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## **Fear and Shame in Your Relationship**

### **Thought of the Month: June 2007**

THIS JUST IN! Talking about your relationship may do more harm than good!

That's right! Just ask Steven Stosny and Patricia Love, who have co-authored a wonderful new book entitled (of course), *How to Improve Your Marriage without Talking about It*. Now, before turning your back on the wonderful world of Imago, let's be clear about what they mean.

The thesis of the book is that when women want to talk about the relationship (which they do), it almost always triggers feelings of shame and failure in men. The man, in turn, reacts by running away, getting quiet or getting angry. This, in turn, ignites a big negative reaction in the woman who feels that the relationship really is falling apart.

Women often learn in childhood that the way to reconnect a relationship is to talk about their feelings. Other women understand this and it works just fine. But the minute a woman exposes her feelings to her man (unless, of course, they are totally happy feelings) the man feels inadequate and shamed that he has not been a good enough protector or provider. So the man relies on what he probably learned in childhood...to withdraw emotionally and to go out and play football, or spit, or kick dirt, or whatever he does to relieve his feelings of inadequacy...and the woman becomes fearful that she is alone and disconnected (which is what women most fear).

It's a great book! I'm telling you! The hope in the whole thing is to learn that for most women, the need to talk is just to relieve their natural fear and anxiety about the relationship. Many women learn early to be the "guardians" of relationships. It is equally helpful to learn that men feel that the overwhelming main purpose of their lives is to protect their wife and family. Anything that threatens this instinct, no matter how subtle, throws a man into some reaction of shame and failure.

I (David) hate to read books, but this one is easy, especially Chapter 13 which is just for men. Try it!

*With great encouragement and hope,*  
David and Donna

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