

Talking Points

Top Questions a Married Man Should Ask (By Gary Dahl)

1. Am I willing to do the work to heal myself and my part of the relationship?

I wish it was easy but healing ourselves and our marriages requires time and effort. It can be a daunting project. There can be long periods of little progress. How much do you want it? Are you willing to try something different?

To make a lasting change and for healing, you'll need to:

- a. Face your own issues.
- b. Learn to speak up.
- c. Possibly journaling about your issues and feelings.
- d. Make an effort to understand yourself and your behaviors. (understandyourself.com)
- e. Possibly reading books and watching videos for guidance and input.
- f. Come to MMG, share feelings with other guys or go to counseling.
- g. Get better at trusting and waiting.

If you consider counseling, remember that a good counselor costs money. If you are making progress, it's probably worth the cost. How much is your marriage worth to you?

2. How did I get here?

How well do you know yourself? Ask yourself: What is my story? Be honest about the past. What were the mistakes you made, even from before you got married? List them. Am I just a victim or am I partly at fault? Once you metabolize and better understand your past, you can avoid repeating it. A clear view of your past helps show you what you need to change.

3. Am I being honest with myself and my wife?

One of the first things we need to do in a relationship crisis is to be brutally honest with ourselves. It can be painful, but it's a key step to growing and healing relationships.

4. What are my true motives?

In our communication and actions toward someone, we rarely ask "what are my motives?" What exactly do I want to accomplish with my words and actions? Avoid manipulating and controlling. Try your best at hearing her truth and really understanding where she's at. Good or bad. Even if you disagree.

5. How aware am I of my own issues?

It's not all about her. Make a list of *your* issues. If it's less than half a dozen items, keep writing. If you don't know what they are, you can't get healthy. Bonus question: How have those issues contributed to our marriage challenges? If it's safe, you could read the list to her.

We all have issues and quirks. If she points them out to you, and she's right, own it! Learn to take a good look at yourself that way. It's not so bad to acknowledge our own quirks or goofy ways. Learn to laugh at yourself once in a while.

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6. How do I feel right now?

How aware are you of how you feel? Do you just feel funky and don't know why? Especially in the middle of tough situations? If you have a clear view of what's behind your emotions and feelings you can better manage them.

Are you only focused on her? A lot of times we men focus on our wives so we don't have to focus on us. That's a lot easier, but probably not productive or beneficial. Use the "feelings" handout; really give it some thought! Feelings and emotions are like receiving mail from the IRS. Even the outside of that envelope is scary. This is not a welcome envelope. Many times, we put it on the shelf. Later, we wonder why we are depressed. Open the envelope. There is a message inside. What is it telling you?

7. Am I willing to experience pain?

You will be hanging out with pain anyway, so make pain your friend. Lean into him. Write about him. Ask him questions. Listen to what he has to say. But always invite other safe encouraging friends to the party.

8. What is my part in her pain?

Are you willing to listen to what she is saying with discernment and with enough courage to identify pain that you may have caused? This can be difficult when she is angry and throwing accusations at you which are false. Let those go for a moment (maturity) and try to hear any ways *you* may have hurt her. This is where you can develop courage. If you have a part, ask her more about those experiences and take responsibility immediately and fully.

9. How do I interact with her when she is not safe?

Anything you say and do or don't do can become a trigger for her. Always be clear, kind and concise in any interactions. Be crystal clear in your motivations. Let her vent if needs be. Don't argue. Let her be wrong without reacting. Never ever defend yourself. Many times, silence is golden. Maybe a part of what she says is true; focus on that. Excuse yourself with love when things escalate. Most importantly work on yourself.

10. Am I making her a priority?

If not her, what is it? Work? Hobbies? Other people? What does that look like if you did make her the priority? What other priorities would you have to sacrifice? Specifically, what would you do? Maybe even write it out and show her.

11. What do I like and value about her?

We can get so lost in the problems, that we take her good points for granted; they don't even come to mind. Think about her good qualities. Is she kind to others? Does she dress well? Is she a good cook? Keep these in your mind and periodically recall them. When you notice that she does something good, tell her!

12. Have I failed to acknowledge what she does for me? Maybe even the small things?

It's always amazing to me how we want our wives to treat us well, change some poor behavior or just do something nice, but when she does it, we don't acknowledge it. Pay attention! Let her know that you appreciate her.

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13. Can I say I'm sorry or I'm wrong?

We all do bad things. If you can't say you're sorry, then that's a good place to start. If not, what's getting in the way?

14. Am I afraid of intimacy?

There is physical intimacy and there is emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy requires vulnerability. Vulnerability exposes our pain and past hurts. It can be easier to put up a wall. We push her away and she loses the opportunity to know us and we, the opportunity to be known.

Sometimes it's easier to use porn than to open our bruised heart. Other people can also supply a false or other-focused intimacy. That's how many affairs happen.

Do you engage in non-sexual touch? Do you initiate physical intimacy? Are you soft and affectionate with her?

15. What challenges am I facing that I haven't surrendered to God?

We are fixers and try to fix our relationship in the belief that we personally can fix our problems. Yes, we can solve many problems, but sometimes there is no fix. We are not God. Sometimes everything falls into its best place when we just stop trying to fix it. This is the essence of surrender. Letting go.

16. What does God want me to do in this situation?

This is a great question to ask in any difficult moment or situation. Sometimes He may want nothing more than a few quiet moments of your time contemplating His goodness. Other times, He may lead you to a specific helpful thought. God wants us to love our wives. When you don't know how to do that, ask God for His help. If you are in an argument or tense situation, ask God then and there to show you how to love your wife.

17. What would it be like to be married to me?

This one was from Rick Warren. How empathetic are you? We get so self-centered, looking at everything from our perspective. Visualize how she sees you as you go through your day, at breakfast, at dinner.

Please write some of your key notes you have uncovered.
