

## LL30-How Men and Women Differ

Hi I'm Doug Weiss, and I'm Alvean Lyons, Welcome to Love Life

Alvean, I suspect that you've read your share of those books that seek to explain the differences between men and women ...that men are from Mars and women from Venus type of thing. I have read many of them myself and I find they often have moments of insight and are also often very trite and not very helpful likely. So, we get to try and take on this topic but with a little bit narrower construction, that is how do we think and feel? That's the root of it, how do men and women think and feel and how is that different for us because that really leads ultimately to these contrasts that people draw about how we process things.

Wow, that that definitely makes me think. Well you and I have had multiple conversations about the lens of spirituality and so much of who we are. Without making this religious, I want to just reference a particular scripture that we've discussed before and that particular scripture says Wives respect your Husbands and Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church. So what's interesting about that is both lead to the same place but they start directionally different, and what I mean by that is that respect is such a fundamental need for men that a man who feels respected often feels loved in his home where as a woman who feels loved in her home often believes she's respected. So one starts at the head and lands at the heart, one starts at the heart and moves to the head but both of them pass through the same places. So we come to this notion of love directionally different, because I am processing love through my mind first as a man and I am processing love through my feelings first as a woman and we watch that play out relationally and in so many different directions .

That absolutely fits. And to further that conversation about feeling and thought, one of the observations..... and let's be honest here and say that these are generalizations folks and there are no absolutes. They may or may not apply to you..... but we often hear people say that men are better at compartmentalizing than women are. I had a conversation with a woman friend of mine and we were talking about this exact subject and I said that in my experience men do have a tendency to put things in boxes and are comfortable with something unresolved and being in a box and not having to visit that constantly and worry at it. And for many women that's very difficult. She said, Doug you need to understand. Now I know you have a bit of a technical background so I'm going to put this in terms you will understand. Imagine that you were looking at a computer display and every file that you have is open all the time. At one point or another every one of those files is at the top and you're touching them all at the same time and then they never really go away, they just move to the background. That's what it feels like to be a woman.

It was a great insight for me and I had a perfect visual. It's wonderful isn't it? What it said to me was that for Her, and me maybe this is true for other women as well, that they are so in touch with their feelings and their feelings are the place they start from, that it isn't as easy to put something unresolved into its little box and park it off in the dusty cobwebbed attic of your mind for a while. It's always present and until resolved if it's, in fact, possible to be resolved, it's nagging at you. And so it goes to a different state of being. Whereas men can by themselves create some distance from their feelings---- and arguably that isn't always a good thing it's hard for a woman to do that. Do you agree?

I have to say well OK, so I probably am not your typical girl and so I will admit that but what I will say though that there is such truth to the fact that we are wired slightly different. We are trained and nurtured that we're allowed to express the full range of our emotions. As girls it's it's perfectly OK to cry, it's perfectly OK to feel sad, it's perfectly OK to feel weak and vulnerable. Those things are OK for you as a girl and so you grow up in an environment that allows you to access the breadth and width and depth of your emotion, where you hear every single day if you are a little boy and you fall, come on you're a big boy... big boys don't cry ... hey take it like a man. There are these reinforcers societal which we let penetrate our households that tell boys that you need to stuff your emotions. So they learn to leave their emotions in spaces that are tucked far away, but then when we get into relationships the same women who in some way or another were part of the crime of teaching men not to access their emotions now want them to readily access them and to be able to speak to about what's going on and them how much and why they love you. We want you to access all of those things

now after you've been trained not to do so. I think that there's a level of cultural role responsibility associated with the way in which we do things differently. I don't know that if we did not reinforce those differences through the way that we nurture our children that we would be as different. I think we are unique in our creations but I don't know if we would be so different because you will find in research that men, the deeper they get into relationships, the more they tend to be able to access their emotions. Once again, they are in an environment where it's safe to start to explore this thing that you were taught not to. I just wonder if there's an environmental lens associated with why we do these things as differently as we do them.

