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The Secrets of Happily Married Women

How to Get More Out of Your Relationship by Doing Less

Scott Haltzman, M.D., and
Theresa Foy DiGeronimo



John Wiley & Sons

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“Every woman can benefit through understanding how to bring out the best in a man. Scott Haltzman and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo brilliantly reveal this secret.”

John Gray, author, *Men Are from Mars,
Women Are from Venus*

“Finally. The first book that men will want women to read! Scott Haltzman has created a practical gem that allows women to focus on learning how to receive love from their husband. He advocates the Platinum (not Golden) Rule and urges women to ‘Do Unto Your Husband What He Wants Done Unto Him,’ so they can find the marital happiness they long for.”

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“This groundbreaking book combines a pro-female, pro-male, and pro-marriage approach to life and couple satisfaction. It’s very user-friendly, with shared secrets and research gems coupled with a large dose of humor that makes clinical points personally relevant and easy to relate to. The sex self-test in Chapter Five is an effective tool to help set realistic expectations. This will be a particularly helpful book for couples to increase understanding, acceptance, and value in their lives and marriage.”

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“Scott Haltzman has made the deep secrets of happy marriage accessible, memorable, and inspiring. He writes with a light touch that makes the reading thoroughly enjoyable. Don’t miss this engaging book!”

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8 Loving Actions That Will Transform Your Marriage
and If I’m So Wonderful, Why Am I Still Single?*

“This book delivers! *The Secrets of Happily Married Women* is jam-packed with research, ancient truths, street-smart wisdom, and years of advice from the psychiatrist’s couch. Page after page provides a sensitive, sensible guide to a satisfying relationship. Buy it, read it, reap the benefits. I’m going to.”

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“Dr. Haltzman uses clear and practical language to show women how to engage and support their husbands in their efforts to please them. He shares the ‘secrets’ women really need to know about men, so this book is a ‘must-read’! Reading this book should start your list of New Year’s resolutions.”

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“Wives, what we’ve all been longing for has finally arrived. . . . This masterpiece eliminates the womanly guesswork and illuminates the path to true marital happiness with honest, sincere, frank . . . (and even humorous) information.”

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The anecdotes in this book are based on the life experience of the authors and the clinical work and research of Dr. Haltzman. To protect confidentiality, names and identifying characteristics of clients have been changed, or represent composite identities of clients.

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To my wife, Susan, who has helped me be a better man.

Scott Haltzman

*To my husband, Mick, who has given me a
quarter century of happiness.*

Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

Acknowledgments

When my editor, Alan Rinzler, agreed to publish *The Secrets of Happily Married Women*, he spoke with Theresa and me about giving my wife, Susan, an opportunity to coauthor the book. Susan didn't have to think long before declining the offer. By making such a decision, she taught me my first secret of happy wives: when your fanatical, obsessive, and perfectionistic husband invites you to write a book with him, say no!

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—Scott Haltzman

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—Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

Introduction

In my twenty years as a practicing psychiatrist, I have worked with many women who sometimes question whether they are able to get through the day. I expect that. After all, people seek me out because something's not altogether right in their lives.

Yet in my medical practice and in my personal life, I meet women from time to time who seem to fit a different profile. They have stress in their lives, sure. They have bosses who are jerks, and their husbands are not clones of a chick-flick Hollywood hero. Yet despite falling short of enjoying storybook lives, these women still have a spark about them, an air of confidence, and a sense of somehow being able to keep their head while surrounded by all the chaos that circulates around them.

The most exciting thing about these women is that almost without exception, they are very happy with their marriages. As a marriage therapist, I have been eager to learn more about these women. Who are they, and why do they seem so together? As a scientist, I researched. I started talking to happily married women in my psychiatric practice. I examined medical and psychological textbooks and Internet sites. In late 2006, I launched

an Internet site called HappilyMarriedWomen.com. On this site, I surveyed women to learn more about the approaches to marriage—the beliefs they had, the ways they interacted with their husbands—that lead to feelings of contentment.

