

"**Inspirational** . . . a practical guide for men and women to overcome their challenges and come together outside and inside the bedroom."

—JOHN GRAY, PH.D.,

Author of Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus

how to improve
your marriage
without talking
about it



Patricia Love, Ed.D., and Steven Stosny, Ph.D.

Gender Research

Men are taller than women.

Category prejudice vs. Equality prejudice

- Both lead to blind spots

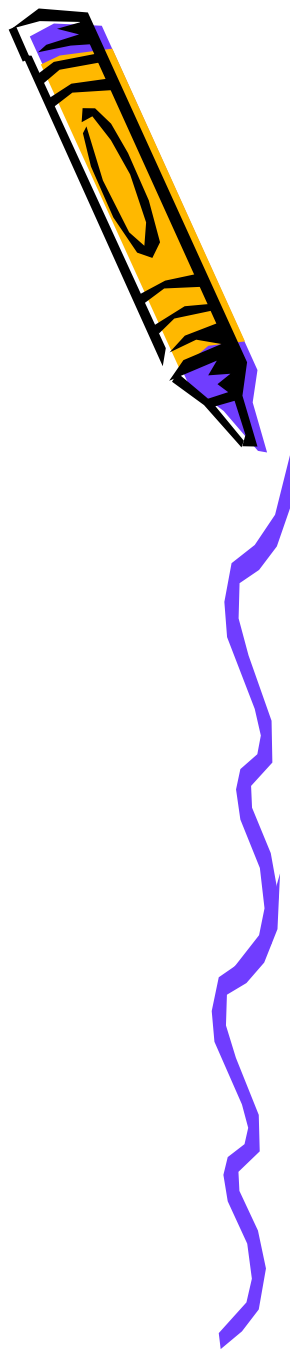
Fear-Shame dynamic - exaggerated in conflict, triggers nearly all male-female conflict.



When you say,

Honey, we need to talk!

Does he say,

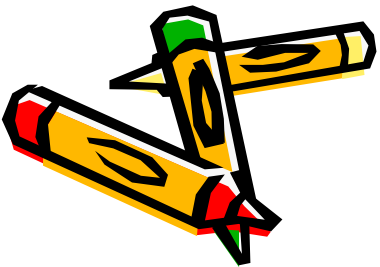




I thought you'd never ask! I've been dying to share my feelings about our life together and to tell you how much you mean to me. And I *especially* want to hear how you feel about us and how you want me to change so I can make you happy.



The History of Relationship Talk



THE EMERGENCE OF LANGUAGE

WE NEED TO TALK.

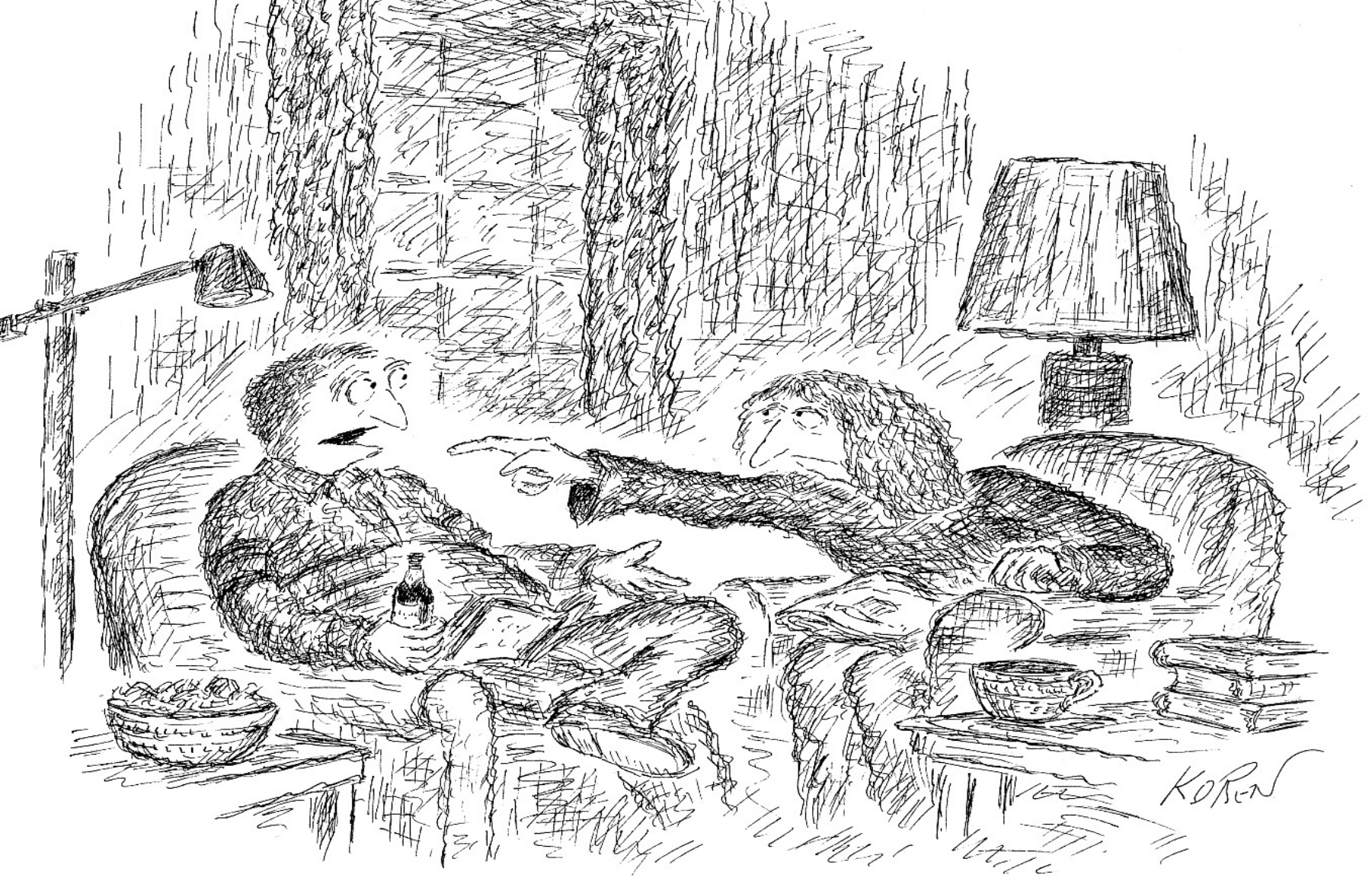
UH-OH.



K. Williams



"I wish you'd open up to me. I need some ammunition."

