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Description

Dr. Gail Saltz and psychologist Jeff Gardere discuss reasons why men may not listen to women and give tips on how both sexes can better communicate with their partner.

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"Why Men Don't Listen to Women." Tamron Hall, correspondent. NBC Today Show. NBCUniversal
TAMRON HALL, anchor:
This morning on Today’s Relationships, “Why Men Don’t Listen to Women.” Does he hear you, but not get what you’re saying? It’s something that frustrates women and can harm the relationship, but men may not be entirely at fault for tuning out when women are talking. Today contributor and psychiatrist Gail Saltz and today contributor and psychologist Jeff Gardee are here with some advice on how to better communicate with your man. What are you doing?
JEFF GARDERE (Psychologist): I’m listening.
HALL: Okay, listen closely here.
GARDERE: I’ve learned my lesson! I’m listening.
HALL: You’re listening. Now, Gail, this is an interesting topic. It’s so relatable and I think every man or woman certainly has a story related to this.
GAIL SALTZ (Psychiatrist): Absolutely, I see a lot of this in my practice. Couples come in and they want help and one of the first issues is what’s not happening in communication and I think what people fail to realize often is that men and women’s brains are different. We are really wired differently and were socialized differently and women think of many, many, many more words per day, for instance, than men are tending to do. Men tend to be more linear - women more emotional, men more analytic. These differences can make the communication be a problem.
HALL: And if they’re not dealt with it can certainly create a major problem, perhaps even the end of the relationship. So, Jeff, we have some tips and explanations and understanding why men think differently and how women can understand this and the first thing you say is that men really want to fix the problem.
GARDERE: That’s right, just as Gail said, men think analytically, therefore they want to go right to the heart of the problem. They don’t really want to hear what’s going on because for them it’s all about fixing it as quickly as possible.
HALL: They want the relationship to work, after all, as well.
GARDERE: That’s the thing, that’s the thing. In their own way they’re listening, but not to the
satisfaction of their women. We shouldn’t bash men who do try to listen. At least they’re sitting next to you. They’re there, but maybe they’re not there, but the fact is they are there.

HALL: And Gail, the other thing to understand and I was trying to wrap my head around this is when you say men want to maintain a rational thought process. What does that mean?

SATLZ: That means that sometimes a woman wants to be listened to, she wants support but she wants to vent. If he wants to go from point A to point B in a straight line and she wants to sort of hit C and D along the way he might deflect her. Problem solving could be problem solving or could be a deflection like, “Look, I solved the problem so whatever else you’re talking about, yeah, I really don’t want to hear that right now.”

HALL: This sounds like a Chris-Rock-stand-up. I’m just reflecting, but with that said, you say Jeff, that men want to keep masculinity in check.

GARDERE: In other words, they want to keep it a man thing and for them to hear the emotion -because woman can get very emotional and what they really want to do when they’re asking for help is be able to vent it’s a catharsis and it’s important and the guys are like, “Wait a minute, I didn’t ask for all this emotion, I didn’t ask for all this intimacy because now I’m feeling very uncomfortable in dealing with those feelings.”

HALL: But you do ask for it because you’re in the relationship. It’s a packaged deal. I come with my emotions.

SATLZ: But his idea of intimacy could be very different from hers so as we know on many sex segments we’ve done she wants to talk and share emotion and he wants to like get to it because that’s his intimacy.

HALL: Well, that’s a great way to put it, “Get to it.” You also say, Gail, that men want to secure the upper hand. Why would you be obsessed with wanting the upper hand?

SATLZ: This is true, frankly, of both people in the relationship. Sometimes relationships are viewed, not even consciously, as who’s winning and everybody wants to be the winner, they want to have the power, and they want to have control in the relationship so they don’t feel insecure. Part of the not listening might be like, “Look, I don’t want to get into the mire here I just want to say I’ve said my piece and now we’re done. I don’t want to hear whining. I’m done.”

HALL: And that’s part of the advice on how to fix the problem because now you understand it so how do you fix it? And you say, “Let her finish.”

GARDERE: Yeah, let her finish because it is about the emotion. Too often guys just jump in and cut her off because they don’t want to hear all the verb-age, but let her finish because that’s even better than your doing the problem solving as a man.

SATLZ: And women have to remember – he’s not the girlfriend, he’s the guy. So if you know he has a different headset tell him what you need. If you want him to listen, tell him. He’s going to listen. At the end of the day you both want the relationship to work out.

GARDERE: I agree with that. That’s why, women, keep it piffy.

HALL: Keep it “piffy,” girls.

GARDERE: He is not the girlfriend. He might be a girly man, but he is not the girlfriend, okay?

HALL: Okay, I’m going to marinate on this with all the people I’m going to tweet about it anyway. Thank
you very much.