best is developing your sexual relationship until it sings like a finely tuned choir.

In more than four decades of counseling thousands of couples, I can't think of a single couple who said, "We have a great marriage, but our sex life stinks." Or, "We have a sizzling sex life, but our marital relationship stinks." You can't have one without the other . . . for long, that is. Without sex, your marriage is headed for disaster and affairs. So if you're the spouse who is reticent about having sex because of trauma you've suffered in the past or because you simply prefer couch potato evenings, you should care. Your marriage is on the line. If you don't provide the warmth, intimacy, and sex your spouse desires, he or she will be tempted to find it elsewhere. But you can affair-proof your marriage.

Designer sex that's reserved for the safe boundaries of marriage, based on understanding the needs of both husband and wife, and charged with respect for each other is well worth striving for. Great sex isn't easy; it takes a lifetime to get to know each

other's hearts and to view events through each other's eyes. I still learn new things from my wife all the time. Those little surprises and our joyful anticipation of walking through them together is what keeps our marriage new and fresh even after four decades.

Have a New Sex Life by Friday is full of surprises—including some basics you should know about sex and your spouse, as well as questions you've always wanted to ask but maybe haven't dared.

In just five days, you'll have the keys to your spouse's heart in hand and be able to develop smart strategies about how and when to open that door.

There is no do-over in life. But there is a do-it-smarter-this-time.

On Monday, we'll focus on women—why women need sex. Why is sex so integral to a woman's life? What stops her from desiring sex? And what does she want most of all?

On Tuesday, we'll focus on men—why men want sex. What do they need the most and want the most in a relationship? And why is foreplay just as important to men as it is to women?

On Wednesday, we'll talk about who is really in bed with the two of you when you have sex . . . and how to kick those intruders not only out of your bedroom but out of your house for good.

On Thursday, I'll reveal how you can make love with words, why that is so critical to the health of your marriage, and why words can be the best sexual tool in your marital tool belt.

Friday is "spice things up" day, where you get to plan some fun experiences to bring new zest to your sexual relationship.

The "Ask Dr. Leman" section contains straightforward answers to the hottest questions couples ask about sex and intimacy. You can use them any way you want:

- Look up the topics you're currently wondering about for some real-life questions and time-tested advice. Then ask yourself, *How can I adapt the advice to my own situation?*

- Read a chapter and then flip to the Q & As for that chapter.
- Skim the Q & As for a marital intimacy crash course.
- Use one Q & A per day to jump-start discussion between you and your spouse.
- Use this book for a weeklong seminar for couples' groups or for an eight-week study group.

I'm sure you'll come up with your own ways to use *Have a New Sex Life by Friday*, so have at it. It's the kind of book you can read by yourself, but wouldn't it be more fun to snuggle in bed with your spouse? Reading together will kick off wonderful dialogue and, I hope, a lot of exploration. So read a bit, and then let your fingers do the walking over that wonderful map of your spouse's body.

In the epilogue, the best night of your life awaits. This is when you jump-start the dead battery, revive the ailing engine, and rev up your sex life to full throttle.

I promise it'll be fun.

You'll go to sleep with a smile.

You'll wake up with a goofy grin.

And you'll want to do it all over again.

Monday

Why Women Need Sex

Why sex is integral to a woman's life, what she wants most of all, and what stops her from wanting sex.

"I have a question for you men. I want you to visualize the answer in your mind," I told an audience of over 3,000 couples in the Midwest. "How long is your wife's clitoris?"

There was deathly silence in the place. Now, if I would have asked about the penis, there would have been a lot of joking, nudging, and whispered exchanges about the length of that appendage from the male specimens in the room. But talk about female genitalia, and suddenly people get uncomfortable.

"I love silence," I said, and everyone laughed. I held my fingers up half an inch apart. "Are you thinking of this number?"

There was a wave of nods across the auditorium.

"Actually, the answer is . . . nine inches."

Disbelief scattered across the faces in the audience.

"Yup, the clitoris wraps right through a woman's body. It's why, when the clitoris is stroked, her response can be so great. Lots of body parts are involved."

So, gentlemen, when you touch her clitoris and bring her to orgasm, the clitoris isn't the only part of her body that's happy. That warm flush she feels spreads all throughout her body and makes her more eager in her lovemaking. And that pays extra benefits for both of you.

The saying "Happy wife, happy life" is completely true. If you want a happy life, including a wow sex life, you'll take lots of time for foreplay. But foreplay to men and foreplay to women often have very different meanings.

For example, in my home I've learned that foreplay means cleaning the kitchen. Not only do you clean the kitchen, but you also wipe off the countertops. That's part of the deal. And check this out. You also have to put the toaster away. As a man, I have to ask the question, why put the toaster away when you're going to use it in less than 23 hours? But as one smart person said, "If Mama's happy, the whole family's happy." That's the truth.

