



Gender Based Changes to Manage Stress:

How Behavior and Nutrition Play a Part in our Relationships

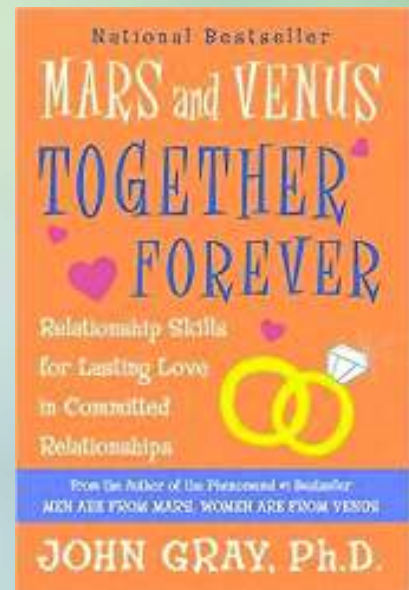
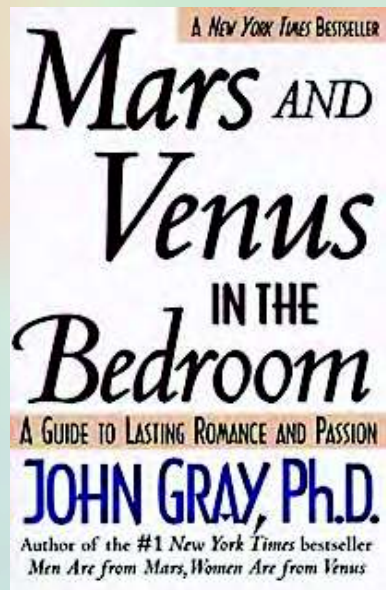
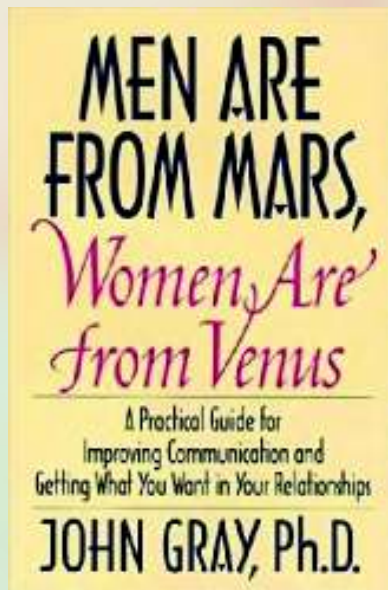
An Interview with John Gray, PhD

By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

I first 'met' John Gray in the mid-1990s on the pages of *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus: The Classic Guide to Understanding the Opposite Sex*, his New York Times #1 Best-Selling Relationship book. When I heard he was a keynote speaker at the USABP Fall 2016 conference on Sexuality, Spirituality and the Body, I flashed back to a scene with my first husband:

It was 1995. We were idling just outside of Loon Mountain in Northern New Hampshire, waiting to see a Crosby, Stills, and Nash (a 1960s folk rock group). Stuck in a snarl of traffic, we decided to listen to a cassette tape our counselor had recommended: *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom: A Guide to Lasting Romance and Passion*. Perhaps the volume was a bit loud but it was difficult to hear John talk above the chaos of cars and people eager to park for the concert. We had the windows down and the sunroof open. It was a humid summer New England day with thunderstorms predicted late afternoon; the pressure felt heavy. I was immersed; this man spoke a language that resonated with me. All the while I noted skepticism on my former husband's face. He was not engaged, at all. A biker pulled up beside us decked in black Harley leathers with his lady laid back against the rear bar. She took a long drag off her cigarette with a nonchalant attitude of "I'm cool and don't care" reflected in her posture and facial expression. Then the tape, well John's words were loud and explicit and while I can't remember the exact wording or sounds I can easily recall the embarrassment my husband felt. He ejected that tape almost instantaneously as the bikers transitioned from a state of cool deflection to rapt attention to finger pointing laughter. He collapsed in the seat as low as humanly possible.

I've held onto those cassette tapes and books ever since.



When I arranged to interview John

I thought I knew all about him, based of course on reading two books he wrote over 20 years ago. I had no idea who he was, what he has since accomplished, and where his practice was focused today. Results from my preliminary research were astounding. John has published over 20 books including a slew of Mars and Venus topics such as: *Mars and Venus Starting Over: A Practical Guide for Finding Love Again After a Painful Breakup, Divorce, or the Loss of A loved One*; *Mars and Venus Together Forever: Relationship Skills for Lasting Love*; *Mars and Venus Collide: Improving Relationships by Understanding How Men and Women Cope Differently with Stress*; *Mars and Venus on a Date: A Guide to Navigating the 5 Stages of Dating To create a Loving and Lasting Relationship*; and *Venus on Fire, Mars on Ice: Hormonal Balance-The Key to Life, Love and Energy*. He and his daughter, Lauren, have a website: [Mars Venus, Down to earth advice on life and love](http://MarsVenus.com), where he provides the male perspective and she the female. And there's also a slew of other resources available including his books on ADHA and more.