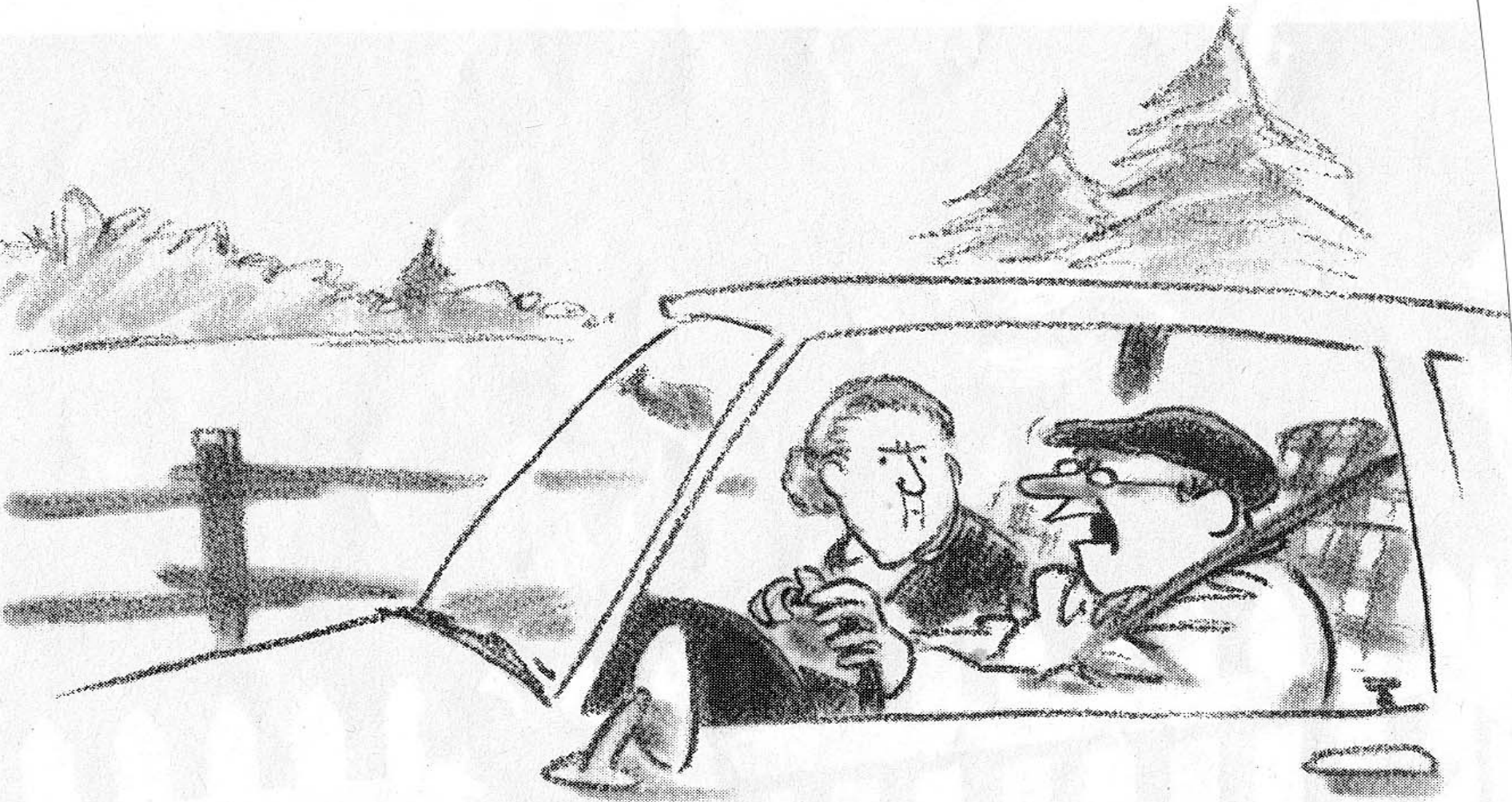


“Could we skip the prosecution and get on to the sentencing phase?”



SIPRESS

"Say something. I forget what you sound like."



P. B. BARNES

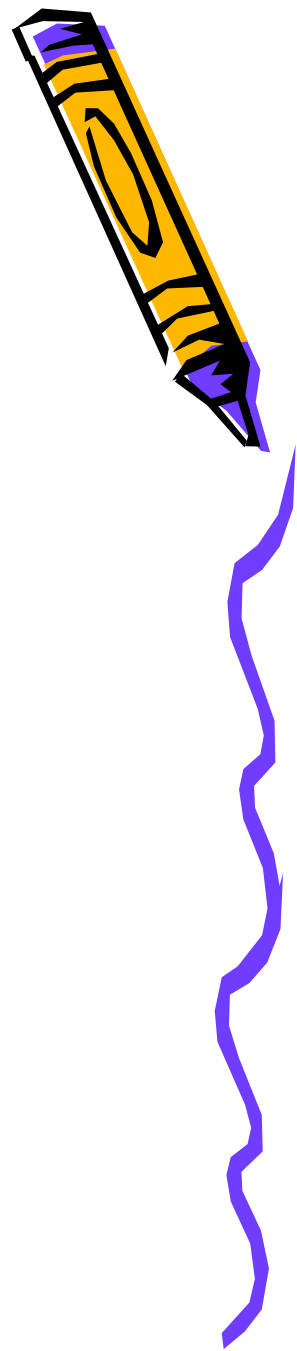
"Just because I didn't tell you to shut up doesn't mean I wasn't listening."



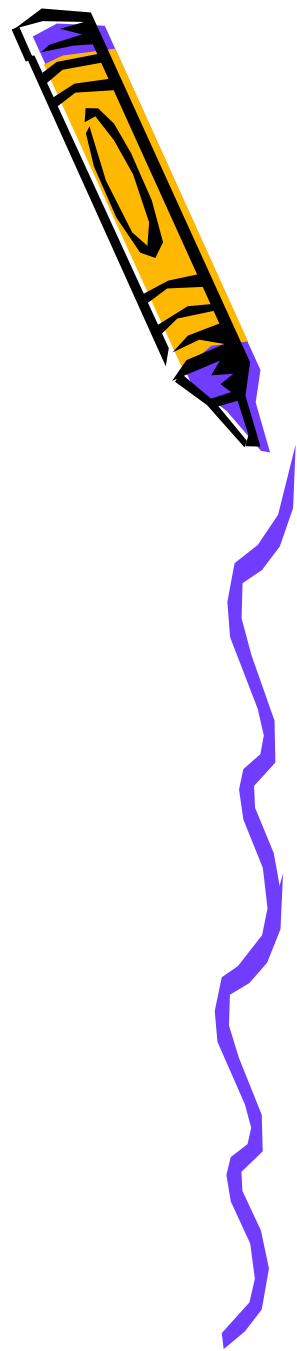
"I'm so glad we've had this little talk, Earl!"

What is the goal of talking
about your relationship?

Connection!



When two people are connected



- They communicate
- Good communication flows from connection—a sense of caring



Connection rarely flows

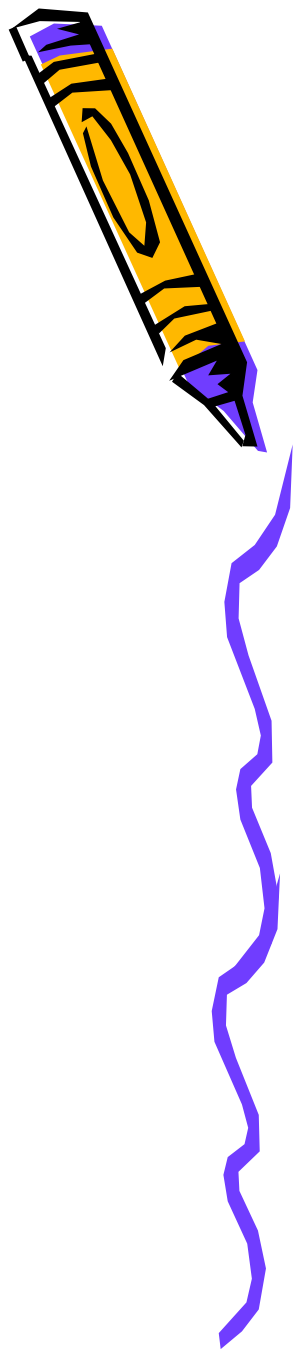


From talking—which tends to be about
the other person's failures

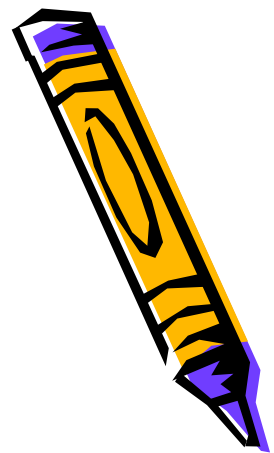


Deepest form of intimacy

Is beyond words



Bringing Us Together: Your Own Relationships



Think about the feeling *you* got from your partner when you were first in love and it *seemed* like you talked all the time.

Think of how you felt about each other and your dreams for the future. What feeling did you get then from talking about your relationship?



He Wasn't Like This

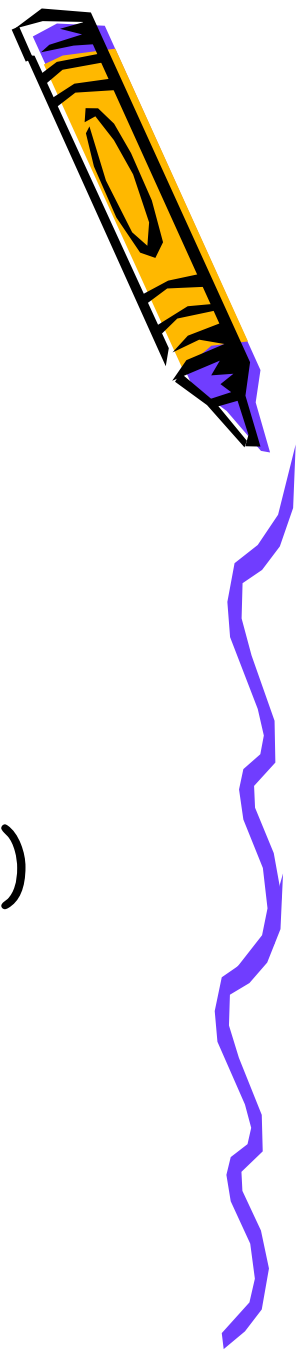
"Sweetheart, you know that I love you. But I'm going to have to approve *every* penny you spend; you can't buy anything unless you ask me first. I expect to go out with my friends several nights a week, whether or not you feel lonely. And you know my mom talked *all* the time, so I don't think my Dad was wrong in screaming at her to shut up."



