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COMMUNICATION

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**Do you want to know why
communication is so important
to a relationship? Do you want to
know why? Actually, I don't really
feel like talking about it right now.**

—COMEDIAN PAUL PROVENZA

Communication is the most important element in a relationship. Without communication, there is no relationship—you're just two people in the same room. Many men would sincerely tell you they believe sex is the most important element. But sex is communication. Good sex communicates all of the passion you can't put into words. And what an eloquent ineloquence it can be. Sex between two people can be an incredibly beautiful thing. Especially if you can get between the right two people.

I think women are naturally better at communicating their needs and emotions than men. Because they've been practicing for millions of years. Since the dawn of human history, women have been getting together with their friends and discussing men, striving to reach an understanding: "He did that? I don't believe it, that bastard. Then what did he do? You should leave him."

Men should think long and hard before doing something stupid around women. Women can be your best press or your worst nightmare.

I have one piece of advice for men: If you break up with a woman, you had better do it smoothly, or you will never get another good one again. Why? Women have an intelligence network that rivals the CIA. They make the Internet

look like two tin cans with string tied between them. I guarantee, if you screw over a woman tonight, by tomorrow morning you'll be on a shit list in Afghanistan.

Women are constantly conferring with their advisers. They are basically researchers. Especially in bed. That only looks like a negligee; it's really a lab coat.

I'm a big fan of the negligee. For guys a negligee is considered "gift wrapping." That's why it usually has a little bow on it. "Ohhh. For me? You shouldn't have. I didn't get you anything."

Gift wrapping, incidentally, had to have been a woman's idea. If it had been a man's idea, we would just spray paint the box.

Men love lingerie because men are visually activated. That's what gets us going. We love to look. Women peak sexually at around 35. Men peek at anything we can.

I can't speak for all men, but that's why I like tan lines so much. There's a mystery to it. And men are drawn to mystery because mysteries beg to be solved. There's also the undeniable allure of exclusivity: "This never sees the light of day." Like freshly fallen untracked snow on a crisp winter morning.

When I see tan lines, I get a feeling much like what I imagine Henry Fonda's Tom Joad must have felt while feasting his eyes on the verdant San Joaquin Valley after that long and arduous trek from the dust bowl in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Haven. Hope. The promise of better days ahead.

Or I picture Lewis and Clark standing atop that mountain, witnessing for the first time the vast, awesome beauty of the Pacific Ocean as far as the eye can see. Lewis turned to Clark and said, "Beautiful, isn't it?" Practically overpowered by emotion, Clark managed to utter, "Like . . . tan lines."

Where was I? Oh, yeah. Men are visually stimulated. This helps give rise to the theory that women may be more evolved than men. It's a widely accepted notion that men get sexually excited by looking at the pictures, and women are more likely to be stimulated by erotic literature.

Now, parallel that to the evolution of an individual human life: We start out life looking at the pictures; then, when we are about five years old, we learn how to read. Perhaps that's where women left us behind. Right about there.

Women read erotic *li-tra-ture*. Guys look at dirty pitchurs.

Communication skills are tied to the desire to fulfill one's needs. It's very clear that men and women just have differing ideas on what it is we, and each other, seem to need. It's not that men completely lack communication skills. It's just that men's communication skills are more likely to be honed in areas where men's needs lie. Consequently, we've developed some seemingly peculiar communication abilities. Men can take any phrase in any language and instantly make it perverse.

MAN 1 (pointing to a woman): You see that woman? She's got a 170 IQ, she's a Rhodes Scholar, she's a nuclear physicist. . . .

MAN 2: Really? I'd like to nuke *her* physics.

Guys will assume that because you're another guy, you want to hear this level of conversation. Men love to talk to their friends about their sexual conquests. In fact, at one point I had considered writing a play called *The Penis Monologues*. Then I quickly realized that men telling stories about their penises isn't theater; it's just life. You don't have to hire a babysitter and call Ticketmaster to hear that.

In the early days of Man, our collective survival depended on individuals sharing their exploits upon their return from parts unknown. Men would come home from hunting trips and share their experience so the others could learn how to find what they needed while avoiding predators. These stories also helped position us in ranking amongst our fellows. So, sharing our experiences is bred into us. But now that we're a little more socialized and do most of our hunting with a shopping cart, it would be nice if we could show a little class. A little decorum.

I've always been uncomfortable listening to other guys brag about sex. It feels creepy. I always want to ask, "Which did you enjoy more, having sex with the woman or telling your friends about it afterward?" Describing to your friends in graphic detail the sex you've had with a woman is basically phone sex with your friends, without the phone.

I wish men were a little more aware of the damage they create when they talk about a woman behind her back. The damage I'm talking about, of course, is that women would be much more inclined to have sex with us if we would just shut the fuck up.

. . .

Even if a guy isn't having sex with a woman, he'll be happy to let you think it's happening. He may not lie outright, but he'll let you suppose he's having sex with her. Women go in the other direction.