Over the years, I've learned that part of being a good mate is knowing the quirks of your spouse and flowing right along with them. My role isn't to argue the thesis of putting the toaster away; it's simply to put the toaster away, because it's important to my wife. Sande is a firstborn, and order and neatness are very important to her. If they're important to my wife, they need to be important to me.

So I dutifully put the toaster away.

Why Sex Is Integral to a Woman's Life

A lot of couples who come to me for counseling are stuck in a rut.

"He's not romantic enough," the wife says, "so I don't initiate sex."

"I can't think romantically if I don't get enough sex," he says.

The only antidote to that dilemma is putting each other first. Then even a dull or nearly dead marriage can be revitalized and more passionate and exciting than you can ever imagine.

Sex is integral to a woman's life. She just may not realize it yet. A lot of women have shared with me the very bad advice their moms gave them on their wedding day: "Just lie back and let him enjoy himself. Sex is something guys need, so you have to learn to put up with it." What a terrible view of the most intimate experience that God created between a man and woman committed to each other for a lifetime! If you grew up with that view of sex, no wonder you'd rather do the dishes than enjoy your husband's attentions when he's in the mood.

Fulfilling sex isn't about going through the motions only because it's something guys need. Sex for a man who doesn't see his wife sexually fulfilled is like a woman trying to talk to her husband when he's reading the newspaper. She craves conversation and tries to engage him, but his non-response or grunts, at best, don't satisfy her need for interaction.

Choosing to marry means you also choose to put your partner first, before your own needs. Sex is as important to a man as affection and emotional closeness are to a woman.

Most women say, "Yeah, I get that. Sex will never be that important to me. I really would rather cuddle." But that's exactly why it's important to put your partner first. Do you want a man who will stay with you for a lifetime? Who will actively engage with you and your family? Who will listen to you as you talk about things that are important to you? Who will care about what you care about? Do you want him to go to work smiling and thinking, *I'm the luckiest guy on earth to have a woman like her?* Do you want the kind of guy who would take a bullet for you? Who will even do the dishes and the laundry too?

Sex for a man who doesn't see his wife sexually fulfilled is like a woman trying to talk to her husband when he's reading the newspaper.

Real Women Talk

What I Love about My Husband

- He's happy for me when I do things with friends and pursue activities I like.
- He found my secret stash of Oreos. Instead of giving me grief for breaking my diet, he drew a smiley face on it and wrote, "Enjoy yourself"
- He takes care of things like the spider under our fridge and the garbage every week.
- After he works out in the garage, he comes into the house to flex his muscles . . . *for me*.
- He supports my desire to use my skills in the workplace and helps out with the kids.
- He brings me a single flower just because.
- Every night he tells me one thing he considers special about me.
- He takes his time making love to me, and we don't always have to go all the way.
- He texts me from work so I can enjoy the highlights of his day with him.
- He does little things during the day to show he's thinking of our family and wants to help out—like getting the oil changed in the car over his lunch hour or picking up milk after work. He doesn't expect me to do everything just because I'm at home with the kids.

But it isn't only women who should be putting their spouse first. Husbands also need to put their wives first. Here's what I mean. When a man arrives home from work, what's the first thing he naturally thinks about? I'd bet you a million bucks it isn't, *I can't wait to talk with my wife for an hour about all the blow-by-blow details of her day and mine*. No, all he wants is to change into those comfy sweats, scarf down some dinner, and start channel surfing . . . with maybe a shower mixed in there somewhere. But if he loves his wife, he must choose to put her needs first, before his desires.

What a Woman Wants Most of All

I think God Almighty had a great sense of humor when he created woman as woman and man as man, then commanded them to come together and become one. The top three needs of a woman are affection, communication, and commitment. Ironically, those are the things that most men are very bad at. But when a man understands and meets a woman's needs, and a woman understands and meets a man's needs, oh, the beautiful music they can make together!

Affection

Every woman longs for her man to reach into her heart and fill it with affection and romance. As soon as any man sees, hears, or thinks the word *romance*, he automatically thinks *sex*. But that isn't the primary thing a woman is looking for. She wants to know that her man chose her as his bride not just once but continues to choose her every day above anything or anyone else. She longs for her husband to think of her not only when he wants to be intimate in the bedroom but throughout the day, even when he's at work or at a football game with his friends.

The man who walks in the door, sees how exhausted his wife is, and helps out with dinner and the dishes deposits affection in her love bank. If he puts the kids to bed so she can take a long, relaxing bath, he deposits more affection. And if he sneaks in and gives her a foot rub in that tub, washes her hair, and combs it for her, he'll fill her love bank to the brim.

