1-Page Book Summary of Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus

Men and women tend to get into conflict over their natural differences. But when you learn to think of men and women as coming from different planets, and therefore recognize the inherent differences between men and women, you will be more successful in relationships with the opposite sex.

Imagine that men come from Mars and women come from Venus. By understanding life on both planets, you will begin to understand why men think one way and women think another. Then you will learn to be more tolerant and forgiving of people of the opposite sex. You will discover creative solutions to miscommunication problems, understand the best way to show love and support, and learn how to get more fulfillment out of your relationships.

Martians and Venusians Come to Earth
One day on Mars, the Martians were looking out through their telescopes. All of a sudden, they noticed beautiful creatures on another planet. They had discovered the Venusians of Venus. Immediately, the Martians began to feel a kind of love they had never known. They quickly invented spaceships and traveled to Venus to take care of the marvelous creatures there.

All along, the Venusians had known that something great was on its way. They welcomed the Martians to their planet and gave their love generously to them. Although they were from different planets, the Martians and Venusians celebrated their differences and learned to live together harmoniously.

Eventually, the Martians and Venusians traveled to Earth. But the planet's atmosphere had strange effects on them—they developed amnesia. All of a sudden, the Martians and Venusians forgot that they originally hailed from different planets. They could no longer understand and appreciate their innate differences.

Men and women have been in conflict ever since because understanding and appreciating one another's differences is the key to healthy relationships.

The Primary Differences Between Men and Women

Because men and women hail from different planets, they have a different code of values and different emotional needs. The primary values and emotional needs of men and women influence everything from the way we behave to the way we communicate.

Qualities and Values of Men and Women

A man is primarily concerned with autonomy, achievement, power, and efficiency. His sense of self is centered around his ability to solve problems and reach goals by himself. These values are reflected in everything that a Martian does and says.

Because a man is so focused on handling his own problems, he does not particularly like to talk about his problems or accept advice, unless he consults a trusted expert. So on Mars, it is understood that when a man talks to another man about his problems, he has already attempted to solve them alone—now he is asking for advice or solutions.

On the other hand, a woman is primarily concerned with relationships, love, connection, and aesthetics. Her sense of self is centered around her ability to nurture others, communicate her feelings, and build quality relationships. These values are reflected in everything that a Venusian says and does.

Because a woman is so focused on communication, she finds fulfillment in talking about her problems with others. So on Venus, it is intuitively understood that communication is a sign of caring and respect. The way women show love to other women is to offer support without having to be asked.

Emotional Needs of Men and Women

Many times, both a man and a woman in a relationship feel as though they give more love than they receive. But the truth is that they are both giving love, but not in their partner's desired manner.

Awareness of how your partner's love needs are different from yours will guide you in how to show your love and support in the way they most want to receive them.

There are 12 types of love. It is important to note that both men and women need all 12 types of love. But men and women each have six primary needs that must be fulfilled in order to truly feel loved and give love in return.

- Men primarily need trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. On Mars, every man instinctively knew to show their love for each other in these primary ways.
- Women primarily need caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance. On Venus, every woman instinctively knew to show their love for each other in these primary ways.

The most effective way for a woman to fulfill a man's love needs is to empower him. Showing your man that you love him the way he is, and wouldn't want to change him, makes him feel trusted, accepted, appreciated, admired, approved of, and encouraged.

The most effective way for a man to fulfill a woman's love needs is to communicate with her. Listening to a woman, without trying to change or invalidate her feelings, is a way to shower her with caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance.
Different Behaviors of Men and Women

How Men and Women Communicate

You probably wouldn't expect two different species from two different planets to speak the same language—so why would you expect men and women to communicate in the same way?

A man and a woman can hear the exact same words and glean two completely different meanings. These little misunderstandings often build into big arguments. The first step to avoiding unnecessary arguments is to understand the natural differences in the way you communicate:

- **Men talk to communicate information.** They tend to speak literally and succinctly.
- **Women talk to communicate feelings.** They tend to generalize, hyperbolize, and use poetic language to express themselves.