A few years ago, I was writing a show for George Hamilton and his ex-wife Alana Stewart. We were in my office, and George was teasing Alana about the new man she was seeing.

Alana was protesting, “George, he’s just a friend. I don’t know why you’re making such a big deal. He’s just a friend.”

George turned to me, smiling, “That’s what women always say when you ask about ‘that guy.’ ‘Oh, him? He’s just a friend.’ Then, a week later, you’re in bed with her and he breaks down the door to prove his friendship.”

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Because women haven’t the physical strength of men, they have needed to rely more on their verbal and argumentation skills to defend themselves. And the more experience they have with defending themselves, the better they are at it. I was walking past a house, and I heard a woman inside shout this at a man:

“You always do that! That’s why your son is the way he is. I don’t want to talk about it.”

Let’s step back for a moment to appreciate the sheer beauty and precision of that surgical strike.

Three sentences.

Three rules of debate broken.

Not a syllable wasted.

Masterful.

Lonely.

It’s very difficult for a man to win an argument with a woman. Women have very effective arguing techniques. For example, if a woman senses she’s losing the logic of an argument, she’ll shift gears and argue about the way you’re arguing just to throw you off.

You can physically feel the power of the argument leave your body as she glazes over like she’s not listening. You get frustrated, maybe a little more aggressive. She throws up

her arms and turns to walk away, saying, “Well, I’m not even going to deal with you if you’re going to be like that.”

That’s the guilt tax we pay for being “man the oppressor.” As soon as you raise your voice in frustration, you mimic a man who’s bullied her in the past, and she becomes defensive. All she can do at that point is throw you off balance; so you redouble your efforts, throwing her even more into defense mode. You accelerate each other.

Here’s an example of how guys can never be right in any given situation: You are with your girlfriend or your wife, whatever the case may be. She reminds you of something you did together maybe years earlier, and you don’t remember it. Watch out.

She says, “Honey, you remember? Remember that?”

“Um . . . no.”

“You jerk.”

So, you are the bad guy. But what happens in the exact same situation when you ask her and she doesn’t remember?

“Honey, remember the time we did that together?”

“No. That must have been *some other woman you were with.*”

. . .

Do you know that the smartest person in the world is a woman? She’ll be happy to tell you. Her name is Marilyn vos Savant—because just in case you may not know that she’s the smartest person in the world, she changed her name to the Latin words for basically “I am the smartest person in the world!”

And I have no reason to doubt her claims to that title. Even if I did doubt her, let’s face it. She’s the smartest person in the world—even if *one* of the smartest people in the world

tried to convince you they were the smartest person in the world . . . well, you'd lose, wouldn't you? Because you are not as smart as they, are you? Stop wasting my time.

Anyway, it doesn't surprise me that the smartest person in the world is a woman.

And it shouldn't surprise you, either.

Domestic Priorities

The smartest person in the world is a woman, and according to television, the dumbest person is every man on the planet. In the TV-commercial world, men cannot exist without the naturally smarter woman to set him straight about Ty-D-Bowl. "Thanks, honey! You're the greatest!"

Have you seen this commercial on TV? A man and a woman are on a dock, about to get on a boat for the day, and the guy pipes up, "What if my diarrhea comes back?"

I just wish the woman would say, "Deal with it! I will reassure you when you're feeling down. Sometimes I'll even pick up your socks off the floor. I will run the family checkbook. But when it comes to your bowels, I'm just not quite that codependent, got it? Damn. I married a child."

. . .

Couples get married, and more often than not, the woman runs the checkbook. If the guy runs the money, he's usually one of three things. An accountant, a banker, or an Italian guy saying, "What are you? Outta your friggin' mind?"

Usually the woman runs the money, and there's a good reason for that. It's because married men are formerly single men. Most single men will spend money on things other than taking care of themselves. We'll drink beer, play poker,

but mostly we blow our money trying to impress women. There's a reason the Corvette is the longest-selling sports car in history.

When it comes to money, single guys do not have high domestic priorities. I know this firsthand. I've done my laundry in shampoo. Add a little conditioner in the rinse cycle, and you've got yourself some extremely manageable Van Heusens.

When I was single, I had nine lamps in my house. At one point, I waited till I got down to one bulb that I'd carry from room to room. And it would waste a lot of time because you gotta sit there in the dark, waiting for it to cool down. That's why men leave their socks lying around—we need them for oven mitts.

I am not the only man who would leave dirty socks and dirty clothes lying around. Women, however, leave piles of clean clothes. You tell me which of those phenomena makes more sense.

It's that pile that forms right before they go out at night. The "discards."

She's standing in front of a mirror: "I won't be wearing *that* tonight."

Then, she says (to the clothes), "You are hereby sentenced to remain in a wrinkled mass of shame, unworthy of my adornment."

