



Why perfectly good husbands are being abandoned?

By: Randi Gunther

[It must be a parallel path. Both men and women must separately find their own balance between their need for independence and their desire for ongoing commitment. As integrated individuals in their own right, they would then have the capacity to create a relationship that is more than the exchange or sum of the parts. Committed partners who are willing to fight for that innovative solution will find the way.]

Not so many years ago, married men had the freedom to live by one set of rules away from home, and a different set at the hearth. Because they held the power to distribute resources however they wished, they could decide what and when to share them. As women have become legitimate wage earners with more powerful voices, they have challenged their chosen partners to participate in a whole new kind of connection that does not accept automatic hierarchy.

In the last few decades women have slowly driven their point home. The millennial men, who are their current counterparts, are freer thinkers and they have responded in kind in their relationships as well. These men like their women strong and feisty, and have willingly accepted the responsibility to connect in a more vulnerable way. They get it that it's sexy to help make a meal or take the kids away on a Sunday morning so their wives can sleep in. They are the

androgynous guys that their women have asked them to become.

You would think that the women in these new relationships would be ecstatic. They've got a guy who wants to work out together, share parenting, support their parallel dreams, and make their family collective central to both of their lives. They've established an equal relationship of coordinated teamwork, and the guys don't seem to miss their old need to posture for power over intimate connections.

Well, guess again. Fifty percent of marriages are still ending in divorce, and women continue to be the gender that initiates those endings. In the past, their reasons for leaving most often had to do with infidelity, neglect, or abuse. Now they're dumping men who are faithful, attentive, and respectful, the very men they said they have always wanted. Why would women who have accomplished the female dream suddenly not be satisfied with it?

Why are they leaving these ideal guys, and for what reasons?

I am currently dealing with several of these great husbands. They are, across the board, respectful, quality, caring, devoted, cherishing, authentic, and supportive guys whose wives have left them for a different kind of man. These once-beloved men make a living, love their kids, help with chores, support aging parents, and support their mate's desires and interests. They believe they've done everything right.

They are devastated, confused, disoriented, and heartsick. In a tragic way, they startlingly resemble the disheartened women of the past who were left behind by men who "just wanted something new."

You may think that these women are ruthless and inconsiderate. Those I know are far from that. More often, they still love their husbands as much as they ever did, but in a different way. They tell me how wonderful their men are and how much they respect them. They just don't want to be married to them anymore.

Perhaps it would be even more honest to say that they don't want to be yoked to anyone any more.

At least in the traditional ways they once embraced as ideal. They feel compassion for their prior mates, but liberated in their new-found right to create a different way of feeling in relationships. In short, they want to live their lives with the privileges men once had.

I think I understand what is going on.

In the last twenty years, as women have found their voices and value, they have been asking more equality in their relationships. They were ready to take leadership and to disconnect from dependency. In exchange, they wanted their men to adopt nurturing and vulnerable characteristics. At first, there was an expected backlash. “Men are from Mars” and other media presentations became the cry for holding on to the differences between men and women and to keep them from blending.

Nevertheless, it became more and more apparent that quality people of both genders would be happier and more fulfilled if they could combine power and nurturing. Men would develop their feminine side and women their masculine. No longer would it be that the bad boys were sexy and the good women were virtuous. Now quality men needed to add chivalry to their power, and women to claim their ability for independent thinking and leadership. They could imagine a relationship where both were equally blended and free to be the best they could be. “She” and “he” became the new idealized “we.”

As the trend picked up energy, more of the die-hard “men’s men” started to see that the androgynous males were stealing the great girls from under their hard-core posturing, and began to wonder if their “take-no-prisoners” attitude might benefit from a little revising. Women saw their newly developed mates as their best friends, so wonderfully malleable they could take them anywhere and know they would fit in. Men no longer had to “understand and handle” their women, nor did women have to orchestrate “connection.”

Then things started to go awry. Perhaps these androgynous couples over-valued adopting the same behaviors in their relationship. Maybe the men got too nice and the women a little too challenging. Oddly, the androgynous men seemed to like their new-found emotional availability, while the women began to feel more unfulfilled. Her “perfect” partner, in the process of reclaiming his full emotional expressiveness, somehow ended up paying an unfair price; he was no longer able to command the hierarchical respect from her that was once his inalienable right.

How can a man be a caretaker and a warrior at the same time? How can he serve his woman’s need for a partner who is vulnerable, open, and intimate, while donning armor to fight the dangers that threaten his family and place in the world? How can he stand up and be a man amongst men, loyal to the hunting band that covers his back, while taking the night feeding, while not appearing less than a man? Did he blend his male energy with his female side, or did

he learn to be more like a female at the price of his innate masculinity?

The women I have treated who have left their husbands for more “masculine” men believed that their new relationships would be able to both excite and nurture them. Sadly, that has not always happened. The

veritable saint with balls is as elusive as ever.

When things haven't worked out as they thought they would, several of the women I am now working with are re-thinking their decisions, wondering if they left too soon, or for the wrong reasons. They want to reconcile with the men they have left behind. Their husbands are torn between the understandable desire to reject them and still wanting them back. Ironically, because these have nurtured the feminine side of their natures, they are also able to forgive in a way few men have been able to do in the past.

But because they have no interest in returning to the “bad boy” mentality their competitors brandished, they are faced with a challenge most men have never had to confront. How do they hold on to their vulnerability and capacity to nurture, and blend it with the strength and power required of a self-respecting leader of men?

None of my reuniting couples ever want to lose each other again. They've left the old ways behind and know that going back to what was will not work anymore. They intensely want to create a new kind of connection that blends the beauty of traditional roles with the freedom to move between them, and to blend the best of the past with an as-yet-unwritten future.

It must be a parallel path. Both men and women must separately find their own balance between their need for independence and their desire for ongoing commitment. As integrated individuals in their own right, they would then have the capacity to create a relationship that is more than the exchange or sum of the parts. Committed partners who are willing to fight for that innovative solution will find the way.

Source: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>