

# Smart Life Forum

SmartLifeForum.org

presents

**John Gray, Ph.D.**

## **Why Mars & Venus Collide: How Men & Women Cope Differently With Stress**

Thurs, Nov 20, 2008, 7 PM

LOCATION: Cubberley  
Community Center - Room H1  
4000 Middlefield Rd  
Palo Alto, CA

### FUTURE SPEAKERS

December 18, Lance Morris, ND  
“Healing Body Mind & Spirit  
with Resonant Sound Therapy”

**FMBR Meeting: on Nov. 28, Join Dr. Bruce Lipton for a discussion of his and Steve Bhaerman’s upcoming book, *Spontaneous Evolution*. Bruce is a cell biologist and an internationally recognized authority in bridging science and spirit. He is also the author of the popular book, *The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter & Miracles*. For more information see [fmbp.org](http://fmbp.org).**

**Short Report: by Doug Husbands, DC, CCN  
“How to Enhance Detoxification”.**

### Meet John Gray, Ph.D.

John Gray, Ph.D. is a best-selling relationship author of 16 books, including the relationship classic *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (1992). In the past fifteen years, millions of “Mars, Venus” books have been sold in over 45 languages throughout the world. His latest book: *Why Mars & Venus Collide*, is ranked #7 in the “Health, Mind, and Body” category on Amazon.com (accessed 10/21/08).

John Gray was a Certified Family Therapist for over fifteen years and has been conducting personal growth seminars for over thirty years. He was the Consulting Editor of the *Family Journal*, and a member of the Distinguished Advisory Board of the

International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors. He received his doctorate in Psychology and Human Sexuality from Columbia Pacific University in 1982.

John Gray’s focus is assisting men and women in understanding, respecting and appreciating their differences. For more than 30 years, he has conducted public and private seminars for thousands of participants. In his popular books, CD’s, and DVD’s, as well as in his seminars, he entertains and inspires audiences with his insights and communication techniques that can be immediately applied to enrich relationships and the quality of life.

He is a popular speaker on the national and international lecture circuit and often appears on television and radio programs to discuss his work. He has made guest appearances on Oprah, Good Morning America, The Today Show, The CBS Morning Show, Live with Regis & Kelly, The Early Show, The View, Politically Incorrect, Larry King Live, The Roseanne Show, CNN and Company, as well as many others. He has been profiled in USA Today, Newsweek, Time Magazine, TV Guide, People, Forbes, and other major publications.

John Gray’s weekly nationally syndicated column has reached 30 million readers in

many newspapers, including The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, New York Daily News, New York's Newsday, The Denver Post, and the San Antonio Express-News. Internationally, the columns appear in publications in England, Canada, Mexico, Korea, and in Latin America and the South Pacific.

John Gray lives with his wife and family in Northern California.

## **Main Presentation**

### **Improving Relationships by Understanding How Men and Women Cope Differently with Stress**

(The short version, for the men)

Once upon a time, Martians and Venusians functioned in separate worlds. Today, relationships have become more complex; men and women are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress. To add to the increasing tension, most men and women are also completely unaware that they are actually hardwired to react differently to the stress.

It's a common scenario: a husband returns home from work stressed out and eager to relax on the couch and watch television. A wife returns home from work stressed out and wants to talk about it with her husband. What happens? Neither is on the same page, anger and resentment set in, and Mars and Venus collide.

John Gray arms the inhabitants of Mars and Venus with information that will help them live harmoniously ever after. Gray focuses on the ways that men and women misinterpret and mismanage the stress in their daily lives, and how these reactions ultimately affect their relationships. "It's not that he's just not into you; he needs to fulfill a biological need," Gray explains. "And it's not that she wants to henpeck you; she also has a biological drive."

He writes, for instance, how a husband's withdrawal is actually a natural way for him to replenish his depleted testosterone levels and restore his well-being, and how a

woman's need for conversation and support helps her build her own stress-reducing hormone, oxytocin.

Backed by research, Gray offers a program to bridge the gap between the two planets, providing effective communication strategies that will actually lower stress levels. This will help both men and women, whether in a relationship or single, to understand their new roles in a modern, work-oriented society, and allow them to discover a variety of new and practical ways to create a lifetime of love and harmony.

### **Why Mars & Venus Collide**

(The longer version, for the women)

Over the last fifty years, life has become more complicated. Longer working hours, intensified by grueling commutes and traffic, the increased cost of housing, food, and health care, rising credit card debt, and the combined responsibilities of work and childcare in two-career families are only a few of the sources of stress in our fast-paced modern lives. In spite of new technologies designed to connect us, information overload and round-the-clock accessibility via the Internet and cell phones have reduced much of our communication to the equivalent of text messaging. We are stretched to the limit, with little energy for our personal lives. Despite increased independence and opportunities for success at work, we are often left with a sense of isolation and exhaustion at home.