John has taught gender differences

and ways of understanding communication styles for over 40 years now, and he continues to evolve. I learned that he realized healthy human relationships

depend on more than strong connections, understanding our differences and good communication skills—they are also influenced by our physical health: "If you aren't healthy in your mind and body, it's hard to be healthy outside your mind and body. So if you feel sick, tired, exhausted, stressed and generally unhappy, this will cause your relationships to feel the same way" (www.marsvenus.com).

Body to Mind

His enlightenment began as a child: practicing yoga from age 3 on; excelling in his karate practice at age 12 that guided him into a deeper understanding of discipline, meditation, and 'the best defense'—avoiding conflicts in the first place. While friends attended Woodstock, John immersed himself in Transcendental Meditation (TM). He spent nine years with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, becoming his personal assistant and leading training workshops (John taught over 15,000 TM teachers in over 300 TM centers worldwide). At first he meditated three to four hours a day then increased to six, eight hours. He ate simply, twice a day, from a stainless steel cup, slept on the floor, and started the day with a cold bath. Had his brother not needed assistance in 1978 with bipolar disorder, John may still be meditating. He moved to Los Angeles, California intent on finding a cure for



Bipolar disorder. Life's experiences such as love, marriage, divorce, remarriage, child rearing and so forth taught him what he needed to know, guided him to write his books and extend his practice, as well as formal academic education including his doctorate from Columbia Pacific University.

John cites the time he spent with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and in meditation as a large part of his awareness. "I developed a quiet mind, the spaciousness to observe emotional reactions. You have to witness your emotions, embrace them, and create space for them to exist. Anger, sadness, disappointment, fear, concern, embarrassment, regret, you have to embrace your inhibited desires and not be concerned if they are not fulfilled. We all want to be loved, to be of service, to support others and be supported. When desire is free from negative emotion, we can feel the pure heart's desire and the positive emotions including: gratitude, empathy, wisdom, and appreciation. Contained within

these positive desires are the seeds of knowledge that we can have what we want. There is an intuitive pathway back to the true self." John explained, then added that through the spaciousness created in meditation, the intimacy of our sexuality, and the peak state of love, we can sustain happiness, which opens our heart. "By spending hours in meditation, you can hide from the world," he said, "but your truth will show up in relationships."

"When we readjust our expectations, our actions are aligned with a loving heart. With all the negative emotional energy inside of us, rather than act on it, we can feel it, embrace it, and then go deeper; negative emotions serve as a sign post that can lead us back to pure intent so we can go beyond them," he said.

"America fosters greater introspection, individuation and freedom of choice," John said, which leads to a greater potential to grow but also offers the risk and danger of

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wanting more. And, when you don't get it, you feel frustration, anger, disappointment, and fear. "On the other hand, if you don't want more, there's no Pandora's box of emotions to deal with," he said.

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"Negative emotions call for higher practice," he said. "In China, a deity can be beautiful and loving as well as fierce, angry, terrifying. They are portrayed with garlands of skulls and mediators imagine demons attacking them. The idea is to sit and feel the fear, to feel the anger, you can't deny it. First you have to feel the emotion and go through it to reach the positive feeling underneath."

A Second Awakening

Another experience in his awakening occurred 15 years ago when he was diagnosed with early stage Parkinson's disease. He opted for natural solutions versus medical interventions and psychopharmacology and successfully reversed the disease. During the healing process and thereafter, his wife, Bonnie, noticed he had become a better husband.

"I was listening with more focus, not forgetting," John said. "I was better romantically; it was effortless like 30 years ago when we were first getting together."

His prescription for healing? Extra amino acids (building blocks for protein construction), vitamins and minerals, and probiotics to improve his digestion. As his health improved, his brain function organically improved. "Good nutrients, healthy digestion, emotional support, lower stress levels and managing my stress in healthier ways improved our relationship," John said.

"I've helped a lot of people since then," he said, then explained that literature reviews and searches in data bases such as Pubmed yield few studies researching supplements; they remain questionable, not certified. Most sources cannot say they can 'quantifiably reverse symptoms' or 'halt them', though studies do exist (Qureshi & Al-Bedah, 2013). According to John, much of the food we consume today is mineral-deficient (poor soils, pesticides, toxins in our water combine to affect our farmed food sources). However, there is greater awareness today of the need to eat organically grown fruits and vegetables, and that at times supplements may support the quality of our ultimate health, which then impacts optimal brain function and optimal digestion and in the end our relationship skills.

