

Women are not from Venus, Men are not from Mars



Men and women both come from the planet Earth, of course! A while ago, a number of popular psychology books argued that men and women have a number of fundamental differences and would be best looked at as a completely different species. Men are said to be more interested in competition and power while women are said to be more interested in forming social networks and chatting. While women are said to be more motivated by the need for love and affection, men are said to be more interested in sex. Moreover, the ways that men and women communicate and think, it is claimed are different.

One interesting aspect about these generalizations made about men and women is that in some ways they are similar to claims made about the characteristics of different nationalities. That is to say, it is not that such generalizations are without any basis in fact, it is just that they too greatly exaggerate certain perceived tendencies. Moreover, such generalizations about men and women confuse behavior that is socially conditioned and behavior that is inherent. Furthermore, over-concentration on such perceived “differences” creates a stereotyped image of the typical “man” and “woman,” which may be difficult if not impossible for us to live up to.

The problem with such stereotypes is that they put limits on what an individual human being can achieve. For example, a young boy might be told “boys shouldn’t cry,” even though in certain circumstances crying is good for our mental health. A girl might be criticized for being a “tomboy” if she prefers playing games with boys rather than girls. Even adults have certain expectations on “manly” and “womanly” behavior. In extreme cases we might be forced to suppress important aspects of our own natures in order to comply with social expectations concerning the appropriate behavior for people of our sex.

This is not to say that the categories “men” and “women” are meaningless. However, it is sometimes worth wondering why girls are often dressed in pink and boys are often dressed in blue to indicate their sex. After all, there is nothing inherently masculine or feminine about the colors blue and pink.

1. Is love more important than sex?
2. Should boys cry?
3. Is it OK if girls want to play with boys?