What most women say

I felt:

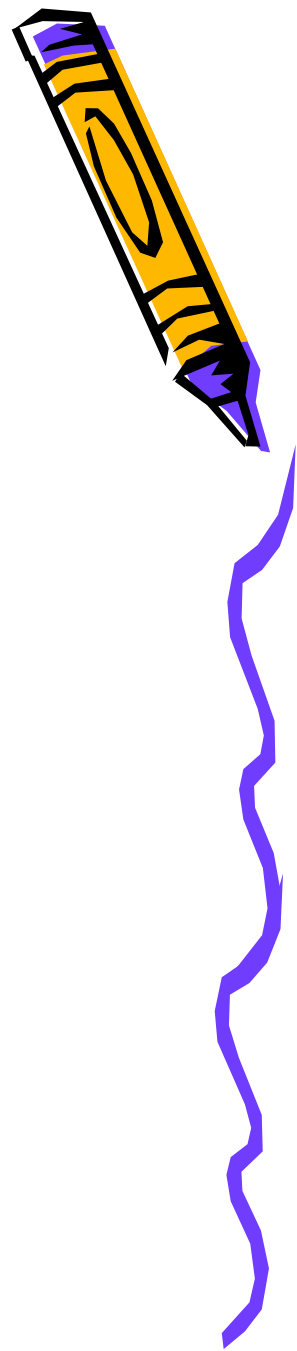
- Safe, secure
- He was *interested* in me
- He was generous (within his means)



Primary Female Dread

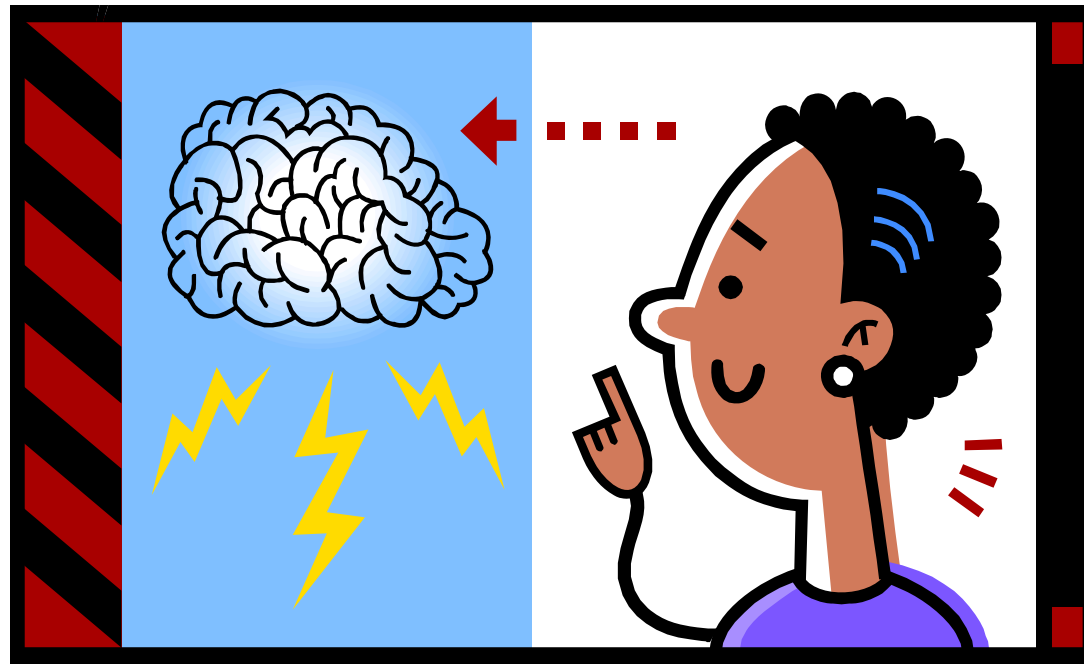
Fear of:

- Harm
- Isolation
- Deprivation



Even contact via conflict

- Alleviates fear pain



How do men fall in love?

Not this way:



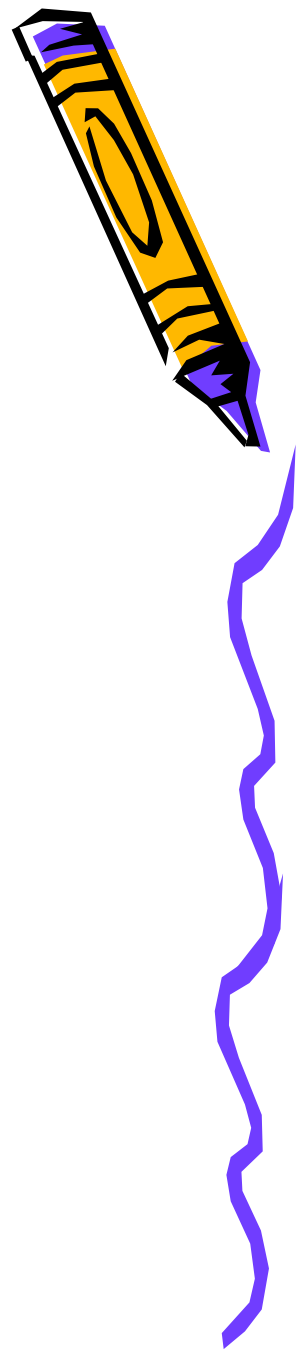
She: "How could I *not* love you? You *are* a loser, you're not the smartest guy in the world, and you drive like a jerk. You don't know the first thing about being a parent, and I don't feel safe with you. And I hope you don't mind if I watch TV while we're making love -- I can work the remote over your shoulder. But I *do* love you and I think I can make you into a good husband."



What most men say

She believed in me, thought I'd be:

- Successful
- Good lover
- Good father

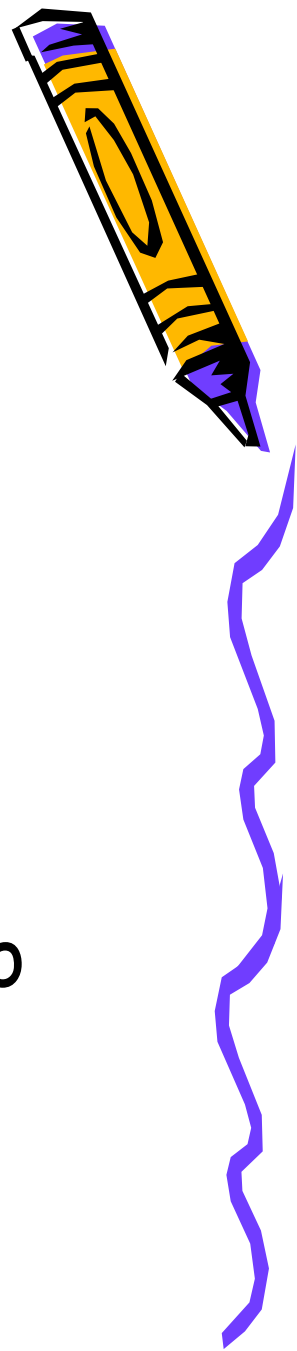


The Great Male Dread

Failure as a:

- Protector
- Provider
- Lover

Most of his emotional energy goes to avoiding this kind of shame



Shame response

- Is physiologically
- psychologically

painful!!