Because men and women use their words differently, they often misunderstand each other and end up in arguments.

**Example: How to Communicate**

Tammy is frustrated and says “You never listen to me!” Her husband, George, responds earnestly, “I'm listening right now.”

Because George forgot that Tammy is from Venus and likely to hyperbolize, he took her statement literally. He wanted to comfort Tammy with his response, but instead he frustrated Tammy further. Tammy forgot that George is from Mars. She interpreted his response as an attempt to invalidate her feelings.

When you learn to translate your partner’s words and understand the intended meaning behind them, you’ll be able to avoid arguments by eliminating miscommunication.

How Men and Women Respond to Stress

One of the most drastic natural differences between men and women lies in their response to stress.

- **A man withdraws into his “cave.”** He needs to be alone to focus on the problem and come up with a solution.
- **A woman reaches out.** She needs to talk about her problems in order to find comfort from her stress.

**Men Go to Their Cave**

When a man is under stress, he rarely wants to talk about what’s bothering him. So he goes into his “cave,” his private mindset. Remember, men from Mars are primarily focused on autonomy and competence. Talking about his problems would make him feel like he’s not able to solve them himself. In the cave, a man’s primary focus is on discovering how to solve his own problems.

While in the cave, a man is usually distant, preoccupied, and forgetful. He is unable to be fully present in his relationship until he has found a solution and emerged from his cave.

As a man, it is important to know your own tendency to go into your cave. **Be aware of how quickly you might shift from being warm and loving to being withdrawn and unresponsive.** Try to be compassionate of your female partner if she feels neglected while you are in your cave.

Ideally, women should understand that going into the cave is a necessary step for a man to deal with stress. It is unfair to expect a man in the cave to be able to open up or talk about his feelings. Don’t take it personally—remember that he is from Mars. **Trust his ability to cope with his own stress and come back to you in his own time.**

**Women Talk about Their Problems**

When a woman is under stress, she needs to talk about everything that’s overwhelming her so that she can sort through her feelings. So she reaches out to those closest to her. Remember, women from Venus primarily focus on connection and expression. While stressed, a woman is usually emotionally involved, talkative, and sensitive.

As a woman, it is important to remember your tendency to talk about everything that is overwhelming and bothering you. **Be aware of how your complaints might sound like blame to your male partner.** Try to be appreciative of your male partner if he listens to you and your stress.

Sometimes when you talk about your problems with your male partner, he will feel attacked and assume that you are blaming him for everything that’s bothering you. Because he came from Mars, he might forget that you’re only talking to feel better. If you sense this happening, say these magic words: “It’s not your fault.”
Ideally, a man should understand that talking through problems is a necessary step for women to deal with stress. It is unfair to shut your partner down when she needs to vent. Don’t take her complaints as blame or criticism—remember she’s from Venus and she’s just talking to feel better.

How Men and Women Argue

Most arguments in relationships follow a similar pattern:

1. The woman expresses that she is upset about “Topic A.”
2. The man explains why “Topic A” shouldn’t upset her.
3. The woman feels her upset feelings have been invalidated. Now she is more upset about this invalidation than she ever was about “Topic A.”
4. The man feels her displeasure and becomes upset. He mistakenly blames his partner for making him upset and expects her to apologize.
5. She either apologizes while secretly wondering why she was the one to have to apologize, or she becomes increasingly upset and escalates to a fight.

In order to avoid arguments and break this pattern:

- A man must learn not to invalidate his partner’s feelings.
- A woman must learn not to speak in a disapproving tone.
- **Both partners must learn the value of the words “I’m sorry.”** Not every apology has to be an admission of guilt. Men, especially, should learn to use “I’m sorry” as a way to say “I care about you and your feelings.”

**Men unknowingly start arguments by invalidating a woman’s feelings.** When your female partner expresses feelings of disappointment, frustration, or worry (especially about something you’ve done or said), resist the instinct to offer explanations of your intentions or justifications for your behavior. First, show that you are listening to her in order to fulfill her primary love needs of reassurance, caring, and understanding.

