

**GENDER DIFFERENCES**

Allow for

***GENDER JAMMING-MAKING MUSIC!***

A  
Summary

prepared by

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for  
the

**PMCQ**

## **GENDER DIFFERENCES & GENDER JAMMING!**

This presentation was about how differently men and women view work, tasks, relationships, and each other, especially with respect to how they each function in task-oriented situations – i.e. the work place. The most important thread throughout, however, is that when men and women meld their differences and unique abilities and strengths, there is no better team or coalition anywhere. Moreover, once the differences are understood and certain small adjustments are made, there is rarely any need to so much as think the “H” word. Over 90% of the “gender glitches” that turn nasty or are given some degree of “official status” are miscommunications left unaddressed. <sup>1</sup>

### **A. DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES - *Portents of What’s to Come!***

There are biological differences upon emerging from the womb, most of which are obvious and relate to physical strength and an inclination toward either right brain (women) or left brain (men) thinking. However, given the exceptions to this rule, it is much more resourceful to continue to recognize the importance of each kind of thinking (creative and linear) and the importance of managing a mix of right and left brain thinking in order to become and remain lateral in our thinking – that is, to use both right and left brain thinking to innovate, communicate more effectively (with everyone, primarily clients), and to increase overall creativity toward improving the bottom line.

### **1. EARLY TASK AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS - *To Be Modified by Choice as Adults!***

#### ***THE GAME – THE BEGINNING***

The task behaviours noted below literally represent the foundation from which boys and girls enter *the game*, that is, the daily work life of business, organizations, sales, professions, etc. The boys keep and hone their behaviours. Girls – or at least those who have not been exposed to brothers and co-ed team sports and other mixed activities – find the loaded behaviours of “boys in boardrooms” to be awkward, aggressive, and somehow “wrong”.

**Boys** view the world as a boy’s world and by the age of 6 to 8 years, **boys choose boys to play with**

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<sup>1</sup> 200 cases researched by the author - including 120 in which she was asked to mediate and assess.

**and girls choose girls. Boys “play rough”**, throwing sand in the sandbox and scuffling. Boys have no problem pushing over their best friends’ sand castle and then pushing them into the debris. **Boys also play rough and are encouraged to do so in sports right through the school years. They need and like rules and expect some kind of physical discipline** if they challenge the power structure (e.g. 4 laps around the soccer field for being late for practice). Boys jump up and down when they “score” and yell some version of *“I scored! I’m awesome!”*

**Girls** of the same age see this as “fighting”. They have already been socialized to be cooperative, “make nice”, look after each others’ feelings (or, in subtle ways, use the same nurturing inclinations to “fight nice” by exclusion). They like to see everyone get her chance in group activities (i.e. sports at school) and feel more comfortable bending, expanding or making up new rules to accommodate personalities, strengths and weaknesses. **The same kind of discipline used for and accepted by boys as the norm, is perceived as strict and mean by girls. When a girl scores, she is likely to be quietly pleased, join in a group hug, and say, “We scored! How lucky!”** Then, she will proceed to give (away) credit to the two players without whose previous actions she apparently could not have scored.

## **B. THE MALE-FEMALE ADULT PLAY AND WORK STYLES**

**Men yell at each other** in “rough play” style when they disagree or even, at times, when they agree. They often lightly scuffle or shove each other after a meeting or talk and **this physicality can be accompanied by a descriptive remark** (i.e. sh. head!) that is a sign of affection between two or more men. **Men speak loudly and expect to be heard, are heard, and feel little compunction about interrupting** someone to make a statement or to cut someone off whose points are deemed boring or off topic. **Men use few words, more assertive language, and even body movement** to get points across. They are direct, to the point. **Men can negotiate ferociously, even diminish someone in an argument and want to meet later for a drink.**

**Women speak either quietly or in a monotone** voice in a meeting setting. They try to be considerate and are concerned if someone is left out of a discussion. **Shouting is threatening** to women, as is the use of the body in any way to assert a specific point. **They do not call each other names** – this would be an “end all” move on the part of one female to another. **The female cooperative**

**style does not allow for interruption** and when they are interrupted, the experience is considered a serious offence. Women are, more often than not, **not heard** in mixed meetings and they feel this. **They are indirect**, are inclined to use many words when a few will do, and **experience work-related dynamics on an intensely emotional level**. If women raise their voices and, in their way, **“fight to the finish” in a negotiation**, they can be heard uttering something like, **“I can’t stand her!”** and the **grudge is deep and long held**.

### **Analysis**

The few characteristics noted above represent or play a role in virtually all “gender glitches”. If one considers the case of a male and female disagreeing on principle about a specific program, with each having fiscal agendas related to his and her position, as well as an intense need to rise (hierarchically and regarding the respect of others) in an organization, it is easy to see that, without understanding and some compromise of “styles”, neither would come out of the meeting unscathed.

### **Solution(s) – The Bottom of the Bottom Line**

The “work world” is the equivalent of the boy’s sandbox or the boy’s soccer game, field, and rules. However, in reality, and in spite of a misrepresentative amount of bad press regarding men, women and the “H” word, it takes only small adjustments on the part of women and men to limit discomfort and ensure that “conflict” is creative and constructive. Some active solutions are noted below with the appropriate commentary.

- 1. Women must not try to “lead like a man”.** A woman aping the male style (and the traits and tendencies mentioned above) will lose all connection and influence with both men and women.
- 2. Men can learn “active listening skills”** from watching women with other women *and men* as a way to increase the comfort level of women in an organization. Even if a man does not agree with a woman’s point of view, acknowledging it as having validity (something men automatically assume about their own views) will take him a long way in the eyes of a woman and other women who witness the behaviour.
- 3. Women must ask for what works for them.** A woman has to tell a man that she feels offended or discounted and, further, tell him (or them, in a meeting setting) what can be done differently in the

way of a response. In the vast majority of cases, men want to know, need to be told, and are much more comfortable with a female colleague who will be clear about these needs (regulations, parameters, rules, etc.).

**4. Men need (the kind of) foundation** mentioned above in order **to feel secure**. Men enjoy working for women who are clear, relatively direct, can laugh at themselves, and who can imitate “rough play”.

**5. Women need to take direct credit for their work**. If they do not, and a man takes credit, they created the vacuum, not the “victorious” men.

**6. Men can benefit tremendously by giving credit where credit is due and by sharing credit**. Women will remain loyal and buffer a lot of hard times for a male colleague who shows this kind of generosity.

7. In addition to being more direct, **women need to stop apologizing for “nothing” and ask fewer questions**. They must “**act confident**” and **ensure that they are being perceived as competent** (by doing the preceding) by male and female peers and execs.

**8. Men need to not “B.S.” about knowing something around a female team member**. In a team or group context (vs. assuring management), this is perceived as lying and completely undermines trust.

9. Ideally, **men and women employees should “mix it up” for a day or so, once a year, away from the office, and look at ways they can better optimize their respective strengths and reduce real or potential areas of tension**.

**10. Both men and women should observe themselves, and observe themselves being observed by each gender!** Brilliant leaders manage to make both women and men feel both comfortable and important.