

“Eve Interpreting Adam - - a conversation for women about men”

**Presented by
John Goll, LMFT
Thursday, April 17, 2008
Bartholomew County Public Library**

Welcome and Introduction

How Boys become Boys

What do we teach our children?

Does the socialization fit with what we want?

How do we contribute to the confusion?

*“All I care about in a man
Is that unbroken spark in him
Where he is himself
Undauntedly.*

*And all I want is to see the spark flicker
Vivid and clean.*

*But our civilization, alas,
With lust crushes out the spark
And leaves men living clay.*

*Because when the spark is crushed in a man
He can't help being a slave, a wage slave,
A money slave.*

--D.H. Lawrence

The “Interplanetary Theory of Gender” (Mars vs Venus)

Men want to fix things, women just want to be heard

“Women marry men hoping they will change. They don't.

Men marry women hoping they will not change. They do.”

-- Bettin Arndt

The Myth of Narcissus and Echo

Narcissus

Punished for his pride

What he desires he cannot get

He cannot know himself, but seeks outside himself for his wholeness

Echo

Punished for her deception

Lost her voice – can't be heard

Can only echo him - reinforcing his expressions

Both are paralyzed

Man lost his heart

Covert or overt depression

Woman lost her voice

Protective, dependent and resentful

The Differences (Agreements?) Between Women and Men

Caregiving vs Providing

Pre and post-industrial revolution

The agreement:

Men - give up emotional needs; devote themselves to achievement and competition.

Women - give up their achievement needs; devote themselves to care of family and husband – everyone but themselves, including his physical and psychological needs.

The result:

Man's sense of self defined by his ability to achieve results

Performance-based self-esteem

Woman's sense of self defined through her feelings and relationship quality

Men are motivated and empowered when they feel needed.

Women are motivated and empowered when they feel cherished.

Society gives false empowerment to men:

They don't need to work on relationships

He is "King of the castle"

Rigid gender roles

When under stress:

Men go to their caves to solve problems alone

To ask unnecessarily would be a burden to others and a sign of his weakness

If really needed, there is wisdom in seeking expert help

Men offer solutions and invalidate feelings

Unsolicited advice is heard as criticism or an assumption of incompetence

Women get together and openly talk about problems

A sign of love and trust, not a burden

Women offer unsolicited advice and direction

Unsolicited solutions to her problems are heard as invalidating her feelings

A man's deepest fear is that he is incompetent or not good enough.

A woman's deepest fear is that she will be abandoned.

The Complications

Pursuer-distancer power struggle

Common in many couples

At best results in disconnection – at worst, abuse

Women learn to manipulate men – Echo's lesson

Men learn to disconnect – often through overt or covert depression

What Can We Do About It?

Woman's task: To learn assertion without aggression.

Man's task: Wake up to the responsibility of listening and step up to negotiate.

Both, when needed, are able to take on the characteristics of the other

Men can listen, relate, be sensitive

Emotional flooding in men – Gottman

Women can assert, lead, produce, confront directly

Influencing change

One is usually in pain, and the other is in trouble.

Empower the one in pain.

References

Glover, Robert A., No More Mr. Nice Guy: a proven plan for getting what you want in love, sex and life. Running Press, Philadelphia, PA. 2003.

Gray, John, PhD., Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: a practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want from your relationships. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY, 1992.

Kundtz, David, Nothing's Wrong: a man's guide to managing his feelings. Conari Press, York Beach, ME. 2004.

Real, Terrence, How can I get through to you? : closing the intimacy gap between men and women. Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 2002.

Real, Terrence, I don't want to talk about it: overcoming the secret legacy of male depression. Scribner, New York, NY, 1997.

John Goll, LMFT