I had some experience with using the World Wide Web to research these issues. In 2006, my coauthor Theresa and I published *The Secrets of Happily Married Men: Eight Ways to Win Your Wife's Heart Forever*, which was based on contributions from over a thousand individuals who had found my site and shared their insights. One of the findings that emerged from the “Married Men” phase of my research was that women and men take radically different approaches to making their marriage a success. Men tend to talk about strategy; planning; step 1, step 2, and (brace yourself for a real shock here) step 3. On the basis of the message men gave me, I presented my thesis, which formed the basis for my book: Men, make marriage your job.

I told men that if they treated their marriages with the same sense of purpose, resolve, and single-minded devotion that they have applied in the workplace, they’d have happy wives and, by extension, happy marriages. The message resonated with husbands everywhere, who informed me that I had helped their marriages. It was like music to my ears.

But my ears also picked up another sound. It came from women, and it wasn’t exactly music. Women also heard my message, and they loved that I was helping men do better at marriage. But when it came to my main message, many women disagreed. Take my interview with Robin Roberts on *Good Morning America*.

As I explained how I use my work skills to succeed at marriage, she reflected back, “You say, ‘apply the same principle to success in the job at home,’ but, you know, won’t some guys say, ‘Look, I work forty hours a week; why should I make my

marriage a job as well?” I answered the question, but it gave me pause to think. Then I realized why the exchange stuck with me: almost every woman (and not a single man that I can recall) who interviewed me about the book raised the same concern: “Who needs more work?”

It became clear to me that women weren’t just asking a question; they were making a statement. Today’s woman has taken on the roles of full-time employee, social coordinator, child advocate, caregiver for parents, homemaker, and sexual partner, while simultaneously trying to tend to her personal needs, such as working out, dieting, studying, or meditating. Moreover, women have taken on the role of processing, interpreting, and integrating all the emotional goings-on in the life of her husband. So when I talk about treating marriage like work, it’s no wonder women balk! Throughout America, I heard the hue and cry: women work hard enough! Don’t give us more work!

Eventually I caught on, and realized that *The Secrets of Happily Married Men* works fine for men (better than fine!), but it just won’t do for women. Women’s secrets differ from men’s, and it was the women who taught me that. As I listened to the women who found happiness in their marital bonds, I realized that although they had as many day-to-day obligations as other women, they didn’t view their marriage as “work.” Rather than view their marriage as another task to accomplish, they looked to the connection with their husbands as a source of strength and as a refuge from the stresses of everyday life. And, unlike husbands in troubled marriages, these guys didn’t shy away from the emotional closeness that their wives sought. They were right there by their sides, in high spirits because their wives were happy. They all wanted to please their wives by being better men and better husbands (and—because men are

in fact different from women—were willing to “work on it” without adding any work for their wives).

Happily married women are the ones who know how, seemingly effortlessly, to shape the kind of loving relationship they desire. They have mastered the magic of touching a man so deeply that he wants to be more—he wants to be better. And you too have the raw material to do the same for your marriage.

You, like most Americans, chose the person with whom you wanted to spend your life. You sought him out because he had character qualities that you liked, he turned you on, he shared values with you, and he wanted many of the same things out of life that you wanted. You and he decided together that you would share a life, and together you stood on the altar and exchanged rings, till death do you part.

Besides the man your husband is, the love that bound you together, and the pledge that you shared on your wedding day, you have one more quality at your disposal to ensure that you can find the kind of marriage you seek: you’re a woman. Without exception, happily married women recognize that their female traits are indeed a source of strength and influence within the marriage, and they use their womanhood to get the most out of their relationship with their husbands. Studies have shown that women have different brains than men, and these brains are acted on by a different array of hormones. Females have a more attuned sense of emotional connectedness; they are better able to express their feelings and have radar highly sensitive to problems in the marriage. Women have a wonderful capacity to nurture, support, and bolster others, not to the exclusion of getting their own needs met, but in a collaborative way that draws out the best qualities in husband, wife, and children.

