

Married With Benefits

References to conferences, resources, or other special promotions may be obsolete.

Season 1, Episode 2: Why Is He So Touchy?

Featured Host: Shaunti Feldhahn

Air Date: April 1, 2019

Brian: From the FamilyLife Podcast Network this is *Married With Benefits*. I'm Brian Goins on a relentless pursuit to help you love the one you're with and discover all the benefits that came with saying, "I do."

Ladies, I wonder if a Harvard relational wizard assessed your husband what do you think she'd discover or find? Don't answer that. In this session of *Married With Benefits* we do have best-selling author and researcher Shaunti Feldhahn. She's continuing to ask questions that you're thinking about your husband but just aren't sure who to ask.

So today in this episode were going to ask, "Why is he so touchy? Why does he get so irritated when I offer just a little bit of help or criticism?"

Brian: Shaunti, you're married to Jeff. I'm guessing every now and then he gets touchy about something.

Shaunti: He is the best husband ever.

Brian: Right. He is a good guy. I've hung out with him. Love the guy.

Shaunti: He is a great guy, but he's a guy.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Every woman knows what I mean by this—that sometimes, our husband just kind of gets touchy about something. You're like—"What?! What was wrong? What did I say? What did I do?" I mean just the other day—I think it was two or three days ago—we were in the middle of a discussion. You know those discussions?

Brian: Lively.

Shaunti: Yes. I literally was trying to process through something; and he's like—"Look, I can't say anything."

"So, I'm just going to shut up." I'm like—"Ah!"

Brian: Yes. So, that's—

Shaunti: You'd think I would have written a book about men or something. [Laughter]

Brian: Right; exactly.

Shaunti: Like I wouldn't do this, but I did.

Brian: That you would know.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: Yes, which she has. Shaunti, of course, has written a number of books. How many books are you up to now?

Shaunti: I haven't added it up. Actually, you're going to laugh, but I haven't. It's probably 15-ish.

Brian: 15 or so—I know that she's—you've probably heard her from the *For*—is it *For Only Series*? Is that what you call it?

Shaunti: Yes; the *Only Series*.

Brian: The *Only Series*—so, *For Women Only*, *For Men Only*, *For Young Women Only*, *For Parents Only*.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: I can't wait to see what the next one is. I know everybody is asking, like—"What's the next *Only* book going to be?"

Shaunti: One of the days, I'm going to tackle the research for *For Singles Only*.

Brian: Oh, nice!

Shaunti: One of these days—yes.

Brian: That'd be great. We'll be looking forward to that; but this one, the idea of being—"How do I know my husband's tells?" It's like in poker; you know? It's like—"Oh, I know that guy is bluffing." So, how do I—what are the tells of my husband when 'Oh, he's being touchy' about something?" I think every wife could probably—if we had a call-in show, they'd go—"Oh, I know exactly. It's when my husband says this—like—'Fine, you just do it your way.'"

Shaunti: Yes. I've heard that one, too—yes.

Brian: You've heard that one a couple times?

Shaunti: Every wife is nodding—

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: —because every woman is like—“Yes, been there.”

Brian: Yes. I was trying to think about mine would be with Jenn, my wife.

Shaunti: I told him earlier that he needed to text Jenn and ask her.

Brian: Yes. She has not responded yet, and I don’t know why. Oh, here we go. There it is. I just got it: “When you feel like things aren’t getting done and I just get impatient.”

Shaunti: There you go.

Brian: So, it’s like—“Why aren’t we done with this? Why hasn’t this—I ask to do this. Why are the kids not done with this?” I get impatient. For me, it’s like it comes out—and I’m generally a pretty patient guy, I think; but I get really short.

Shaunti: Yes. Every wife is like—“What? I don’t get it. It was just this”—in our minds—“it was this little thing.” So, here’s really the reality of this—is that honestly it feels little to us; but clearly, it’s not to him, or he wouldn’t be upset. He wouldn’t be irritated. In our minds, he wouldn’t be over-sensitive.

Brian: Oh, that’s the word we use.

Shaunti: That’s the word—see, this is the word that women privately use amongst themselves: “So touchy / so over-sensitive.”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: The reality is—at least what we found in the research with men in all these different studies—is, honestly, it’s minor to us; and it’s not to them because it’s hitting a raw nerve down deep that we, women, don’t know is there.

