



## **Common Relationship Mistakes *And How to Fix Them!***

---

Humans are made for relationships. We have a common and basic need for acceptance, approval and love. Yet men and women can have diverse preferences for expressing and receiving these core desires that connect us. So often, we build distance in our relationships by failing to appreciate the other’s needs and what makes them feel value and fulfillment. Below are common mistakes men and women make and suggestions for improving and enriching your relationships.

<b>Common Mistakes Men Make</b>	<b>#1 Suggestion for Improvement</b>
<p><b>Disregarding the Importance of Communication</b>                      Generally, men do not value active listening skills as much as women, so they tend to provide a level of communication that only they prefer. Men communicate to talk. Women communicate to feel closer. If a man is in the same room as a woman, he feels that he is listening. Actually, he’s only using 5% of his brain – unless he is truly paying attention to her. Men have a tendency to be less open to sharing their thoughts, needs or emotions. This puts distance between partners and minimizes the potential for growth in the relationship.</p>	<p><b>Connect through sharing and listening</b>                      Recognize and appreciate that open, honest communication and mutual sharing is highly valued by women and will make her feel truly loved and validated. It is the glue in the relationship. It is a rich bond for intimacy. Women spend a lot of time supporting, helping and nurturing one another. For them, talking and relating brings great fulfillment. Men should listen with their heart as well as their ears, and be open about sharing their thoughts and ideas. Understand that when a woman feels connected to you, she may be more able to meet your needs as well.</p>
<p><b>Giving Up on Romance</b>                      Men commonly make the mistake of thinking that the thoughtfulness, surprises and romantic gestures that won over their special lady in the early stages of the relationship will be sufficient to sustain it in the future. To stop “dating” once becoming a couple is a mistake and leaves the woman feeling less than special. It is also a mistake to assume that dropping off something on the table, like flowers or candy, and then walking away, is romantic.</p>	<p><b>Delight her with creative dates</b>                      Try to remember how you felt when you first met your lady- the effort and energy that was devoted to putting a smile on her face. Find out what makes her feel special today. Ask what she needs from you, what would make her happy. It may be a closer friendship, it may be flowers, or it may be folding the laundry. Delight her with unexpected thoughtfulness, small acts of kindness, and romantic gestures. It is the demonstration of care and consideration that translate to romance.</p>

<p><b>Fixating on the Fix</b>          The mistake here is confusing assertive problem solving with helping. Men experience fulfillment and success through achievement and accomplishment. With that, men often interrupt with suggestions and solutions when women share concerns or struggles. While offering a spreadsheet analysis to a problem may be appreciated in the boardroom, it will not be taken that way when responding to the emotions of a woman.</p>	<p><b>Provide support before solutions</b>          Women crave understanding and support through listening and attentiveness. If she presents you with a faulty car engine dilemma, she may seek you for a solution. Otherwise, you can aid her best by your emotional support. It is smart for men to not interrupt with their creative and well-meaning ideas unless asked. For example, if she comes to you upset over the broken washing machine, first acknowledge the stress of the issue, before advising on options of appliance recovery.</p>
<p><b>Avoiding Conflict</b>          Some men can be overly sensitive to perceived criticism, and therefore avoid any conversation that could possibly lead to argument. The perception is that the discussion of an issue is a personal criticism. Many men fight to be right, or totally disengage to avoid a confrontation when they feel they are being blamed for a problem. A big mistake is to act on assumptions and to reject the communication request. Dodging issues only makes them grow.</p>	<p><b>Realize conflict does not mean criticism</b>          Discussing problems in a relationship is a good thing. Otherwise hostility and resentment can build up and destroy any union. Do not overreact to a woman's need to talk through a potential problem. Even if she has a complaint, it is not to be confused with criticism. The complaint could be an opportunity to better meet both your needs. Remember, household suggestions like where to stow the lawnmower are not an attack on your manhood.</p>