**Women unknowingly start arguments by being indirect when expressing their negative feelings.** Women commonly ask rhetorical questions when they are upset, such as “How could you do that?” Women also use their eyes and tone of voice to express that they’re upset. To a man, these indirect forms of communication feel like interrogation and disapproval. When your male partner makes a mistake, resist the urge to correct him. First, forgive his mistake in order to fulfill his primary love needs of trust, acceptance, and encouragement.

**Example: How to Avoid Arguments**

One day, Frank forgets to pick up groceries on the way home like he said he would. Laura is frustrated.

**What not to do:** Lisa sharply asks a rhetorical question, like “How could you possibly forget?” This is too indirect. Frank takes the question literally and answers “I was really busy. These things happen.” This is an explanation and too invalidating of Lisa’s feelings. Lisa feels like Frank thinks she has no reason to be upset, and she...

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**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary Introduction**

Men and women tend to get into conflict over their natural differences. But when you learn to think of men and women as coming from different planets, and therefore recognize the inherent differences between men and women, you will be more successful in relationships with the opposite sex.

(Shortform note: Throughout this book, published in 1992, author John Gray uses the terms sex and gender somewhat interchangeably. He also makes some generalizations about men and women that might seem outdated today. Challenge yourself to look for insights about yourself and your romantic partner in the descriptions of both sexes.)

Imagine that men come from Mars and women come from Venus. By understanding life on both planets, you will begin to understand why men think one way and women think another. Then you will learn to be more tolerant and forgiving of people of the opposite sex. You will discover creative solutions to miscommunication problems, understand the best way to show love and support, and learn how to get more fulfillment out of your relationships.

Once you are aware that men and women are naturally different, you will be able to set more realistic expectations for yourself and your partner. Often (usually unknowingly), you expect people of the opposite sex to act, think, and feel the way you do. You expect your partner to love you the way that you love them, and to behave the way that you behave. This is a recipe for disappointment because you have already forgotten to appreciate the ways that your partner is naturally different from you.

**Martians and Venusians Come to Earth**

One day on Mars, the Martians were looking out through their telescopes. All of a sudden, they noticed beautiful creatures on another planet. They had discovered the Venusians of Venus. Immediately, the Martians began to feel a kind of love they had never known. They quickly invented spaceships and traveled to Venus to take care of the marvelous creatures there.

All along, the Venusians had known that something great was on its way. They welcomed...

**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary Different Behaviors of Men and Women**

When you remember that men and women come from different planets, it makes sense that men and women naturally behave differently. By understanding how and why men and women behave the way they do, you'll be able to achieve greater harmony in your relationships.

**How Men and Women Receive Love**

All humans need love, regardless of gender. But men and women naturally crave different kinds of love.

Many times, both a man and a woman in a relationship feel as though they give more love than they receive. But the truth is that they are both giving love, but not in their partner's desired manner.

Awareness of your partner's love needs will guide you in how to show your love and support in the way they most want to receive them.

**The Twelve Types of Love**

There are 12 types of love.

- **Men primarily need trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement.** On Mars, every man instinctively knew to show their love for each other in these primary ways.

- **Women primarily need caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance.** On Venus, every woman instinctively knew to show their love for each other in these primary ways.

It is important to note that both men and women need all 12 types of love. But men and women each have six primary needs that
must be fulfilled in order to truly feel loved and give love in return.

Understanding your partner’s six primary love needs and how they relate to your own is a critical aspect of any relationship. Once you learn to give love the way your partner wants to receive it (details below), your relationship will blossom.

Reciprocal Love Needs

The most practical aspect of the six primary love needs of men and women is that they are reciprocal. Giving and receiving love the right way keeps both partners fulfilled. Here are some examples:

- **Men need acceptance, women need understanding**: A woman can fulfill a man's need for accepting love by allowing a man to be himself and not trying to change him. Once a man feels **accepted** for who...