When a man does things like that, he's saying to that woman, "I value you. I love you. Bringing you pleasure gives me pleasure. I care about what you care about." When a man asks a woman's opinion, he's saying, "I value your thoughts. Your opinion is everything to me. I want to tap into your multifaceted brain." Now that's the kind of affection that makes a woman purr like a kitten. It's

female Viagra. Even better, that dose of affection won't wear off. Women have long memories for details. A week from now, that woman will be happily telling her girlfriends about how wonderful her husband is for doing those things for her.

Every day, wives spend a lot of time doing tasks that are seemingly endless. Not many people praise her for doing the laundry, cooking, doing the dishes, or finishing a project at work. That's why her husband's affection is critical not only to the health of their marriage but to her emotional well-being overall. She needs to hear what she means to her husband—that she's attractive and desirable, that he noticed her new hairstyle and complimented her clothing.

Little things bring women pleasure. My wife loves to get a pedicure. "It's pure pleasure," she says, "because they massage your legs and feet." So, gentlemen, if you've got the bucks to do so, treat your wife to a pedicure every once in a while. Or provide the service yourself with some warm, soapy water, a scrub brush, and a bottle of lotion. That lotion will do double duty on your hands too, so they're softer later when you touch her delicate parts.

The point is, treat your wife as the special princess she is. Do things to please and pleasure her. If those things move you toward the bedroom, wonderful. But don't show affection to her only to get her into bed. For her to enjoy sex, there has to be an atmosphere in your home conducive to lovemaking.

Women aren't like men. Men get excited at the drop of a pin. A little jiggle to your wiggle, and all of a sudden your husband, who had no thought of sex a second ago, is more than ready to go.

You spot that Bullwinkle the Moose look and are frustrated. "How could you possibly want sex? We just had it last night. You remember that?"

"But honey," he says, "that was hours ago."

Sex is not centered on a woman's vagina. It begins in her heart, through her husband's care for her and his understanding of what

she thinks and how she feels. You can pursue the physical act of sex with great gusto, but it won't be ultimately satisfying to either of you until her affection and heart are engaged.

In my quest to show Sande the affection she needs and deserves, I've even had to develop an appreciation for the color mauve. Sande has me watching *Project Runway* with her. It's a TV show where clothes designers go to a store, buy crazy things, and then craft a formal gown from those items. It's hardly typical fare for someone like me who eats, sleeps, and drinks football. But because I love my wife and she's fascinated by the show, I watch it with her . . . as well as *Top Chef*. Both certainly help me get in touch with my feminine side.

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Communication

The second top need for a woman is communication. Women are relational by nature; they love to share. Men, can you imagine saying to a buddy, "Hey, Tom, want to stop at that little restaurant there and share a tuna salad sandwich? Maybe we could split a salad too." Never in a million years would you hear such a statement from a man. But women? Not only do they share their experiences, they relive every detail and nuance about what he said and she said. I'm always amazed at the length of time my wife can talk on the phone with our daughters. She asks questions I wouldn't even think to ask.

When a friend of one of our daughters got engaged, I just wanted to know how long she'd known the guy and when the wedding was. Sande grabbed the phone from me and cooed, "Oh, isn't that precious? So tell me . . ." And they were off and running about how, where, and when exactly the guy proposed, specifics about what the diamond looked like, what colors the bride

was considering for the wedding, what the guy's family was like, and on and on. I shook my head and laughed. Men and women couldn't be any more different. But I have to admit, hearing all the goings-on *was* entertaining. If it were up to us men, the conversation would have lasted about 10 seconds.

Not only do women share their experiences, they relive every detail and nuance about what he said and she said.

However, over the years of our marriage, I've learned that listening is one of the top skills a husband needs to learn. If I love and care about my wife—and I do—I will listen to anything and everything she has to say. In the flow of conversation, I'll ask appropriate questions to show that I'm engaged and that I care. By actively listening, I'm saying, "Honey, I care about you, and I'm interested in what both excites and concerns you. I want to spend time with you. I want to know what's important to you."

That means when I walk in the door, I don't talk first about my day. I ask her, "How was your day, sweetheart?" I find out what's pressing on her mind, her heart, her schedule.

When you do that, your wife thinks, *Wow, what a man. I know he's had a very busy day himself, but he really cares what I'm up against. I can talk to him about anything. We're in this together.*

Commitment

All women can relate to hectic days. When I was doing a presentation in Canada on stress in a woman's life, one woman asked a question about how to get kids to do homework. She added that she was homeschooling six kids right now.

Talk about a huge job—teacher, mother, and disciplinarian, all rolled up into one. Is it any wonder she's tired?

Some women have the ankle-biter battalion circling their mommy wagon all day. Others juggle kids at home and full-time

or part-time work outside the home, with constant demands from both directions. Still others put out one fire in the workplace just as another is ignited, causing them to feel like they can't accomplish enough either at home or at work.

