

Special Report: Five Myths That Keep Men Stuck

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This Special Report is about five “myths” or beliefs or perceptions about men that keep us stuck in our relationships and in our lives. They are stereotypes that keep us disempowered and prevent us from fully expressing who we are in the world.

These beliefs have been around for a long time and like most generalizations, even when we dispute them, we still fear that there is some “grain of truth” in them. **AND**, it is even more hurtful for us when our loved ones buy into these limitations as well.

The five myths that keep men stuck that I will describe and contest are beliefs about men in general, yet I will challenge them from the perspective of the “man after fifty” since that is the context of this report and of the www.menafterfifty.com website. The information is valuable to ALL men, as well as their partners.

In no particular order, the “Five Male Myths” are:

- 1. Men don't like to communicate or share their feelings.**
- 2. Men are afraid of commitment**
- 3. Men's top priorities are power, success and money.**
- 4. Men are only attracted to looks and are only interested sex.**
- 5. Men don't want to be with or are intimidated by powerful/smart/successful partners.**

Do any of these sound familiar or strike a chord? Have you heard them before? Do you **BELIEVE** any or all of them? Have you heard

them from your partner? Have any of them been the excuse behind the ending of a relationship?

Note: I am writing this report in the context of heterosexual men and couples. Much of what I am saying may also apply to homosexual relationships, but not necessarily everything. While half of my private psychotherapy practice consists of couples counseling and I have worked with many couples of various sexual orientations over the last twenty plus years, I wouldn't classify myself as an "expert" when it comes to gay and lesbian relationships although I have helped many such couples and understand some of the key distinctions. As always, filter what I share here through your own experiences and apply what feels relevant and valid.

Now, let me explore and challenge each myth one by one.

MYTH #1: Men don't like to communicate or share their feelings.

It's **NOT** that men don't like to communicate, it's more that we have a different style of communication than our female partners. Whether there is a genetic/biological factor or it's more anthropologically or socially based or some combination, men and women communicate for different purposes.

Men communicate with each other to define the power structure, the hierarchy and to maintain their status and independence. Sitting down and talking does not create connection with boys or men in the same way that sharing an activity, working on a project together and actually **DOING** something does.

Women on the other hand, communicate in order to build connection and intimacy. Women bond by getting together and sharing their

lives, their problems, their concerns. This creates closeness and intimacy.

Now when women use this strategy on men, they are usually doomed to disappointment. Sharing problems with a man is a request (in *his* reality) to **SOLVE** the problem and deal with the issue. It's not a request for **INTIMACY**, as the woman believes, it's a request for **ADVICE!**

And when the woman rejects the advice, just wanting to be heard, it feels to the man like the woman is simply complaining or whining. "Why talk about it if you don't want to take care of it?" is our thought.

A lot of my work as a couples counselor over the last twenty years has been to serve as a translator between men and women. We **ALL** want the same things, it just looks and feels different for each of us.

As far as men not sharing their feelings, that is certainly a myth that our society has helped to perpetuate. It's not that we don't want to share our feelings, it's more that we have some strong reactions to sharing our feelings.

Women are more "designed" to benefit from sharing their feelings and are also more practiced and rewarded for doing so. Men seem to have a much lower tolerance for the language of feelings and are greatly challenged.

And the truth of the matter (in my personal and clinical experience) is that when we share our feelings beyond what a woman would consider a perfunctory level, we feel insecure and young and we begin to regress.

And while a psychotherapist can appreciate regression in a patient and deal with it skillfully and not take it personally, our romantic partners often do not. They really **DON'T** want a helpless child as a

partner who turns them into mommy. It definitely puts a damper on romance and sex!

We're men. We're not comfortable talking about our feelings. Is it genetic or societal reinforcement? "Big boys don't cry! Be the strong, silent type!" Perhaps it's a mixture of both.

The truth though is that talking often makes us feel weak. Talking makes us feel vulnerable. Talking makes us feel anxious. Talking makes us feel shame. Talking makes us feel "less than". And when we feel like that, we tend to act out our insecurities in our relationships and take it out on our loved ones!