Anger, which numbs

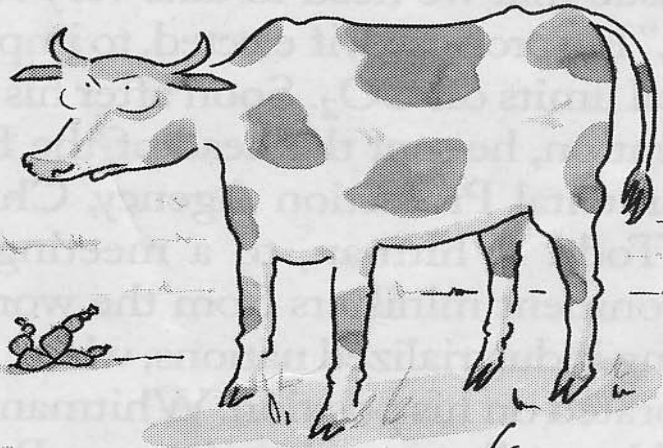
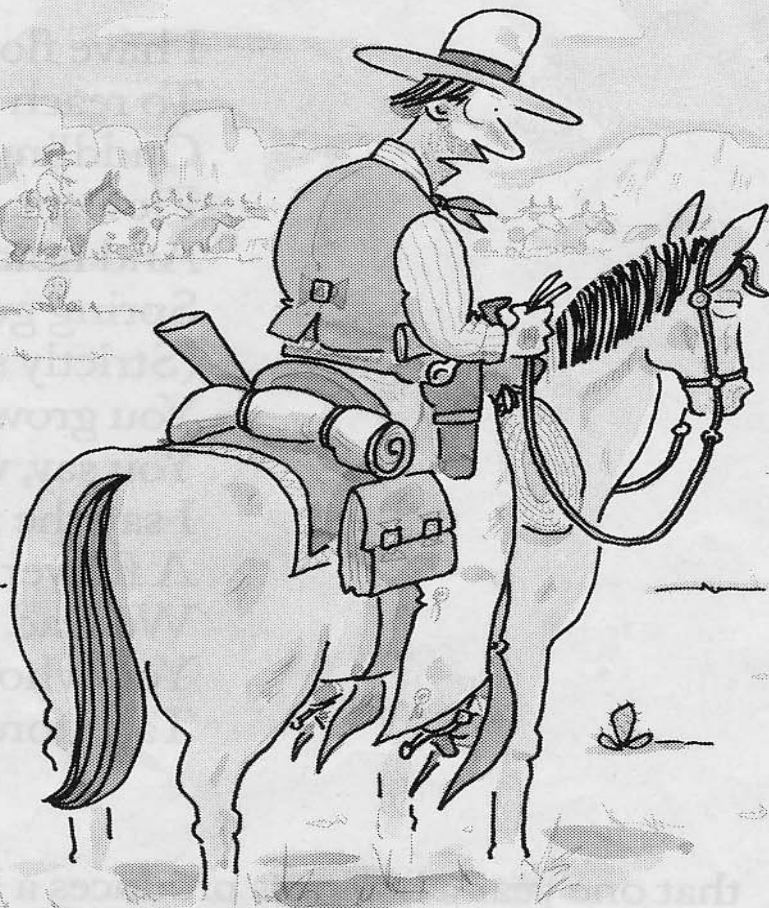
- Is effective in alleviating shame



Emotional and psychological withdrawal

- Avoid shame pain



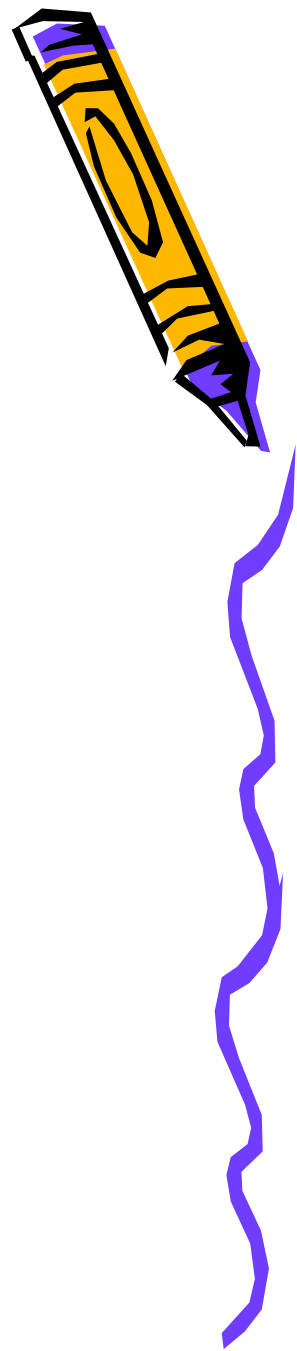


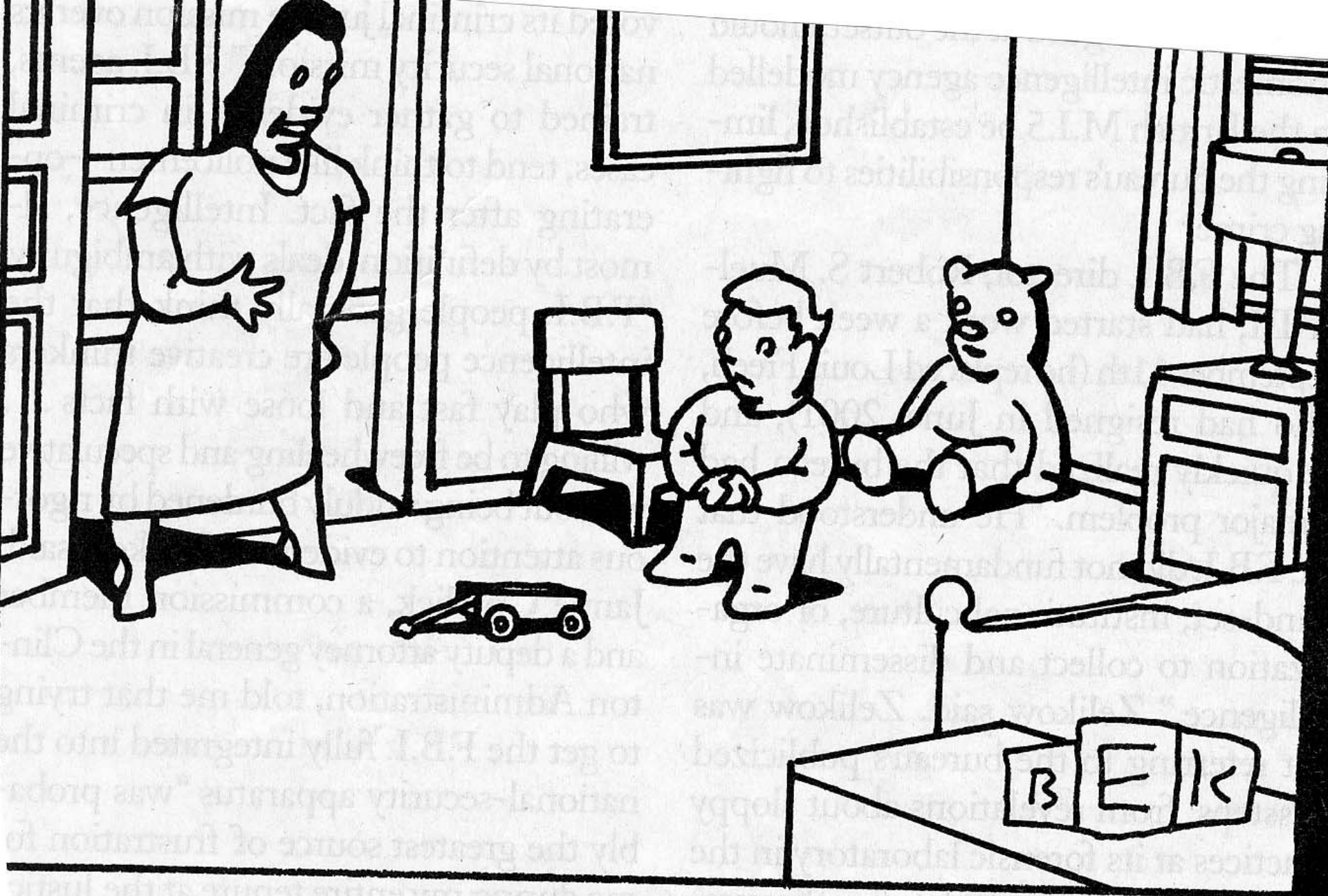
Leo Coleman

"No one is making you do anything you don't want. I'm just saying we're all headed for Dodge City and we think you should come along."

How to control a boy toddler

You're a bad boy!!