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**Shortform Exercise: Help Your Partner Support You in Stressful Times**

Men and women naturally respond to stress differently: Men withdraw and women reach out. In order to get the emotional support you need from your partner during stressful times, you might have to help your partner understand why you’re behaving differently than they would.

Think back to a time that you were extremely stressed. How did you feel and how did you naturally respond? Did you need to withdraw or did you crave connection and communication?

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**What Our Readers Say**

This is the best summary of Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus I’ve ever read. I learned all the main points in just 20 minutes.

Learn more about our summaries →

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**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary**

Men and women have different rhythms and intimacy cycles when they're in love.

- Men get intimate with their partner, then distance themselves and withdraw, then come back to intimacy again.
- Women rise on the wave of love, then fall into dissatisfaction, then swell with love again.

**Men Are Like Rubber Bands**

When a man is in love, he goes through a natural cycle of intimacy that is a lot like a rubber band. First, the man is very close and intimate. Then he begins to pull away. Once he has stretched to his maximum distance, like a rubber band, he snaps back into the relationship with the same level of intimacy he felt before he stretched.

The rubber band cycle comes naturally to a man in love—he might not even realize that he tends to pull away every time the relationship becomes more intimate. As a woman, it is important to be aware of this cycle, understand why it's important for men, and know how to react to your partner's fluctuations of intimacy.

**Why Men Pull Away**

When a man is in love, he feels the need for intimacy. However, because he is from Mars, he also feels the need for autonomy. The rubber band cycle gives the man a chance to fulfill both needs.
Reasons a man needs to stretch away:

- He craves independence.
- He has spent energy fulfilling his partner's needs, and he needs time to regain his energy.
- He doesn't want to be responsible for anyone else for a while.
- He needs to take care of himself.

Throughout the cycle of stretching away and springing back, a man continues to love and care about his partner. He doesn't choose to pull away, it's instinct.

Many men don't even realize that their natural intimacy cycles have a profound impact on their female partners. **As a man, do your best to reassure your partner before you stretch away.** You can say something like "I need to be alone, but let's talk about this again once I've thought it over." If nothing else, say the magic words: "I will come back."

Unfortunately, men often pull away (without reassuring their partner) at the precise time a...

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**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary Improve Communication in Your Relationship**

Almost all relationship problems stem from communication errors. In order to communicate successfully, you have to be respectful of the innate differences between you and your partner. In other words, you have to remember that your partner is from a different planet.

**Good communication requires both partners to make small changes that reflect the way their partner would most like to be loved.**

- Men have to communicate how much they care about their female partner.
- Women have to communicate how much they trust their male partner.

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**Understand the Language of the Opposite Sex**

You probably wouldn't expect two different species from two different planets to speak the same language—so why would you expect men and women to communicate in the same way?

A man and a woman can hear the exact same words and glean two completely different meanings. These little misunderstandings often build into big arguments. The first step to avoiding unnecessary arguments is to understand the natural differences in the way you communicate:

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Because men and women use their words differently, they often misunderstand each other and end up in arguments.

For example:

Tammy is frustrated and says “You never listen to me!” Her husband, George, responds earnestly, “I'm listening right now.” This upsets Tammy, and she storms out.

Because George forgot that Tammy is from Venus and likely to hyperbolize, he took her statement literally. He wanted to comfort Tammy with his response, but Tammy only became more frustrated. Tammy forgot that George is from Mars. She interpreted his response as an attempt to invalidate her feelings.

When you learn to translate your partner's words and understand the intended meaning behind them, you'll be able to avoid arguments by eliminating miscommunication.

**Translate Venusian to Martian**
Shortform Exercise: Improve Communication in Your Relationship

Almost all relationship problems stem from communication errors. In order to communicate successfully with the opposite sex, you have to remember that men talk to communicate information, while women talk to communicate feelings.

Think back to an argument you’ve had with your romantic partner in the past. What were some of the reasons you thought you were arguing?

Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary Understand How Your Partner Keeps Score

In relationships, men and women perform gestures of love for each other in the hopes of earning points from their partner, or earning favor. But because men and women are from different planets, they award points based on an entirely different set of rules.

Once you understand how your partner awards points, you’ll be able to direct your energy towards the gestures of love that your partner will appreciate the most:

- Men need to focus on performing small loving acts for their partner.
- Women need to focus on showing a loving attitude to their partner.

How to Score Points with a Woman

To a woman, every gift or gesture of love, no matter the size, is worth one point. The little things, like taking out the trash or bringing home flowers, are just as important to a woman as the big things, like a new car or a fun vacation. This is not just a woman’s preference—it’s a true emotional need. Every expression of love makes a woman feel cared for, validated, and respected.

Here are some examples of the kind of small gestures you can do every day to keep your female partner’s love needs fulfilled:

- Give her a hug first thing upon arriving home from work.
- Compliment her.
- Notice something that needs fixing and offer to do it. Don’t forget.
- Offer to complete something on her to-do list for her.
- Call her from work just to tell her you love her.
- Make a point to show her some non-sexual physical affection.
- Call on your way home and ask if there’s anything you can pick up for her.
- Comment on how she seems to be feeling—say something like “you look happy today” or “you seem upset, are you okay?”
- Treat her the way you used to at the beginning of your relationship.

These might seem like small gestures, but each one will count as a point to your partner.

Unfortunately, a woman's way of keeping score is directly opposed to how men expect to be scored. Men typically think that a small gesture will be worth a few points and a big gift will be worth a lot of points. As a result, men tend to overlook the small...
Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary

Achieve a Reciprocal Relationship

The key to a successful relationship is for both partners to feel equally fulfilled and loved—it should be a win/win relationship. Both partners should be equally motivated to give love to and receive love from one another.

Learn to Motivate Your Partner

If you feel unloved in your relationship, you might need to motivate your partner to show you the kind of love you need. The first step is to understand how men and women are motivated differently in love:

- Men are motivated in love when they feel needed by their partner.
- Women in love are motivated when they feel cherished by their partner.

If your partner is feeling unfulfilled in your relationship, you might need to motivate yourself to show love to your partner in a different way:

- Men must learn how to give.
- Women must learn how to receive.

Men Are Motivated by Being Needed

On Mars, men operated with a win/lose philosophy. Every man looked after himself and his own needs. Life on Mars was like a game of tennis—each man not only wanted to win, he wanted to actively make his competitor lose.

Once men discovered women, however, their view changed. Women instinctively sent out a signal of need to these men: “We need your power and strength. Come to Venus and satisfy everything we are missing.” The men were motivated to overcome their fear of dependence. All of a sudden, their capacity to sacrifice and serve the needs of someone else was awakened. Once in love, men were suddenly motivated to serve others to the best of their ability. They experienced their partner’s happiness as their own. Men started to develop a win/win philosophy. They learned how to give.

Unfortunately, because the signal of need is a subconscious instinct for a woman at the start of a relationship, many women neglect to keep sending that signal of need. Not being needed is torture for a man in love. When a man stops feeling that he is needed, he becomes passive, uninterested, and ungiving. He goes back to his win/lose way of thinking and chooses to satisfy his own needs at the...

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Shortform Exercise: Get the Support You Need

The three steps for learning to ask for more support in a relationship are: 1) Ask for what you’re already getting in a new way. 2) Ask for more support and accept no for an answer. 3) Step Three: Ask for what you want assertively.

Consider Step One and how you can begin the process of asking your partner for more support.

What are some things that your partner already consistently does for you in your relationship?

Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary Handle Conflicts Lovingly

Just as loving communication saves relationships, hurtful arguments destroy relationships.

Couples who fight all the time gradually fall out of love due to growing tension. Couples who never fight end up falling out of love due to suppressed emotions. In order to maintain a successful relationship, you and your partner must learn to avoid arguments when possible. But when you do have an argument you must communicate lovingly.

