

Differences between men and women



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For a long time there has been considerable scientific interest in studying differences between men and women and the effect that these differences have within the relationship. The sexes are different because their brains are different. The brain, the chief administrative and emotional organ of life, is differently constructed in men and in women; it processes information in a different way, which results in different perceptions, priorities, and behavior. Women have four times as many brain cells (neurons) connecting the right and left side of their brain. This finding provides evidence that supports the observation that men rely easily and more heavily on their left brain to solve one problem one step at a time. Women have more efficient access to both sides of their brain and therefore greater use of their right brain. Women can focus on more than one problem at one time and frequently prefer to solve problems through multiple activities at a time. Nearly every parent has observed how young girls find the conversations of young boys " boring". Young boys express confusion and would rather play sports than participate actively in a conversation between girls who are discussing as many as three subjects at once

Recognizing, understanding, discussing as well as acting skillfully in light of the differences between men and women can be difficult. Our failure to recognize and appreciate these differences can become a lifelong source of disappointment, frustration, tension and eventually our downfall in a relationship. Relationships between men and women are not impossible or necessarily difficult. Problems simply arise when we expect or assume the opposite sex should think, feel or act the way we do. It's not that men and women live in completely different realities. Rather, our lack of knowledge

and mutual experience gives rise to our difficulties. Men and women approach problems with similar goals but with different considerations. While men and women can solve problems equally well, their approach and their process are often quite different. For most women, sharing and discussing a problem presents an opportunity to explore, deepen or strengthen the relationship with the person they are talking with. Women are usually more concerned about how problems are solved than merely solving the problem itself. For women, solving a problem can profoundly impact whether they feel closer and less alone or whether they feel distant and less connected. The process of solving a problem can strengthen or weaken a relationship. Most men are less concerned and do not feel the same as women when solving a problem. Men approach problems in a very different manner than women. For most men, solving a problem presents an opportunity to demonstrate their competence, their strength of resolve, and their commitment to a relationship. How the problem is solved is not nearly as important as solving it effectively and in the best possible manner. Men have a tendency to dominate and to assume authority in a problem solving process. They set aside their feelings provided the dominance hierarchy was agreed upon in advance and respected. They are often distracted and do not attend well to the quality of the relationship while solving problems.

While men and women can reach similar conclusions and make similar decisions, the process they use can be quite different and in some cases can lead to entirely different outcomes. In general, men and women consider and process information differently. Women tend to be intuitive global thinkers, they come to understand and consider problems all at once. Men tend to

focus on one problem at a time or a limited number of problems at a time. They have an enhanced ability to separate themselves from problems and minimize the complexity that may exist. Men come to understand and consider problems one piece at a time.

There is evidence to suggest that a great deal of the sensitivity that exists within men and women has a physiological basis. It has been observed that in many cases, women have an enhanced physical alarm response to danger or threat. Their autonomic and sympathetic systems have a lower threshold of arousal and greater reactivity than men. In both men and women, higher levels of testosterone directly affect the aggressive response and behavior centers of the brain. Increasing estrogen and progesterone in men has a "feminizing" effect. Sexually aggressive males become less focused on sexual aggressive behavior and content when they are given female hormones. On the other hand, changing estrogen and progesterone levels in women during menstrual cycles can produce a "flood" of memories as well as strong emotions. Increasing or high levels of testosterone can produce an emotional insensitivity, empathic block and increased indifference to the distress others.

At the heart of sensitivity is our capacity to form, appreciate and maintain relationships that are rewarding. Even here there are important differences. For men, what demonstrates a solid relationship is quite different from that of most women. Men feel closer and validated through shared activities. Such activities include sports, competition, outdoor activities or sexual activities that are decidedly active and physical. While both men and women can appreciate and engage in these activities they often have preferential

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differences. Women, on the other hand, feel closer and validated through communication, dialogue and intimate sharing of experience, emotional content and personal perspectives. Many men tend to find such sharing and involvement uncomfortable, if not, overwhelming.

These differences found in men and women help me understand why relationships are complicated, and why is important to learn and accept these differences. I have a pretty good relationship with my boyfriend but sometimes I feel he does not care enough for the relationship, and that is because we do not know how to communicate. That is something that I have been trying to change. I understand that we perceive things differently but there are things that we can do to improve the relationship and we both know we can do better. Everything is part of understanding each other and being mature in the relationship. If I love somebody I will try to understand and identify our differences and make changes for the benefit of both.