Brian: Well, on the last podcast, we talked about this—how it’s like there is a difference of opinion about what this issue is. Last time, we talked about sex and how it’s a totally different need that women didn’t realize.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: They didn’t realize it’s not just a physical act; it’s really serving an emotional need. For this, it seems like there is, again, there is another mismatch of the importance of something: “Why? He shouldn’t be touchy about that. It’s really not a big deal. I’ve

basically just shown him how to put the dishwasher—all the dishes in right. Why wouldn't you want to do it the right way"; right?

Shaunti: Whenever I do—Jeff and I do a lot of marriage conferences, and I use that example sometimes—that exact example of—“Okay, so, you know, ladies, that time when he's done the dishes after dinner / he's cleaning up, and he puts the dishes away; and then you come along behind him and put the dishes in the right way. Every man in the audience starts going—“Oh, yeah”—and he starts nodding.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: The women are like—“What?!” Here's what we don't realize is going on—is that our big, strong men look so confident; and on the inside, there is a lot of self-doubt under the surface. We don't know it's there. It's essentially this deep feeling like—“I want to be a great husband, but I don't know that I know what I'm doing.” He's looking for these signals from the people around him, especially his wife, as to whether or not he measures up. He thinks, “I don't think I measure up; but if she thinks I do, then I'm okay.”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: “But if she's signaling that I didn't measure up, then, now, I'm like really in trouble because this is the woman who knows me the best in the world; you know?”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: We think, “What is dishes—redoing the dishing have to do with this?” Here's really the bottom line underneath that sort of emotional surface—is for us, as women, the question in our hearts is kind of—it is the “Am I loveable” kind of question—like down deep. “Am I loveable? Am I special? Am I worthy of being loved for who I am on the inside?” So, what we love—the signal we are looking for is that he loves us / that he loves us / he says, “I love you” / he does these loving things.

We don't realize that in the heart of our husband and our son—like this is most men, not all, you know statistically but the vast majority—the question in their hearts is a completely different question. The question that he has isn't “Am I loveable”—but “Am I able?” “Am I adequate?” “Am I”—it's not “Am I worthy of being loved for who I am on the inside?” For him, it is: “Am I any good at what I do on the outside?”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: That is it, and he is always concerned in the deepest places of his heart that someone is going to figure out he's an imposter / he doesn't know what he's doing. So, it makes this little—what we think of as so minor—it's like—“Why should that bother?”

That shouldn't bother you." I hate to say it, but since most all of the listeners here are women.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: We're kind of thinking, "Dude, grow up." [Laughter] "You're so touchy. That shouldn't bother you." Finally, I realized, as I started down this path of listening to the hearts of these men, I'm saying that because it wouldn't me; and he's not me. He's wired *very* differently.

Brian: Yes, which is a whole other great podcast that we've got to do on just the wiring and how it's different and where it looks like. It shows up in this. It shows up in, for us, as guys—I know for me: "I want to be shown that I can do things. If you're—and all of the sudden you come down and redo something I just did, you're basically saying, "Whatever you just did wasn't good enough. It wasn't like I would do it, which is the right way"; right?

Shaunti: Right; of course, because there is one right way to load a dishwasher.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: I mean really, come on. Honestly, I'm kind of joking; but we as women, we kind of have to confront that a lot of us actually think there is one right way. Even now, I can guarantee you some of the women listening are like—"And?"

Brian: Yes. What are you saying? What's your point?

Shaunti: Of course, there is one right way.

Brian: There is one right way. The silverware goes up; right?

Shaunti: This is one of these things that we, as women, have to confront—something that we didn't even know was there. We didn't know that with everything we're doing / everything that we're saying / every interaction with him, we are either because it's not because of us; it's because of him and this question and this insecurity on the inside. We are either signaling, "Yes, you measure up," or "No, you don't"—one of those two things. You know we love our husbands. We care about them. We don't want to trigger that feeling.

I'll give you the perfect example that we heard from one of the guys as we were doing this original research 13-14 years ago with a bunch of men. He had this emotional explanation for it. He said, "It's like when I was a little boy"—and he's this CEO-kind-of-guy. Like, he's this strong, confident—

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: —kind of guy. He said, “But in my mind, I’m always taken back to being this little kindergartner, five years old—maybe, six years old—back in the day when used to in craft class you used to make ashtrays. Anyone under 30 is like—“What?”

