

The One Thing Men Want More Than Sex

It happens to be the one thing women find hard to give.



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By [Jed Diamond Ph.D](#)

How many times have we heard the phrase, “All men want is sex?” When I was 17 years old I was sure it was true. When I was 37 years old, I suspected it might not be true. And now that I’m 73 years old, I know it’s not true. Now don’t get me wrong, sex can be wonderful at any age, but there’s something that is more important than sex, but it’s something that men have difficulty admitting and women have difficulty giving.

This understanding has dawned on me slowly and became most evident to me in my men’s group. I’ve been meeting regularly with six other guys for thirty-eight years and sex has been a topic that has run through our discussions over the years. Like all guys, we are somewhat competitive and we all want to be seen as successful, but we also have learned to be honest with each other. We not only talk about our sexual successes, but also our failures, fears, and confusions.

From the time I was young I learned that wanting sex was synonymous with being a man. In high school, I remember overhearing a girl I liked talking about a guy we both knew. She wasn’t complaining that he was preoccupied with sex, but that he “didn’t come on to me like other guys do.” She went on to tell her girlfriend, “He’s not being very manly.” The message was clear, “real men” want sex and if you don’t “come on” to a girl, you’re not a real man.

This early lesson was validated through the years: **Always wanting sex is the mark of manliness for many.** It’s better to be turned down again and

again and be seen as a *jerk* who is totally preoccupied with sex than to want something more than sex and be seen as “less than a man.”



So, what do men want more than sex? We’ve all heard that **women need to feel loved to have sex, but men need to have sex to feel loved**. Let’s look more deeply at what it is exactly that men are getting when they get sex. Sure, there is the physical pleasure, but there is a deeper need that is being satisfied. I call it the need for a **safe harbor**.

The world of men is a world of competition. On the most basic level, males compete with other males for access to the most desirable females. Males make the advances and females decide which males they will accept. Sure, in modern times these roles are less rigid than they once were, but for the most part, whether we’re peacocks or people, we strut our stuff and hope it’s good enough to get us chosen by the woman we go after.

Getting taken into her body gives us a sense of peace and homecoming that goes way beyond simple sexual pleasure. Of course, I’m talking about heterosexual men here. There’s a similar dynamic in the gay world, but here I’ll focus on men and women.

Many of us remember the early school dances we attended. If you wanted to hold a girl in your arms, you had to make the long walk across the room with everyone watching and ask the girl to dance. If she accepted, you were in heaven. If she refused you were in hell. The key here is that you must make yourself vulnerable to rejection to hold and be held by a girl.

By the time we become adults, we’ve already been battered and bruised by the world of competition and rejection. We long for that safe harbor where we don’t have to pretend to be something we’re not in order to be chosen. We long for someone who sees us for who we are and wants us anyway, who can hold us and touch, not just our body, but our hearts and souls.

“Always wanting sex” is part of the male persona we wear to show we’re manly. What we really want is a safe harbor where we can take refuge, relax, and be cared for. In other words, we want the feeling of being nurtured that most of us didn’t get enough of when we were children. But admitting these needs makes us feel like little boys, not big strong men. Better to be manly with our sexual desire and then once we’re inside her body, we can relax, be ourselves, and be infused with love. That’s the hidden desire we have when we have sex.

One of the things I love getting from my wife, Carlin, is to lay in her lap and have my scalp rubbed. This is one, wonderful, safe harbor. I don’t need to have sex in order to have this need satisfied. I just have to ask for it. Here, I’m being touched deeply, accepted completely. I don’t have to perform or prove myself. I just must be willing to be deeply vulnerable.



Just as it’s difficult for men to ask to be held, nurtured, and touched; it’s often difficult for women to give that kind of intimacy. There are three main reasons, which are often subconscious:

- First, women have their own conditioning about men being men. If he doesn't want sex, they worry that they may not be attractive enough.
- Second, a man wanting to be held and nurtured triggers feelings that they are dealing with a boy, not a man. I can't tell you how many clients I have who say things like "It's like I've got three children in the house. There are our two sons, and then there's my husband." Women want a man but worry they have another little boy.
- Third, women fear men who don't feel manly. They know that the most violent men are men who feel weak and powerless. They've often had experiences of men allowing themselves to be gentle and vulnerable, only to have them respond with anger and rage later.

It takes a lot of time and maturity for men to admit to themselves that they need a safe harbor where they can be nurtured and embraced by a woman. It takes a lot of courage to let his woman know he may want sex, but more important is his need for security, love, and nurture. It requires a level of wisdom to know that allowing ourselves to be as vulnerable as a child may be the manliest thing a man can do.

For a woman, she must also go beyond her own conditioning and be open to a man who is making himself vulnerable in new ways. She must have a great deal of self-love and self-confidence to accept being a safe harbor. She must also have the strength to protect herself when his shame at being vulnerable turns to anxiety, anger, or depression. It isn't easy for men and women to take these kinds of risks, but the payoff is a life-time of deepening love and intimacy.

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