When men don't get their work done for the day, they shrug and say, "Well, I did what I could. There's always tomorrow." A woman? She is wracked with guilt for not being able to do it all, has difficulty saying no because she doesn't want to disappoint people, and will often push herself far beyond her limits to try to get more done than is humanly possible. Why else in a lot of homes do you see the husband channel-surfing late in the evening while the wife is still doing the dishes, lining up her to-do list for the next day, finishing laundry, and simultaneously helping her child memorize the table of elements for his chemistry test?

I call those wives "Velcro women" because everything sticks to them. They are the ones who keep the family moving in multiple directions. Think about it. Who remembers that your four-year-old has a dance recital on Tuesday? Runs the kids to and from school and packs their lunches? Goes grocery shopping over lunch? Does dishes and laundry in stages as she runs in and out of the house completing projects? Talks your junior higher through her latest crush? Helps your fifth grader who's wrestling with math? Provides the chocolate chip cookies for your work lunch? Accompanies you to that colleague banquet? And still manages to hold down a part-time or full-time job outside the home? Your wife, that's who. Is it any wonder she's tired by the end of the day and too pooped to whoop?

*For a woman,
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But what if in the middle of her hectic day she received a text from her husband that said, “Honey, I just wanted you to know how much I love you. Is there anything I can pick up for you after work today?”

What is that husband doing? He’s showing his commitment to her best interests and to his family by offering to help. You see, for a woman, foreplay is all about commitment. It’s about having a strong man who jumps in when she needs help. The kind of man who wipes off sticky countertops, makes breakfast every Saturday and Sunday morning, gets up three times a night with the toddler who has the flu, and volunteers to pick up the kids from school because he got off work early. What does that tell his wife? *I care about you and the kids, and our family is my first priority.*

Gentlemen, whenever you say, “Honey, what can I do to help?” you’re making love to your wife.

What Stops a Woman from Wanting Sex

I have a wife and four daughters. I was reared with an older sister. As a psychologist, I spend my days talking with women from across the world about parenting, marriage, and family topics. So even though I’m a man, I know women pretty well.

Women in general are warm and relational. They love closeness. They will hug anything that moves—including other women, children, the neighbor’s cat that strays onto their porch, and anyone who is having a rough go of it in life. So why is it that, when it comes to the act of sex—the ultimate relational closeness—the majority of women would rather scrub floors? What are we men doing wrong? Or what are we not doing? And what do the excuses really mean?

She doesn’t like being vulnerable.

None of us likes to be vulnerable. And in marriage, there’s an intense vulnerability in submitting to and pleasing each other in

sex. It takes couples back to when Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed in that beautiful garden. They didn't even notice they were naked; it was a normal part of their existence. But when their eyes were opened after they ate from the one tree God said not to eat from, they scrambled to find fig leaves to cover themselves. Women have been scrambling to cover themselves ever since. Is it any surprise, then, that when women do enjoy sex, they like the lights dimmed?

Sex is the most intimate act you can engage in with someone else. But it can also be one of the most distant ones. It can be perfunctory, void of emotion or passion or communication. If you ask most couples, they don't talk during sex, and that is a huge detriment, especially to a relational woman who is high on communication.

But a man who compliments his bride, who whispers to her how desirable she is as he touches her, will stir new heights of passion.

She distrusts or dislikes intimacy due to past experiences.

Women may be uncomfortable with sexual intimacy or even fear it for many reasons.

Those who grew up in conservative homes may have developed a view that sex is dirty. For example, when Diane began developing physically, her father pulled back from her. He rarely hugged her anymore, and when he did, it was awkward. She now had breasts, and he didn't know how to deal with those changes. Diane interpreted her father's actions as, *You're not beautiful enough to be loved*. All at a time when she was wondering how other males would view her as a young woman. She struggled greatly with her self-image during her teen years. She constantly dieted, worrying that she was too fat to be pretty. Desperate for male attention, she flaunted her development to lure in guys. Eventually she fell into the trap of bulimia.

Other women have been sexually abused by a trusted family member, date-raped, or abused by an ex. If you have undergone such trauma, you will understandably struggle with trust. The people you expected to protect you were the ones who abused you. Early sex can change a woman's view of herself and make her believe she is unworthy of love and affection.

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But that's a lie. Every woman is a unique creature, created by God Almighty, and deserves love and affection. Women who have undergone abuse need committed, understanding men who will be gentle with them and ask about their needs and fears. If this is one of the issues you face together in your marriage, a few sessions with a trusted counselor might be beneficial.

She doesn't feel appreciated by her man.

Every day a woman is saying to her man, "Do you really love me? Do you really care?" How does she measure that love? It doesn't start in the bedroom. In fact, if that's the only place her husband seems to show affection—to get sex—that turns her off. She will feel demeaned and disrespected.