Brian: Yes—“Ashtrays? Who makes ashtrays?”

Shaunti: We used to make ashtrays back in the day. Now, it’s like penholders.

Brian: It’s so hilarious that, as a culture, we were like—“Hey, let’s have our kids make ashtrays.”

Shaunti: Everybody did it.

Brian: Everybody did it.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: We were encouraging lung cancer. That’s what we did 30 years ago.

Shaunti: That’s what we did. Yes, we did. Because you are making your ashtrays and you’re a little five-year-old boy, he said, “It’s like that image of me as a five-year-old boy coming home with this ashtray, and it’s all wonky on one side and the coloring is all weird. You hold it up to your mom, and you are just thrilled”—

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: —“when your mom goes—‘Oh! This is awesome, buddy! Great job!’ You don’t want her to go—‘Oh, but it’s all wonky on one side.’”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: As a mom, you would never do that. This guy said, “You don’t realize we’re still those little boys inside.”

Brian: Wow. We are. I hate to admit it, but we never like to be proven that we don’t know what we’re doing even though we know it’s true. We definitely don’t want our wives to point it out.

I remember Jenn, one time—she comes from a home where her dad was a general contractor. He built homes. So, if it broke in Jenn’s house growing up, he fixed it.

Shaunti: I got you.

Brian: And he could fix anything. It didn’t matter. So, when she married me, the expectation was: “Well, every guy should be able to fix anything.”

Shaunti: It's part of the chromosome.

Brian: It didn't take her long to realize that if it gets fixed with a screwdriver or a hammer, it's probably not going to be done. I remember one time in—

Shaunti: How did that make you feel?

Brian: Well, only when it shows up in front of other people—like for me, she knows that I kind of know it. All I want her to know is that I'm going to try and that I'm working on it. For me, that's the thing. I really do want to learn. I just don't know.

My brother-in-law—he's a welder. So, I've got a welder and a general contractor.

Shaunti: Oh my.

Brian: These are men that their hands are hardened, calloused. They know how to work with tools—all of that kind of stuff. And we were at a dinner party, and she was talking to some friends. I was sitting right there, and she was talking about something that I think my brother-in-law had made and made some comment about hands. So, she just pulled my hand out and said, "Look at his hands. They are so soft."

Shaunti: Oh!

Brian: I just died inside because she wasn't meaning it bad to me. It was just like—there are just two different guys. My brother-in-law is a welder. He works with metal. He gets his hands burned all the time. He's probably burned his fingerprints off by now.

I am a writer. I'm an author. I'm a speaker. We're two different guys. Yes, of course, my hands aren't going to be as hard as his; but I don't want anyone else knowing that. There's this latent insecurity that comes out, especially when it is in front of others. So, that's—I got touchy. I got quiet.

Shaunti: Yes. That's the tell for a lot of guys. You know it's interesting. Actually, the thing that a man most wants and needs as a result of this doubt / as a result of this little boy worry that his ashtray isn't going to be good enough—that inside of him—what I heard from all of these men / saw it on the surveys—is they most need to know that their wife, the most important person in his life—that she appreciates him. That she does believe in him. That she does respect him. She does admire him. She does trust him. All of those things that say, "You're good at what you do on the outside."

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: If he doesn't feel that way—whether it's sort of systemically or just in that moment—what we found is that there is usually one or both of two responses. The guy gets angry, he withdraws, or both; right?

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: That's a signal of a guy feeling this sense of total, complete inadequacy. We don't realize as a woman, that is his most painful feeling—that truly is like—“Just kill me now. This is horrible.” None of us as wives want our men to feel that way.

Brian: No.

Shaunti: I mean we care about our husbands. We just think—we kind of have this: “He's just has this little minor thing. He needs to get over it.”

Brian: “What's the big deal?” So, men feel that insecurity when it comes to competence about certain issues or doing something the right way.

Do you feel like there is a same or similar feeling that women would have about an insecurity? What I don't hear you saying is—like, when do women get touchy to know that “Hey, how men feel here is how we feel over here?”

