

# On Another Planet

Bruce Holloway goes far, far away on a quest for the truth about men and women.

**A**S MOST BLOKES already know, the problem with women is they tend to suffocate relationships with talk.

Whereas we men happily retreat to our caves when we get home after a hard day's work, women always insist on sitting down and yakking their way through their stressful day.

The result? Typically you get sucked into waging a tediously unproductive war of words over who is the most exhausted. ("Well, you should have seen my afternoon...")

That's annoying when all you wanted was peace and quiet in the first place.

These observations might be based on a survey group of one, but they fit neatly into the larger gender picture of men and women having very different wants and needs.

For most men food, beer, sex and a game of footy will usually suffice.

For women it's a delicate blend of emotional, physical and psychological longing, subtly nurtured in a caring relationship.

Or something like that — I probably wasn't listening properly at the time.

And so it goes on. Men are from Pluto, women are from Mercury. Common ground is harder to find than Uranus.

Which is why explaining gender differences has become one of the major growth areas in the self-help industry.

Having trouble communicating with your loved one? Does your relationship lack spark? Do you fight all the time?

Then three seminars to be held in Hamilton late next month by two 34-year-old Australians, Jackie Tallentyre and Darren Stephens, could be for you.

This couple, partners in business and life, have made careers out of explaining the differences between the sexes.

They preach the gender gospel according to Dr John Gray, author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. This 1993 book has had "astronomical" success. It's ranked second to the Bible in sales, and has

prompted a flow of spin-off titles (*Mars and Venus on a Date*, *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom*, *Mars and Venus in the Office*).

With 15 million copies snapped up worldwide, don't be surprised if the next bestseller is called *Mars and Venus on the Gravy Train*.

For those who have been on another planet for the past six years, the premise of the Mars-Venus theme is slightly bizarre.

Imagine men originated on Mars and women on Venus. The Martians built a spaceship and flew to investigate the inhabitants of Venus, who welcomed their guests.

Having come from different planets, the Martians and Venusians made generous allowances for their differences in character.

But they made the mistake of flying to Earth where the change in atmosphere wiped out their collective memories and the great war of the sexes began.

Boil down the mumbo jumbo and a slightly leony scenario and you end up with a doctor who has made a mint out of unravelling mutual incomprehension between the sexes and simply explaining the facts of life with a series of dodgy metaphors.

It's worked such a treat for Dr Gray that in 1996 he went a step further and set up the Mars Venus Institute, which is dedicated to improving communication between the sexes.

**WHICH** brings us to Tallentyre and Stephens. They are sole Australasian institute facilitators, though there are more than 250 in the US and 500 worldwide.

Their pending arrival in Hamilton was a great excuse for a free phone consultation.

So why is it, when the pressure is on, men tend to isolate themselves while women go all gobby-mouthed?

Tallentyre, a former teacher and law graduate, who has been on the self-esteem seminar circuit for over a year now, explains. "Men solve problems internally. Solving problems is very high up on their list of things to do. They are very goal-oriented."

"But they get to the end of the day and make the transition through to cave time, where they detach from what they are doing. They want to take time out and forget the day."

By contrast, for women "the solution" is not the issue.

"Sure they go talk, talk, talk."

But once they have shared it, it is forgotten.

"While guys are thinking 'she wants solutions' and try to offer them, what women really want is attention."

"They are quite capable of finding their own solutions, they are looking for empathy."

But Tallentyre acknowledges not everybody is neatly compartmentalised into male-female stereotypes.

"Some women identify with the male side, particularly if they work in male-dominated industries."

"You see it less in reverse, but corporate women quickly pick up male characteristics. They need them to survive."

As well as full-day workshops on couples' communication at the Quality Hotel on July 27-28,

Tallentyre and Stephens are running "Mars and Venus in the Office" evening seminars, exploring male-female relationships in the workplace, and how improved communication can aid productivity.

Here are some office tips from Tallentyre:

For women: "Be very direct when talking to men. Don't give them a stack of unnecessary detail. Doing 'the sharing thing' is not appreciated."

For men: "You must build a rapport. Establish the type of relationship where women will trust you."

Tallentyre guarantees their workshops, designed for 50-100 at a time, are fun, interactive and non-confrontational.

Crucially, she also describes them as "male friendly". That's important, because women love these sort of things, which naturally only makes blokes more suspicious.

They charge \$575 a couple (or \$325 a single if hubby won't go with you), though the first 50 to pay get a free Dr Gray book (*Mars and Venus in Debt*, perhaps?).

If those prices sound like a recipe for one of those nasty relationship-money arguments, here are two simple male-female communication solutions for free: women should allow men time out when they don't have to talk; men should learn to listen empathetically and ask those encouraging questions.

For an even greater understanding — on the cheap — of the gender communication divide, study our bluffer's guide to interpreting what men and women really mean.



## Mercury and Pluto: the bluffer's guide

**What women say, and what they really mean (a bloke's guide to women-speak):**

It's your decision = The correct decision should be obvious by now. Do what you want = You'll pay for this later.

We need to talk = I need to complain. Sure, go ahead = I don't want you to.

I'm not upset = Of course I'm upset, you moron! You're so noisy = You need a shave and you sweat a lot.

I'll be ready in a minute = Take off your shoes and find a good programme on TV.

You have to learn to communicate = Just agree with me.

Do you love me? = I'm going to ask for something expensive. I heard a noise = I noticed you were almost asleep.

Is my bum fat? = Tell me I'm beautiful.

I'm not yelling = Yes, I am yelling because I think this is important. Do you like this recipe? = It's easy to fix, so you'd better get used to it.

You're certainly attentive tonight = Is sex all you ever think about? I'm sorry = You'll be sorry.

Yes = No. No = No. Maybe = No.

**What men say, and what they really mean (a woman's guide to men-speak):**

I'm tired = I'm tired. I'm thirsty = I'm hungry.

I'm hungry (2) = Make me something to eat now.

It's time to go home = The cricket starts on TV in five minutes.

Do you want to go to the movies = I'd eventually like to have sex with you.

Can I take you out to dinner = I'd eventually like to have sex with you.

May I have this dance = I'd eventually like to have sex with you. I'm bored = Do you want to have sex?

I love you = Let's have sex now. Let's talk = I am trying to impress you that I am a deep person so maybe then you'll have sex with me.

Nice dress = Nice cleavage. What's wrong? = I guess sex tonight is out of the question.

What's wrong? (2) = what meaningless self-inflicted psychological trauma are you going through now?

What's wrong? (3) = I don't see why you are making such a big deal out of this.

Will you marry me? = I want to make it illegal for you to have sex with other guys.

Yes, I like your new hairstyle = I liked it better before.

Yes, I like your new hairstyle (2) = \$50 and it looks no different.

I like that one better (while shopping) = pick any bleeding dress and let's go home.

**What a woman says:** This place is a mess! C'mon, you and I need to clean up. Your stuff is lying on the floor and you'll have no clothes to wear if we don't do the washing right now!

**What a man hears:** Blah, blah, blah, blah, C'MON, YOU AND I, blah, blah, blah, blah, ON THE FLOOR, blah, blah, blah, NO CLOTHES, blah, blah, blah, blah, RIGHT NOW!



Rick