



Talk About Intimacy

10 SECRETS TO FEELING CLOSER TO
YOUR HUSBAND (AND HELPING HIM
FEEL CLOSER TO YOU) THROUGH

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INTRODUCTION

When you and your husband are reunited after being apart for some period of time, do you wrap your arms around him and ask how he is doing? Or do you fall into his arms and unload your day on him?

You probably want to do both. But which comes first? Which comes first if you want to be his “intimate”; that is, his confidant, his safe place, his favorite companion; the one with whom he feels he can be most himself.

My purpose is to teach you principles, strategies, and tactics that will help you figure out the answer for yourself; something you should be, as his wife, a master at by the time you finish this e-book.

Now whether you're excited about increasing the emotional intimacy in your marriage by sharing your feelings with him, or by his opening his heart to you, I want to be clear that “intimacy” (which comes from the Latin word for “intimus”, the sharing of the inner self) means accepting, even embracing, not only similarities, but differences.

You have to start looking at the differences between you and your husband not as obstacles to intimacy, but as the actual conductors of life, love, and energy. It's the only way to knowing the whole person, and the only way he will accept the invitation to

know the whole you. In other words, the process of becoming genuine intimates requires going beyond tolerance, or even benevolence. It requires learning to successfully navigate, even appreciate, the very things that used to frustrate or discourage you.

Talk About Intimacy will help you do that. Make a real study of it (including a lot of practice and patience), and you will soon have a new set of skills (as in what to say or do). Not only that, you will have honed the talent most useful and innate to all women: intuition. Intuition goes hand in hand with intimacy because helping another person open up to us isn't just about saying or doing the right thing. It's about rightly perceiving how and when and where to say or do it! All the best practices and intentions in the world are for naught if we can't think on our wifely feet.



That's why intuition is what we want to explore in our first lesson
—before we get into specific tactics.



Secrets
1-3

DEVELOPING YOUR

The First Three Secrets You Need to Know About Men
Before You Will Get That Intimate Conversation

What is Intuition?

Intuition is a gut feeling based on two things:

- Experience
- Understanding

Those two things when perfectly combined, allow you to make on-your-feet, in-the-moment decisions that will impact your relationship optimally.

We know that you've got a lot of the first component, experience, with your husband, but what you may be missing is some basic understanding; that is, comprehending where he is coming from as a man. With understanding missing, it's hit and miss as to whether you can put your experience into truthful (that is, optimal) context.

So! Before I can take you into the principles, strategies, and tactics that will help you feel closer to your husband, I need to be sure you understand three basic WifeSavers tenets that relate to his masculine nature. I'm going to call these tenets "secrets". If you are a WifeSavers student, which I highly recommend, then you will be familiar with these "secrets", but even if they are familiar to you, they are, of course, worth reviewing because they sink in a little deeper each time.

SECRET #1

Most men have only one intimate: you.

Did you know that fifty percent of husbands, on average, have no intimate—that is, someone they talk to about personal matters or confide in—other than their wives? Forty percent have one other close friend they can talk to, while only ten percent have two or more. Wow! How many intimates do you have? Many, I'm sure.

It's not that men don't want and need the benefits of friendship. Of course they do. In the nineteenth century, for instance, deep male bonding and mutual support—of the sort we hardly see anywhere but in the military or the locker room anymore—was the norm.

Today's society has dramatically eroded the number of friends and confidants in a man's life; their emotional isolation is steadily increasing. There could be a lot of reasons for this, but the men I've talked to say that as a younger man especially, their work, their dreams, and their primary relationship with a woman consume their time and emotional energy. Social observers also note that since emotional intimacy is associated with neediness in a man's mind and that the expression of emotional thought can be linked to being gay, men today are very careful not to appear vulnerable with one another. With no where else to turn, a husband naturally longs for his wife to fill his need for friendship, preferring her companionship above anyone else's.

So there it is: our first little known or discussed fact, or secret, that as a wife you have to internalize in order to develop understanding, which, as I say, is key to honing your intuition.

Ready for secret number two?

SECRET #2

Men define friendship differently than women. They crave respect more than they need love.

It's true. The primary focus of a friendship between two women is relational. It's sweet. It's simple. We value authenticity, support, and mutual understanding—in other words, connection. We love to love each other.

The primary focus, or purpose, of friendship for most men, on the other hand, won't seem so simple, sweet, or familiar to you. Friendship for most men is not so much about connection, as it is about status.

Say what?!

As I explain in more detail in my book, men are, in their very essence, performance rather than relationship based. Hence, no one can truly be considered a “friend” in a man's world, unless in the company of that “friend”, a man feels secure in his “status” — that is, respected, for who he is, and he defines who he is as what he does. Listen closely to what I'm saying; it's very important to understand: Your man's very identity is tied up in doing, not just in being. Therefore respect for his “performance” (his work, or any other task-oriented aspect of life) translates in his mind to respect of his person or his status. His sense of worth, or his confidence that he deserves a place in the human race, is based on external recognition—on the acknowledgement of others; most especially YOU.

Do you can see now how impossible it is for him to feel “friendly” toward someone if he feels that person does not treat him with respect? It is absolutely critical and fundamental that a wife

conveys respect to her husband as consistently as possible if she wants to become his intimate.