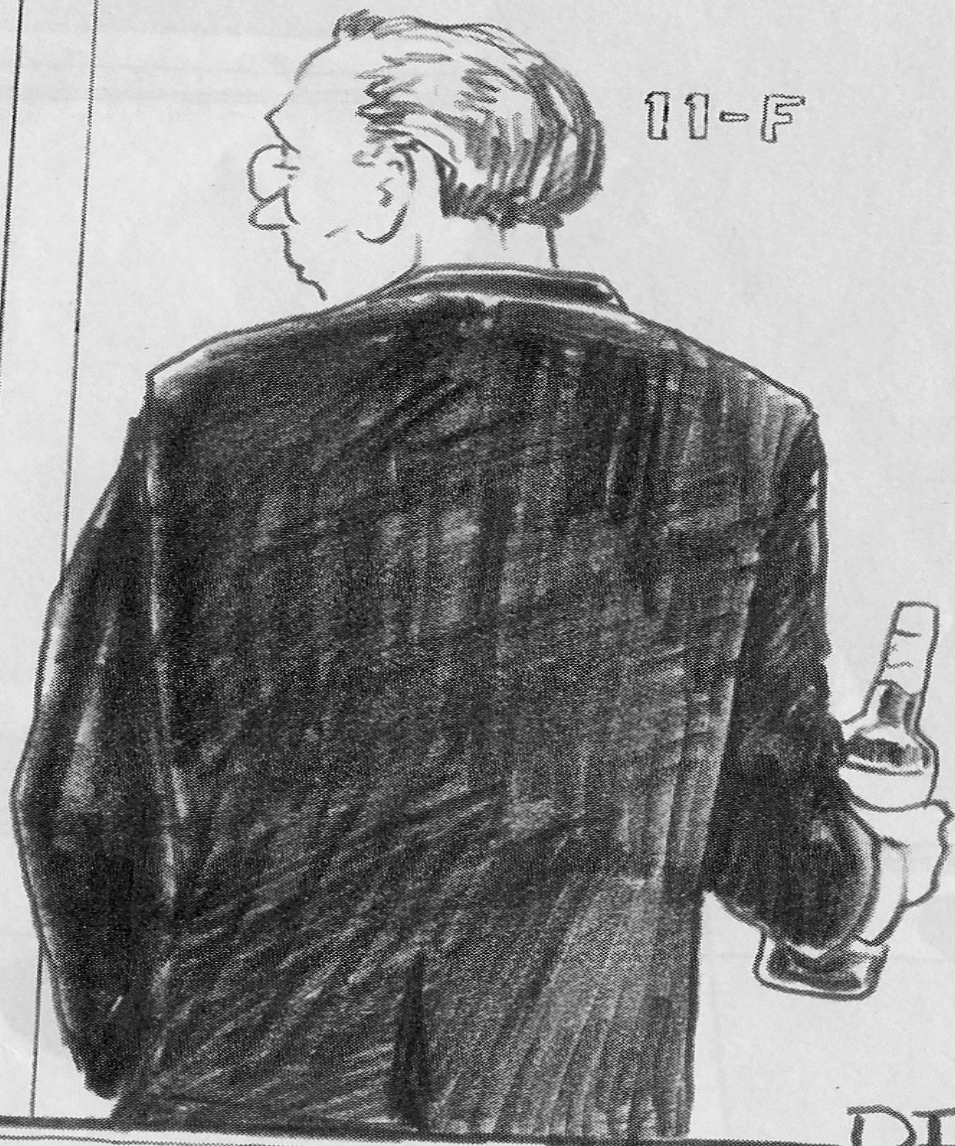




"What should we attach shame to today?"



"I told him to come back when he's truly gifted."



01-F

DIFEE

"Just don't be yourself."

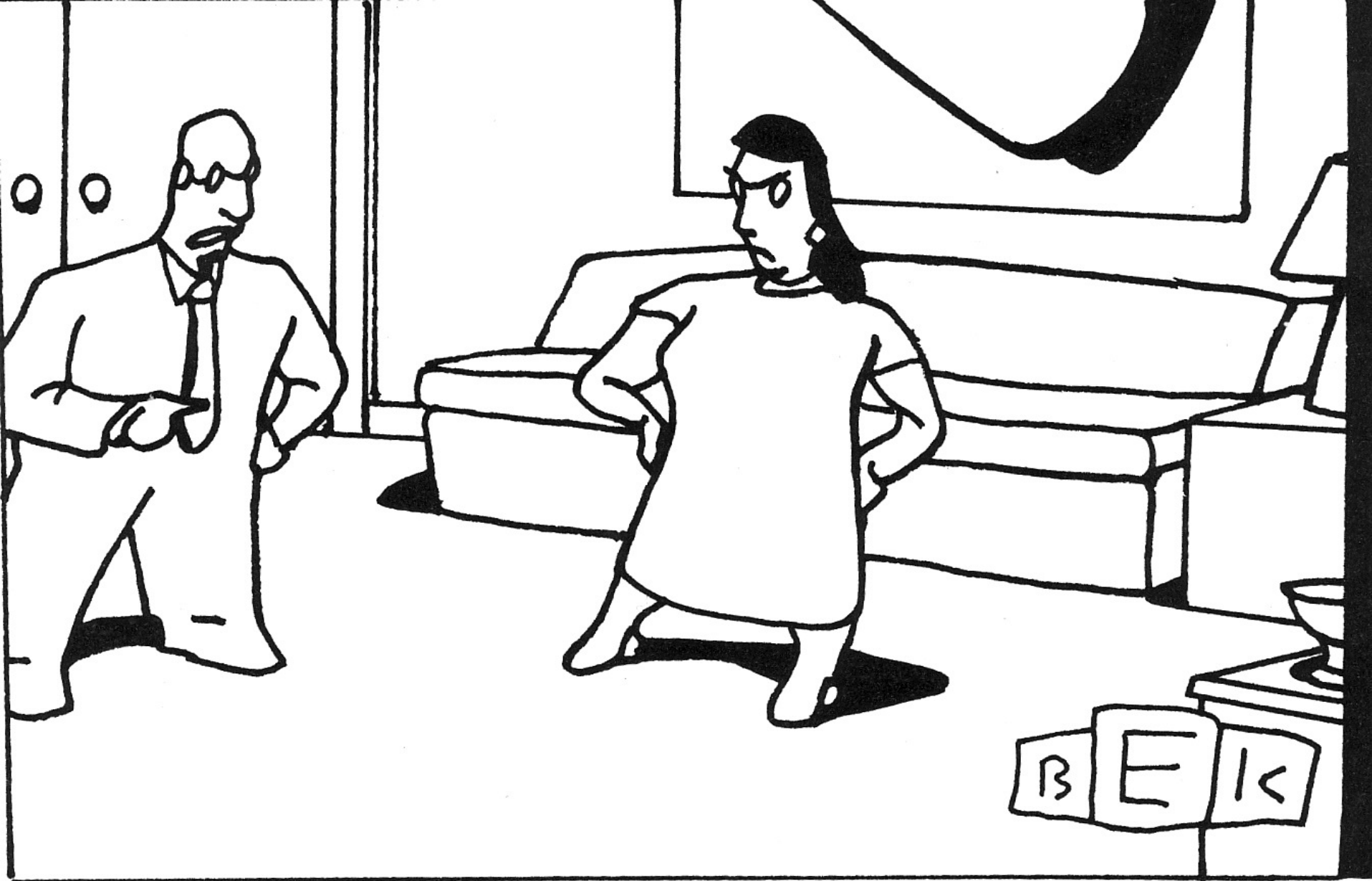


Erin
1997

©Bawrotti

"My first husband never brought home anything smaller than a water buffalo."





"You symbolize everything that's wrong with me."

Male Attachment Style

Protect and Connect

If he feels successful at providing and protecting, he can make emotional connection.





"I'll handle this."