Do we need to learn how to share our feelings and develop this skill set? Absolutely! Can we learn it? Definitely! I help couples and singles deal with this every week. But in the meantime, I truly believe that women should share and "process" the majority of their feelings with their friends and not their lovers.

In my experience, women need to learn the 80/20 Rule: share 80% of your feelings with your friends and share the 20% that are **REALLY** important for your relationship with your partner.

As men, when we know that it's **TRULY** important to our partner, we will make the effort, but if we feel put upon for every little thing, we **WILL** resent it and respond accordingly, usually in an aggressive or passive aggressive way.

Bottom line, we don't have to be at the effect of this myth. The 80/20 Rule can give us the best of both worlds. To learn more about it, please read my blogpost, "[Apply The 80/20 Rule To Your Relationship!](#)"

MYTH #2: Men are afraid of commitment.

The myth that men are afraid of commitment in relationships is based upon two arguments, one biological and one psychological. The biological argument suggests that on a basic genetic level, men are “designed” to mate/propagate with as many women as possible to continue to perpetuate our species. Therefore, monogamy isn’t the “natural” order of things.

The psychological argument states that a key psychological value for men is freedom and that this is incompatible with commitment. By committing to one person, we lose our freedom, we lose our ability to make our own choices without considering another, we lose our spontaneity, our sense of adventure and worst of all, we lose our sense of self!

Addressing the biological argument, I believe that the ultimate freedom rests in accepting that we **ARE** biological creatures and that we **DO** have instincts. We have genetic memory and biological predispositions.

All of this is true and to deny it, is to deny a part of our nature. In the rapid evolution of our species from the hunter/gatherer model into the high-tech, information age, our DNA hasn’t caught up by a longshot!

At the same time, the truth is that using our awareness of our biology, we can exercise some degree of choice and free will in shaping our destiny. We can accept our biology **AND** choose to make commitments where we believe that they will support our ultimate choices in our lives. We do have that capacity and that freedom to **CHOOSE!**

Looking at the psychological argument, the truth in my experience is that commitment **PROVIDES** us with freedom. We create freedom **THROUGH** commitment.

In my personal and professional experience, when a man has made a commitment to a partner, he frees up a great deal of the energy that he would be otherwise expending in the “mating” rituals that we have in our society. Dating, courting and romancing take up a great deal of physical and psychological energy and time.

Being in a stable, monogamous relationship gives men a certain grounding that allows us to be more focused and “launch” more successfully into whatever our “missions” are in life. I’m not necessarily promoting monogamy nor marriage, especially as marriage isn’t even available to all, I’m just challenging the myth. So let me share some recent statistics with you.

Married men are healthier, happier and richer! According to a 2007 Report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, married men live longer on average than single men! Married people consume less alcohol, have fewer doctor visits and hospitalizations, and have fewer depressive symptoms. And, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, the median income of married men is 107% greater than never married men.

The facts validate our capacity as men to commit to long-term relationships as well as the benefits of doing so. Again, we can use our consciousness and our free will, our capacity to make choices to transcend our biology and psychology if we desire a monogamous lifestyle. We **CAN** commit!

MYTH #3: Men’s top priorities are power, success, and money.

This is a fairly pervasive belief system, that the top priority for a man is to have power, success and money! This is supported from a biological perspective, as power and success allow us to dominate our hierarchy and get the most fertile/attractive/appealing mates.

In addition, from a psychological perspective, the message that society gives us is that all good comes to men who are successful. From an early age, we are all conditioned in both blatant as well as in subliminal ways to crave success in either academics or in sports and then in career. The more we men can accumulate, the happier we will become or so the belief says.

While women have achieved society's "blessing" to be a successful mother or a successful career woman or both, sadly the same is not true for men. Men are not rewarded for staying home and taking care of the kids. The "house husband" gets very little respect or acknowledgment.

