

OUTLINE FOR EDUCATION WEEK 2009

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“Male and Female Created He Them” (Gen. 1:27):

Understanding, Honoring, and Bridging Gender Differences

Chemistry: Creating Meaningful Connections
Between How His Brain Works, and How Her Brain Works

Communication: Promoting Mutual Understanding
Through Her Way of Talking, and His Way of Talking

Closeness: Building a Beautiful Relationship,
Blending His Bonding Style with Her Bonding Style

Companionship: Man and Woman Working in Unity,
Side by Side, *Forever*

Chemistry: Creating Meaningful Connections
Between How His Brain Works, and How Her Brain Works

1. **Marriage is ordained of God** (*D&C 49:15*), and establishment and maintenance of happy marriages and families is essential to His plan. (*Proclamation on the Family, paragraphs 1&7*)
2. Satan battles against that plan by fighting strenuously against families and marriage. Current **effective strategies for destroying marriage** include:
 - 1) rampant **divorce** among existing marriages (often for trivial causes, esp. “differences.”)
 - 2) “pseudo-marriage” (ie **cohabitation** and extended romantic relationships avoiding marriage)
 - 3) need fulfillment for married people outside marriage (ie **infidelity**, including porn use)
 - 4) isolation/general relationship **avoidance** (often fueled by fear based on prior negative experience)
3. Much of this is fueled by the mainstream **media**, which generates widespread and unrealistic expectations of men about women, and of women about men.
4. Fortunately, both **science and revelation** have contributed important, marriage-saving insights about how males and females differ, and how those differences can bind us together in happy and productive ways.
5. For example, revelation has taught: 1) Gender is eternal, and men and women have differing but equally important roles in families (*Proclamation on the Family, paragraphs 2&7; Eph. 5:22-33*); 2) Men and women can only gain full exaltation and eternal progress together (*1 Cor. 11:11; D&C 132:19-20*)
6. Meanwhile, recent scientific developments are revealing that 1) Men and women have **uniquely different hormonal processes** that influence their feelings, needs, and behavior in predictable ways over their lifetimes; 2) Significant differences exist in **brain structure and organization between male and female brains** that generate noticeably different ways of thinking (men typically more focused, logical, and sequential; women more globally aware, emotionally sensitive, and intuitive.) (*Louise Brezendine, MD, “The Female Brain”; John Grey, PhD, “Men Are From Mars, Women Are from Venus.”*)
7. When these normal difference are acknowledged and respected, **men and women can become powerful partners and allies**, not only in marriage, but in church, business, community, and family roles. (*Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Counseling with Our Councils.”*)

Communication: Promoting Mutual Understanding
Through Her Way of Talking, and His Way of Talking

1. Men and women differ in the ways they tend (and prefer) to communicate.
2. **Women often use talking as a bonding mechanism**, using communication to vent feelings, share concerns, and feel connection with others. They enjoy thinking out loud, and their thinking process is facilitated through verbalization. In talking about problems, they are often not seeking advice or external solution, but rather a listening ear as they work through their expressed concerns. (*Deborah Tannen, “You Just Don’t Understand”*)
3. **Men often misinterpret women’s verbalization of concerns as a request for advice**, which creates bruised feelings, as she feels controlled and patronized, and he feels unappreciated, and discounted. As he learns to listen, rather than advise, both he and she begin to feel more relaxed and comfortable in communication.
4. **Men generally use talking as a problem-solving device**, to achieve functional, practical purposes. They tend to “think first and talk later,” announcing their conclusions after careful private consideration. This tendency often leaves women feeling “out of the loop” in the decision-making process. (*John Grey, “Men are From Mars...”*)
5. Similarly, while **men tend to be direct** in expressing their opinions and requests, **women tend to be indirect**, “hinting” at what they want or need without stating it clearly (because she does not desire to seem insensitive or controlling, and because she believes that someone who loves her will “just know” what she needs.) These differences often lead to relationship disruption, as she feels her needs are not recognized or met.
6. This is a **common factor in the increasing tendency for women to leave their marriages in midlife**, feeling “I just can’t do this anymore” or “I can’t be me when I’m with him;” while he is left bewildered because, “I thought we had a great marriage.” Women who learn to be direct and clear in their requests often are delightfully surprised by their partner’s willingness to respond positively to their expressed need.
7. As women learn to be more focused and direct, and men learn to be more sensitive and inclusive, **male-female communication can be greatly improved**. “With such sacrifices, God is well pleased.” (*Heb. 13:16*)