Put a little more bluntly: You will never get close to him or draw him close to you through skepticism, cynicism, condescension, contempt, or criticism—even if you think you are being “constructive”. I know, I know...you and your girlfriends would never be so sensitive as to completely shut down or withdraw over a bit of helpful criticism or a well-meaning suggestion for improvement, but your husband is not your girlfriend. He is a man. And in man’s world, a friend is expected to be nonjudgmental, loyal, and straightforward. He longs for unconditional respect the way you long for unconditional love. And, remember, his honest desire when he married you was for you to be his lover and truest friend. He also wants to be the one friend you prize and trust the most—pre-eminent above all others...

...which leads us to Secret #3:

SECRET #3

Your man wants to feel that he is the center of your universe.

A good part of what made you so appealing to your guy early on was that you were so intensely focused on him. He perceived, rightly, that your world had changed its axis—he was your new center and you were his. That’s the glory of falling in love.

In the time since then, however, I'm guessing that you've drifted away from center, or you feel he has, or you probably wouldn't be reading this guide (or watching all those Hallmark movies). It's natural to be wistful about those early days, remembering what it was like to be hyper-focused on each other, but there's no reason to panic or to grieve too long or too loud, because there's a good reason it was that way back then, and there's a good reason that it's not so much that way now.

Suffice it to say, the romance you're remembering—the conversation, the cuddling, the eye-contact that felt more frequent, more intense, and definitely of longer duration—was all part of Mother Nature's plan back then. It formed the backbone of what was to become a marriage. And it actually remains the backbone of your marriage—that singular focus, that pure relationship—it's just that you both express your beautiful obsession differently now.

In fact, from your husband's point of view, impressing and pleasing you is still at the heart of everything he is, everything he does, everything he is meant to be. Or as I wrote in *Wife for Life: The Power to Succeed in Marriage*: For a married man, all roads lead to his wife. (And, he would like to think that—for his wife, all roads lead to him.)

Periodically, I post a meme on my social sites that describes a good husband as a wife's best and first line of defense, her greatest ally, biggest help, sweetest soother, and most reliable problem solver. That meme always gets a hoard of likes and is the most frequently repined of all our memes on Pinterest. No surprise of course, that women love it. What does surprise me

though, is how men respond to it. Comments from men always say something like, “Thank you so much for posting this.” Or “Exactly!” They aren’t overwhelmed by my catalog of “expectations” of a good husband. On the contrary! The list actually describes how they want their wives to think of them!

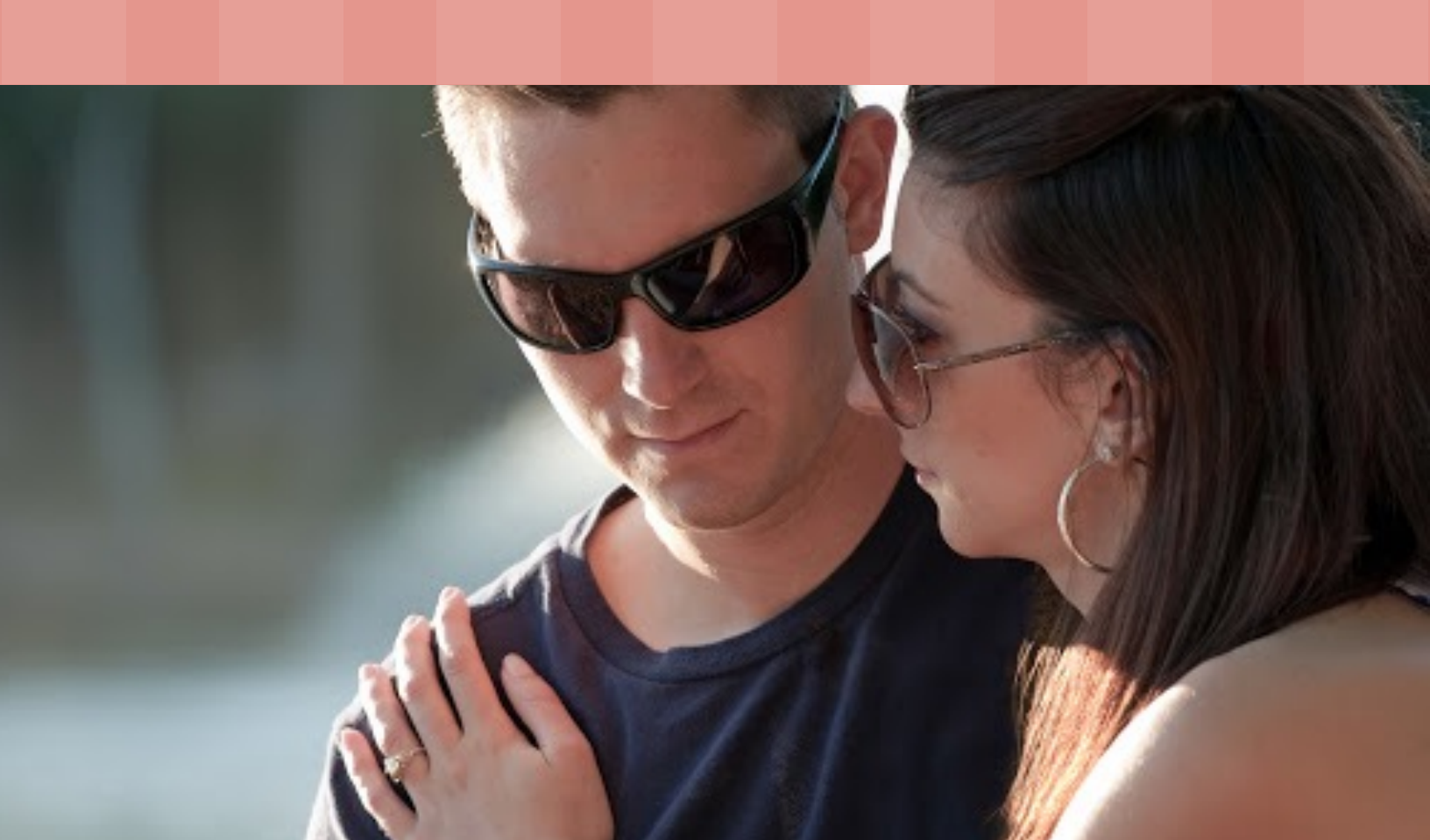
So, before you will be able to fully embrace the idea and the tactics in this guide, you have to believe this principle above all others: He wants to be your ONE.

