

Husband Mastermind Group

Masculine and Feminine Energy

A short disclaimer: I am going to speak in generalities and stereotypes, I fully realize there are exceptions to everything. But for the sake of our lesson and this format, I will categorize things as masculine and feminine, and we're going to have to live with some generalizations.

Masculinity and Femininity and the Energy Found in Both

All men and women have masculine and feminine qualities, and we can consciously move back and forth between masculine and feminine qualities with amazing fluidity.

Masculinity seeks mastery and consistency. Masculinity's goal often is to conquer its world and make things smooth and calm. Masculinity builds dams, slays dragons, cures disease, and defeats the enemy. To boil this down even more: ***The masculine brain sees everything as a problem to be solved.*** And the burning question in a man's heart is, ***Do I have what it takes to come through?***

Masculinity is also a paradox. It is the most energized and creative when challenged with a new problem, yet it believes that perpetual calm will follow the impending victory. It reacts with resentment when its peace is disturbed by a new problem, but feels the most alive when rising to meet challenges and overcoming obstacles.

When stressed, the male brain turns inward, analyzes endlessly, and seeks sameness and repetition. It wants to be left alone to think until a solution arises—or until the problem passes (a common “Nice Guy” trait). Because the male brain is a problem-solving machine, the male can imagine a thousand possible outcomes to any situation, and believes he must examine them all before moving forward. But he tends to do what worked last time, believing the universe is predictable and consistent from moment to moment.

Because masculinity seeks mastery, a man reacts with defensiveness when his flaws or mistakes are pointed out (i.e., criticism). In marriage, he sees his spouse's emotions and feelings as problems to be solved.

Femininity is light and life. It is an energy that seeks a place to flow. It is like the weather or a wild river. It is fluid and constantly changing. It creates life and nurtures it. **Femininity seeks security and connection.** Because it is flowing energy, the female enjoys color, texture, and beauty. She is nurtured through her senses. ***Since her deepest longing is for connection, relationships are extremely important.*** The burning question in a woman's heart is, ***Do you notice me and my beauty?***

When stressed, a female seeks immediate emotional resolution. And this resolution is most often found through talking. A female will talk to as many people as possible about what is bothering her (even if it has no idea what "it" is). Femininity often sees change as the answer to most problems—quit the job, rearrange the furniture, go shopping, get nails done, change relationships, change hairstyle.

Femininity wants to feel good right now. As a result, a female will paradoxically trade long-term security for short-term gratification. "Feelings" are everything. She will eat chocolate to feel better when she is feeling fat, or go shopping for shoes she doesn't need when she's stressed about money.

In general, women have much more access to the emotional side of their brain than men. This is an oversimplification, but a woman's thinking and logic tend to be influenced more by the "feeling" part of her brain than a man's does. Since feelings change easily, so can a woman's logic (thus, a woman's prerogative to change her mind). In the female brain, feelings can easily become facts; in the male brain, facts can easily replace feelings.

Masculinity is the container for femininity's life energy.

Masculinity is the riverbank; femininity is the flowing river. Masculinity is the bottle; femininity is the water that fills the bottle and takes its shape. Femininity feels the safest with masculine consciousness and consistency. Masculinity craves feminine light and energy.

Men and women can each find the other frustrating. And seeking to fully understand the other will only lead to further frustration and conflict.

Leaning into this conflict and the energy that comes with it.

Conflict is going to happen between men and women. But this conflict isn't a bad thing - especially when you learn to lean into it and use it to create something better. So what does this mean?

I used to believe that conflict in relationships was to be avoided at all costs, especially in marriage. The problem is, avoiding conflicts is impossible.

Conflict is GOING to happen. There will be problems in marriage, and many of these problems will not be resolved. Marriage researcher John Gottman found that 63% of the problems that occur in marriage are perpetual. They aren't going away.

So what are we to do with conflicts?

Use the energy they create to grow up!

Conflict produces change. It's transformative in nature. But there are positive and negative ways to approach conflict.