Shaunti: Well, you know, I imagine your husband saying, “So, honey, why are you getting so angry? I just said you needed to lose ten pounds.”

Brian: Ooh—yes. Things—that's out of the podcast, “Things Husbands Should Never Say to Their Wives.”

Shaunti: Yes; really. Seriously, there are so many men who are like—“Of course, I think she's beautiful. All I did was tell her she needs to lose ten pounds. Why is that making her so upset?”

Brian: It's great to work out. You should work out every now and then.

Shaunti: Yes, I mean—you know.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: That's example of—because it's our nerve / our question, “Am I beautiful”; right? We really don't believe that. I was talking to my husband. He was talking about this old band from, I think, Australia called The Seekers back in the day. He was talking about how they were huge. They were actually bigger than the Beatles. They had hundreds of thousands of people in the '60's coming to their concerts. I can't even picture 200,000 people at a concert.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: You know the most popular band on the planet basically. They broke up six years later because the lead singer—this woman who was adorable was convinced she was overweight.

Brian: Wow.

Shaunti: And was convinced that she didn't belong on stage and was convinced that she just wasn't enough.

Brian: Yet, 100,000 people—

Shaunti: 200,000 people

Brian: —cheering for her—200,000 people cheering you—

Shaunti: At a concert

Brian: —approving you.

Shaunti: At one concert.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Hundreds of thousands / millions of men all over the world would be like—“Man! I wish she were my wife”—or whatever. Yet, she didn't see herself that way.

We, as women—and that's the thing. That's our thing—is our question is: “Is somebody going to love me? Does he really love me? Does my husband really love me?”

So, when he pulls away during an argument—I mean, ladies, think about how you feel when you're in the middle of one of those discussions over breakfast. It's emotional. He's upset with you, and you're both kind of emotional. He's like—“I've got to go to work”; and he gets in the car and drives away. What happens in your heart? Is it—“Oh, it's just minor. It's no big deal.”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Or is there this—“Uh, are we okay”—kind of feeling? Most women say, statistically, “It's arisen into this sort of conscious thing that's there in your heart kind of going—‘Uh.’” Nothing is right with the world until that's resolved. You wouldn't want your husband to go—“Get over it. Why are you so—why are you clingy?”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: You would want to be reassured, “I love you. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to say those things.” Look, what you want is before he leaves, when he’s upset, to say, “Look, I’m angry. I need space, but listen, we’re okay. We’ll talk about this when I get back from work.” Why is that such a big relief? It’s because he’s reassured you in your area of insecurity.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: And with a guy, here’s how you reassure him in his area of insecurity. When he does the dishes, and they are all in different spots than you would do it—

Brian: Right?

Shaunti: —you say, “Oh, thanks so much, honey, for doing the dishes. I really appreciate it while I was being with the kids. Really, you’re awesome”—and absolutely nothing about what you wish he would have changed.

Brian: Even though inside you’re dying—you’re going—“Those bowls will never get cleaned. Facing that way, it’s not going to happen. The cereal that’s stuck on there—I’m going to have to clean that off.”

Shaunti: I’m going to have to chip it off.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Well, there are some women—I promise you there are women listening to this—because I used to be one of them; okay?

Brian: Was this your issue? Did you always change the dishes?

Shaunti: This was totally—well, it wasn’t the dishes. Actually, Jeff is more of neat person than I am. So, this particular one wasn’t it; but these kinds of issues where—if I’m listening to this as a woman, there are some women who are getting their head wag on and are like—“Are you kidding me? I can’t say anything! What I have no rights here?!”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: “What—he just needs to get over it?” So, I started asking guys, “Come on. If the dishes do have to get done correctly, what do we do?” I heard consistently two things from the guys—

Brian: Okay?

Shaunti: —about—some of them actually called it this, and I started looking into it. We call it the next-day rule.

Brian: The next-day rule?

Shaunti: The next-day rule—there are two parts to the next-day rule; and ladies, honestly, if you will start thinking this through and watching for opportunities for this, honestly, this one thing can be a huge improvement in your marriage because you've avoid the touchiness.