The relationship that you've been seeking is all there, and (as the Good Witch of the North tells Dorothy) it's been there all along. *The Secrets of Happily Married Women* will show you the ways that other women have inspired their husbands to be partners in a truly happy marriage, and help create a stronger and more loving and lasting connection with your husband. You deserve it!

Know Your Husband

When Rosa and Lucas stepped into my office for our last session, it was obvious that this was one happy couple. There's something in the way that happily married people look at each other and treat each other. They don't wear signs announcing their state of bliss, but still, everyone knows.

But it hadn't started out that way for Rosa and Lucas. At our first meeting, after routine hellos, Rosa began to explain why they had come.

She told me that she had met Lucas during a code blue at a New York City hospital. At the time, she had been a nurse there for three years, and he was a new surgical intern. She had recently ended a previous marriage, so was wary when this mild-mannered doctor struck up a conversation with her and eventually asked her out.

In the early days of their romantic relationship, Lucas was sensitive, warm, and very attentive and loving. This was the kind of man Rosa had been looking for.

"I wanted to know everything about him," she said, "what made him tick, what made him afraid, what made him happy."

Rosa thought she had all the answers by the time they celebrated their wedding day. But, a few months later, she began to get frustrated that Lucas seemed to be more devoted to the hospital than to her. Finally, they ended up having a heated argument over what Rosa called his obsessive dedication to his work, his self-absorption, and his cruel negligence of his wife.

When she finished berating him, she was shocked at the words he threw back at her: "You knew who I was when you married me. Now you want me to change. This is who I am. Why can't you accept that?" How could he make such a hurtful comment and still claim to love her?

"If he really loves me," she said looking at him rather than me, "he'd stop working so much and spend more time with me. Right?"

From Rosa's point of view, the answer was an obvious yes. Either Lucas signs on to work fewer hours or the marriage is over. Rosa was hanging on to an either-or view of how husbands should behave; at that point, she was not a good example of a happily married woman.

So when she came to my office hoping I could save her marriage by making Lucas change, my first step was to introduce her to Secret 1: Know Your Husband. Understand his true nature—and then use that information to your advantage.

THE CORE NATURE OF MEN

By getting to know a man's inborn traits, a woman can enjoy his strengths as well as better understand his weaknesses. At the same time, this knowledge puts her in a position where she can use her mysterious yet wonderful feminine nature to bring out the best in this man she loves.

Of course, in some cases there are things that a man has to agree to change or the marriage may not be able to be saved. If he's shooting heroin, blowing money on scratch tickets, going to strip clubs, or using violence in the household, then the Popeye motto, "I yam who I yam," just doesn't cut it. But in most other cases, any marriage will be a happier one if the husband and wife capitalize on the things that make them "who I am" and make them both feel whole and proud (and focus less on the things that do not!).

In this chapter, we'll take a close look at the nature of a typical male, a nature honed through millennia of biological and societal conditioning, and explore ways that you can both enjoy who he is and gently persuade him to be even better.

Who Is This Guy?

With that goal in mind, you can (as Rosa did) begin to ask yourself, "Who is this guy?" "What makes him tick?" "Why does he act the way he does?" In the answers, you may find that your husband has some funny, weird, annoying, and idiosyncratic ways of doing things that are quite different from the way you do things—not necessarily "wrong," just uniquely his.

As soon as Rosa learned to better read Lucas's male nature, she was able to give *less* time and emotional energy to the impossible task of making her man change because she wanted him to, and to put more emphasis on getting *him* to want to change. It wasn't long before Lucas chose to drop those excessive overtime hours and run home to his new wife, now a very happily married woman. How did she get him to do that? Well, that's the secret I'm ready to share.

Secret 1 will explore seven of the many reasons why men see the world differently than women, and how knowing those

differences gives women the remarkable opportunity to get exactly what they want and need out of their marriages:

1. Men need to feel cared for.
2. Men need acknowledgment of their efforts.
3. Men have trouble verbalizing love and regret.
4. Men need to protect their families.
5. Men need to be right and in control.
6. Men need action.
7. Men have an undeniably strong attraction to females.