Closeness: Building a Beautiful Relationship,
Blending His Bonding Style with Her Bonding Style

1. Both men and women desire to be “best friends” with their spouse. However, their definitions of what this means can differ significantly.
2. Women tend to define their “best friend” as “the person I can talk to about anything.” **Women bond primarily through verbal communication.** (*Tannen and Grey, cited above.*)
3. Men tend to define their “best friend” as “the person I do stuff with.” **Men bond primarily through shared activity** – whether in sports, work, service, or recreation. (*Willard Hartley, “His Needs, Her Needs”*).
4. This difference can create significant conflict and misunderstanding in male-female relationships, as **her efforts to seek more verbal bonding may clash with his hunger for activity-based bonding.**
5. **This difference is a significant one, challenging even the best of couples.** Research has demonstrated that men and women can have significantly different emotional needs in their closest relationships. While most men are capable of conversation, it is not the deep, continuous need that most women feel; while most women can relate on a physical and activity level, it does not have the same importance and bonding power that most men feel. To meet the needs of a spouse, both men and women need to stretch beyond their natural comfort zone. This can require patience on both their parts, but can bring mutually joyful consequences.
6. **The happiest marriages blend the best of both worlds.** These are the couples that *talk* a lot, but who also *do* a lot of things together; couples that enjoy emotional, verbal, spiritual, recreational, ***and*** physical intimacy.
7. Another difference is – women tend to desire continuous connection with their partner, whereas men retain a strong continuous need for independence. Achieving a **mutually-acceptable balance between connection and independence** is a challenge for all couples, but is crucial for successful long-term relationships.
8. Ultimately, closeness in marriage is what God taught to our first parents: “Therefore shall a man...cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.” (*Gen. 2:24*) **We are to become one** – united in love, in purpose, and in spirit. (*Jeffrey R. Holland, “Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments*). Reverence and utmost mutual consideration must attend these most tender dimensions of our relationships, if they are to reach their full and eternal potential.
9. We can find unity and joy in our relationships, if we regard the needs of our partner as just as important and real as our own needs, and find ways to effectively, continuously meet both sets of needs. In the process, each spouse can grow as an individual; and husband and wife can become, in every sense, “best friends” to each other.

Companionship: Growing Toward the “Exultant Ecstasy”
Of Man and Woman Working in Unity, Side by Side, *Forever*

1. **The Lord has clearly taught that He expects His followers to “be one.”** (*D&C 38:27; Moses 7:18; John 17:20-23*) Nowhere is this more important than in the sacred marriage relationship. (*Gen. 2:24*)
2. In understanding this oneness He requires, **we can learn from the “oneness” of the Godhead itself.** The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are “one”, yet they each perform differing roles in their shared divine mission.
3. Similarly, men and women, in marriage and in other roles, serve differing functions and have different talents, perspectives, and sensitivities. **It is because of these differences – not in spite of them – that men and women can be such effective partners** – if they regard these differences with mutual respect, rather than fall to the common temptation to try to “remake” the partner in their own image.
4. President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and **marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive.**” (*“Oneness in Marriage,” Ensign, March 1977/Oct. 2002*)
5. The oneness and unity required to generate such “exultant ecstasy” are **largely dependent upon the many inherent differences built into the design of male and female human beings.** Like puzzle pieces, who fit together precisely because the protrusions of one piece blend with the indentations of another piece, like choirs who create harmony precisely because the voices of altos and sopranos differ from those of tenors and basses, oneness and harmony can be the joyous result of our many differences.
6. Paul observed of oneness in marriage, “This is a great mystery.” (*Eph. 5:31-32*). But it is the “mystery” that can stand at the **foundation of our deepest mortal enjoyments, and our richest eternal rewards.**