

Men Refresh Their Masculinity outside Their Romantic Relationships

Joseph and Sarah Elizabeth Malinak, M. Div.

If he could be all things to you, he wouldn't be the man you want to spend the rest of your life with! There are many reasons why husbands and wives try to be everything to each other. To begin with, when couples are falling in love, most simply do not want to spend time with anyone else! The initial stages of exclusivity tend to include everyone out there. In the beginning, the world only exists to support the two of you being together. It is a delicious time and, if you are lucky, your friends tolerate it for a while and then draw you back out into the rest of your life. That honeymoon period makes you believe you have found the one person who completes you.

Another reason couples believe they need to be all things to each other is because of the physical distances that separate extended family from one another. For a number of generations now, couples have married and moved far away from the support of the friends and family with whom they grew up. At times, they have moved every two or more years, making it difficult to create new support in each new place. It is natural for couples who move frequently to feel they really only have each other.

An additional reason couples believe they need to be all things to each other happens when wives want their husbands to be their very best friend and lover. Now what could be the harm in that?

When a man falls in love with a woman and gives his heart to her, he desires above all things to make her happy. This can be costly when making her happy results in ways of being and activity for which, as a man, he isn't designed. When a man is asked to listen for long periods of time; when he is asked to be sensitive; when he is asked to refrain from trying to fix her problems and, instead, listen some more; and when he is asked to be emotionally available, he spends his masculine energy.

Depending on the man involved, it isn't a bad thing for a man to stretch himself in these ways. However, when he does, it costs him his masculine energy. A metaphor is to compare him to a car and his masculine energy to the gas that runs the car. He uses up his gasoline when he takes care of his wife and children in ways that are sensitive to their feelings and desires. At some point, he must refuel. For a man, his male friends are to his masculinity what fuel is to a car.

A man expresses his masculinity with his woman. He refreshes his masculinity with other men.

When a man doesn't refuel, he can become impatient and resent the demands his wife and children make on him. The more time he spends with and on them without taking time to be with his male friends, the more he feels their demands require too much. Especially for a mama's boy who is prone to look to his woman to get reassurance about his masculinity, a man has to have something meaningful outside the relationship.

Spending time in male company can look like shared hobbies or tasks like fishing or hunting. It can look like shared passions for making a difference in the world, such as gathering with friends to help build a Habitat-for-Humanity house or other charitable work. It can mean being a member of a church or civic men's group. It can be starting up a side business with friends. It can even be found at work! It can mean getting together regularly to play chess or shoot pool.

Kent Couch from Bend, Oregon, refreshed his masculinity over the July 4th weekend by flying his lawn chair (with helium balloons attached) from Oregon to Idaho! He actually refreshed his masculinity off and on for weeks and months prior to that flight as he and his friends devised the plan and made trial flights. His wife is reported to have been supportive of his efforts because she didn't believe he would follow through with it! In an interview on Good Morning America (7/7/2008), they both looked proud and happy.

When their masculinity has been spent, men need the company of and activities with other men so that they can reconnect with the masculine field. Afterwards, with his masculinity refreshed, a man is available for giving his wife and children his loving attention again. Giving to and protecting his family is what a man wants to do with his masculinity. Taking time off and creating space for himself isn't a sign of lack of love. It helps him refresh so that he has more of himself to give back to his wife and children.

When a man's woman honors the time he takes to refresh his masculinity, she shows him respect that makes her even more desirable!

If a woman wants to assist her man in creating time to refresh his masculinity, there is one thing she should not do! She shouldn't tell him to go do it, as a daddy's girl would be prone to do. As he naturally leans in the direction of creating time for himself, she can either just let it happen or show enthusiasm over it; either way, honoring him for it makes her that much more appealing.

By the way, a woman has the exact same need. Women express their femininity with men but refresh their femininity with other women. Women spend their femininity with all the activity and doing involved in having a career, running the household and managing children. All that activity costs a woman her feminine energy.

Women need to take time to slow down with themselves and other women so that they can refresh their femininity. Years ago, there was a commercial for Calgon Bath Oil Beads that showed a woman harried by the demands of her day, tucking herself in the bathroom in the evening to a tub filled with bubbles, while the voice over said, "Calgon, take me away!" I don't know if Calgon Bath Oil Beads are still available, but the bubble bath that cannot be disturbed is still a great idea. Furthermore, the man who appreciates and supports such time off is highly desirable to his woman!

A man instinctively knows to both search out time alone as well as the company of other men and do things together. Just so, a woman instinctively knows how to create small to large moments throughout the day to steal time for herself, to let her thoughts and

imagination roam, to feel her feelings, and not have to answer to anyone during those moments. This refreshes a woman's femininity just as keeping company with her female friends does.

She cannot refresh his masculinity. He cannot refresh her femininity. You cannot be all things to each other. However, as he takes the time to refresh his masculinity and she takes the time to refresh her femininity, when they come back together, wow! There is so much more available for giving to one another. It is magical!

It is definitely worth it to let the natural biological need for same sex friendships be an important part of any couple's life together. It can enrich the love you share.

*

There is a secret to relationship success that is direct, simple, and effective. We and others have used it to transform marriages that felt burdensome and hurtful into marriages filled with love and satisfaction.

You can discover this secret for yourself in the e-workbook called *Creating the Love You Want: Five Unique Steps to Improve Your Marriage*. Go to <http://www.CreateTheLoveYouWant.com> and order your copy right now. With it, you can begin making a difference for yourself tonight!