

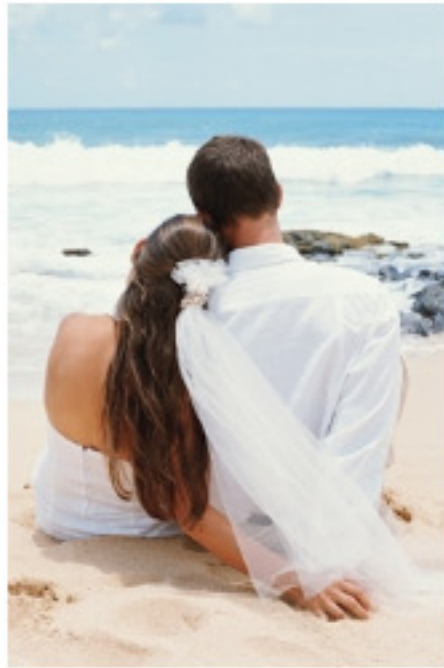


# When To Keep Mum

## 9 Things You Should Never Say to Your Husband

September 21, 2011

By [WomansDay.com](#)



Steven Lam/Getty Images

One of the best parts about marriage is being so comfortable with your hubby that you can say just about anything to him. But if you don't watch your mouth, then sometimes the ugly truth comes out in hurtful—not helpful—ways. Though you may have legitimate concerns to express or issues to bring up, doing so in a harsh manner can be damaging in the long term, to both your husband's feelings and your relationship.

According to Judy Ford, psychotherapist and author of *Every Day Love: The Daily Art of Caring for Each*

*Other*, "Speaking kindly is a skill that couples have to learn. Everyone feels battered by life and the outside world. You shouldn't feel that way at home." Here are nine statements that you should never utter to your significant other—and the words that you should try instead.

### 1. "You're just like your father."

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"This is just a no-no," says Julie Orlov, psychotherapist, speaker and author of *The Pathway to Love*. "It's nasty and belittling, and it gets at his fear that he may be exhibiting the worst traits of his family." If you're about to spout a criticism like this, then stop and think about what's behind it. Maybe your father-in-law is the kind of guy who never cleans up after himself, and your husband's habit of leaving dirty dishes around the house is getting to you. According to Ford, you should skip the insult and get right to a reasonable request, such as "Hon, when you're done with your sandwich, can you bring your dish over to the sink?" That way, you can achieve your goals without hurting him in the process.






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## 2. "When are you going to find a new job?"

First, figure out why you want him to find a new job so badly. Do you dislike how much time he spends away from home? Do you think he can or should be further ahead career-wise? Is he not bringing home a healthy-enough salary? "Before you say anything that could be hurtful to him, think about what your own issues are," says Ford. Be particularly careful that you're not attacking his ability to support you and the kids. "Part of how a man evaluates himself is by how well he can take care of his family," says Ford, so insulting him in this sensitive area can be a serious blow. To avoid this, have regular talks about both your jobs, career ambitions and budget concerns.

If you have an issue with how much money he's making, then "it's an opportunity to talk about your lifestyle and how you want to live," she adds. The aim is to avoid putting him on the defensive, and instead work together to create the life you both want.

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## 3. "My mother warned me you'd do this!"

Something must have seriously **infuriated** you, because what you're doing here is letting him know that there are others in your "camp." "You are trying to validate your 'side' of an argument, as though you're marshalling an army to your side," says Orlov. But that's never a good idea, because it's telling him that you're not on his side, or on the side of your relationship.

You should never let the opinions of others' dictate your relationship, but if there is some kernel of truth to a concern that your mother raised, then think about how to address that. "Maybe your mother said, 'He's too cheap,'" says Orlov. "Say to him, 'Why do you sometimes seem reluctant to spend money on things we need?'" Without ganging up on him, that could open up a discussion about money worries that stem from his childhood, for example. And if you're just lashing out? Hold your tongue and focus on the root of what's making you mad. In the end, coming to a solution together will make you feel better than unleashing hurtful words will.

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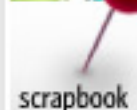
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## 4. "Just leave it—I'll do it myself!"

This is hurtful in two ways. First, it gets at your husband's elemental need to be a provider, supporter and capable person in the house. Second, it's just plain demeaning for any adult to hear that his efforts are sub-par. Doing this too often might make your husband think, "I can never do anything right or anything that'll please her," says Ford.