A woman can come from a difficult background, where she was unloved and abused, and still be an eager sexual partner in her marriage bed. But the reason has everything to do with the way her husband treats her. If his attitude is, "Are you gonna put out tonight or not?" he won't win her trust and confidence or capture her heart. He'll get an accommodating wife at best, but never an eager one. She'll grow more bitter and resentful toward him every time they have sex.

What warms a woman up? When a man picks up his clothes and hangs them up, folds laundry, arranges dates, helps with the

kids, listens to his wife talk about her concerns, and kisses her when he leaves the house and walks in the door, she will naturally respond eagerly to marital intimacy. After all, she has a man who is enthralled with her beauty, desires her, wants to bring her pleasure, and shows his understanding and appreciation of what she does every day by helping out wherever he can. Now that's a winning combo that will steal any woman's heart and make it yours forever, gentlemen.

Every day a woman is saying to her man, "Do you really love me? Do you really care?"

She's continually multitasking.

I don't know a woman in the world who can think romance and sex if there are dishes in her kitchen sink. She may be fulfilling the desires of her in-the-mood husband, but her brain? It's on the dishes. *I just did them this morning. Then I did them after dinner again. So how, in the space of two hours, can the sink be entirely full of dishes again?*

That's because women, unlike men, are multitasking creatures. At lunchtime, men simply eat lunch. When women eat lunch, they accomplish other things: making a grocery list, switching the laundry or zipping off to the dry cleaner's, making dentist appointments for the kids, scheduling the dog's toenail clipping, and running a sack lunch a kid forgot to school. It's no wonder that a woman's brain has difficulty shutting off the flow of to-dos to focus on sex, even as much as she loves her man.

Women don't need bigger houses, more expensive cars, more clothing. What they need is an actively involved man who is committed to helping out and taking some of those items off her list for the day. Gentlemen, if you don't think your wife accomplishes 17 items in the time you accomplish one, just step into her shoes for the day. Ask her to hand over her list of items,

and then do exactly what she'd do for 24 hours. I guarantee at the end of that 24 hours you'll be draped, nearly lifeless, over your La-Z-Boy.

So it's important that when you arrive home, you haven't expended all your energy or your word count for the day. You're needed at home—by your wife, by your family—to help out, to listen, to be at the dinner table, and to do whatever needs to be done afterward.

I don't know a woman in the world who can think romance and sex if there are dishes in her kitchen sink.

When I was growing up, I always thought my mother was like an owl. She could swivel her head and see anything I was up to, which was usually a lot.

That multitasking nature is also why my beloved wife can't have sex if anyone is within five miles of our home. Believe me, we tried. When our kids were young, we'd let them watch cartoons on Saturday mornings, just so Mommy and Daddy could "talk." However, it would only be minutes before at least two of them were at our locked bedroom door.

"Daddy? Are you in there? I can't hear you talking. I thought you said you and Mommy needed to talk," Krissy would say.

"Get away from that door!" I'd yell in a fatherly tone.

Sande would raise an imperious eyebrow. "You're a psychologist, and that's the best you can do?"

The tiny feet would scamper away, but then they'd be back seconds later. One time at the worst possible moment, right when I was circling the planet Jupiter with my bride, I heard little Krissy say, "Kevey, I think they need our help. You better go get the hammer so we can get the door open."

Yes, the enemy is small. And they can wreak havoc on your sex life. Mama Bear will always have her ears tuned to the least

little whimper from one of her cubs, whereas Papa Bear hears them but has his eyes on his hunting mission.

That's why couples have to get really good at being creative.

She's bored—the glow is missing.

Men like predictability; women like variety. Men, if you wonder whether that's true, just go take a look at your closet. Stare at her side. She might have 20 pairs of shoes. Then go stare at your side. You might have three or four. Women don't wear the same clothes two days in a row. We men? We give that shirt the sniff test, and if it's not too rank, back on it goes.

A woman likes variety; she's bored with routine. Just because she's turned on by a certain touch one time doesn't mean she'll be turned on by that same act the next time. But men want the road map to the destination. They try to follow the same route they did the previous time . . . and end up boring their bride.

You see, one night she may be up for a quickie. But two days later, she wants slow, languid sex with lots of foreplay. A male's job? To figure out what kind of mood his wife is in.

Some men think foreplay is taking a shower, then exiting to do their best *Dancing with the Stars* audition. As Sandra once said to me, "Uh, that's not a good dance."

My feelings were hurt, but I understood.

Sex, to a woman, isn't a onetime event. It's an all-day affair. It begins with how her man treats her from the instant he sees her in the morning.

Sex is an amazing marital glue. Without it, a woman doesn't receive the affection, communication, and commitment she craves,

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and a man's needs aren't fulfilled either. Then that couple grows distant. Discontent often seethes beneath the surface. Both husband and wife feel emotionally empty and bury themselves in their work and/or in the children.

