

# HOW TO BUILD A MAN UP

Much is written about how a man can and should nurture his wife and lead his family, and rightly so given many men's apparent lack of knowledge in that area. Nevertheless, men are not the knuckle-dragging instinct-driven cavemen some seem to characterize them as nor are they driven solely by a need for sex. All this talk makes for a good monologue for a comedian, yet when the laughter fades the truth remains—men have feelings just like women. Believe it or not, men are emotional creatures. It is just that their sensitivity is different than that of a woman.

For instance, men are validated differently, and could be argued more, by personal achievement than are women. Whereas, women by nature, tend to be more validated through relationships. Don't misunderstand me, men value relationships, we are just inclined to believe we have to bring something to the table, other than ourselves, to be valued. This in part, drives most of our need to make a significant contribution to the world. We want our spouse and families to be proud of our accomplishments. We want to "make something of ourselves," to leave a legacy, or an inheritance. This is one reason only men put their names on buildings. If a woman's name is on a building, most likely a man put it there to honor her in a way he would have liked. This goes for statues and monuments as well.

Men are fixers, doers, protectors, and providers—at least in our minds. Consequently, take that away from us and we are usually miserable. And when we are miserable ladies, you guessed it; we aren't in the mood to make you happy. It's the opposite of "When mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!" Men who need "building up" are usually moody, grumpy, angry, irritable, uncooperative, withdrawn, and more. It could be depression, but he can also just be feeling as if he is failing. Few things are as sad as a man who feels defeated by life. It can affect every area of his life from his relationships to his ability or desire to set and reach goals.

When it comes to building a man up, it's really not too hard. Think of the family dog.

- **Pet him a little.** Yes, some men are spoiled, some are insensitive, and some men need to show some affection to their wives as well. I'm just saying you will have a better chance of jumpstarting his better instincts by showing him some affection. "Well when he does this..." or "Well when he shows me some affection I will..." When will men and women stop behaving as children, go ahead, and do what is right and good? Giving one's spouse a little positive attention won't hurt anyone.
- **Show approval for good performance.** Let him know he got it right. Concerning meeting your expectations, many men think in terms of a bulls-eye on a target. He needs a specific goal. None of this, "I want to feel loved." Instead, you could show you love for me by \_\_\_\_\_. Now he has a target. If he hits the bulls-eye, commend him. If he gets close, commend him just the same. "But I don't want him to get a 'bighead', he's already cocky enough." Wrong! Insecure men are often the most boastful. The more he gets your approval the less he will feel the need to brag on himself. "Well, he gets enough praise from others." Wrong again! He wants YOUR approval.
- **Be clear about what you want and expect.** Forget being a mystery. I have *never* heard a man say, "I love her because she is a mystery. I never know what she is thinking or what she wants." However, I have seen them almost pull their hair out because deciphering their wife's messages and mixed signals were like interpreting the book of Revelation. Again, get specific. Don't say, "Why don't you do something to make the house look better?" Too vague unless you know he specializes in that, otherwise you might get results that will get you a letter from the homeowner's association.
- **Throw him a bone!** What will keep us interested? Satisfied? Wanting to please you? Throw us a bone! In other words, a small reward here and there, give us a hint when we don't understand, an opportunity to fix things or make things right. Remember, brag on a man and he will out do himself trying to live up to your words. Take him down a notch and he will not try to rise any higher—for you.

Ladies, while it is true we men are simple creatures. In spite of the use of the dog analogy I think I can speak for all men when I say, "*We are not animals!*" As you know, it is our simplicity that can be our charm. Joke about us if you will, just don't forget that the showing of love, affection, consideration, and the need for better communication is mutual.