

# Life Lessons

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## Better Relationships: Coping with Stress

It is God's will for us to enjoy and have meaningful relationships in our lives. He made men and women uniquely (not better than each other). His purpose for us is to live in harmony and celebrate our differences. Regardless of our marital status, deep in our hearts we all long to be in a loving, accepting relationship. We're created to receive and give love. However, many of us struggle to build quality relationships. We lack understanding and practical tools. We frustrate ourselves and each other because we don't know how to understand our mate and be understood.

Men prefer time alone to cope with stress and problems. They process life in "boxes." Have you ever noticed how men go into their "boxes" when they want to relieve themselves from stress? Newspaper, football and basketball court, TV and computer screen, a bed are all shaped like boxes! Men tend to handle life best by compartmentalizing their lives tackling one problem at a time.

**What she can do:** Show him that you care by giving him a hug or a kiss. But most importantly, give him the space to be alone to relieve his tension. Don't tell him what to do unless he asks. Trust him that he will be able to solve his problems alone and come out victorious. Express your admiration for his ability to handle stress on his own but don't bombard him with questions. That makes him feel inadequate and your lack of confidence in him.

Women work thru problems in a more intricate way. When they feel under stress, they need to talk and share their feelings about everything (good, bad and the ugly). They need to connect with someone who will listen without being judgmental of how they feel. During these times, her immediate goal is not finding solutions to the problems but someone to understand

and accept how she feels. She does not want to be told that what she is feeling is wrong. At this time, she's looking for a shoulder not a mouth (lecture).

**What he can do:** When women talk about problems, men automatically think that he is being blamed and she's making him responsible for her unhappiness. So very soon men start to get out of the conversation or put up a defensive wall. Understand that women need to process their feelings by verbalizing them. She's not blaming you or looking for a solution when she expresses her feelings of frustration. Your feeling of being "attacked" is temporary. The sooner she feels understood, validated and accepted the faster her hopelessness will disappear.

Give her the "gift" of your attentive listening ears, keeping eye contact, and asking caring questions. Touch or hold her gently in your arms and tell her how important and valuable she is to you. You can score really big if you can listen without getting critical of how she feels and providing solutions to her problems.

Also before you retrieve to deal with your own stress, let her know that you're not upset with her. When she feels secure in her relationship with you, she'll not come after you trying to mend things. Without this she feels she has done something wrong and tries to reach out bombarding you with questions and unsolicited solutions.

*Trust your man to solve his problems alone unless he asks for your input. Allow your wife to express her feelings without criticizing, interrupting or offering solution.*