

Recommended book – How to Improve Your Marriage Without Talking About it, by Drs. Love and Stosny

February 25, 2016 | 32 upvotes | by [Kittenkajira](#)

Who should read this book? Those who feel unhappy, uneasy, resentful, or unconnected. If you want to learn more about the differences between men and women. Women who want to feel closer to their husband. Those with conflict in their marriage. Those who freaking love to take quizzes. *Raises hand.*

This book is about the five words a man dreads most – “Honey, we need to talk”. The authors do note that they use broad generalizations that are respective of the sex as a whole, but not necessarily to the individual, since we are all different. They also state that you should not tell your husband all about the book you are reading, or ask him to read it – you should apply what you learn without sharing it.

The authors start out talking about fear and shame as it relates to the sexes. Men have a heightened sensitivity to feeling shame and inadequacy, while women are driven by fear, all of which may be outside of their awareness. When women keep attempting to improve a relationship, men take it as a failure - that they are not meeting their wife’s expectations. Women have an “internal GPS” that keeps them aware of closeness and distance in relationships, so they are anxious when feeling distant and relaxed when close. The authors go deep into how childhood plays a part in it.

In one of my favorite exercises, the authors ask you to make a list of what you most dread (pg 19). Go ahead and try it if you like – list the top four things that you *most* dread ever happening to you, even if they are highly unlikely. (Do this before reading more.)

If you are female, you will likely find your list consisting of things that involve harm, isolation, or deprivation (fear-based). If you are male, the list will likely consist of things involving failure, inadequacy, or loss of status (shame-based). I found this true, as my list was “being injured or sick, getting divorced or breaking up, someone close to me dying, and being assaulted or in a fight”.

According to the authors, most power struggles are a result of people trying to protect themselves from fear and shame. “She wants him to do what she wants so she doesn’t have to feel anxious, and he wants her to give in so he doesn’t have to feel like a failure.” The more you push for what you want because of your fears, the more disconnected you become from your husband. A survey is included to help you determine your sensitivity to isolation and fear (pg 36).

Chapter three speaks of how men show emotions, love, and what they want out of relationships. It also goes over the devastating effects of divorce on a man. It even discusses how men are encouraged by relationship books and marriage-enrichment programs to become more “like a woman”, which almost certainly leads to “disappointment for both partners” (pg 50). I found the section on “why men need routine” fascinating and enlightening.

| Words Hurt. Words destroy. Words can kill a relationship.

Now we get to the core of the book - what shaming is, and how you're doing it. Some examples of shaming (many more in the book on pages 67-70):

- Excluding him from important decisions
- Correcting what he said
- Questioning his judgment
- Giving unsolicited advice

- Overreacting
- Using a harsh tone

A true/false quiz is provided to help you discover the areas in which you are shaming your husband. I completed the quiz, then at the instruction of the authors asked my fiancée if he was willing to do the same quiz from his point of view. For the most part we saw eye-to-eye, but on a few I'd marked true (meaning I shame him), while he marked false. For "I use a harsh tone to get through to him", I marked false, and he marked true. Definitely eye opening!

There is a chapter targeted for male readers, but I found it helpful to read anyway. This is when the authors warn that you should *not* read all the lovely things you want your man to do and eagerly show him the chapter he should read. *You* can improve your relationship without talking about it or showing him the book. If you do read this chapter, read it only to get insight into your behavior.

Part Two of the book includes chapters 7 through 14, and is all about the actions you can practice to improve your marriage *without* controlling or shaming your husband. Four core values are introduced - **improving, appreciating, connecting, and protecting**. They talk extensively about transforming (negative) emotions into positive motivators, which is the purpose of emotions - to act upon them (*not* to talk about them or dwell in them). In the end, you learn to "judge yourself by *your own* efforts and behavior, not by your partner's" (pg 105). I'll leave the rest of part two for you to discover - I especially like the section titled "twenty reasons to have sex when you don't feel like it" (pg 148).

This book is right in line with RPW - it goes over how damaging it is to criticize, shame, withhold sex from, control, and divorce men. If you think you're with a guy who's bad at communication, this is a book to read. Chances are it's you who's at fault, not your SO. I recommend getting the print version of this book so you can write answers to the questions and quizzes.

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Comments

putski88 • 4 points • 26 February, 2016 12:41 AM

Thanks for posting this. Even just your overview is thought-provoking, especially your discussion of fear-based versus shame-based motivators. I will definately check this out.

[deleted] • 2 points • 25 February, 2016 09:15 PM

I am definitely going to have to pick this one up! Thanks so much, /u/kittenkajira!

Kittenkajira • 1 point • 25 February, 2016 09:20 PM

Yay! I'd love to hear your thoughts after you read it.

Camille11325 • 2 points • 26 February, 2016 03:40 AM

Thank you so much for the comprehensive review, this sounds great :) A lot of women were asking about RP books so hopefully they take notice of your post and check it out for themselves!

91akita • 1 points • 27 February, 2016 07:25 AM **[recovered]**

Thank you for the recommendation. Do you think it would be useful to people who aren't married but are in a relationship?

Kittenkajira • 2 points • 27 February, 2016 08:15 AM

I'm not married yet and it helped me! If you're in a new relationship and new to RPW, then you might want to start with The Surrendered Single instead.