What you deserve is the kind of sex that's intensely exciting—where you can't keep your hands off each other. Do you remember those times early in your relationship that the world seemed to disappear when you made love, lost in each other's embrace? If that intensity has cooled, and sex isn't as eager, fun, and adventurous as it used to be, it's time to get back on track—back to thrilling sex.

When sex is satisfying for both parties and you desire each other's bodies, you won't be embarrassed by any extra pounds or jiggles. You'll make the best use of those love handles. For those of you who don't like your work and are only putting in the hours to bring home the bacon, sex with the one you love can make life worth living. And for those who are with toddlers all day, a husband who lights a candle, dances with you around the bedroom, and tells you how wonderful you are is a romantic adventure that will keep you going amid the Pampers changes and juice spills.

If you want to have more sex and better sex as a couple, a husband needs to sensitively understand and address his wife's vulnerability, her background, the way she's treated, and her multi-tasking nature, and think variety. To have a sexually fulfilling relationship requires more than a physical jumping in the sack together. It means each of you truly knows the other.

Top Four “Dos” for Men to Get That Female Slow Cooker Simmering

Men are streamlined, easy. They're ready to go anytime, anywhere. Women are more complicated. I often compare men to

microwaves and women to slow cookers. She may be slower to warm up, but when she does, oh, the incredible flavors you'll enjoy together. So, gentlemen, this section is especially for you, since we males often need some suggestions to get our own wheels turning. If you want to warm up that slow cooker, here are four "dos" to pay attention to.

Let your wife be a woman, and show your appreciation.

Let me point out the obvious. Your wife is a woman. She's not a man. She thinks differently than you, talks differently than you (in fact, she can talk circles around you), and responds differently than you to the same situation. Does that make your relationship predictable and easy? No, but it'll never be boring either.

Some of you are saying, "Amen! You can say that again."

Well, good, I got your attention. Now, see if you can hang on for the rest of this section, even if it's in the middle of Monday Night Football. See what I mean about men being singly focused?

What if your bride asked in the middle of that game, "Richard, do you really love me? Lately, you haven't . . .?"

The shortsighted man might wave her off and say, "Uh, honey, it's almost the end of the second quarter. Can we talk about this at halftime?"

But the smart husband who's focused on a long-term, satisfying relationship would do something else. He'd mute the television, set the remote control down, and turn his whole body toward her. Looking her directly in the eye, he'd say kindly, "Sweetheart, is there something you want to tell me?"

That's the man who will reap entertainment in the bedroom that's far more scintillating than sitting in an armchair watching football.

You married that woman because you were attracted to her differences, including the fact that she cared enough to ask you questions about yourself and your day, so let her be different. Allow

her to be the communications expert she naturally is. Yes, she may be fussy about details and sometimes have bad timing—like in the middle of the football game—but that fussiness and commitment to improving your relationship make her who she is. It’s a part of that mystique you fell in love with in the first place. After all, marrying someone just like you wouldn’t be very exciting, would it?

So why not let your differences work for you as a couple rather than against you? Men enjoy sex the most but women enjoy snuggling the most. Men talk in grunts but women need words, sentences, and even full paragraphs. Men crave respect for the hard

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work they do. They show their commitment to their family by working hard to bring home the bacon, while a woman’s definition of commitment to family is more along the lines of “being there.” Is it any wonder, then, that women who play two roles—bringing home the bacon and frying it up in the pan—feel additionally

stressed? Although they’re carrying a full-time or part-time workload outside the home and still carrying their regular workload at home, they continually feel guilt for not “being there” for their kids and husband as much as they’d like.

Men have to accept a woman’s top needs—for affection, communication, and commitment—and learn how to read her. The prevailing winds of a woman change every day, and even from hour to hour. A man who can adjust to those changes, approach her sensitively, meet her needs, and ensure she feels loved creates the environment of warmth a woman craves.

In short, let her be a woman. Take her out for a nice dinner. You might even break down and go to a salad buffet every once in a while, since she loves variety. Show your appreciation of her femininity when she dresses up for you. Whistle at her and touch those curves, showing that you still desire her. Make her

an appointment for a haircut or a facial as a surprise, and don't wince when you see the bill. Smile and compliment her on how beautiful she looks.

Encouraging your woman to be a female doesn't make you a wuss. In fact, it makes you even more of a man. You can still wear the same shirt and ball cap you've worn for three days. You can eat the same breakfast two weeks in a row. You don't have to eat quiche for lunch just because she does. You can still burp and release other gaseous noises . . . but please, not in her presence. And before you get amorous, brush your teeth and take a shower. Add a dash of cologne to tickle her oh-so-female nose. Then take that woman in your arms and start telling her what you appreciate about her.

Bet you anything the juices in that slow cooker will be boiling before long.

Listen, but don't problem-solve unless she asks.

