Why Men Don’t Ask Directions and Women Can’t Read Maps

Are we biologically programmed to drive each other crazy? Absolutely.

By Barbara and Allan Pease

Picture this scene. A cave family is crouched around a fire. The man is sitting at the cave entrance gazing out, surveying the landscape and scanning the horizon for signs of movement. The woman and children have not eaten for days, and he knows that he must hunt at the first break in the weather and not return until he has found food. This is his role, and his family is depending on him. They’re hungry but confident that he can succeed, as he always has done. His stomach is churning and he is fearful. Will he be successful again? Will his family starve? Will other males kill him because he is weak from hunger? He just sits there with a blank, expressionless face—watching. He must not show any signs of fear to his family, as they would become disheartened. He must be strong.

Why Men Don’t Ask for Directions When They Drive

A million years of not wanting to be seen as a failure appears to be wired into the brains of modern men. A man considers himself a failure if he is wrong, because that means he has not been able to do his job properly. This is the reason why men have difficulty saying, “I’m sorry.” They see it as admitting they are wrong, and to be wrong is to fail.

If a man was driving a car alone and got lost, he’d probably stop and ask for directions. But to do so when a woman is in the car makes him feel he is a failure because he can’t get her to her destination on his own.

When a woman says, “Let’s ask for directions,” a man hears, “You’re incompetent, you can’t navigate.” Likewise, if she says, “The kitchen tap is leaking, let’s call a plumber,” he hears, “You’re useless. I’ll get another man to do it!” Even giving a

He: No. You must have put it somewhere else. There’s definitely no butter in this refrigerator!

At that, the woman strides across the kitchen, thrusts her arm into the refrigerator and, as if by magic, produces a stick of butter. Inexperienced men sometimes feel that this is a trick, and they accuse women of always hiding things from them: socks, shoes, underwear, butter, car keys, wallets. They’re all there, though; men just can’t see them.

Men’s brains, being prewired for hunting, see a narrow field. They have to move their heads from side to side and up and down as they scan for the “missing” objects. But because of women’s history defending the nest, their brains decode information over a wider peripheral range, and they can see most of the contents of a refrigerator or cupboard without even moving their heads.

Why Women Give the “Silent Treatment”

A woman uses words to show participation and build relationships, and so, for her, words are a form of reward. If she likes you, is buying what you are saying or wants to be your friend, she talks to you a lot. The reverse is also true. If she wants to punish you or let you know she’s not your friend, she doesn’t talk. Men often call this the “silent treatment.”

It takes an average man around nine minutes of silence to realize that he’s being punished. Until the nine-minute mark is reached, he sees a woman’s silence as a kind of bonus—he’s getting more “peace and quiet.” Men everywhere ce-

A man feels like a failure if he has to stop and ask directions.

A man’s self-help book for his birthday is often interpreted by him as, “You’re not good enough.”

Why Men Can’t Find Things

Every woman in the world has had the following conversation with a male who is standing in front of an open refrigerator:

He: Where’s the butter?
She: It’s in the refrigerator.
He: I’m looking there, but I can’t see any butter.
She: Well, it’s there. I put it there myself 10 minutes ago.