The first part of the next-day rule is you ask yourself, "Okay, here is this this thing I want to change. I want to come along behind him or I want to question his judgment about something right in the moment." Ask yourself, "Is this thing going to matter the next day?" If it's going to matter enough that it may be worth hurting your husband's feelings—

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: —then mention it; right? If it's not going to matter enough / that it's not worth having that kind of soul-shredding feeling—

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: —then, maybe, don't mention it. Yes, the kids may have been taken out in the snow without their gloves.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: He's all excited because he's been outside playing snowball with the kids and being a great dad. Is it worth it to say, "Why did you not put gloves on them?"

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Is it worth it knowing that he is high from his triumph of being a great dad, out there playing snowballs with the kids? Is it worth is to kind of sink that feeling; okay? If it is, then mention it. If it's not, then not: "Like, honey, thanks for dressing them for school; but you know what? You didn't realize there is a special uniform that they are supposed to wear today. They are supposed to each have a blue shirt on because they are going to have class pictures"; you know?

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: "You might have forgotten." That's—

Brian: Because the guy is just feeling like—"It's a miracle I got them dressed!"

Shaunti: Right. [Laughter] Well, I don't know if he's feeling that way; but—

Brian: He probably—I would, at that point.

Shaunti: Okay. So, that's an example of that's worth it. You don't want your kids to be the only ones to show up in normal wear when they are all supposed to wear blue t-shirts or whatever.

Brian: “Is it worth it?”—that's a great question.

Shaunti: “Is it worth it?”—that's the first thing.

Brian: Okay.

Shaunti: Next-day rule: “Is it going to matter the next day? Is it worth it to hurt his feelings?” The second part of the next-day rule is if possible, mention it the next day. If it's important enough that it's going to matter and it's not super-time sensitive, like the blue shirts for the kids going to school that minute—

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: —then mention it the next day: Like, “You know, honey, thank you so much again for doing the dishes. That was awesome. I'm so glad. You know what? I thought you'd want to know. I looked at how the water jets hit the dishes, and they actually hit it from the right instead of from below or whatever it is you've discovered. So, I thought you'd want to know.”

Brian: And if you could use the word schematic—“I pulled up the schematic for the jets on the dishwasher”—that would get him—“Oh, really? I haven't looked at the schematics, but I kind of want to.” If you could use that word anytime, schematic, you've got your guys attention.

Shaunti: Along with quantum physics.

Brian: Yes, quantum—yes; exactly.

Shaunti: Yes; exactly—“The numbers prove....”

Brian: Right; right. [Laughter]

Shaunti: Whatever it is.

Brian: Anything like—“If I'm not in the know, I want to be in the know now.” So, “Oh, the jets point that way. That's interesting.”

Shaunti: But you have given him his triumph.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: Do you agree that—because a lot of women are sitting here listening saying, “This sounds kind of patronizing”—you know, to the guy, that he’s a little kid with an ashtray that—“I need to give him his triumph.” Some women are thinking—“Come on.”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: “You know my husband is more secure than that.”

Brian: Exactly. He’s not.

Shaunti: Really?

Brian: He’s not. It’s amazing how easily offended I can be. I was trying to think of a couple of examples—just even the one about soft hands. The truth is I don’t work with my hands. Yet, that comment because—here’s what I’m doing. I’m projecting myself in the eyes of the people that are in that room—whether it’s in front of my kids or whether it’s in front of friends.

It’s like I want them to think of me in a certain way. Even if it’s not true, I don’t want to be diminished in anybody else’s eyes.

Shaunti: Especially by your wife—

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: —who knows you best.

Brian: Yes. So, for Jenn, it wasn’t a big deal because she was just telling the truth. My wife is high justice / high truth teller, and it’s great. I love that about her; but she just didn’t think of it in terms of “What’s this doing in terms of my husband’s heart?”

So, like I said some other time, a mentor friend of mine said that—“Hey, as a man, I always feel insecure, not just insecure, but desperately insecure.” We don’t come across that way. We don’t project that; but inside, when a comment is made—here’s one example that I’ve seen a lot with couples. A guy is telling a story, and he is fabricating some of the details; right? He’s trying to build it up and make this—I mean let’s not let the truth get in the way of a great story. As guys, that’s kind of our mantra.

Shaunti: I think Tony Campolo once said, “It should have happened that way.”

Brian: It should—exactly.