And because he wants that so badly, you can expect him to feel a little to a lot uncomfortable whenever you focus on a person or project other than him for any significant period of time. And if he continues to observe that you are unavailable or drifting from him, anxiety will start to strangle his heart because it feels to him like he has no recourse. Unlike you, a woman, he cannot easily communicate his neediness without feeling ashamed of it.

So be careful and don’t forget: he really wants (and needs) to be your “everything”, positioned smack dab at the heart of your world.

Now, how that “secret” and the two others we’ve learned actually plays-out in the day-to-day dynamics of your relationship is something we’re going to get into in our next lesson.

Congrats though! You’ve got the basics for the understanding that is going to fine tune your wifely intuition, which will lead to the intimacy you’re looking for with your husband.



Secrets
4-5

THAWING THE FREEZE

Why He is Reticent to Open Up and How to Overcome It

A very persistent little girl pursued my grandson, Bracken, on the playground one day. “What’s wrong?” she asked repeatedly as she followed him from the monkey bars to the slide to the swings. “Nothing’s wrong,” he growled at her over and over.

I’m sure you’ve had experience with something similar: trying to wiggle open your honey’s sticky lid, maybe in the same way you do with your girlfriends, like, “What’s the matter, honey? You

should talk about it; it'll help you feel better. If you'll just share, then I can help you." But for some reason inconceivable to most women, our guy's sticky lid just seals up tighter than ever. Ever wondered why? Or how to get around it?

To begin with, as our little friend and my grandson demonstrated, you can't pound or prod it out of him. You won't get anything worth keeping or worth working with, let alone treasure, that way. Too often, Cupid's arrow feels more like a bullet to him.

There are much better tactics, which I hope doesn't sound like some kind of assault. The Wife for Life approach is the opposite of that. We are going to discuss a combination of gentle approaches that can be better compared to running warm water over a sticky lid. I will teach them to you as "secrets", or big principles, which we'll break down into **strategies**, which I will then break down into even more specific **tactics**.

All of that, this entire lesson, is—at the core—positioning you to become the one he feels most himself with, the one who inspires him, the one he can trust and open up to.

That's a big objective, so this is a big lesson. You will want to highlight and take notes. By the time we're done, we will have covered the following:

- How you really feel about him opening up.
- What to do when he opens up.
- Why he's reticent to share stuff with you.
- How to encourage him to open up.
- Ways to alleviate his fears.

SECRET #4

Women say they want their man to open up emotionally to them, but the truth may be that you really don't.

- How to help him talk more about his inner life specifically.

Let's start with how you really feel about him opening up...

When we women say we want to be emotionally intimate, what we're really saying (more often than not) is, we want him to listen to us and that we'd like to hear how much he loves and needs us. But in WifeSavers, when we speak of "becoming his intimate" we are talking about building a rich, reciprocal, rock-solid PARTNERSHIP. We want your husband to bond to you so tight, that nothing can come between you; we're aiming for a cohesiveness that only gets stronger and stronger through the decades. And that kind of partnership means that you have to be open to him becoming...well, more OPEN!

Here's why that's easier said than done....

Wives often become uncomfortable when their husband opens up about aspects of himself that reveal how susceptible to worry, fear, and doubt he really is. Because we are so susceptible to those very things ourselves, deep down we actually depend on or crave his stabilizing influence, his strength. It would be great if he could do that for us consistently throughout a fifty-year marriage, but he is human after all. If we are asking him to be vulnerable with us in order to feel closer to him (and so that we can be a

better companion and partner for him), then we are asking for the truth, and the truth for any human being, men included, isn't always pretty and pleasant, is it?

So, if he really opens up emotionally and exposes difficult feelings (anger, sadness, or fear), don't be thrown off; don't be surprised or alarmed that it makes you feel a bit anxious or unsettled or even afraid. And do not overreact, take it personally, or try to fix him. We want instead to respond to him with a much more positive, prepared, proactive approach that will encourage him to open up again and again.