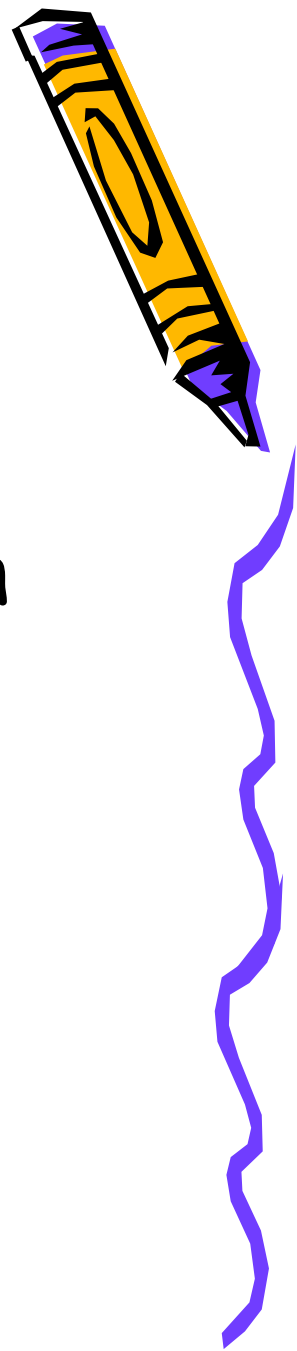
"What do you mean I
don't love you..."



"I go to work every day!"



If Fear is your primary vulnerability, What is Your Primary Defense?



Building alliances - there is safety in numbers.



Contact lowers fear

Alleviates fear
pain



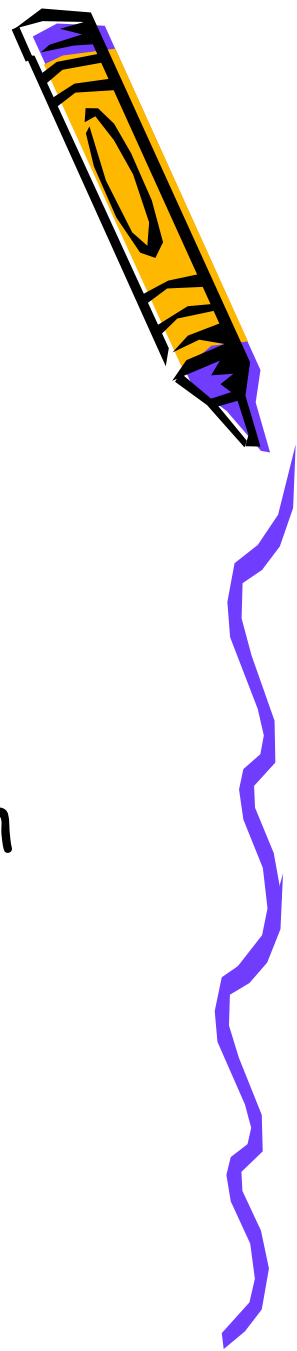
Women have an instinct

To tend and
befriend



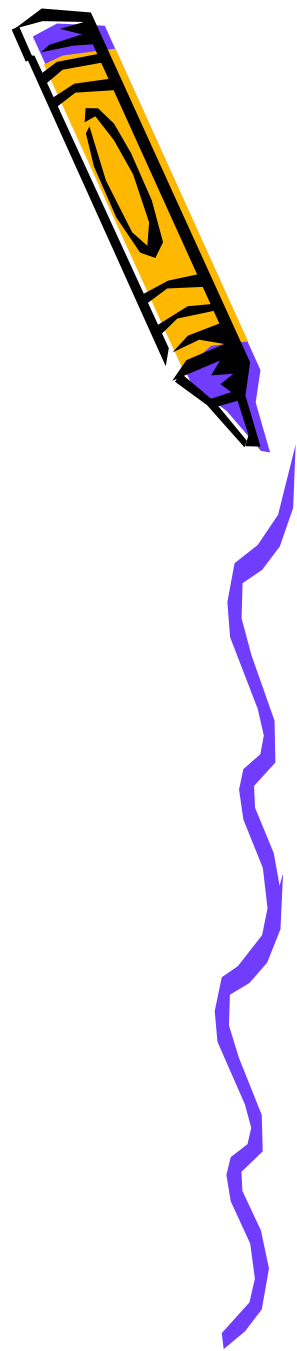
Connect via talking

- Activates pleasure centers in the female brain
- Sharing relationship information gives a dopamine and oxytocin rush



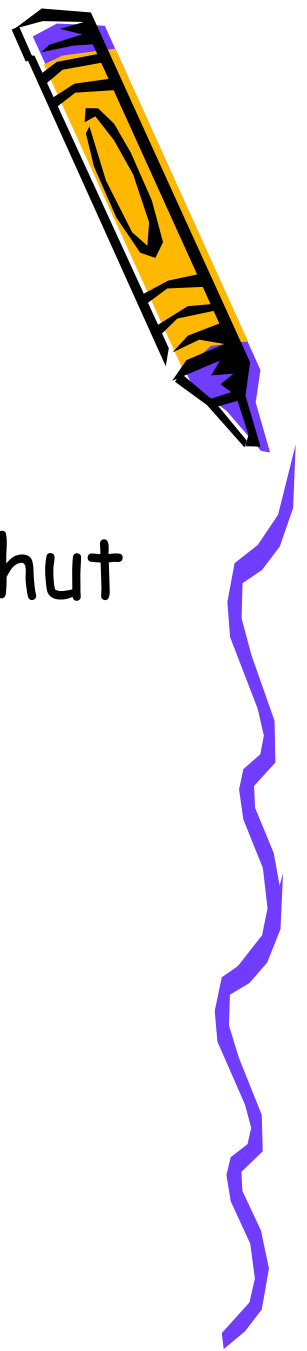
Female oxytocin rush from

- Gazing
- Positive emotional interaction
- Kissing
- Orgasm



When oxytocin and dopamine are high

- Loving circuits are activated
- Caution and aversion circuits are shut off
- Anxiety is greatly reduced in the face of generalized well being

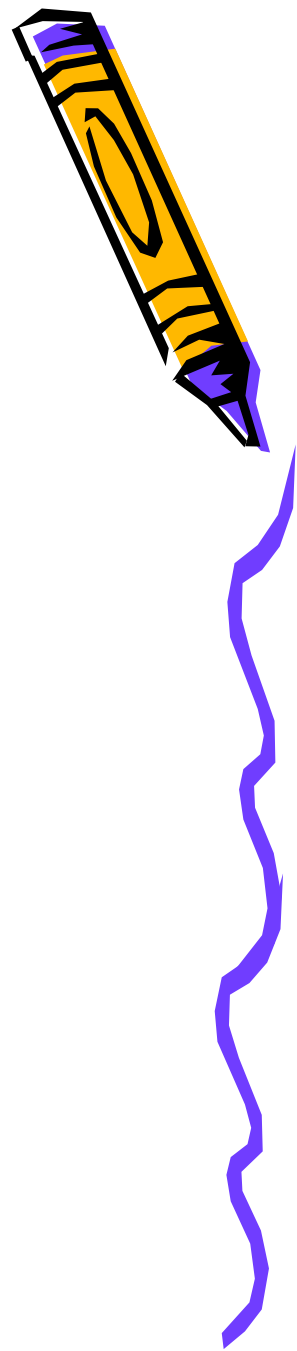


Women are designed to
connect



When they cannot connect they feel
fear





When a woman feels fear

She wants to move closer

When a man feels shame

He wants to move away



How Fear Stimulates Shame

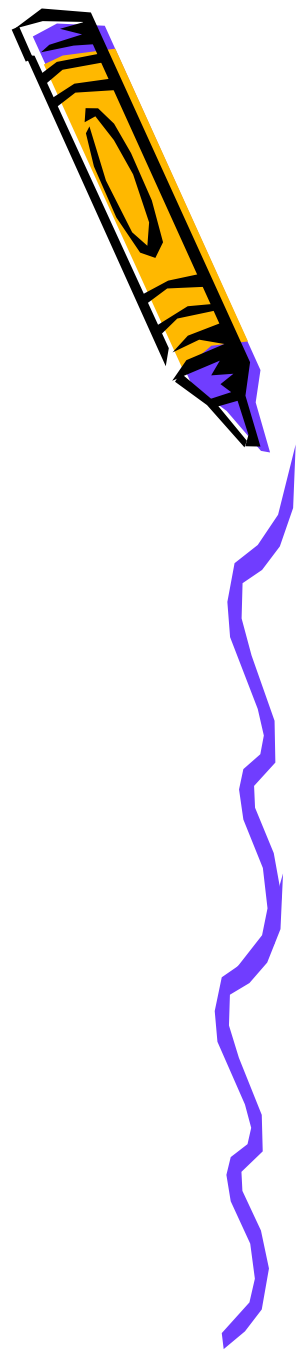


Ever drive with a man?