How to Stop Conflicts Before They Start

As a general rule, you and your partner should try never to argue. Instead of fighting over disagreements, discuss the pros and cons of each person's point of view. During these discussions, remember to speak in a loving, respectful, and approving manner—do your best to fulfill your partner's primary love needs throughout the conversation.

The closer you are to someone, the greater the potential for hurt feelings. You must remember that your words have incredible power to deeply hurt your partner. And your partner has the power to hurt you deeply, as well. Hurt feelings don't usually stem from the argument itself, but from how you communicate during the argument. The way you say something means more than what you actually say.

Most arguments in relationships follow a similar pattern:

1. The woman expresses that she is upset about “Topic A.”
2. The man explains why “Topic A” shouldn't upset her.
3. The woman feels invalidated for her upset feelings. Now she is more upset about being invalidated than she ever was about “Topic A.”
4. The man feels her displeasure and becomes upset. He mistakenly blames his partner for making him upset and expects her to apologize.
5. She either apologizes while secretly wondering why she was the one to have to apologize, or she becomes increasingly upset and escalates to a fight.
In order to avoid arguments and break this pattern:

- A man must learn not to invalidate his partner's feelings.
- A woman must learn not to speak in a disapproving tone.
- Both partners must learn the value of the words “I'm sorry.” Not every apology...

**Shortform Exercise: Write a Letter of Love**

One of the best ways to communicate nonverbally in times of conflict is to write a Letter of Love. Every Letter of Love that you write should include expressions of your anger, your sadness, your fears, your regrets, and your love—followed by your desired response.

Think back to a conflict you've had in one of your personal or romantic relationships. Do your best to put yourself back there and remember all of the emotions you were feeling at the time. Write a Letter of Love in the box below, including your desired response:

**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Summary**

Nurture Love in All Its Phases

Think of your relationship as a garden—understand that you will need to put work into keeping your love alive and growing. You will need to treat your garden differently as the “seasons” (or phases) of your love change:

- **Spring:** Falling in love is a lot like springtime. Your love is budding and everything feels warm and easy. During spring, you must remember that nothing stays perfect forever.
- **Summer:** As you get more comfortable in love, you'll begin to realize that your partner isn't perfect. The first “weeds” (or disagreements) begin to grow and must be plucked. During summer, you must remember that relationships are not easy. You have to be willing to work hard under the hot sun to nurture your partner's needs.
- **Autumn:** Once you've put in hard work during the summer phase, you have the chance to reap the rewards and enjoy the harvest. This is a golden phase in which love matures. During autumn, remember to appreciate the beautiful love you've worked for.
- **Winter:** In the winter phase, love withers and pulls back within. You and your partner will hide away in the cave and the bottom of the wave in an effort to grow. During winter, remember to work on healing yourself so that you'll be ready to enjoy the spring when it inevitably returns.

**When Love Shifts**

It is very common in relationships to experience sudden shifts from love to frustration. Read this list of examples and see if you can relate to any of these within your own relationship:

- You feel confident in your relationship one day and then suddenly feel insecure about your partner's devotion the next.
- You feel happily independent in your relationship one day and then suddenly feel needy and desperate for attention the next.
- You crave sex with your partner one day, but the next time he or she wants to initiate sexual intimacy, you don't want it anymore.
- You've been excitedly waiting to see your partner, but when he or she comes home, you suddenly feel uninterested, repelled, or disappointed.
Shifts like these are confusing and often lead...

READ FULL SUMMARY OF MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS

Shortform Exercise: Fulfill the Primary Love Needs

Men and women each have 6 primary needs that must be fulfilled in order to freely give and receive love in a relationship. Consider how the 12 kinds of love play a role in your romantic relationship.

- Men primarily need trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. On Mars, every man instinctively knew to show their love for each other in these primary ways.
- Women primarily need caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance. On Venus, every woman instinctively knew to show their love for each other in these primary ways.

What kind or kinds of love do you give most freely to your romantic partner? Do you tend to give the kind of love your partner needs or the kind of love that you crave for yourself?

SIGN UP FOR FULL EXERCISE