STRATEGY: What this means is

1. We are going to treat his emotions, revelations, and confidences with respect.
2. We are going to listen with love; that is, with compassion. In your mind, couch his revealed feelings within the context of the male fears: fear of failure, fear of dependence, fear of neglect, fear of uselessness.
3. We are going to listen objectively, in an emotion coaching frame of reference. For instance, you can view anger as a lack of control, or better, as frustration over a blocked goal. Some would consider ongoing sadness an emotional disorder, but actually, it is an indication of something missing in life. Try not to think of fear as a sign of cowardice, but rather as an indication of insecurity. We are going to look at those difficult emotions as clues to whatever is really going on inside of him.

Choosing to listen, understand, and sympathize with the less-than-positive emotions in your man instead of dismissing them as unimportant, weak, or threatening, is critical to encouraging closeness between the two of you. Any other reaction (vs. response) will drive him away.

Remember this phrase:

“Help me understand, sweetheart.”

Okay, let's review...

TACTIC: What to do when he opens up

1. Do not overreact.
2. Do not take it personally.
3. Do not try to fix it or him.
4. Listen with love (context: male fears)
5. Listen objectively (context: emotion coaching)
6. Remember to use the phrase: “Help me understand...”

And one more:

7. If you are going to offer input when he opens up, be soft about it, and do so in the form of a question:

“What do you think about...” or “What do you think would...”

This “question approach” is the best way to alleviate his fear of dependence, by showing respect for his independence. To be able to think for himself and problem solve independently is incredibly important to a guy.

All right then, with all the optimal attitudes and approaches in place, you are ready for that conversation when he actually does open up to you.

Now the question is, how do we get him into that space in the first place?

I’m going to show you how, very specifically, in this lesson and the next, but again, like everything in WifeSavers, we have to start with understanding where he’s coming from: those “secrets” or the why’s behind his behavior.

Here’s another secret that is critical to wrap your brain and heart around as we refine your intuition:

SECRET #5

A man may be reticent to be vulnerable with you, not because he doesn’t have deep feelings he craves to share, but because he is afraid that if he reveals those feelings to you, you will lose respect for him.

In my WifeSavers Course & Community, we go deep into the male fears and, boy, is that an eye-opener/game changer! In the context of this study though, there are three male fears that particularly apply to the quandary: Why won't he talk to me?

- The fear of Failure: You will think less of him.
- The fear of Exposure: You might tell others.
- The fear of Exploitation: You could burn him someday with the information.

So let's go through these fears and talk about how we can alleviate each one.

First: How To Alleviate His Fear That You Will Think Less Of Him

In order to alleviate this fear, we are going to set a courageous example ourselves. That is, if you want him to be vulnerable with you, then you have to be vulnerable with him. You have to be willing to take a risk on him thinking less of you by sharing your fears and failures; in other words, your real, authentic self. How do you do this?

STRATEGY: Instead of dumping, learn to reveal.

Dumping is basically complaining; you are not looking for input, you just want a sounding board.

Revealing is all about being vulnerable with him as a demonstration of your faith and trust in him. You are open to soothing and problem solving, and this helps establish or send the message that your relationship is a “safe place” for both of you.

How do you know if you’re dumping vs. revealing?

Ask yourself: Would I feel hurt right now if he checked out or lost interest or attention? If so, you are in the dumping mode, not the revealing mode and dumping takes a whole ‘nother set of skills that you can learn in WifeSavers. In that course, we learn how to teach him how to be there for us.

In this guide however, what we’re focused on is communicating to him that your marriage is the safe place for emotions: both positive and negative, both yours and his.

So, while we’re focused on building intimacy, just for now, rather than dumping your angst on him (flooding him with emotions or with your complaints), try thinking more often about “revealing” yourself to him.

How do you do that?

TACTIC: When revealing, choose your subject and your time and your approach wisely

1. Your Subject: Revealing yourself in this context—that is, with the purpose of helping him feel close to you—should not (perhaps ironically) include any “relationship” issues between the two of you, or any issues that “relate” to him: his choices or behaviors. The subject of your “reveal” should be about something other than that; something in your world, in your heart, in your environment, something other than what you’d like him to change about him or about your relationship.
2. Your Timing: Also, be aware of your timing. Try “revealing” yourself when the two of you are alone and he’s undistracted; preferably, after you’ve had some exclusive time or activity together (the next lesson will give you lots of ideas about that).
3. Your Approach: Tell him what you’re looking for from him in as direct, calm, and straightforward style as possible right at the start. In WifeSavers, we call this “talking to the big dog” (a phrase used in business). Let him know you have something you need his insight on, or that you have a problem you’d appreciate him helping you solve: don’t jump straight into the subject itself. Give him a chance to put on his thinking cap, and he’ll be much more engaged. In fact, if you use the words...

“I have a problem I need your help with...”

OR “I’d really like to know what you think about this...”

He will, in all probability, be instantly on the job because you’re speaking his language: most men relish solving problems. And

you have to let him do it, which brings us to our second strategy to help alleviate his fear of failure:

STRATEGY: Let him soothe and counsel you.

When you share confidences and reveal aspects of yourself and then invite him to help you find your perspective or restore your balance with his ideas and insight, you are positioning yourself to be in a very influential place when he needs a confidant and counselor. You will no doubt expect him to receive your input graciously at that time. Well then, while you are the one in revealing mode, try to be gracious and just thank him for his input instead of taking exception with it for whatever reason. Let him soothe and counsel you.