When we men talk, most of the time we exchange information so we can solve problems. We're goal-oriented and short-winded with our conversation.

When your wife talks, she isn't necessarily giving you that information to go from point A to point B. She is talking because she is in the midst of processing some information or an emotion and wants to share that with you. She isn't necessarily looking for you to solve that problem for her; she simply wants you to be a listening ear. Much of the time, she will already have decided what she needs to do, but she longs for you—strong, wise man that you are—to empathize with her, relate to her, and say, “Honey, I know you'll do the right thing. You always do. I believe in you.”

That something she's telling you may or may not seem important to you, but you should treat it as important. When she talks, you need to actively listen. Listening in between commercials or with a grunt won't satisfy her need for conversation. It would

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Yes, she will give you far more details than you want to know. You like the CliffsNotes; she wants to tell you the whole novel. But you can't capture your wife's heart unless you are engaged in her world.

Little things matter to women—texts to tell her you're thinking of her; a quick phone call in the midst of your business trip; a surprise flower just to say "I love you"; a midnight run to pick up Pepto-Bismol. Your wife is continually watching you, absorbing what you say, your expressions, and how you listen to and respond to her requests. Your involvement and your interest in the little and big things of her day make all the difference in the health of your marriage.

Be her rock.

Let's face it. From day one of our existence, we males are primed to compete—to be tough. Sure, we may be little boys inside, wanting to please our women, but on the outside we want to be seen as boulders.

Well, your wife wants that too. She wants you to be the strength she can count on, that immovable force who will protect her and your family against anything, whether it's the neighbor who's angry because your son trampled his flower bushes, a mouse that has taken up residence in your cereal cabinet, or an ex who keeps showing up uninvited.

I can't think of a single woman I've counseled over the past four decades who said, "You know, Dr. Leman, I want a guy I can push

around easily, a guy I can control, a guy who's a limp noodle, who just does what I want him to do and has no mind of his own." No, women admire, need, and respect our male strength if it is used in the proper way—to support, encourage family members, and provide a solid, safe foundation for our home.

Because women are wired innately to be relational, they also care intensely about relationships. Along with that caring comes deep emotion, which sometimes leaks out in a form we men dread—tears. Most men don't know what to do with them. Many of us tend to edge into another room, either saying nothing or muttering, "Uh, honey, when you're done with that, maybe we could do dinner."

But the "rock" man, when he sees tears, gathers his wife in his strong arms, lets her cry it out, and simply holds her until she's ready to talk about it.

I guarantee, gentlemen, that if you do that, it doesn't matter whether you're only five feet eight inches and 140 pounds. You'll be bigger to her than Dwayne Johnson, The Rock.

Get active—both inside and outside the bedroom.

Funny thing, I spend most of my counseling time helping women get active in the bedroom and helping men get active elsewhere.

If a man only makes love to his wife in the bedroom, both are missing out. He needs to make love to her outside the bedroom. No, I'm not talking about switching rooms where they have sex (though that is nice too). I'm talking about helping.

Women admire, need, and respect our male strength if it is used in the proper way—to support, encourage family members, and provide a solid, safe foundation for our home.

A man who carries groceries in for his wife or, even better, shops for her on his way home or on his day off is extending a romantic gesture that says, “I care about you and about us. I want to make your day easier.” He’s the same kind of man who calls her when she’s driving in a rainstorm to see if she’s all right, making her feel well cared for, cherished, and protected. He’s the type of man who helps their kids with homework and tucks them into bed and is a supportive, loving, involved daddy. When he does those things, he’s making love to his wife. She thinks, *Wow, out of all the people on the planet, I’m the one who was lucky enough to marry that man.*

Think of it this way, men. Every time you carry the laundry up the stairs for your wife, every time you take out the garbage or vacuum the hallway, every time you bring milk home from the store, you are gaining points of respect with your wife. You are saying, “I’m a man who can be counted on to help out with whatever you need.”

A woman whose husband serves her practically is going to be a much more willing participant in their bed, because she appreciates his efforts and respects him as a man. Sure, she looks capable, juggling all those tasks. But that doesn’t mean she wouldn’t welcome her husband’s help or that she doesn’t need it. Nothing would please her more than to have you ride in on your white steed to rescue her from a difficult situation, to spirit her away for a break, or simply to help get the job done.

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A woman who has a good sex life tends to experience less stress in life. She knows she’s in good hands with her husband, because he has her best in mind. That’s why he doesn’t mind

changing diapers, cleaning up vomit, or spraying the hornets' nest in the mailbox. That man is willing to do anything for his wife. In response, he gains a partner who is willing to do anything with, and for, him.

Great Ways to Woo Your Wife

Want to show your woman how much you love her? Then try these simple ideas—or combine one or more into a getaway evening or weekend! Every time you brainstorm something special to do for her, plan it, and carry out the steps, you deposit dividends in your wife's affection bank.

