

Dear Dave: My husband won't come to the gym with me. I would really like his support, but he keeps criticizing my exercise efforts. Do you have any suggestions?

Your situation is very common. Women's most powerful emotional need is Love and connection. This is why women tend to like group exercise and group weight-loss programs like weight-watchers. Women are social by nature and need their emotions acknowledged by others...especially others who are close to them. Men on the other hand are primarily driven by the emotional need of significance. To feel significant, one must be smart, on-top of things and know what they are doing. This is why men won't ask for directions and have a hard time admitting they are wrong. Men want to be seen as the important providers for their family and loved ones.



They fear being or looking insignificant. Men will avoid things they are not good at...especially manly things that would prove or disprove their significance as men.

Men have been judging men based on their physical strength and fitness for as long as there have been men on the planet. Who were the popular (significant) men in High School? The quarterbacks and sports team captains or the quiz bowl guys who couldn't do one pull up?

If your husband sees going to the gym as a potential blow to his feeling significant, you can bet he's going to avoid this environment like shopping with his mother-in-law! The only way to get him in the door is to do just that....get him in the door to see what the gym is really all about. Many men have the notion that the local gym is full of manly men who would crush their ego into a fine powder. But when he sees it's mostly just regular folks, his danger alarm might go off.

Understanding your husband's need to be significant also means he naturally wants to be a great provider for you. You might use this natural tendency your husband has to please his wife by communicating that if he comes with you to check out the gym, you'll be exceedingly proud of him and brag to all your friends that YOUR husband comes to the gym with you! Bragging about how great your husband is to your friends in front of your husband is like giving a hungry dog raw meat! Appreciation, even if he shrugs it off as unimportant, is highly effective in motivating men who live to be providers! Their whole ego system is centered on being excellent providers and the only way they know they are doing a great job at this is to be appreciated for what they do.

I know it's hard to appreciate someone who's been criticizing you, but by criticizing or complaining back, you'll just keep getting more and more of the same. The reason he's been critical of your gym efforts is because he feels threatened by the notion of you loving something that scares the hell out of him! Yes, not being significant scares the hell out of all men. The same as being alone and unloved scares the hell out of women. Realize that our emotional needs are not just "needs". They are better defined as "requirements". Meaning they are as required as air, water and food...without them we die...die inside that is. Give your husband what he craves most (appreciation) and you'll not only get him in the gym with you, you'll get him washing the dishes and even taking out the trash!