Warning: don't be surprised or offended if he jumps swiftly to a solution without letting you fully verbally process. Remember, if you didn't want his input, only his ear, then you were looking to dump, not reveal. If you are truly in the "revealing mode", you won't be offended when he actually has a swift idea or two for you for you. In fact, you will say something like:

"Wow. That's insightful. Thank you. I'm going to chew on that. May I share some more detail with you?"

Since you don't have to necessarily take whatever advice he gives you, there's really no reason to get defensive, is there? You're just gathering ideas; options. It's up to you what you ultimately do with his feedback. However, since you're focused on building intimacy and trust, do your best to respectfully listen and to promise to think about it and to thank him for it.

TACTIC: Acknowledge his attempt to soothe you, no matter how awkward.

Also, if part of his input includes trying to talk you down from the high emotion you've spun into during your reveal, do your best to accept his soothing (rather than getting frustrated) by just acknowledging his attempt to help you that way:

“Sorry to get spun up. Thanks for helping me think this through.”

Now be prepared that his approach to soothing or problem solving may be trying to reason you out of the problem (as though it shouldn't be a problem). He may also or try to humor you out of your emotion or earnestness (as in making light of it). Both are common masculine attempts to soothe a woman, and neither is very effective. We usually end up more emotional or frustrated than ever. Even so, instead of being disappointed or huffy (because we want him to feel successful in the end so that this

kind of conversation can happen again and be improved upon with practice), it's best to respond with something like:

“Honey, this is real to me and I’m counting on your thoughtful input. Give me your best thinking.”

He'll probably get serious after that and offer you a more thoughtful solution or insight. Thank him for his second attempt and avoid irritation or belittling him for his first reaction.

He may also try to soothe you not so much verbally, but physically: a hug, a touch, a kiss. If he does, do your best to sink into it, even if you're upset. Jerking away from him when he's trying to soothe you feels to him like a punch in the stomach. If you really don't want him to touch you, that's your right of course, but try to be straightforward (brief, informational, friendly, and firm) in stating what is helpful or what you will accept:

“Honey, I’m sorry to be so prickly right now...just got a lot of stuff going on inside...give me a few.”

...and then let him pull away, not you. Of course, you will want to immediately thank him for his respect and understanding.

Now the opposite can also happen. Rather than pulling you in for a hug, he may become fidgety, or disinterested, distant, even dismissive. That's not unusual once he thinks (in his mind), that he has solved your problem or has given all he has to give you. And that may very well be true. Concentrated conversation can

zap his testosterone levels (his source of energy), believe it or not. That's okay. Your objective has been met.

And what was your objective?

In this case, it was to alleviate his fear of failure; it was to help him feel successful in listening to and problem solving or in sharing his opinion with you. Well done. Just be aware that wives, when they sense their guy getting fidgety or distant, are tempted, ironically, to start “dumping” on him, or getting more emotional than ever. Stop short if at all possible. He has already sent you the message that he's absorbed all he can for now. And he really has. His ability to process emotion is slower than yours (for good reason) and he probably needs time and space to “catch up” emotionally.

So, in review, you will fare better, far better, in helping him feel close to you if you focus, just for now, while we're working towards becoming his emotional intimate, on:

- “Revealing” rather than “dumping” and on
- Letting him soothe and counsel you, using all the strategies and tactics we've discussed.

And one last tactic...

TACTIC: Don't forget to express appreciation.

Here's the kind of affirming dialogue you want to use to express your appreciation for his help:

“Thank you honey for listening to me and letting me open up so much to you. Your advice [or your take on it, or your touch] also helped, and makes me feel close to you. I love it when we share like that – just the two of us. I hope you know you can do the same with me anytime.”

OR “I love it when we can share times like this – just the two of us.”

If said sincerely, this will speak the truth to him and obviously send the message that you are eager and glad to be, or to become, more and more his intimate.

All right. You have hopefully put the fear of failure to rest.

What's the next fear that may be keeping him from opening up?

Second: How To Alleviate The Fear That You Might Tell Others

This is a trust issue and trust is only built line upon line, time after time.

Before he can be sure of you, you have to be sure of yourself. You have to be absolutely committed, anchored, devoted, determined, rock-solid certain to the moon and back that you will never share or even hint at his secrets with or to others without his permission.

STRATEGY: Build trust over time by determining to be trustworthy.

You can understand that. Think about it. He knows how much you talk to other women: your mom, your sisters, or your girlfriends. Remember, you have hoards of intimates, but he only has one: YOU.

What a sense of betrayal would ensue if he should finally open up to you, his ONE intimate, perhaps about something he's kept close to the hip for a long time, only to hear later that you had told someone(s).

This is a no-brainer/deal-breaker, ladies.

WIFESAVERS MANTRA: "To keep his trust, I have to keep his trust."

This is all part of the 9th WifeSavers Law of Attraction: Allegiance, the inner-pledge or attitude that "you have all my heart both in private and in public". If you are committed to protecting his

confidences, you will, over time, prove your integrity to him so that his fear of exposure will subside.

Third: How To Alleviate The Fear That You Could Burn Him Someday With The Information He's Shared With You

STRATEGY: Never use his confidences against him.