In fact, men in general are punished for **NOT** being successful. In our society, men who "follow their passion" and follow more nontraditional or creative/artistic pursuits generally don't generate as much success or as much income. Consequently, they don't get into relationships with the more attractive/appealing females. They are penalized according to society's standards.

Again, I'm not saying that this is conscious, but it is activated at the most basic biological level as well as from society's structure of rewards. I'm not saying it is "good" or healthy or that I even like it, yet there is a structure set in motion that perpetuates the myth that men are in it for the the power, the success, the money, the status.

If we look below the surface, all of this is a means to an end. As men, most of us truly **DO** want to bond with someone, we truly **DO** want connection and deep inner fulfillment.

Dr. Carl Jung was one of the great psychologists of the twentieth century and I have studied a great deal of his work as a way to help men. Jung believed that the first half of a man's life should be dedicated to building a strong ego and a strong sense of self and

creating a successful life in the material, outer world. This could occupy the first forty years of life.

At that point, a man might have sufficient “ego strength” to actually transcend his ego and begin to focus on his inner world. Without success and stability in the outer, it can be challenging to focus on the inner.

My belief then, is that men in the second half of life (which includes those interested in my work at www.menafterfifty.com) actually have the potential to make their inner life and their essential relationships the top priority.

Money, power and success can still have their place, yet they are now a means to an end, not the end itself. They can be used to create and expand life and improve upon it for ourselves and others.

MYTH #4: Men are only attracted to looks and are only interested in sex.

From an evolutionary psychology perspective, men are certainly interested in looks and sex. Physiologically speaking, we are attracted to women who exhibit the physical signs of fertility and good child-bearing genetics: youth, symmetrical features (face and body), breasts, hips, lips.

Interestingly enough, the different shapes, sizes and proportions vary across cultures and over periods of time in these cultures. While some believe that “thin is in” in Western culture today, 100 years ago, a woman with more “meat on her bones” was a sign of beauty. It is indeed in the “eye of the beholder” and this is important to recognize.

Physical appearance and the desire for sex are often the initial source of attraction for men towards women. However, there are

huge psychological attractions as well that may override or even conflict with our own personal idea of beauty.

From my perspective as a psychologist and couples counselor, we each have an internal, psychological representation of what the “ideal” partner is. I am trained and certificated in Imago Relationship Therapy and in that theory we speak about the “Imago” which is Latin for image.

Deep inside our unconscious we hold this image of our “perfect” partner. This image, the Imago is based upon what we witnessed of love and relationship growing up. It includes all of the sights and sounds and smells and feelings we gathered.

And guess what, our model for relationship and attraction is very strongly based upon our primary caregivers, usually our parents and sometimes also our extended family. The Imago is also based upon our neighbors and the books and newspapers and magazines we read and the television and movies we watched. And these days, of course, it’s also based upon the ubiquitous Internet.

And we take all of those images record and store them with our own unique logic, which is based upon some combination of our genetics and our upbringing and our developing personality. The kicker here though, is that the unconscious image we have created as the Imago not only includes the good qualities we witnessed, but also the **negative** traits of our caregivers. As children, we’re like sponges and we absorb it all.

And so, when we meet someone that is close enough to this Imago, this internalized blueprint, our radar goes up. And if they have enough of those qualities or we believe that they have enough of those qualities, we fall “in love” and enter that first stage of relationship, the romantic stage, the honeymoon stage.

The honeymoon stage is easy though, as we focus upon the positive qualities of the Imago. The challenge in most relationships though, is

when the honeymoon stage “wears off” and we’re left with this person who has many of the negative traits of our primary caregivers! That’s the stage in Imago theory know as the “power struggle” and it is usually where a couple gets into trouble and where an experienced couples counselor or relationship coach can be of support.

Now, back to the myth. Yes, we have a physiological predisposition towards physical attraction and sexuality. And yes, we have a psychological predisposition to a certain psychological profile for our “perfect” relationship.

As stated in Myth #3, as we mature as men (back to “Men After Fifty”), we can choose to continue to be driven by our genetics and our psychological past or we can choose to work on ourselves and liberate ourselves from these restrictions.

