



UNDERSTANDING MEN AND WOMEN: WHY THEY SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY

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After years of studying men and women, I've come to realize that a key to a happy relationship with the opposite sex is to recognize that we have two natures. One I call "human animal" and the other "human spirit."

Human spirit is the elevated part of us. It enables us to be our best selves. Human animal is the more primitive part – the instinctive part that lashes out, often in response to a primal fear of scarcity or competition.

When that happens, I call it an attack of human animal. It's a cave woman or a caveman attack. And what happens is there's literally an eclipse of human spirit. So human spirit is still there, but it's in the background, overshadowed by the animal reaction that is driven by a perception of a threat to one's survival.

So, when men and women perceive a threat to their survival, they react by instinct, and instinct is defined as a primal, biological urge, impelling a response that brings relief of tension.

Now, I bring that up because it's a good place to look. Whenever you're experiencing tension, there's a very good chance that you're reacting instinctively from your caveman or cavewoman, and not from human spirit.

Now, if we're going to bring out the best in ourselves and in each other, we have to understand what causes an attack of human animal; and what does that, is anytime that we perceive that our survival is in jeopardy.

So it could be a threat to our physical safety, it could be a threat to property we're attached to, it could be a threat to our identity, to our sense of self. Now, if we're going to bring out the best in each other, we have to understand that the masculine and feminine aspects of our nature experience survival, and therefore safety and security, in different ways.

For the masculine, survival depends upon one's ability to produce results. So the masculine will feel safe and secure when they have the greatest opportunity to produce results. And that comes when they are respected and trusted by the people that they work with and the people they care for.

The feminine on the other hand, experiences safety and security when she feels connected, when she's getting the attention and the interest that she needs from the people around her that give her a nearly constant sense of being connected and therefore safe and secure.

Now one of the problems is that men and women have instincts that literally antagonize the

other's caveman or cavewoman.

So, for example, the way that a man thinks, which we call "single focus", will cause him to pay attention to one thing at a time. So if he's watching television the woman in his life may feel ignored, and she'll get this incredible sense of tension in her body, and she'll try to do things to try to connect with him, and connect with him, and connect with him, which, as a "single focus" person, he's going to experience as an interruption and be annoyed by it, and cause a downward spiral.

On the other hand, women have an instinct that causes them to want to be scrupulously accurate in their details. So, if a man is telling a story and he says something happened on a Tuesday, that she thinks happened on a Wednesday, she'll interrupt him and correct that story. If this is in front of other people, it's going to cause a problem, because if it's someone whose respect and trust he needs, and she's now intimated that he lies or exaggerates, that's going to be a problem.

Now, on the other hand, by understanding these ways that we antagonize each other's instincts, we can behave in a way that instead brings out the best in each other. So, for example, for a man to overcome his natural respect for privacy, and instead ask questions that show that he's interested in her.

He can even ask her, what are her favorite questions to be asked, and for a woman to recognize the tension she feels about the accuracy of details and realize that maybe this isn't so important. Just let him tell the story.

You don't have to correct him on that, and then he can maintain the respect and trust that he needs. By understanding the differences in the way that men and women think, communicate, process information, and solve problems, men and women can learn to bring out the best in each other instead of causing an attack of human animal.

I'm Alison Armstrong, for Prager University.