A better choice is to pick your battles. If he's in the middle of a task and you think that he's doing it wrong, then evaluate whether it really matters, keeping in mind that, just because he's doing something differently than you would doesn't mean that he's doing it wrong—he is, after all, an adult too. Sure, if he's about to hurt himself or someone else or if he might break something, then kindly step in. But if he's just loading the dishwasher in a way that drives you nuts? Let it be.



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## 5. "You always..." or "You never..."

"These are two phrases I advise couples never to use," says Ford, "because they set up an instant, negative tone. They halt communication, and they put the other person on the defensive." These blanket statements can make your husband feel unfairly attacked, and chances are that he'll just fire back with all the times he *did* help.

If there are legitimate problems you'd like to address (he really does tend to leave his tools all over the garage floor or often forgets to put gas in the car after driving it), then avoid generalizing and try to focus on the issue at hand while also communicating how his actions make you feel: "When you come home with an empty tank of gas, I feel like you don't care about the next person who has to drive the car—which is usually me." Ford suggests adding the phrase "would you be willing...?" Try this: "Would you be willing to fill up the car when it gets below a quarter tank?" Most men are willing to do most anything that'll make you happy—it's all in how you ask.



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## 6. "Do you really think those pants are flattering?"

Are you trying to hint that he's putting on weight? Because saying the above, says Ford, is not getting anything concrete across. You may think that you're subtly conveying the message, but instead you're insulting his looks without showing any genuine concern for his health.

Instead, start with something you like about how he looks: "When you wear that blue shirt, it really makes me appreciate your gorgeous blue eyes." Then broach the topic of his weight gain by framing the comment so it's about his health, not his looks: "Honey, what do you think about us both starting after-dinner walks?" When you've softened up your approach, you have more room to make other, helpful suggestions.



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## 7. "Ugh, we're hanging out with *him* again?"

There's nothing wrong with your guy having a friend whose company you don't love—no one says spouses are required to adore each other's friends, especially that one college pal who likes to pretend he and your hubby never left the frat house. What is wrong is insulting your man's choice of friends. Your disdain may also suggest that you'd prefer to pick his friends for him—and no one wants to be told who they should be pals with.

A better choice, suggests Ford is this: "Oh, honey, you know I don't always enjoy doing the same things as you and George, so why don't you plan a guys' night instead?" Remember, there's no marriage rule that says you two have to do everything together. He might actually be relieved to have a little guy time with his pal that doesn't involve him having to worry if you're having fun or are offended by his friend's jokes. (And keep this in mind: If a friend is really awful, then your husband is much more likely to see that on his own, over time, whereas if you nag him to drop the dolt, it may never happen.)

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## 8. "Please watch the kids. But don't do this, take them here or forget that..."

This is a classic nervous-new-mom move: When you're in anxiety mode, it can be hard to let go of childcare tasks (even though you would love to have more help). It's also an attitude that can become a habit no matter how long you've been a mom, leading to some very unhealthy feelings. You may become resentful because he doesn't pitch in, but you don't always give him room to, either.

At the end of the day, no husband is going to be inspired to be a better, more hands-on and involved dad if his every effort is shot down, says Orlov. "If he always feels like he's wrong, he'll only start to disconnect emotionally." So let Dad be Dad. Trust that he knows as well as you do how to keep a child clean, safe and fed—even if his definitions of those tasks are slightly different than your own. That said, if there are things he needs to know, like how to use the stroller or what the pediatrician's phone number is, then definitely give him the rundown.

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## 9. "Yes, I had an orgasm." (when you didn't)

Lying is never a great idea, especially when it comes to sexual intimacy. "The definition of intimacy is letting another person see your vulnerabilities," says Ford, and that includes admitting that your sex life might need some TLC. When you pretend you're enjoying sex, you may think that you're sparing his feelings, but you're actually pushing him away by not being honest. And chances are, you aren't fooling him: The very fact that he's [asking](#) usually means he suspects that something is up. When broaching the subject, start with the positive: "Express appreciation of the fact that he even wants to know—"that's so thoughtful of you, honey," suggests Ford.

Then, while you're both clothed and not in the bedroom, bring up some things you enjoy sexually and that you would like to try in order to enhance the experience next time around, taking care not to place blame on him. By emphasizing what arouses you and what you two can do in the future, you'll spare his feelings without duping him in the process.

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