

“How (Often) Do I Love Thee?”



It has been written that women tend to define themselves through their feelings and the quality of their relationships. Their communication is strongly influenced by a need to establish “connection.” This is why women, in conversations, are more likely to share problems *with the hope of getting reassurance or empathy*. They are also more likely to listen for an *implied* message and its emotional content.



Men, on the other hand, tend to define themselves through their ability to achieve results. Finding solutions for problems tends to dominate their communication. That listening style then provides them opportunities to *solve, fix or advise* another. They are listening to the *literal* meaning of the words. The common thinking, therefore, is that men and women are *fundamentally different*, you know “...Men are from Mars, women are from Venus.”



While we support a less divisive philosophy, focusing instead on commonalities between the sexes, the differences that do exist are likely to reveal themselves as we approach the celebration of Valentine’s Day,



According to the Greeting Card Association, estimated one billion valentine cards will be sent this year, making Valentine’s Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. (An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas). So... let’s take a look at what type of card you might be giving or getting this Valentine’s Day. A good number of men will be scanning the card racks for a card that declares their love in the simplest way, with the fewest words. In contrast, women will likely spend an inordinate amount of time seeking a card that “captures” the message of how special their partner is and the depth of



their love for them.

Research several years ago found that, on average, men had a “daily language capacity” of 10,000 –15,000 words, while their female counterparts had an average capacity of 25,000 words. Simply put, men tend to be finished with both talking and listening long before women are done. Where men gravitate toward “keep it short & sweet,” women may take greater poetic license and rely more on metaphors, images and words to express their feelings. After all, a woman (Esther A. Howland, 1840) began to sell the first mass-produced valentines in America.

In the final analysis, we shouldn’t focus on the different ways love is expressed... its just important that it be expressed. Better yet, it is far more beneficial to reveal your love a little bit everyday then to store it up for one day—February 14.

Consider your relationship like a bank account. This “love account “ needs regular deposits...little positive experiences that provide you and your partner with energy and a greater sense of security. Too many times, couples allow themselves to coast along; unaware of how many times they withdraw from their love account. When the balance gets dangerously low (or even overdrawn), they suddenly realize they had stopped making deposits.

Mark this Valentine’s Day with a renewed

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commitment to *pay yourselves first* with small and regular deposits into your “love account.” You never know when the rainy day may come that you will be grateful for the reserves you have built together.

Dan Haycraft, MD and Meg Haycraft, LCSW of Wilmette are the founders of TWOgether, Inc. a premier educational and counseling resource for couples. To contact them, call (847) 581-9444 or visit www.twogether.org.