Arrange a surprise dinner out, complete with a babysitter.

Call Grandma, your wife's best girlfriend, or a qualified babysitter and make arrangements for her to come to the house at least an hour before you arrive home. Let your wife know you are taking her out for dinner and have made all the arrangements necessary for the kids. That hour before you arrive will give her time to get things squared away with the babysitter and time to prepare herself. We men need little preparation. All we have to do is go potty, brush our teeth, and loosen our tie (or put one on), and we're ready to go. Women need advance notice—time to shower, fix their hair, put on makeup, and try on some different outfits in their wardrobe to find the perfect one.

Hire some cleaning help.

Hire Merry Maids or some other local cleaning staff to come in and clean the entire house. From firsthand experience, I know that four Merry Maids can do it in an hour . . . even while you're at dinner. That way, when your wife walks in the door after that romantic dinner, she won't have heaps of dishes to do or brownie

crumbs to clean up from the couch. She'll have that satisfied "wow, look at that, everything is clean" feeling.

Romance her.

Prearrange with the restaurant and waiter for them to hand-deliver a favorite flower, a little gift or two, and some love notes that you've already dropped off. Along with the appetizer or salad, the waiter shows up with your wife's favorite flower and a note you've handwritten: *One of the reasons I love you so much is . . .*

During the main entrée, the waiter brings a second flower, or a little gift if you prefer, with another handwritten love note: *Another reason I love you is . . .*

And during dessert, that waiter brings a third flower or gift with another handwritten note: *I'm so glad I married you, and I'd do it all over again in an instant.*

The glow in her eyes will be worth all your work.

Make dinner for her.

Your wife may be a gourmet cook, but she'll happily eat anything you make if you suggest, "Honey, let me handle dinner tonight while you relax a little." Even better, draw a bath for her before you start cooking. Add a fragrance she likes to the water. Place a candle nearby for an extra romantic touch. Add a couple fluffy towels and a robe to the setting. There's no woman alive who wouldn't sigh walking into that bathroom, knowing she has a guy who appreciates her. No matter what the dinner tastes like, she'll give you five stars for effort.

If you have children, give a qualified babysitter money to take those kids to the Cheese Breath Rodent Place, with another \$20 for lots of game tokens to keep them occupied.

If you're like many men, you might cringe at these suggestions. *That sounds like a lot of work. I'm not very good at planning*

ahead. Is this something I have to do every five years, or more regular than that?

You do it a lot more regular than that, Rocky. Consider this. Every day your wife's head spins with to-dos, and many of those have to do with keeping your world spinning on its axis too. The least you can do is take some time out to focus on her and what she enjoys.

There are days when your Velcro woman wonders, *Is all this worth it? I'm tired beyond belief. Being a mom and a wife seems to be such a thankless job. Nobody seems to notice.* But if you shower affection on your wife in practical ways that show your support of her as well as your admiration of her and her femininity, she will look at you and think, *Well, others may not notice, but he notices. What a lucky woman I am!*

Your Velcro woman also needs time away from the kids, where she doesn't have to worry about them. Moms always worry about their cubs. If their cubs are not in her den, she worries all the more. That's why it's important you make sure someone very capable is taking care of your cubs. If you allay her fears, she can thoroughly enjoy time with you.

Do any of these things, use your imagination to think up more, and you'll be reaching into your wife's heart big-time and meeting her top three needs for affection, communication, and commitment.

Let the Chandelier Shake . . .

Over the years, as I've met women across the country, I've asked them what their top three stressors are. The order may vary, but it's always the same three: lack of time, kids, and husband. Here's what's interesting—even those who work outside the home didn't mention work. That's because the things closest to a woman's heart

are her relationships at home. When I asked the women to clarify what they meant by lack of time, it always came down to the fact that they wanted to spend more time with the people they love.

Well, guess who is in the best position to help with all three of a woman's top stressors? Her husband! Problem is, most of you women look so capable at juggling tasks that we men often assume you're handling everything just fine and don't need our help. And being the tenderhearted boys we are, we don't want to offer assistance and then get slapped down. We want to please you; we simply don't know where to start. So kindly offer some suggestions both inside and outside the bedroom, and watch us go to town.

Say, "Honey, I need some time to myself. Just a couple of hours. Can you watch the kids after you get settled in from work tonight?"

Your husband's chest will puff out like a rooster's, happy to please his bride, and he'll even hurry home from work to pluck your five-year-old son off the dining room chandelier he's swinging from.

Say, "Honey, I'd like to try something different tonight." Touch him intimately, whisper the suggestion in his ear, or move his hand to a specific location, and he will most eagerly oblige.

He might even shake the chandelier and do a little swinging from it himself to make his own Tarzan and Jane love story.