Since masculinity seeks calm, many men mistakenly assume women want the same thing. This is why most men find women difficult to understand. They assume that women desire the same drama-free life they do. This huge misperception leads to tremendous frustration for both genders.

To further compound this, men are often guilty of two other mistakes. **The first is they go out of their way to make sure they never create any conflict.** They keep things to themselves to avoid rocking the boat; they try to please their spouse and steer clear of conflict; they withhold the truth; and they don't ask for what they want. **Important note: This kills the emotional energy between a man and a woman (and this is the energy that fuels passion, i.e., sex).**

The second big mistake men make is to quickly try to eliminate (or fix) any conflict that their spouse creates. If his spouse has a negative mood or emotion, the man will try to swiftly put out the fire. He will do whatever he can to fix her mood quickly and get her back to "good," thus "*maintaining the possibility of availability.*" Since most guys don't think a woman will want to have sex if she's in a bad mood, sad, etc., they try to fix everything quickly.

The problem with trying to create a problem-free, smooth marriage is 1) it's an impossibility and, 2) it robs the relationship of the energy naturally found within it.

If you think of this in Eastern terms, there's a yin and yang to relationships. Now, this is not to say that without a partner we are incomplete or only half a being; rather that the energy found between spouses is actually a tremendous mechanism that can be used for one's personal growth (and a by-product of one's growth will be their spouse's growth as well!).

To truly create a marriage with great sex, whenever there is a difference or conflict between you and your spouse, don't withdraw, don't attack, and don't defend. Instead, grow! More on this in a moment.

Here's an example to further explain the differences between masculinity and femininity, as well as the role of unavoidable conflict in marriage:

Steve plans a weekend away for him and his wife Michelle at a cabin in the mountains. They talk a lot on the drive, they go for walks, play games, read books, make dinner together, and have great sex. Friday night and Saturday are amazing. Steve is having a wonderful time, and he assumes Michelle is as well.

On Sunday morning Steve wakes up, his mind now on the logistics of everything that needs to be done before the drive home later that morning. He gets out of bed, checks his work email, and starts packing. Michelle walks into the kitchen in her bathrobe and, without a word, starts making coffee. Steve moves toward her, and she stiffens. He's confused. "What's wrong?" he asks. "Nothing," she replies, and leaves the room.

Steve is totally perplexed. He thought everything was going great, and yet Michelle is now upset about something. He wants to get everything back to happy and smooth. He follows her into the bedroom and asks again what is bothering her. Michelle says, "If you have to ask, I don't want to talk about it. Leave me alone. I just want to take a shower."

Steve walks on eggshells the rest of the morning, trying not to upset Michelle further. He thinks that maybe if he just leaves things alone, she'll get over her mood and be happy again. There is a cold silence on the ride home. Finally, after what seems like an eternity of silently staring out the window, Michelle blurts, "I hate that you are always on your computer. I feel like that thing is more important to you than I am."

Steve, of course, doesn't know what just happened. He defends his email checking that morning. He details all the things he did for her over the weekend. He reminds her of what a good time they were having until she woke up in a bad mood.

Michelle then proceeds to list every frustration and resentment she has with his work and the time he spends online. She states she knew that the weekend was a fluke; that she wished it never happened because now it feels even worse to return to "normal." Steve continues to respond to her "emotional logic" with his "rational logic." Finally, Michelle declares, "I hate you. Just leave me alone." She stares out the window for the remainder of the drive.

A few days later while having coffee with some buddies, Steve describes the scenario, hoping to find some clue as to why things went from great to terrible so quickly. As he tells the story of the weekend and his wife's "crazy" behavior, every buddy is nodding his head from common experience. Almost in unison, they all ponder, "What is that about? Why do they do that?"

So what happened with Steve and Michelle?