This becomes another internal covenant with yourself: you are never ever going to throw his secrets back in his face: not during a heated conversation, not when he's hurt your feelings, not when you are feeling keenly disappointed in him or in how things appear to be turning out at any given moment, not when you think you can manipulate him with guilt or shame, and not when you want badly to displace whatever guilt or shame you are feeling.

I know this is a tall order, but if you find yourself self-justifying the act of resurrecting his confidences or secrets in a way that you know will pain him or shame him, with any degree of disrespect or disdain or disappointment in your heart, you had better Drop and Cover (see *Wife for Life*, chapter 16) because this is Betraya, the Crazy Lady, Territory (*Wife for Life*, chapter 9). In other words, you're in nothing but quicksand: the more you struggle, the faster you'll sink. Do your darndest to resist the temptation to exploit him this way, or you will push back your hope of becoming his intimate by about a thousand years. Let the heat of the moment or the

temptation pass with time, or process it with an objective third party (like me), but do your best to live by this mantra:

WIFESAVERS MANTRA: “I’m not going to burn my bridges by burning him.”

If you have violated his trust in the past, you will need to learn and apply WifeSavers know-how consistently over a significant period of time. And you will need to learn how to request forgiveness; a skill that I would love to teach you more about in the WifeSavers Course & Community. In the meantime, start by repeating the mantras silently to yourself repeatedly over many days until they begin to seep into your heart. You will feel them working upon you and seeping into your interactions with your husband in perhaps subtle but welcome ways.





Secrets
6-10

OPENING HIS STICKY LID

How to Create That Warm Conversation Where He Opens

Okay, so now that you have laid his fears to rest—which of course is an ongoing process and a lifetime commitment—we are going to discuss a specific principle as well as two tactics that will really help him open up to you. However, to maximize them, you need to understand why they work, and to comprehend that, you need to be aware of Secret #6...

SECRET #6

Men and women process emotions differently. You express emotion. He releases emotion.

It may seem strange or unfortunate or irritating to you, but most men are not comfortable with emotion in the same way women are. Neither are they insensitive brutes. Your man feels things very deeply; it is just that he is wired to respond to emotion differently from you.

Researchers have found that, generally speaking, women verbalize emotion, while men's emotional language is physical—that is, a man needs to physically release the emotion that a woman would express or process in words. What that means is that while you as a woman are wired to talk about your feelings, he is programmed by Mother Nature to do something about them. Women's preference and skill tends towards rapport talk, while men's preference is more report talk. Understanding that difference can help us not only become more patient in our communications, but it can also pave the way for more heartfelt and frequent one on one conversation.

Let's start with a very basic approach that nevertheless is rather revolutionary to most of my WifeSavers students.

STRATEGY: Share or exchange information, rather than emotion.

As we've discussed, you as a woman are an emotional/relational creature. He's different. He is a problem-solving, performance-oriented creature. He tends, out of the shoot, to naturally gravitate toward logical, analytical thinking and speaking, and is therefore most comfortable with information-based communication. Therefore, the way to help him edge closer towards conversation that involves more emotion or relationships (particularly the relationship between the two of you) is to respect his preference for information.

How do we do that? Like this.

Men warm up to sharing feelings by exchanging or by "teaching" information first. You can help your conversations become pleasant and bonding in nature by encouraging him in a very specific way: Start talking about anything casual and factual. And let him give you casual information in exchange (whether it's about his work or world events or whatever!). And while he does...give him the same kind of attention you want: 100 percent.

TACTIC: Carefully and judiciously nudge him toward more "feeling".

As you exchange information, it may take him a while to warm up, but when he does, and he's obviously feeling relaxed and close to you, you can nudge him gently away from just-the-facts with a no-pressure:

“And how do you feel about that?”

Careful! No loaded questions. Your intent must simply be to get information, not to judge or manipulate him into the answer you are looking for. In other words: no agenda. You can fight a natural tendency to judge (or feel threatened by) his response, opinion, rumination, or observation, by thinking, and occasionally even saying, this one magic word:

“Interesting!”

It is “interesting,” isn't it, how that one word says so much and so little; just enough of the right and respectful engagement without bespeaking one syllable of judgment.

Okay, so informational conversation is the first gateway to opening his sticky lid. The remaining strategies and tactics involve the fact that he is a physical creature.

STRATEGY: Communicate shoulder-to-shoulder, rather than face-to-face.

Keep in mind that friends can find solace in just being together. As a woman, you may bond verbally, but your husband can bond with you just by sharing a space with you. Ever notice how pleased he seems when you watch him engage in some activity? He also likes it when you simply sit beside him in quiet contentment.

This mode of bonding is sometimes referred to as shoulder-to-shoulder communication, and men generally prefer it. Even though women default to face-to-face bonding, mastery of this type of communication can be very pleasant. And once you've kindly and consistently indulged his preference this way, he's much more likely to look you in the eye when it counts the most.

STRATEGY: Converse while moving, while you are physically active together.

Frequently, men (and boys I might add) are more comfortable communicating while moving; a walk or a physical activity or project is a very effective conversation starter with him. And you can generally expect him to share more of his “inners” with you while on a long hike or during a Saturday garage cleaning, or even just strolling around the neighborhood. (Remember, this goes for your sons as well.)

