

Stories of the Male and Female Brain



The brain
loves stories

The brain loves stories. It's a child who wants to hear the same bedtime story one more time, it's someone listening to Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon radio drama or it's friends hearing the how the big one almost got away, again. There's something intrinsic in the sound of a good story as it unfolds that holds the attention of your brain cells.

Everyday conversation is also about stories. There are story elements within everyday conversations that can either appeal to or drive male or female brains crazy. This phenomenon appears to be based on the nature of conversational differences between men and women.

Deborah Tannen, PhD. is professor of linguistics at Georgetown University and author of numerous books including **You Just Don't Understand – women and men in conversation**. Dr. Tannen's research has identified several gender differences in miscommunication. Three common gender differences are –

Men are about **status** – Women are about **connections**

Men like to respond by offering **advice** – Women respond with **understanding and connections**

Men use conversation to transmit **information** – Women use

conversation to maintain **interaction**

Anyone who has been married any length of time will basically concur but can also provide a first-hand examples that come from the “daily marital question.”

The Daily Marital Questions is: Honey, how was your day?

Now, in all fairness, women have more familiarity with this question. As part of the Mommy experience it becomes their role to ask their children when they come home from school – “*what did you do in school today?*” They have acquired the patience to listen as each child recites a whole series of events.

However, the same question when asked of a husband and wife can have a totally different intent and expectation.

Male response to Honey, how was your day?

- Will include a few specifics
- Will be short in number of spoken words
- Will highlight any personal achievement
- Will interpret any event which demonstrates his intellect

The **male intent** is to answer the question as briefly as possible.

The **male expectation** is to let his wife to know he fought another great day in the juggle and then he wants to know what’s for dinner.

Female response to Honey, how was your day?

- Will come in the form of a story
- Events will be given in their exact timeline of occurrence and include a list of characters
- Events will include insignificant and significant details

- Personal interpretation of events and other possible meanings will be provided unsolicited
- The storyline might diverge from time to time but will eventually come full circle back the point of the story

The **female intent** is to answer the question as fully as possible

The **female expectation** is to have her husband just to listen, understand and sympathize. She doesn't particularly welcome his well intended advice at this time.

What can drive male and female brains crazy and into misunderstandings is that when they **hear their partner's story it doesn't match the way they traditionally tell their story**, nor does it have the same intent or expectation.

While the brain loves a story, **tell it a story your partner's brain will tune into**. That may mean men you need a story with more details and women you may need a story that just sticks to the highlights.

If that doesn't work for you, find a good bedtime story you can read to each other.