According to John, our optimal digestion is inhibited after many generations taking antibiotics. Our food is filled with pesticides, there's toxicity in our air, these compromise our gut microbiota (*formally called gut flora they help the body digest foods that the stomach and small intestines can't, help produce vitamins B and K, play an important function in our immune system, and ensure proper digestive functioning*). Digestion is incomplete. Proper management of our emotions will improve our digestion just as improving our digestion will help us embrace our emotions.

Good Digestion is One Way to Health

Fear is often experienced as a queasy feeling in your gut. Distress causes cortisol production, which results in inflammation in the gut that inhibits brain function. The more anxiety you feel, the more cortisol is produced resulting in more inflammation. John discussed supplements and a natural focus on neurotransmitters such as dopamine (associated with our pleasure reward system), serotonin (associated with depression, memory, social behavior and mood balance) and gaba (known to reduce stress and tension and promote relaxation (for more information see page 137)

"Society offers a variety of distractions and addictions to prevent us from feeling emotions, rather than feel what's inside. Say we feel sad so we eat sugar to artificially stimulate and produce dopamine. We go into this made-up feeling, produced in the outer world. It does not come naturally, from within. We become dependent on outer things and can't generate positive feelings."

"If you are stressed you are not digesting protein," he said. "To focus on digestion you have to get the brain to calm down, calm the adrenal glands and allow the gut to heal itself. You want to improve digestion and help the system create its own neurotransmitters so you are not dependent on external interventions." John said

"When you move through states of extreme stress and emotions come up, you deplete the body of nutrients, vitamins, minerals. Athletes require extra nutrients to reach their peak performance; people with a genius IQ are at the highest risk of schizophrenia. We are giving Ritalin and Adderall to children who are said to have a brain dysfunction when in fact they have a highly functioning brain—a high performance brain requires more nutrients not drugs with proven, detrimental side effects."

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"Children are diagnosed with ADD, ADHD, bipolar disorder. But no one is talking about nutrients and destruction of the gut. Vaccinations and antibiotics destroy the gut microbiota. Children are born with gut destruction because of their mother's health. It is no mystery that 1 out of 6 children need assistance learning, that 1 out of 50 have autism, that 1 out of 5 boys are on Ritalin or Adderall. That's why I wrote my book, *Staying Focused*. It is a crime to tell parents there are no side effects when giving their children these drugs."

"There are a host of natural solutions including dietary change and supplements that have no side effects. There are healthy ways a child with ADHD can live such as taking supplements that are the precursors for dopamine and serotonin. You have to find out what works for each individual child's gut biomes. When the digestion is inhibited, it helps to get gluten out of the diet and make some other major dietary changes. For instance, adding in grapeseed extract and vitamin C, for many children will immediately increase focus, concentration, and comprehension."

"This information is available but it is not being presented in the mass media. There was a PBS special on ADHD that identified the symptoms and conditions. Then, rather than offer natural solutions, they had a string of doctors saying Ritalin and Adderall had no side effects, no danger even though this has been proven to be wrong."

What to Expect in Rhode Island

During his keynote address, John will focus on differences between men and women biologically speaking in terms of how they manage stress. He will touch on the impact of inflammation in the gut. And he will discuss the reality that men are hyper focused and detached while women tend to be overwhelmed and hyper distracted, with a sense of, "I must do it all."

He will share behavioral changes and nutritional changes and teach a ten minute physical exercise to help detox the liver and assist the lymphatic system remove excess

estrogen and create hormonal balance. He said that he's seeing excesses in phytoestrogens because of the toxins in our food—pesticides bind with estrogen receptor sites and throw off our natural balance of estrogen and testosterone.

And, since July 2016 is a bit down the road, I'm sure we can anticipate changes and surprises in his keynote address as John continues to expand his knowledge and approach as he offers his gifts to our field.

John Gray, Ph.D. is the #1 bestselling relationship author of all time. He is the author of over 20 books, including The New York Times #1 Best-Selling Relationship Book of All Time: *MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS*. His books have sold over 50 million copies in 45 different languages in 145 countries around the world.

John is a leading internationally recognized expert in the fields of communication and relationships. His unique focus is assisting men and women in understanding, respecting and appreciating their differences. John's advice can be easily used to improve relationships at home and in the workplace.

For more than 35 years, he has conducted public and private seminars for thousands of participants. John entertains and inspires audiences with practical communication techniques. John's mission is for men and women to understand, respect, appreciate and work together.

John Gray is a popular speaker on the national and international lecture circuit and often appears on television and radio programs to discuss his work. He has made guest appearances on such shows as Oprah, The Dr. Oz Show, Good Morning America, The Today Show, The CBS Morning Show, Live with Regis, Fox & Friends Weekend, Good Morning New York, Larry King Live, CNN and Company and many others. He has been profiled in major publications across the United States. John Gray lives with his wife, children and grandchildren in Northern California. Visit www.MarsVenus.com

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