

Transforming the Way Women Relate to Men

An Interview with Alison Armstrong

by April Thompson



For 25 years, relationship expert Alison Armstrong has worked to evolve society by changing the way women relate to men. Her yearning to understand the opposite sex was born from personal challenges, including a failed marriage in her 20s. She began studying men on her own, at the age of 30, beginning with the question, “What if men are responding to women?” What started out as a personal inquiry has become a lifelong pursuit and she’s shared her findings with millions of men and women worldwide.

Armstrong, co-founder and CEO of PAX Programs, addresses gender differences, sexuality and relationships. She has written three books, including *The Queen’s Code*, and speaks to interpersonal insights through workshops, webinars and teleclasses, including free recordings and articles at *UnderstandMen.com*.

Armstrong and her second husband have been happily married for 23 years and now live in Colorado.

Which core differences between men and women cause everyday misunderstandings?

The biggest source of mischief is denying that differences exist at all. Both men and women tend to assume that each is a version of the other, which creates significant misunderstandings. We interact with our partners by doing

or saying what works for us. When that doesn’t get the response we’re expecting, we usually draw incorrect conclusions and act in counterproductive ways.

For example, men and women relate to feelings differently. Women often make life decisions based on their feelings about something or someone. To men, who tend to rely on facts and set aside feelings, this approach can seem irrational, and relating to women as irrational has predictably bad outcomes.

Where does a couple best start to heal the communication divide?

The most powerful thing men and women can do is to address misunderstandings with openness and curiosity rather than assuming we know why our partner did or said something. We should ask ourselves, “What if there’s a good reason for that?” Don’t assume that what’s true for her is also true for him, and vice versa.

Once a couple chooses to give each other the benefit of the doubt, a few simple changes can further open up communication. Saying “I need” instead of “I want” will make a huge difference. Because being “needy” is considered unattractive, women avoid this word, not realizing that it connects with a man’s instinct to provide.

When asking for something,

it’s important to say what it would provide us. For him, there needs to be a reward equal to or greater than the energy he’ll have to expend. Years ago, I described to my husband in colorful detail the experience of falling into the toilet in the middle of the night; he took it upon himself to make sure that never again happens to the women he loves.

What’s the secret to navigating partners’ differing needs and drives for physical intimacy?

The secret is to stop leaving our sex lives to the whims of biology, or making decisions based on whether we “feel like it.” Waiting for a time when both partners feel like it, the kids are at Grandma’s and we’re not too tired leads to sex happening too rarely. Delicious sexual partnerships begin when we decide to stop waiting and instead work on creating the circumstances that put us in the mood.

One example is learning to offer “dessert”. Using the desire for food as a metaphor for the desire for sex, we’re often trying to eat together when only one partner is hungry. But dessert sounds delicious anytime; examples might be massage or kissing or other physical activities. Find out what reliably perks up a partner’s interest and put that on the menu.

How can a woman satisfy a

***man's desire to provide without
sacrificing her independence?***

American culture tells women that being low-maintenance matters most. Yet, when we allow our partners to fulfill our needs, it can help us unlock our own greatness, as well as theirs. Men are driven to provide for their loved ones and denying them such opportunities takes away their life's pursuit, which can be emasculating.

By asking for what we need, women create opportunities for partnership, satisfaction and fulfillment for both partners. When we allow the men in our life to contribute to us and learn to receive graciously, we discover that it doesn't diminish our power.

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