<p><b>Common Mistakes Women Make:</b></p>	<p><b>#1 Suggestion for Improvement:</b></p>
<p><b>Believing He Should be a Mind Reader</b>          Women tend to think men should already magically know their needs and wants, without having to tell them. "If he really loved me (or knew me), I wouldn't have to ask!" is a common thought. Women make the mistake of assuming men should think like they do, and therefore it should be obviously what's on their mind, and he should act accordingly. Believing he should mind-read only delays the satisfaction she seeks.</p>	<p><b>Request needs and desires</b>          Recognize that the best way to get needs met is to actually speak them directly through requests. Do not assume anything is a given. Don't set him or the relationship up for failure by withholding your needs or desires, only to be resentful when he doesn't read your brain. Realize everyone lives inside his or her own unique world, and no one sees life exactly the way someone else does. Speak up, be specific, and make known your request.</p>

<p><b>Trying to Change Him</b> Some women actually go into relationships or remain in relationships with the absurd thinking that they can change some undesirable attributes in a man. They may approve of him overall, but still ponder how he could and should be remodeled to meet their ideal expectations. A big mistake is to think that once they are married, or at any other milestone, that's when he will suddenly change into a flawless species of a man.</p>	<p><b>Toss the man-improvement-kit</b> Try changing your focus from how to change your guy, to how best to respond to any of his "less-than-perfect" aspects. If he cannot be accepted for who he is now (sports-loving, weekend golfer, momma's boy, workaholic), then don't continue the relationship with the false belief that he will change. Make his feelings more important than his imperfections.</p>
<p><b>Suffocating His Space</b> When women want to talk; they feel the man should be willing to talk also, and without delay. When women are fraught with frustration or overwhelmed by a need to understand or resolve a disagreement, they can get in a "hunt, hound and harass" mode. This is counterproductive. By being demanding and smothering, women can make the situation worse, causing him to likely push further away and become defensive. Chasing him physically or emotionally will suffocate him, not inspire him.</p>	<p><b>Respect his coping needs</b> Accept that men cope with stress differently than women. They need space and time to consider the issue or idea. This doesn't make them wrong - they just have different needs. Respect his need to put up a temporary wall, and do not punish him when he comes back out from it. Do something that makes you happy in the meantime. And also create a safe environment for him to gradually come back to the discussion. Then your need to be listened to will have a greater chance of being met.</p>
<p><b>Being Untrue to Themselves</b> Sometimes women forget that even in a relationship, they are still individuals. Acting out of a need for acceptance, validation and love, women sometimes put on a "false self" to others, especially to the man in her life. She may go along with an idea she has no interest in, to gain connection in a relationship. If she is only pretending to have interest in a particular idea or activity, then the question becomes, "When does her true self-come out?" This is a sure way for the woman to lose herself. If she is consumed with being a people-pleaser (or man-pleaser in this case) at the expense of being true to herself, the possibility of a lasting and healthful relationship is minimized.</p>	<p><b>Be authentic</b> Women must be honest and true to themselves first, then to all others. Being flexible and compromising is one thing, but comprising your needs, values and unique personality is not healthy, and will not maintain a relationship. Living an inauthentic life will eventually tear at your soul. Honor your needs, values and requirements for personal growth. By being true to yourself, you are offering the best you have to him. Don't waste energy on pretending or go to desperate efforts for approval. Energy is shared in enhancing the relationship and in more authentic living!</p>

**Contact Centerstone at (615) 460-HELP (4357),  
for information about help and support for you or your family.**

February 14, 2007

**About Centerstone**

Centerstone ([www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)), a not-for-profit organization, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. Serving the community for more than fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Centerstone provides services to more than 50,000 individuals annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs at more than 65 facilities and 140 partnership locations throughout the region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

**About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS**

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

To request Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization about complete wellness in living, contact her at (615) 460-4445 or [susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org](mailto:susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org).