

REASONS SHE THINKS YOU'RE A WIMP

5 Reasons She Thinks You're a Wimp

Forget knowing how to wire an outlet. These manly traits mean more to her

BY LAURA TEDESCO, IMAGES BY THINKSTOCK, MARCH 05, 2014



« 1 2 3 4 5 6 »

We're guessing your girlfriend doesn't spend her day in a frilly apron, baking cookies and arranging your social calendar. Likewise, you're not expected to be some kind of Don Draper/Marlboro Man hybrid, raking in six figures while rebuilding engines on the weekend.

That said, women still have some pretty concrete ideas about what makes a guy manly. "Men are bigger and stronger than women, so on some level, we expect the behavior to follow that—they should take charge and speak up," says Christine Milrod, Ph.D., a Los Angeles-based sex therapist and researcher. "And that doesn't necessarily mean walking around like a gorilla anymore." If machismo is a thing of the past, what do women consider manly—or worse, unmanly?

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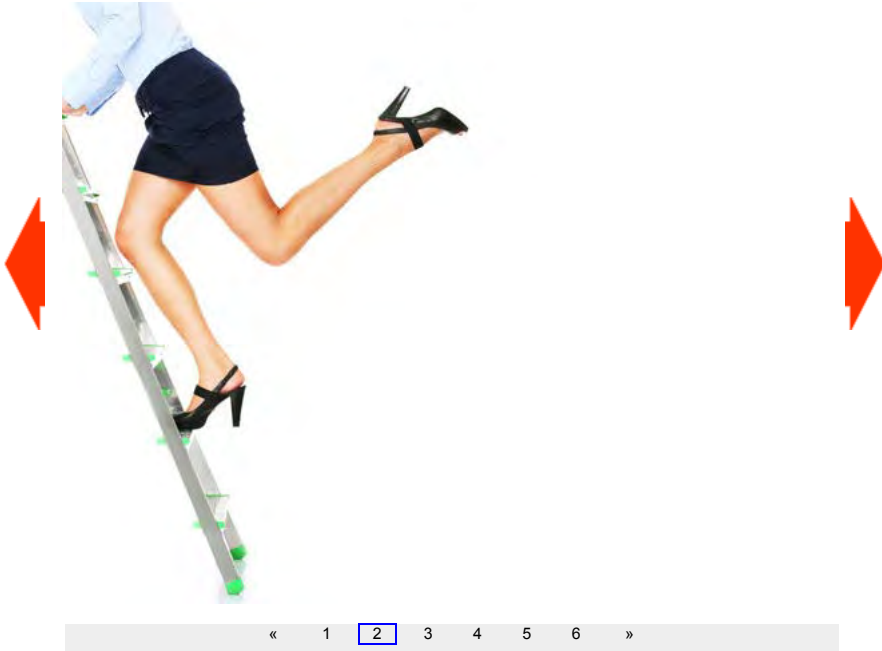
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You're jealous of her career.

These days, it's not uncommon for a woman to out-earn her man. But pulling in less than your wife doesn't automatically emasculate you—it's the jealousy that does you in. "This is a complete buzzkill in a relationship," says Mirod. "When a man criticizes a woman for being 'too successful,' he's got an inferiority complex. That's unmanly." Unfortunately, this seems to be many men's M.O.: A recent University of Florida study found that guys tend to feel threatened by their significant other's success.

Overcome it: Just because she's the primary breadwinner, it doesn't mean you can't take the lead in the relationship: Pick up the dinner bill. Take the initiative and plan your next vacation. And engage when she wants to talk about her workplace aspirations—if you're involved in mapping out her career, her success will feel less like a threat and more like a shared victory.

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You act like taking care of the kids is babysitting.

In case you forgot, your sperm are partly responsible for the little monsters terrorizing your home. "Even 15 years ago, there was much more division of labor," says sex therapist Arlene Goldman, Ph.D. But as gender roles have blurred, "no one has really shown men how to take on 50 percent of the responsibility," she says. Translation: Men still act like giving their wife a night off is a generous favor. "That makes women feel like you're a little boy, not an adult man," Goldman says. "Women want an equal partner, not another paid babysitter."

Overcome it: Do you know what your kids eat for breakfast? When the next parent/teacher conference is? What time soccer practice ends? "Women don't like men who need to be told exactly what they have to do all the time," says Goldman. So start paying attention and anticipating your family's needs: Pick up a carton of milk on the way home, plan a date and book the babysitter, and don't freak if you have to watch the kids while your wife goes to yoga class. You get the idea.

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You ditch all of your guy friends once things get serious.

We get it: As you invest more and more in your relationship, your friends can easily get sidelined. Some women even encourage this. Even so, "women like men who are men," says Milrod. "When you hang out with other guys—playing soccer, fishing, any competitive situation—your testosterone levels naturally rise." Even a temporary boost in T can ramp up your sex appeal—and remind her why she was attracted to you in the first place. The same can't be said for cuddling up on the couch to watch *The Real Housewives* every night.

Overcome it: This isn't an excuse to gallivant around town all weekend. So mutually decide on a reasonable amount of "guy time," then make a standing date with your buds to play pick-up basketball on Monday evenings, for example. Or join a once-a-week rec league. Anything that gets your competitive juices flowing should do the trick.

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You don't defend her honor.

No woman is turned on by bar fights—so does that mean you're exempt from standing up to the creeper who grabs her ass? Not a chance. "If you don't act protective, she'll see you as unmanly," says Milrod. The ultimate offense: She confronts the guy—and you just idly sit on your barstool, waiting for her to wrap things up.

Overcome it: You don't have to throw a punch or toss a beer in his face. A verbal reprimand will do: "Just say, 'Hey, man, that was inappropriate. You owe her an apology,'" says Goldman. Then make sure your girlfriend is okay and apologize for him, as in, "I'm sorry he did that to you—I promise, not all guys are like that." You've just positioned yourself as the good guy—and scored big-time points for defending her.

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You complain. Constantly.

You're annoyed you have to take the trash out. You're disgusted by the lack of service. You're miffed you had to park in the boonies. "The reason we call this 'bitching' is because this domain sort of belongs to women," says Milrod. "You're supposed to be able to suffer—to grin and bear it." And if the complaining is somehow directed at your partner—say, you're annoyed by your chores—"it makes her feel guilty," adds Goldman, "like she's making you do something. That makes her feel like she has a child."

Overcome it: Learn to distinguish between unloading and whining. It's okay to vent after a bad day at work, or even cry on occasion. "This doesn't mean you can't express sadness," says Milrod. "Crying is not considered unmanly, but bitching and moaning is." So keep your rants about the injustice that is your life to yourself—and if you really need to whine, call up a buddy and grab a beer.

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