

## Why should I be the one to do all the work when he's not willing to work on the relationship?

*By Jackie Feit*

PERSPECTIVE #1 (hers):

Dishes are piled in the sink, crusty from last night's dinner and this morning's breakfast. Shrieks echo throughout the house—the kids are undoubtedly winding up right before they need to be put down for bed. Piles of laundry in the washing room are begging to be folded, and you have at least one more hour of reading preparation before your workday starts tomorrow. All you want is a moment's peace and maybe a hot shower. Frazzled, you look around to find some relief, only to find your husband sprawled out on the couch, dozing off to the voice of Tom Brokaw. Anger wells within you...

PERSPECTIVE #2 (his):

Man, it's been a week. Work is basically sucking the life out of you. Every day, it's a battle to get out of bed and face a day of frustration. The paperwork is endless, your boss is never satisfied, the hours are long, and there are interpersonal conflicts at the office. This dead-end job is not what you bargained for, but your primary desire is to provide for your family, so you grit your teeth and make it through. Each hour at work, you're aware of the clock. You can't wait to go home and are increasingly excited as the 6:00 hour approaches. You rush to your car and drive off towards your oasis. You get home, see the ones you fight for daily, and finally, begin to decompress. What a day...

Same situation, two very different views. The truth is, whether it is an office dispute, a fight on the playground, or a trial in court, every story has (at least) two sides. In this particular example, what one person perceived as lazy, the other saw as a necessary recharge. And regardless of whose perspective is "wrong" or "right," communication is key.

Typically, the female is wired to be an "emotion barometer." Dr. DeAnne Terrell, a psychologist and faculty member of Psychological Studies Institute, states that "women are able to discern breaches in emotional intimacy much more quickly than men. Many women have a God-given ability to sense the emotional gap before the man even recognizes there is a problem." Because of this, it may seem as if you are the only one fighting to work on the relationship.

But, as Dr. Terrell mentions, "Someone has to step out and say, 'This matters to me.' The stalemate has to be broken, and someone has to be **brave** enough to break out." While bravery is usually associated with war heroes,

firefighters, or knights, it also applies to relationships—confronting a relational issue can sometimes feel even bigger than fighting a war.

When an emotional deficit is recognized, there are choices to be made. One of the options is to well up with anger or hurt, which will immediately draw battle lines and move you farther from where you desire to be. The other option is to sit down with humility, love, and grace and say, "I'm not saying that either of us is solely responsible...but let's both be the solution." When you think through these two approaches, the first option comes more naturally because it parallels what you are feeling. But the second option will open the door (even if it is only a crack) to a better marriage.

Women, think about it. How would you feel if your husband came to you saying, "I want to know how to love you better, and I want to teach you how to love me better."? It would be hard to refuse. And although you desire that he come to you first, you're the one with the keener ability to sense emotional distance. That gives you the opportunity to take the initial step. And with just one step, the lines of communication begin to open, allowing you to discuss how the union can become stronger. Brainstorm practical ways in which you can start mending the relationship, such as having a consistent date night, praying together, designating time to talk about your day, eating meals together, etc.

Whatever perspective you hold about the situation you're in, realize your spouse most likely has a completely different point of view. Take the first step in trying to understand his vantage point. Blessings may come from this bravery!

Book Suggestions:

*The Five Love Languages*, by Gary Chapman

<http://www.fivelovelanguages.com/learn.html>

<http://www.amazon.com/Five-Love-Languages-Heartfelt-Commitment/dp/1881273156>

*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, John M. Gottman, PhD

<http://www.amazon.com/Seven-Principles-Making-Marriage-Work/dp/0752837265>

-offers actual exercises throughout the book—helps couples work together...to become better friends.