The unprecedented levels of stress both men and women are experiencing is taking a toll on our romantic relationships. Whether single or in committed relationships, we are often too busy or too tired to sustain feelings of attraction, motivation, and affection. Everyday stress drains our energy and patience and leaves us feeling too exhausted or overwhelmed to enjoy and support each other.

We are often too busy to see what is obvious. A man will give his heart and soul to make enough money to provide for his family and return home too tired even to talk

with them. A woman will give and give to support her husband and children and then resent them for not giving back the kind of support she thrives on giving. Under the influence of stress, men and women forget why we do what we do.

Over the last fifteen years, a new trend in relationships has emerged linked to increasing stress. Both couples and singles believe they are too busy or too exhausted to resolve their relationship issues, and often think their partners are either too demanding or just too different to understand. Attempting to cope with the increasing stress of working for a living, both men and women feel neglected at home. While some couples experience increasing tension, others have just given up, sweeping their emotional needs under the carpet. They may get along, but the passion is gone.

Without an understanding of our different needs, men and women are adjusting their actions and reactions to no avail. Our actions may be pointed in the wrong direction. Why Mars and Venus Collide provides a new understanding and a variety of techniques to counter the disruptive effects of stress and to steer a true course to a lifetime of love.

Remembering and understanding our differences are only half the battle. The other half is about action – learning to cope more effectively with stress. John Gray aims to help you discover new ways to lower your own stress and help to lower your partner's. Whether you are in a relationship, starting over, or single, you will discover a variety of new and practical ways to improve your communication, uplift your mood, increase your energy, elevate levels of attraction in your relationship, create harmony with your partner, and enjoy a lifetime of love and romance. You will learn why communication breaks down or why your relationships have failed in the past, and what you can do now to ensure success in the future.

## Summary

Gray believes that men and women need to

understand their biochemistry is different, and that explains different behaviors and mindsets. Stress affects each gender's biochemistry differently and their recovery from stress is different.

However, each gender projects onto the other their own perspective: women expect men to react and behave the way they do, and men often misunderstand what women actually need (as opposed to what is often literally said).

He believes women deal with stress by talking and connecting, which replenishes oxytocin (see below). Men de-stress by withdrawing ("going to their caves" as Gray put it in his first book) and detaching from the day's troubles—which replenishes testosterone.

If men reframe listening per se as actually doing something for the woman, then they are on the right track; as women just want to be heard. Otherwise, a man's testosterone declines as he passively listens to his partner vent their feelings – which seems like a no-win situation for a man. Instead of suffering through this, men need to just listen, without feeling the need to fix anything. John refers to this as a "Venus Talk".

And Gray notes that man's desire to make a woman happy is not fully appreciated by women, since they have such different motivations.

He examines the gender differences and ways men and women can de-stress and relate to each other in ways appropriate for their gender.

## Review of "Why Mars & Venus Collide"

The first chapter points out that in the wake of 1970s feminism, men and women were thought to be "the same". While men and women may be roughly equal before the law and in the workplace, they are not the same: they think and act very differently – and Gray rightly points out that this includes the

way they react to stress.

This leads to a long list of complaints, hurt feelings, unhappiness or collision. Women are exposed to the same levels of work stress as men, as well as taking on "masculine energy", while at the same time many college-educated men have taken on more "feminine energy".

There are many single women, some unconsciously, looking for a man with a connection to genuine masculine energy – someone, for example, who can not only handle himself in his career – but access the warrior archetype present in all men to, for example, physically protect his loved ones, if required. The reverse is also true – many men are looking for a woman with a connection to their feminine energy; they too are in short supply. Without some anchor to these energies, most couples never achieve the gender "polarity" that fundamentally drives attraction in the initial stages of a relationship, and long-term pair-bonding for those that last. Gender differences and their recent blurring have been discussed in the pop-psychology book genre before.

Gray also discusses the unrealistic expectations both genders have of themselves and their partners (or potential partners). Another good point made by Gray is that some women believe if they have a sensitive (i.e., feminine) man, it will be safer for her feminine side to emerge. Gray says this line of reasoning is wrong because a feminine man will not help her connect with her own feelings and be more vulnerable. Assuming they would even admit they want or need a man, as in a "fish not needing a bicycle," since many women do not need a man for economic survival anymore and are "repelled by the idea that they might need a man" as Gray puts it, on page 27. To drive the point home, he has a long list of practical reasons why women really do need men on page 28 – but the need a couple has for each other transcends simple lists; it is part of what makes us human.