well I think there is an affect that is unhelpful. Men tend to suppress because they compartmentalize. Again, these are generalizations, but because we don't show what we're feeling we don't show our vulnerability. We tend to suggest to the people around us, and most importantly to our significant others, that we don't feel those things. In fact the most hardbit obtuse guys I've ever met were inwardly plagued by emotions and it bothered the heck out of them. They didn't know what to do with them. It nagged at them and their only recourse was just to stuff those feelings back down into the box again, and often so deeply and so fully that eventually it came out in unfortunate and explosive ways.

The opportunity that exists for men and women to build really competent relationships with each other is to understand that we are coming from very different directions but that we're not at fundamentally different. Those differences are about how we approach things not how we resolve them. So, if I want to help Peggy, the best way that I can help her is not to apply my rationality. The worst thing in the world are men who adopt the now little lady here's what you should do about that approach. I go the other direction. I will avoid making suggestions about things unless or until I'm asked. I may have some thoughts, but I'm hesitant to venture them because that's not what I'm there for at the moment. I'm there to just listen, not to fix things. In the same way I think that one of the things that women can do for men that's very helpful is to put them back in touch with their feelings, and often the best way to do that is just to come up alongside somebody and say, if it were me I'd be feeling this. That gives approval and license to express those just below the surface, lurking sentiments that as a man I don't feel comfortable stating out loud.

We have to be patient as women, because first of all we use three times as many words as you all use and those are just the things that make it out of our mouth that has nothing to do with how many are floating around in our computer screen. Sometimes I look at my husband and he'll just have this very interesting look on his face, and I'll say what are you thinking? One day he finally laughed and he said baby if you could hear what was going on in my brain it sounds a lot like crickets. And he said, what were you thinking? When I started to tell him, he was like, how does that not exhaust you? I had like fifteen thoughts going through my mind at the same time and I could figure out how this thought connected to that one and it went on and on. So there are some things that are naturally different. How we come at things, who we are, and the environments that we have to create to allow someone to be the fullness of who they are, particularly as women, means that sometimes we have to be patient enough to let our men find the words around their feelings.

We have a tendency, especially moms, to want to finish your sentence because where we're so involved in what you are saying there we already know where you're going to go, and we finish it for you. And sometimes that's not even the direction you mean. We just watch your pattern so closely, we're just sure where this is going to, and sometimes we're completely wrong because we're finishing the thought based on what we would do and that's not necessarily the math that you all were doing. It could be one and a four but we put a plus and you all a times. Your equation might have been something different. It's the two same elements but the connecting piece can be different enough that the result is something different. So, we sometimes need to back up enough as women to let you do the full math; connect your thought and your emotion to be able to come with the words associated with that so that we're not doing the math, we're not changing your direction. We're not being disingenuous as to the quality or the depth of your feeling such that you can say it made you angry. We might have gone to sad, but the answer was angry for you. It's also part of the reason that depression is misdiagnosed in men because it's not considered socially acceptable to be sad. Men will tend to rage with their sadness and because rage is socially acceptable it's a powerful response. It is masculine, but it is just that rage and sadness are often the same thing turned inside out. It's important that we don't push you all to a space that is not sincere, not what you're actually feeling. Love, as we've referenced in previous podcasts, is creating the environment so someone can be the fullness of who they are and know that it's safe

to be able to do that.

So, we have the stuff here I think for another episode, but we'll have to come back and talk about that another week and we'll wrap it up here.

We want to thank Chelsea Washington, our producer, Todd Washburn, our Recording Engineer and the entire Love Life family, including you, our listeners. If you have a suggestion, question or comment, write to us at [doug@lovelife.digital](mailto:doug@lovelife.digital) or [alvean@lovelife.digital](mailto:alvean@lovelife.digital)

We'll be back next week with another episode. Until then, have a wonderful week. Bye folks