As a woman, Michelle craves the emotional tension that Steve's presence and leadership creates for her. She loves knowing what is going on in his head, and wants to believe that he cares what is going on in hers. This feels solid and validates her. It builds a sense of deep trust, and it arouses her too. These are the things a "Security Seeking Creature" most deeply desires. It is literally heaven on earth for her man's presence to provide the container for her flowing energy. The way Steve opened up to Michelle and set the tone over the weekend made her feel safe and loved.

Bringing the Authentic You to the conflict

In order to effectively use the conflict and energy the differences between you provide, the "Authentic You" must show up. A "Fixer" or a "Pleaser" sees their spouse's negative moods and emotions as problems to solve or hurts and disappointments to soothe. It is easy to trigger your lizard brain and react to the emotional tone your spouse sets.

When your spouse comes home in a bad mood and you jump into "Fixer" or "Pleaser" mode, you will likely only exacerbate their mood or, even worse, create a dynamic where they expect you to continually soothe and prop them up—the exact opposite of what you want.

If you climb on the emotional roller coaster and follow your spouse down emotional rabbit holes, you'll end up further from what you truly want in your marriage. What you want is a relationship with another full-grown, capable, solid human.

Typically, a man will respond to his spouse's emotional logic with his male, rational logic. And since the man often seeks to maintain the possibility of availability, his first response to any emotional conflict is to solve the problem or make it go away ASAP.

Here's the challenge: **For a man, when your wife presents a mood you don't understand and makes you uncomfortable or anxious in some way, do everything you can to avoid being infected by it.** This may mean you speak

up and speak the truth in love, which will rock the boat, but it will also help your wife be responsible for herself.

Tell the truth all the time, in every situation

Telling the truth is the most powerful way to experience growth through conflict.

Being dishonest is the quickest way I know to kill any depth to a relationship, if not the relationship completely. “Fixers” and “Pleasers” lie in all kinds of ways while telling themselves that they are pretty honest. Being honest and transparent means telling your spouse everything that would make you anxious for them to know about you. Most of us are really scared little kids who tell little lies and hide our feelings and thoughts in order to avoid disrupting the relationship. This kills any relationship.

The best in us, whether male or female, is turned on by the person who tells us difficult truths. While you are thinking that your spouse will hate you, attack you, shame you, or leave you if you tell her everything that you think, feel, or do, the opposite is actually true. I believe people are actually turned on by hearing things they don't want to hear—as opposed to not hearing them at all. People actually like it when you rock their boat!

The truth creates a greater possibility for growth through conflict.

It makes your wife feel safe. When she asks, “What are thinking?” it is code for “I want to feel connected to you by knowing you deeply.” She isn't trying to be invasive or catch you at something. Think of it as foreplay for her. Femininity is flowing energy, seeking something solid and constant. Truth is a constant. It doesn't change.

The truth also makes your spouse respect you more. Men often respect the people in their life who will speak honestly to them, and most men have one friend who will do this. And even though they don't like to hear the truth sometimes, they respect their friend for being willing to speak it. They will trust their friend's perspective and will seek their advice in the future.

A side note: One of the best things you can do for your marriage is to have one or two close, same-sex friends. This is especially true for men, but easier for women.

Honesty and transparency are big turn-ons in grownup relationships.

If your wife senses you aren't being honest and open about something (it may even be something really insignificant), they will fill in the blanks with the craziest

possible scenario they can imagine. They will try to be prepared for the worst—which is why they then project their anxiety onto you. For most people, nothing hurts more than finding out, after the fact, that you were withholding some thought, feeling, or secret—especially if it's about them, or affects them in some way.

I've had many clients tell me how much it hurt when their spouse had an affair—but almost without fail, this is followed by, "But it hurts even more that you (the spouse) lied to me and denied it every time I confronted you."

In other words: it hurts your spouse more when you lie to them (withhold any information due to your anxiety, guilt, or shame) than it does when you cheat on them!

So if you want to grow through conflict and experience an increase in passion in your marriage:

- Tell the truth and hold nothing back, even when it might rock the boat.
- Tell the whole truth.
- Bring up the difficult things.
- Soothe your own anxieties.
- Don't withdraw, don't attack, and don't defend.