TACTIC: “Play”, or have fun, or enjoy recreation with him.

There is one more thing you can do that will help you help him to open up because it involves physicality (most of time), and it's the funniest one of all: play with him! What I mean of course is to lighten up and enjoy some recreation or refreshment together. Sounds so fun it's easy, right? Well, actually, there's a lot you need to know about how men play and why they play and it's all wrapped up in the masculine quest believe or not. Sound intriguing? It is!

When you're a busy wife and perhaps a mother, and perhaps have a professional work, life can get serious, or at least, feel very serious. It can be a blessed relief and healthy actually (if for only a few minutes, or hours, or if we're really lucky, a few days), to let go of all that seriousness with a laugh, or a silly encounter or conversation, or a good game, or some kind of physical, or even intellectual recreation.

We talk a lot about “delighting” our own heart in WifeSavers, but in this context, we are talking about letting him delight our heart: giving him the pleasure (and that's how it feels to him), to have you right beside him, watching you release your worries, focusing a little on him instead of all the other relationships in your life: plain old having fun together.

Why is fun so important and effective in helping him feel more intimate with you? The answer is in our next “secret”:

SECRET #7

Play and adventure are necessary to his thriving and even to his surviving.

As you may remember learning already, men are generally action-oriented, physical creatures. They are meant to accomplish great deeds, which often includes competition, exertion, and conquest. This helps us to understand his long hours at work, his extensive projects, and his relish for problem solving.

In other words...

MEN HAVE TO WORK because they are:

- Action-oriented
- Physically-oriented
- Performance or Accomplishment-based
- Their quest is all about competition, exertion, and conquest

But as much as he is driven to work, he also needs to PLAY because, guess what? He is...

- Action-oriented
- Physically-oriented
- Performance or Accomplishment-based
- Their quest is all about competition, exertion, and conquest

Look at those lists. What's the difference? What's the difference between work and play for a man?

One thing and one thing only: purpose.

- The purpose of his work is to benefit the world as well as his family (and in the process receive the respect he craves from external sources).
- The purpose of his play is to benefit himself (and in the process increase his self-respect or pride in his masculinity).

You can understand that, can't you: the need to benefit yourself once in awhile? Please note: what we're talking about here goes far beyond getting your nails done or gabbing with the girls; it's way more than needing a breather or a change of routine once in awhile. Working, thinking, and problem solving continuously for a man without replenishing his hormones and energy will kill him just as certainly as if he could not work at all. As I wrote in *Wife for Life: The Power to Succeed in Marriage*: "Your man is not a Pioneer Woman, milking the cows at sunrise and going with gusto all over the farm until midnight. His brain cannot and will not run nonstop like a computer."

No, in order to thrive (and even survive) your Nice Guy has to have play AND adventure...

- Play: a time-out from the intense personal fears, needs, and responsibilities of manhood. (Rest)

- Adventure: daring exploits that challenge and confirm his masculinity. (Test)

...in between building a barn and bringing in the hay.

His biology and his physiology require it; otherwise his heart and body will literally wear out prematurely. He knows this instinctively, and that's why he asks (or maybe tells) you that he's going to play ball with the guys, or immerse himself in a video game, or watch a guy-movie, or go for a run. He knows (or rather, his body and brain know) that he has to do everything in his power to bolster his masculine self-confidence in order to deal with his masculine fears; fears that do their best day in and day out to tear him up inside, literally.

Now, be ready, his escape might not take a form you think of as relaxing (it may seem over-stimulating or even dangerous to you), but relaxing isn't the point of play or adventure for a guy. It's about restoring that confidence in his masculinity, or even confidence in masculinity in general (as in, if HE can do it, I can do it).

Biologically, we are talking about literally replenishing his testosterone levels here; levels that are drained after every concentrated act—from physical exertion to problem solving to involved conversation—and a good shoot 'em up movie or video game or intense TV sports, could very well be the ticket for him. I know the idea that play's not always about relaxing (or distracting) may seem strange to some women, but just you keep in mind that list of similarities between work and play for a guy. The only difference, remember, is the focus:

Is the activity about benefiting the world and family, or is it about benefiting himself?

Now let me ask you another question...think hard, but not too hard...we're talking about fun here...What do you think would happen if he could combine his two focuses?

What if he could have fun for his sake, while also having fun for someone else's sake: let's say...hmmmm... YOU?! Now we're talkin'! Now we're talkin' about...

- Optimal fun for him
- Optimal bonding for you
- Optimal health for his body
- Optimal health for your marriage

Here's another secret you have to believe in order to put this strategy of playing together on the front burner:

SECRET #8

He would prefer your recreational companionship to anyone else's. He craves your availability.

Remember "Superman", the 1978 movie with Christopher Reeves? Who did he really want to fly with and for...a world full of people in trouble? Think again and I'll ask again: Who did he really want to not only serve and impress, but also go for a late evening "fly" over Manhattan? That's right, Lois Lane.

Yes, your guy sometimes wants to play ball with the guys, but he would love you to be there to watch him (and “fly” with him when he makes that amazing basket or pass). In fact, there’s a whooping good chance that he’d not only appreciate you there watching him, what he’d really really like is if you were the one fishing, or jamming, or climbing rocks, or tossing a ball with him. Marriage experts call this “recreational companionship” and it’s one of most men’s top needs in marriage. Do you hear me? TOP NEEDS.