Here's another great example of how single men will cut corners. I bought a set of dishes for the first time when I was 32. I had owned the bachelor cereal bowls before, but this time I left the store with eight place settings. Because I took a woman along with me to help me pick them out.

This should give you an idea of how women think differ-

ently than men. She said, “Definitely get eight place settings. . . . You’ll want to entertain, you know, have people over for dinner.”

What was *I* thinking? “Eight meals in a row without doing the dishes.” Not including eating the cereal out of the coffee cups.

There is a reason other than laziness that men will leave dirty dishes lying in the sink. That pile of dishes is something familiar in an otherwise lonely, hostile, and unpredictable world. You are able to walk by and see piles of plates and bowls in the sink, and they are like that old friend you keep bumping into once in a while, saying, “We’ve got to get together sometime.” But you never do. Seriously, who’s got time these days?

When I was younger and single, finding ways to avoid responsibility was an art form. The challenge of resourcefulness is always a wonderful source of satisfaction from accomplishment. My limited writing skills cannot convey to you the feeling of satisfaction I got the day I discovered that the rubber stopper for the sink disposal will perfectly seal a half can of cat food.

Go ahead. Check. I’ll wait.

. . .

When I was single, I thoroughly enjoyed being irresponsible. That’s one of the benefits of being single. You are accountable to no one. You’re a “maverick.” A “lone wolf.” Or any number of romanticized labels one might use to justify irresponsible or antisocial behavior.

But while that mind-set works when you are single and accountable to no one, it doesn’t prepare you for when the

time comes to be responsible to someone else. It's important to recognize when the transition at hand calls for a change in attitude.

I've often heard guys complain that women are mercenary. Guys will say, "Women just want guys with money. What about my personality?"

I've got news for you: By the time you're 35, your personality should have some money.

It's not about the money, Stuey. It's about being able to take responsibility. If you can't take care of yourself, don't go complicating someone else's life.

But when Stuey and a bunch of his friends spend Saturday night drinking beer on his garbage-picked couch because they can't seem to get girlfriends, it's easy for them to agree that women are shallow and only interested in money. It's much easier to blame than to go deep down inside and discover how dark and hollow and empty you might be. Pride makes it hard to face your inadequacies. So you reflexively find fault in women. Especially when no one bothers to call you on it.

**Faults are thick
where love is thin.
—ENGLISH PROVERB**

Blame

Men blaming women isn't new. This goes all the way back to the Bible. Who wrote the Bible? Men. Notice how readily the Bible blames Eve for the all the problems of mankind.

“Eve tempted Adam with that apple and it was the birth of original sin.”

I don't think it happened that way. I've been to nightclubs. Odds are Adam was hitting on her relentlessly. At first she was polite and gracious. Finally she got to the point where she said, “Would you just go away? I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the first man on earth.”

That's when Adam became the very first man to try to guilt a woman for giving him “blue balls.”

“You don't know what seeing you in that fig leaf does to me, Eve. Come on. I gave you a *rib*. And I get nothing? Just *touch* it. I won't tell anybody. There *isn't* anybody.”

Finally she rolled her eyes and threw him a mercy lay. They had a kid, and the rest is history.

But they'll try to tell you that Adam was just minding his own business, you know, trying to have a beer and watch the game without being pestered. Because most of history was written by men.

The city of Chicago burned down in 1871. We are *still* blaming Mrs. O'Leary for that cow. I heard about it in sixth-grade history class.

“Where was Mr. O'Leary?” I blurted out.

There *was* a Mr. O'Leary. He was at the local tavern, hoisting a few cold ones. But I guess since Mrs. O'Leary had the privilege of waking up to milk the cow every morning at 5:30, it was *her* cow when Chicago burned down, wasn't it? I bet if that cow had pissed on the fire and saved Chicago, it would have been Mr. O'Leary's cow.

. . .

“Hey. Women blame men, too.”

Yeah. Women are screwed up. Men are screwed up. Men are assholes, and women are bitches. Conclusions like these mark the end of discussion and any possibility of happiness. The end of a willingness to believe that there might be something better.

If you think men are assholes or women are bitches, you're right. Live in your men-are-assholes-and-women-are-bitches world. When you're 90 years old, you can sit in a wheelchair in the corner of an old-folks home, and hopefully God will be kind enough to give you dementia so you won't recognize that you've lived three percent of your possibilities because of cynical labels.

Sure, women blame men. But all I can do is take care of my side of the street and have faith that it will have a favorable impact on the people around me. I can't change “her.” Thank God I can look at my problems and be willing to change some things about myself because if I have to change “her” in order to feel okay with myself, I am in deep shit. Because it's never going to happen. All I can do is look at my part in things and try to come up with what I can bring to my relationships.

The men I admire don't blame others. They assess, and then they take responsibility. They think about what they can bring to a situation. Ignorant and incomplete men are quick to blame women. They will consistently go from zero to blame in 1.3 seconds, never learning that located in the area between zero and blame, you will find most of the skills and knowledge that make up a man's character.