

Sensory Delights

Get Real

by

Brooke Bessesen



Research is all good as in-home hubby study goes on

I consider my marriage a lifelong study of the Male Brain and I'm on track for a Ph.D. in Testosteronology. Our house is my research station. I collect and analyze data, formulate and test hypotheses, and occasionally discover some exciting new detail that better explains the whole.

I appreciate, even delight in, gender-based differences. Cohabiting with a member

of the opposite sex, someone who observes the world in a markedly different way, can prove both entertaining and insightful.

My husband, Kevin, is my best friend and scientific colleague (he studies Female Behavior but insists he is no less mystified than when he began.) We are bound by love, respect, parallel interests and perhaps the most essential nuptial

ingredient ... humor.

We laugh. A lot.

We do occasionally have opposing views of what is funny. Regardless of increasing age, intellect and professional achievement, his comedic taste embraces one eternal truth: boys think bodily functions are a riot!

I hope to someday substantiate my theory that this trait is encoded in men's DNA. Mention bathroom and matchstick in the same joke and any guy within earshot is sure to guffaw.

As a party trick, I can recite the alphabet backwards. But I know the male audience would be far more amused if I could burp my ABCs. (I tried to learn this stunt as a kid but presume my double-X chromosomes hindered my potential.)

In mixed company, men may feign offence at such crass tomfoolery but secret informants assure me they all laugh on the inside.

Most of the time, however, my hubby's humor is cerebrally clever and he can make me giggle even when life gets serious. If ever I am kidnapped by the doldrums, he heroically comes to my rescue with some witty one-liner.

This tension-breaking ability is a precious attribute in times of trouble and one that, examining many case studies, appears more common in men than women.

Not to say girls aren't funny; we just tend to approach the slightest emotional emergency as a full-blown "heart" attack, rushing in with the crash cart and preparing to defib our patient with *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

While men are typically kind and sensitive, during a crisis some can become befuddled by tears. Whirling about in the treacherous Maelstrom of Deep Feelings, they reach for the closest lifeline ... either levity or a way to fix the problem.

Men, in fact, seem to be natural-born problem-solvers. They may not worry about all (or any) of the psychological ramifications, but in a matter of minutes, you are sure to have at least six viable solutions to consider. It's really quite a gift.

And here's an ever-more impressive talent: ask a guy sitting comfortably on a couch what he's thinking and he may well say, "Nothing" - and actually mean it!

Other divergent characteristics are only revealed with time.

A few years into our marriage, I unearthed a major finding: Kevin will wear practically anything as long as it meets one vital criterion: it must be soft.

I am tempted to hang an extremely downy clown suit in the closet just to see how far his penchant for comfort will take him.

And when it comes to shopping, it's nearly impossible to get him to the mall without a specific mission - for example, a

three-pack of underwear.

Despite decades of domesticity, most males have retained primitive hunter instincts. For men, clothes are simply modern-day prey to be pursued, captured, bagged and carried proudly back to the home fires.

Upon arriving at the store, Kevin steals in, lines his cross-hairs on the men's department, flushes the aisles and - BAM! - he's got his skivvies.

He simply can't understand, and I suspect has an intrinsic intolerance, for my estrogen-driven gathering. Picking panties like berries ... fastidiously evaluating each for seasonal size and color and eliminating unfit specimens before ceremoniously dropping one ideal pair into the basket.

It's true no marriage is perfect; although gender roles have altered significantly in recent times creating new commonality, core differences remain.

So what beneficial conclusions have I drawn from my doctoral research?

Men and women can learn from one another. Balance is attained when, as individuals, we are in touch with both our masculine and feminine sides.

Observing Kevin, I have already documented these invaluable life lessons:

1. Laugh more, 2. Think less, 3. Seek multiple resolutions, 4. Shop efficiently, and 5. Always wear soft clothing.

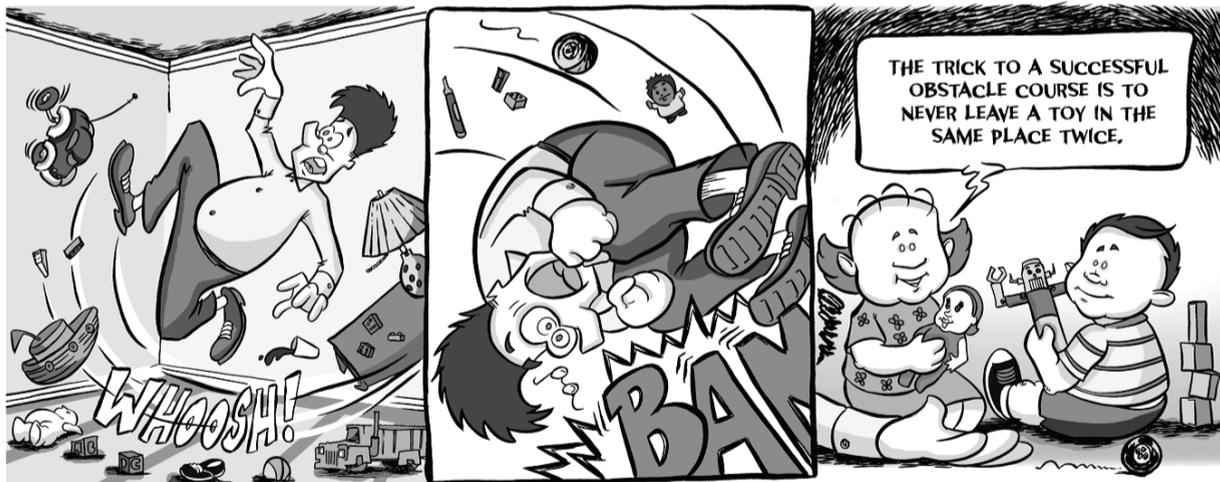
You have to admit, it's pretty good advice.

Now if I can just figure out how to shower, dress and be ready to leave the house in 1.3 minutes ... that will be something.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book *Look Who Lives in the Desert!*, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including *Gridleys of Fountain Hills*.

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