When I think about the uncanny ability of a good woman to change a man's tendency to have a self-centered, ego-driven nature, I'm reminded of that scene in the movie *As Good as It Gets* when Jack Nicholson's character says to Helen Hunt's character, "You make me want to be a better man." It is her reply that explains why it's worth the effort to teach men how to be more than they think they can be. She says simply, "That's maybe the best compliment of my life."

There. That is the magic power women have: to touch a man so deeply by caring for him that he wants to be more and better. At their core, men are hardwired to want to please their mate and make them happy. Understanding your man's nature will help you touch the core of who he is and get back from him all that you need to be happily married.

Consider the following, not as rules, but as guidelines that might differentiate you from your husband and give you insight into the many ways you can use a man's nature to strengthen your marriage.

Of course, many women have these same drives. And, naturally, all these needs are not equally strong in all men. But the



REMEMBER THIS

It Starts in the Brain

Any discussion of human behavior has to include the main engine behind all thoughts and actions: the brain.

So when I talk about the brain, please remember that I am talking in broad generalizations; just as every person is different, every brain is different. To begin: There are two lobes of the brain. In most individuals, even left-handers, the left brain controls the understanding and speaking of words, the fine details of images and words, logic, mathematical sequencing, and orderliness.

The right side of the brain has a different area of specialization. Rather than appreciate the exact semantics of speech, or see the fine details of items, the right side of the brain is more big picture and holistic. The brain's centers for creativity and emotional interpretation are found in the cortex of the right brain. Music and creative movement are generated from the right side of the brain.

As a fetus's brain develops in a mother's uterus, it will begin to shape itself based on whether the growing child is a boy or a girl. Although the expression of gender traits varies from one person to the next, the hormones androgen and estrogen act on the brain to produce "typical male" or "typical female" brain types. These differences include the following:

- The male brain is 10 percent larger in mass than the female brain. (Men's heads and bodies are also larger.) Much of this larger brain consists of white matter, which shields the brain cells from trauma and keeps information running quickly along the whole cell.
- The female brain contains more gray matter than the male brain, and these gray-matter cells tend to have more connections between them. Due to these additional connectors, the cells in the female brain are more likely to interact with many other cells simultaneously.
- The visual-spatial region of the right cerebral cortex is thicker in males in the area associated with interpreting sensory data, such as measuring, doing mechanical design, perceiving direction, map reading, and working with blocks or other objects (like the car engine). In females, there are more nerve cells in the left half of the brain where language is processed.
- The brain's two distinct hemispheres are connected by a group of fibers called the corpus callosum. In women, parts of the corpus callosum are larger than they are in men. These more fully developed pathways between the two brain hemispheres may help women to better integrate information from the logical (left) brain with the intuitive (right) brain.

As you read the rest of this book, keep these differences in mind. Differences in brain structure are microscopic, but they can sometimes result in monumental differences in behavior.

goal is to avoid marital disappointment, frustration, tension, and even divorce by accepting the fact that men and women have different physical and psychological strengths and weaknesses. This understanding can be used to support the two opposing pillars needed to give a marriage a strong structure on which to build.

So read on, and get a snapshot of who your man really is. With that understanding, you too will soon be doing less work and getting more love.

MEN NEED TO FEEL CARED FOR

Men need to feel cared for? Oh no, you and your man may say. A man wants to be the one who cares for his family. He is not the weak partner who needs someone to care for him! Well, yes and no. Yes, men do want to pamper their wives and be in charge of things (as I'll explain later in this chapter), but there's no denying that many of them also have a strong need to be cared for by their wives. If men didn't want to be taken care of, we would not be so accustomed to hearing women say, "He's such a baby when he gets sick" and "He acts like he thinks I'm his mother and will indulge all his needs" and "Sometimes I feel like my husband is my third (or fourth, or fifth) child." Sound familiar? Most men do have distinct moments when they express dependency on a mother figure and a desire to be taken care of. This is common and natural among men.

I confess to having this need myself at times. On Tuesday nights I work late, usually until after 8:00 P.M. Because I don't get a chance to eat dinner until I come home, I hold on to the secret hope that when I arrive at the end of that long day, my