Most conflict in couples is unconscious fear stimulating unconscious shame.

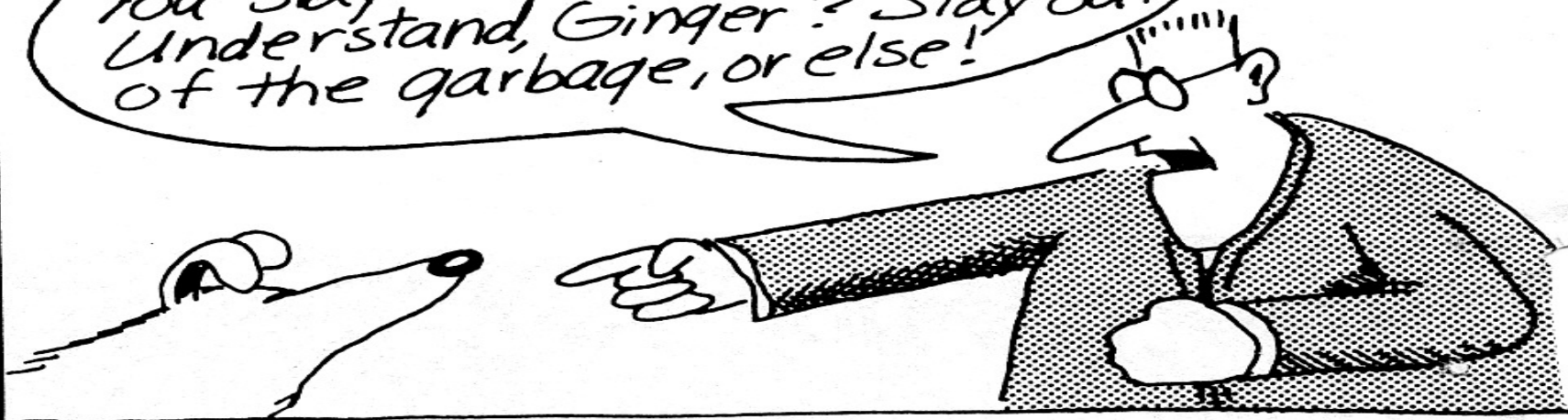


Getting Your Needs Met by Talking to a Man



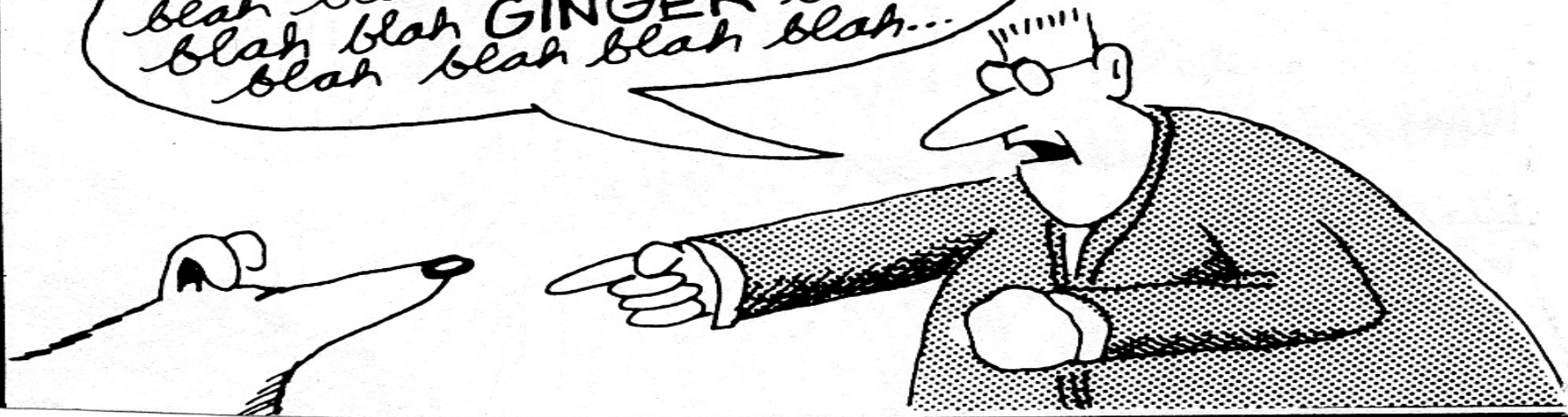
What we say to dogs

Okay, Ginger! I've had it!
You stay out of the garbage!
Understand, Ginger? Stay out
of the garbage, or else!



What they hear

blah blah GINGER blah
blah blah blah blah
blah blah GINGER blah
blah blah blah blah...

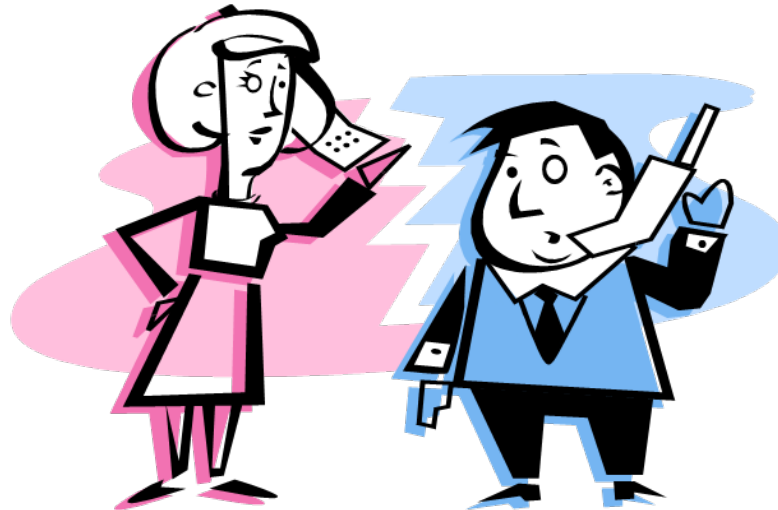


What we say to men:

“I feel you need to pay more attention to me.”

“We need to sit down and figure out why this marriage isn’t meeting our needs.”

“I feel that you need to be more emotionally available to me.”

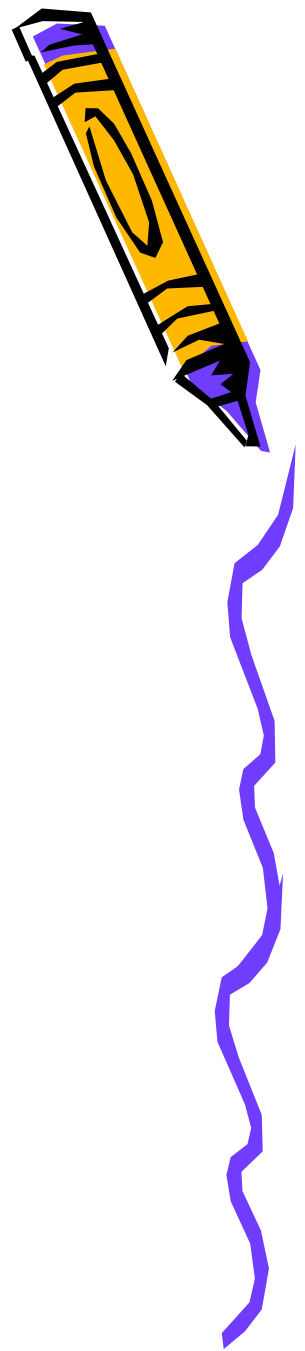
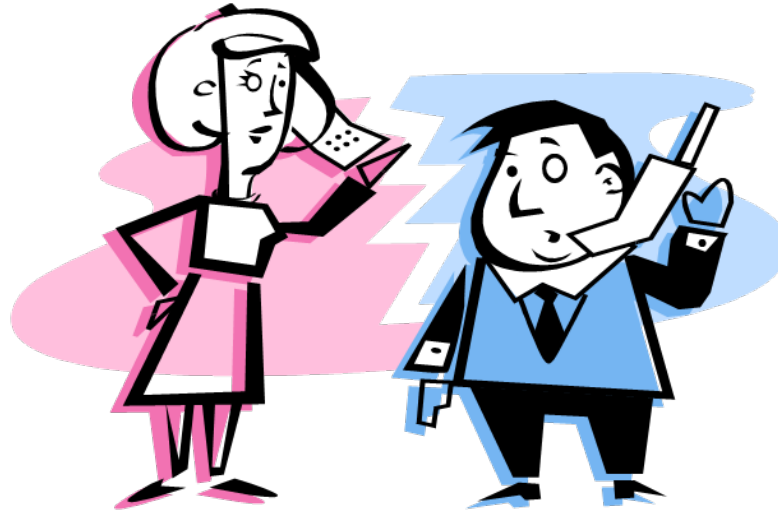