We are **MORE** than an accumulation of physiology and emotional memories and my work is to help men to gain this freedom and have more choice in the partners they wish to be with and the lives they wish to live. To learn more about Imago, please read my blogpost, [“The Three Stages of Relationship”](#).

MYTH #5: Men don’t want to be with or are intimidated by powerful/smart/successful partners.

This myth seems to cater to the idea of the fragile male ego. We can’t tolerate the “competition” of a partner who is too smart, too successful, too powerful. The myth is that we want someone that **WE** can dominate, that **WE** can take care of. Anything else makes us feel too insecure.

While it is true that we have the deep, biological instinct to take care of our mate, to take care of our family, to take care of our community, I think that the myth gives us too little credit. Yes, we enjoy feeling strong, feeling powerful, feeling in charge, no doubt about it.

However, at the same time, we **DO** want to be challenged in a relationship. We **DO** want to be faced with a partner who can stand up to us, show us where we have weak points and can help us to grow. Why else be in a relationship if it doesn't stimulate us to grow and be more than we can be alone?

What is behind the myth perhaps, is the fact that as men, we have certain basic needs in a relationship. And I'm not talking about the other myth-based needs of having a "trophy wife" or someone to have hot sex with. I'm not even talking about the need to have someone to raise children with or to share our feelings with (perish **THAT** thought!).

What I'm talking about is more basic than any of this. What I believe that men **REALLY** want in a relationship, is a safe place to recharge and renew themselves in order to go back out and face the world and "fight the good fight." What we want is a safe, secure, **STRESS-FREE** environment where we can recover from dealing with the "rat-race" and just relax.

What men want is a place where we can be ourselves, without putting on the facade that the world sometimes demands. We want a place where we don't have to be on our best behavior, where we don't have to walk on eggshells and where we don't have to pretend that we're something we're not.

We want a place where we can be accepted for who we are and for who we are not! What men want is consistency and routine, because that is what relaxes us. "Same place, same thing" calms us down. Yes, we like change and excitement from time to time, but what we really want in our primary relationship is a place where we can be at

peace, where we don't have to have our "fight or flight" response triggered. We're activated enough in the work world, we don't want our relationship to be like a second job!

And perhaps it is too challenging for us to get this "recharge" need met if we are partnered with someone who is focused primarily on their own success. Perhaps they are too driven and don't know how to recharge, don't know much about self-care. Perhaps then we are **TOO** much alike.

I don't believe it's hopeless though. I believe that we can collaborate in partnership. I believe that **TOGETHER** we can learn how to care for ourselves **AND** each other. Perhaps we can teach ourselves and each other or perhaps we need the support and guidance of a therapist, counselor or coach. However we do it, I believe that we **CAN** put this myth to rest.

Conclusion:

So there you have it, the "Five Myths That Keep Men Stuck" and how you can begin to challenge them. It takes willingness, it takes awareness and it takes commitment to make changes in our lives.

And it takes **SUPPORT**, usually a combination of inner and outer support. I've been supporting men to make changes in their lives for decades! That's why I'm grateful that you've downloaded this report as a thank you for joining the "Men After Fifty" Community. I hope that you will participate fully in the website and all that it has to offer you.

If I can be of any support in helping you either individually or helping you as a couple in improving your relationship, please feel free to contact me. I help people in person, by telephone and by Skype.

My contact information is available at:

www.menafterfifty.com/contact/

Thank you so much,

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About The Author



Doctor Adam Sheck is a licensed Clinical Psychologist specializing in Men's Issues, Relationship Issues and Couples Counseling in Los Angeles, California.

He is certified in Imago Relationship Therapy, a powerful form of couples counseling made popular by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D., author of Getting The Love You Want.

Dr. Sheck has taught graduate classes in Marriage and Family Therapy since 1998. He is currently Director of Psychology Training at Airport Marina Counseling Services where he is also in charge of the Couples Counseling Program.

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He is currently accepting applications for clients in his men's groups, both in Los Angeles and in "virtual" format via Internet.

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