It is the incorrect equating of "feminine" with

"weak" that costs these women so much in their personal lives (p. 26). The reverse is also true: men who have internalized the message that "masculine" is "bad" never connect with this vital life force, and pay the price personally and professionally. The negative association is due to immature masculinity – not the real thing – being linked to violence and abuse of women (think of "gangsta rap" lyrics, or even the connotations around the word "macho").

Chapter two points out that men and women are hardwired to be different and couples should embrace the difference and stop trying to change the other.

Chapter three discusses stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol. Testosterone is briefly mentioned, along with "Irritable Male Syndrome". Testosterone levels are important to monitor in aging men for a variety of reasons beyond the scope of this article. Oxytocin is mentioned as the feel good, love and bonding hormone.

Gray mentions stress researcher Hans Selye, whose three stage response to stress (alarm, resistance, exhaustion) has been discussed at past SLF meetings (2/08, Dr. Dawson Church).

Chapter four discusses women's stress. One common fear women have is if they stop giving to take time for themselves, men will not love them. This is not true. Men will always love a satisfied, fulfilled woman. As women realize this they can relieve themselves of the added burden of making a man happy.

In Chapter five, Gray says women are 90% responsible for their happiness in a relationship. Again he reduces it all to a single hormone: men can fulfill only a small portion of the support women need for Oxytocin production.

In chapter six, Gray talks about men's need to be alone to replenish testosterone levels.

Chapter seven is about conflict. The primary reason couples fight is they are dealing with

too much stress, according to Gray. This begs the question of why the stress is there in the first place. Gray says in arguments, men need to avoid correcting a woman's feelings, and should ask more questions and reflect back what they have heard. Women need to avoid making disapproving comments about a man's thoughts and actions and to talk less about their feelings. Gray offers some detailed advice on how to argue with your partner in this chapter.

Chapter eight is about how to de-escalate a fight, for example by taking a time out.

Chapter nine talks about the women returning from work, starved for conversation, or "oxytocin producing experiences" as Gray puts it. Men should listen more as they do not relieve a women's stress by sharing feelings.

Chapter ten is directed to women, on how they can take responsibility for getting the love and support they need from a support network of others, not just their partner. For example, by spending some time apart.

The conclusion starts with the notion that to create a lifetime of love, passion and attraction, one must deal with stress first. Gray says (p. 221) that "women today long for romance, because romance is the most powerful oxytocin producer". So Gray advises women to speak the Martian language to the men in their life: ask for the romance they want, with specific direct, brief and positive instructions. This is especially true later in the relationship when the courtship phase is over.

## **Background: Oxytocin**

"The hormone best known for its role in inducing labor may influence our ability to bond with others, according to researchers at the University of California, San Francisco.

In a preliminary study, the hormone oxytocin was shown to be associated with the ability to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships and healthy psychological boundaries with other people. The study appears in the July 1999 issue of Psychiatry.

"This is one of the first looks into the biological basis for human attachment and bonding," said Rebecca Turner, PhD, UCSF adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry and lead author of the study. "Our study indicates that oxytocin may be mediating emotional experiences in close relationships."

Women whose oxytocin levels rose in response to massage and remembering a positive relationship reported having little difficulty setting appropriate boundaries, being alone, and trying too hard to please others. Women whose oxytocin levels fell in response to remembering a negative emotional relationship reported greater problems with experiencing anxiety in close relationships.

"It seems that having this hormone "available" during positive experiences, and not being depleted of it during negative experiences, is associated with well-being in relationships," said Turner.

In addition, women who were currently involved in a committed relationship experienced greater oxytocin increases in response to positive emotions than single women. The researchers speculate that a close, regular relationship may influence the responsiveness of the hormone, said Turner.

These preliminary findings bring up some intriguing questions, said Teresa McGuinness, MD, PhD, UCSF clinical psychiatry faculty member and co-author of the paper. Because oxytocin is released in men and women during sexual orgasm, it may be involved in adult bonding, said Turner. There is also speculation that in addition to facilitating lactation and the birthing process, the hormone facilitates the emotional bond between mother and child.

"Evolutionarily speaking, it makes sense that during pregnancy and the postpartum, both a woman's body and her mind would be stimulated to nurture her child," said Turner.

Source: Psychiatry, 1999 Summer; 62(2):97-113.

"Preliminary research on plasma oxytocin in normal cycling women: investigating emotion and interpersonal distress". Turner, A.B., et al. [www.oxytocin.org](http://www.oxytocin.org)

### **Additional Resources:**

<http://home.marsvenus.com>  
[www.marsvenuswellness.com](http://www.marsvenuswellness.com)

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