What they hear:

Blah, blah, blah, bad boy

Blah, blah, blah, failure

Blah, blah, blah not good enough

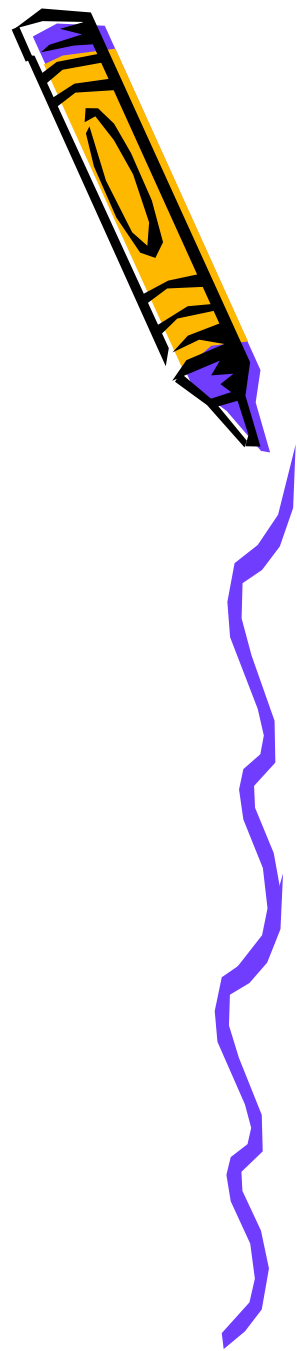


To love a man:

- Accept that the partner provides the meaning in a man's life
- Understand his dread of failure as a provider, protector, lover and parent
- Connect more through routine, fun activities, touch and sex
- Avoid controlling



Ways to connect with a man:



- Sex
- Touch
- Activity, appreciation
- Routine—honor his routine



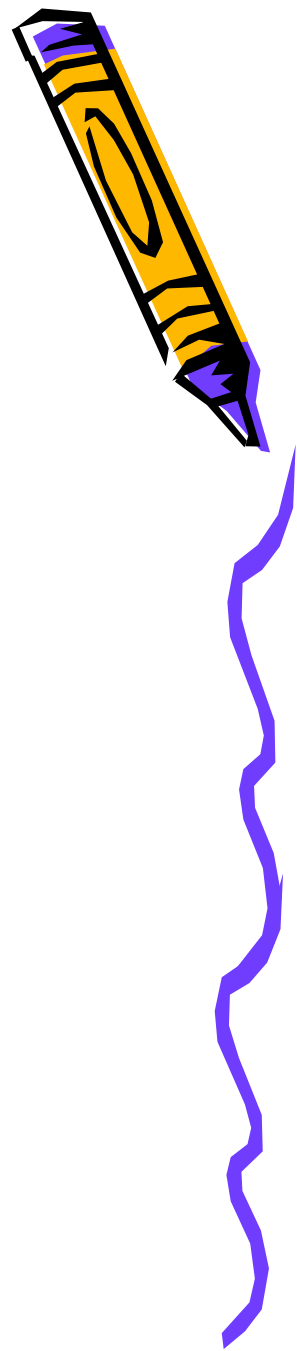
To love a woman:

- Appreciate her importance to you
- Make an effort to understand her
- Avoid controlling, protecting is fine
- Understand
 - Her fear of harm
 - Her fear of your anger
 - Her fear of deprivation

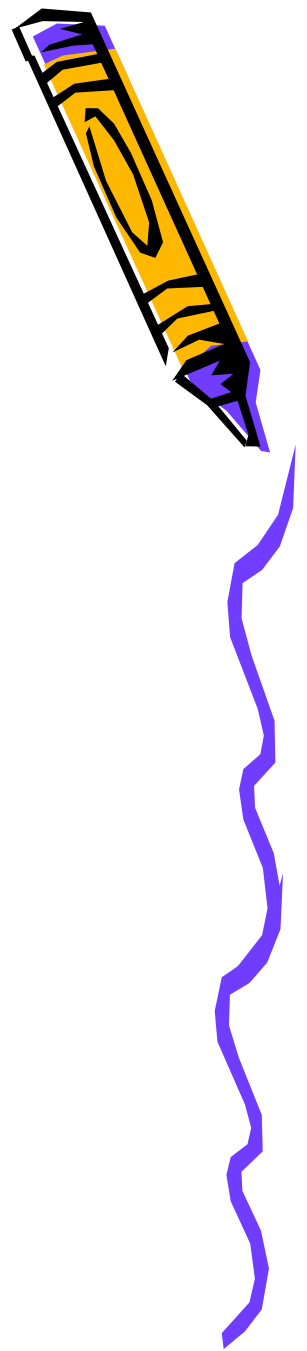


To connect with a woman

- Routinely make contact with her
- Open your heart to her
- Connect, connect, connect
- Keep your thoughts and actions positive



Male complaint about marriage therapy



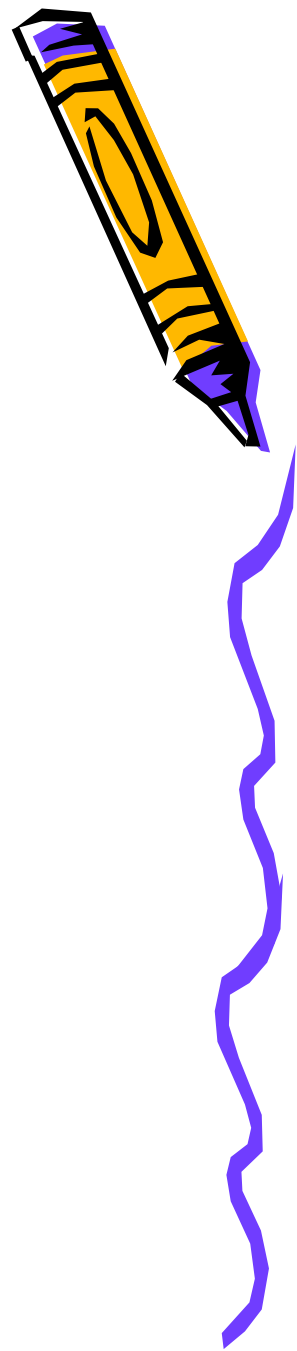
The only way to have a good relationship is for me to become a woman.

Put it in a way he can understand:



Forget feelings

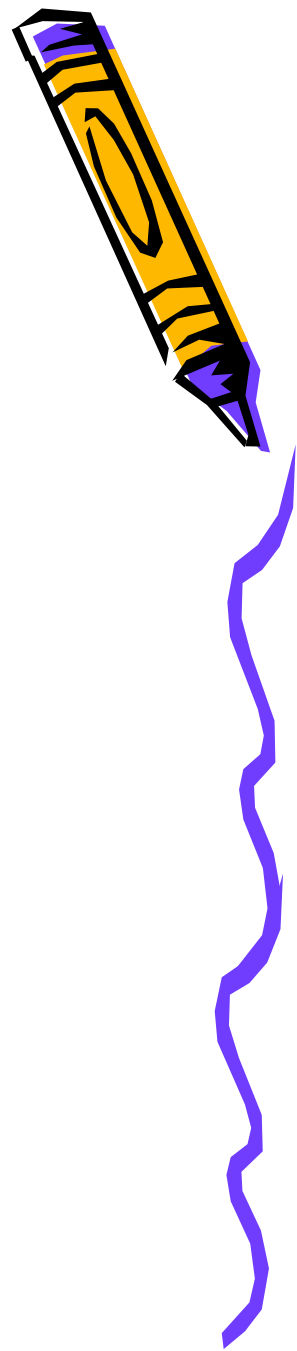
- Think motivation
 - Approach
 - Avoid
 - Attack



Remember ROCK STAR

- Routinely connect with the woman
- Open your heart to her
- Connect, connect, connect
- Keep it positive

- Sex works for men (and women)
- Touch, men need 2-3 times more
- Activity
- Routine



Empathy vs. Higher Order Compassion