So, now that you know how important play is to him, imagine how bewildering and discouraging and frustrating it must be to him that his favorite recreational companion, the one who he thought would always be available to him; the one who was so enthused about his passionate pastime when he was dating her; the one that he couldn’t wait to share his passionate pastime with, or teach more about that passionate pastime to (yes, YOU); has gradually, or even suddenly, become not so interested in “that stuff” anymore?

Do you know how a man subconsciously defines emotional partnership?

SECRET #9

A man’s definition of emotional partnership is physical availability and intellectual enthusiasm.

If you want him to be more open and interactive with you; if you want to create that kind of open, safe, intimate climate in your marriage, then you'd be well advised to consider this strategy:

STRATEGY: Meet him on his playing field.

...whatever and whenever that is.

Whatever? Check. But whenever?

Listen. We all start out thinking it's so wonderful to be our husband's best friend and favorite playmate, but you know as well as I do that as time goes on and the laundry or stack of assignments at work pile up, we go into "git-er'-done" mode, paranoid that if we slack on the stack, it will only get higher and higher. But how often have you found time for your son or daughter's soccer game or school play or homework assignment, but there's no time "left over" for a date night or a fun night or a few quiet minutes with your husband? What about a night or weekend away with him?

TACTIC: Pause the To-Do list and Prioritize the Do-With-Honey list.

Write down three activities, play or adventure, that you know your husband enjoys. Choose at least one that you think you could make room for, or that you would be willing to learn more about. It might not take a lot of learning, like watching one of his guy movies with him or attending a ball game or a concert, but it might stretch you a bit to learn to maneuver a joystick, a golf club, or a chess board. But I challenge you to try, or to be willing to try.

You can do this. You are creative by instinct. You are relational by instinct. And you are smart, capable, and FUN. You've no doubt impressed him in the past (though it may be the distant past) with your playful spirit. It's time to remind him (and yourself) just how

TACTIC: Plan a time with him to engage in the activity together.

fun you are!

Once you've determined that you are willing to try introducing more "play" into your marriage, approach your husband and explain sincerely:

"Honey, I want to learn how to _____, or I want to do _____ with you. When can we do that?"

Put the timing in his court and mean it. Demonstrate that you are not only willing to DO whatever with him; you are also willing to

DO whenever with him! Remember how important “Availability” is to him (Wife for Life, chapter 20), and how much he fears neglect; and how much he wants to be the center of your universe. Stepping up to plan a time with him to engage in an activity of his choice is how we are going to demonstrate our sincerity in meeting this need of his.

So pull out the calendar this week, and begin to figure it out with him. Commit to your date night or fun night right then and there, and prep yourself to keep the whole event light and pleasant. As the corporation that really seems to understand how important recreation is puts it:

JUST DO IT.

After one passionate (or plain old silly) pastime-experience together; that is, after even just one episode of his kind of play or adventure, I predict that his masculine zest and his masculine confidence will be on such a high that he will open up to you in surprising ways: ways that I predict, will make you very happy.

Do you hear what I’m saying? Even if the activity itself wasn’t how you would have chosen to spend an evening or afternoon or weekend, the resulting happiness quotient is going to blow the roof off. When you see and feel his happiness; as you watch energy flowing into him and feel it spilling onto you, it won’t matter what the activity was about. You’re just gonna love the way he magically begins to TALK!

That’s right, talk, as in open up to you.

It may be two hours into that Saturday afternoon hike up the mountain, but in all likelihood, he will, all of a sudden, out of the blue, just start talking.

If that sounds remotely worth the trouble, believe me, it's worth just about everything.



CONCLUSION

Alright then, let's begin working the strategies in this guide today and in all probability—unless there are some long-standing deep-seated issues between the two of you—you will begin to see immediate results. In the long-term (if you do your best to internalize and consistently apply what I've taught you here), you will find him opening up to you more and more; becoming a better, more loving, more sensitive partner for you.

Remember how we discussed at the very beginning how “becoming his intimate” would be a process? Can you see now that intimacy itself is a process, not a state...how it is the great challenge and the great exhilaration of marriage?

I hope that this last secret won't come as a surprise to you...

SECRET #10

Intimacy is not an OUTCOME. It is a QUEST. It is the JOURNEY and the CHALLENGE and the JOY of a man and a woman spending a lifetime together.

Learn More

Wife for Life: The Power to Succeed in Marriage

The critically acclaimed, multi-award winning book that is transforming women and marriages everywhere

<http://ramonazabriskie.com/book>

WifeSavers Course & Community

The online, interactive personal study plus live mentor and community support to help you transform yourself, your husband, and your marriage

<https://wifesavers.org/membership/>

WifeSavers Podcast

The 5-star top relationship podcast
with Ramona & Dale Zabriskie

<https://wifesavers.org/podcasts>

5 Lies We Tell Brides and 5 Truths That Save Wives

Enlightening and entertaining FREE ebook
by Ramona

<https://wifesavers.org/free-ebook/>

Conversations on Physical Intimacy for Wives and Their Husbands

Informative and inspirational audio course by Ramona and her husband
for you and your husband

<https://wifesavers.org/physical-intimacy/>

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