Shaunti: It should have happened that way.

Brian: And you see the wife going—“No, it wasn’t four people that were there. There were three people there. No, no, no, no, no. It wasn’t a right turn.”

Shaunti: Oh my!

Brian: “It was a left turn.” The guy is sitting there feeling—

Shaunti: I’ve probably done this.

Brian: —like an idiot. It’s true. It’s true, but is it spoken in love? Probably not because she’s not caring about what’s going on in his heart; and at some point, some guy goes—“Why don’t you just tell the story?”

Shaunti: Yes. Well, that’s that “Nothing I do is every good enough for you”; right? So many of us, as women, have heard that phrase and had no idea what the guy was talking about / no idea what our husband was talking about; right? We don’t think of it that way. We don’t realize you guys do.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: We don’t realize that, for you, again, it is—ladies, get this into your heads / into your hearts. This is something I’ve had to wrestle with for years. When you look at that big, strong husband, next time you look at that big, strong husband / next time you talk to him, recognize that inside he is thinking, “Am I any good at what I do on the outside? I don’t think I know what I’m doing.”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: “I am desperately looking to the people around me—even though I don’t look like it, and I’m looking oh-so-confident—but I am looking to the people around me for signals as to the answer to that question. If the heart-cry of a woman is “Am I loveable,” the heart cry of a man is “Do I measure up?”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: He really, sincerely doubts it. Honestly, I mean, let’s just—if we can get all theological for a second. It’s really—honestly, it traces back to the curse; right? I mean if you look at how God said, “Adam, here is what life is going to feel like for you. You’re always going to feel like you are toiling the ground by the sweat of your brow, and you’re never going to get there.”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: “You’re going to always feel like the thorns and the thistles are rising up against you. No matter what you do, you’re never going to feel like you’re going to get there.” That is the heart of our big, strong man. There is a tenderness inside / a vulnerability / a self-doubt. And what a precious opportunity we, as women, have to steward that self-doubt and speak to it and build them up in the same way that once he knows we have our self-doubt / our vulnerability, we want him to tenderly steward that—

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: —and speak to that and reassure that as well.

Brian: I was just thinking about this because both of us have 17-year-old daughters—

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: —Morgan and Brantley; and I was just thinking: I imagine if—I don’t know if your daughter went to prom last year—

Shaunti: She did.

Brian: Yes. So, my daughter went to prom; and of course, she just stunning / beautiful. I’m not just saying that because I’m her dad, but she came out in a great dress, done makeup, hair all up and just looking great. Just imagine, right as the boy is about to pick her up, if you look at your little daughter and you say, “Huh? Why’d you choose that makeup?”

Shaunti: Oh, that’s a great analogy.

Brian: What is she thinking the rest of the night?

Shaunti: Yes—“Why did you put the dishes in that way?”

Brian: That’s what we’re doing.

Shaunti: “Why didn’t you put the gloves on when you were out playing in the snow?”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: Yes, and we, as women, would never have seen it that way.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: And if there are any guys secretly listening into this, realize we’re not trying to kill your heart.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: We have no idea how much we're killing it; but that is a great analogy. What a beautiful picture of how much you build your daughter up when you look at her and go—"Wow!"

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: "Amazing. You're so beautiful. Inside and out, you are so beautiful." The affirmation to her tender, little heart and we have the same opportunity with our men.

Brian: So, we've talked about a number of tells; you know? Let's just recount them real quickly. When your husband is saying things and, maybe, pulling away and he's getting short with you and he just walks out the door—I like that idea of anger being—he's going to respond—if you've hurt his heart in this way / if you've tapped into that insecurity, the tell will be: There might be some anger that gets shone—either kind of lashing out in a short way or something called depression anger turned inward. That's what I do. I just withdraw. I just move away.

So, if all of the sudden your husband suddenly withdraws from you, maybe, you think back—"What did I just say," or "What did I just do"—

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: —and check that through or if he just gets real short with you and makes some rude comment.

Shaunti: Or the "Nothing I do is ever good enough."

Brian: Yes, if he says, "Nothing I do is ever good enough," or "Why do you keep correcting me?"

Shaunti: Yes, that's another good one; absolutely.

Brian: Those little phrases that you just think to yourself: "Okay, I'm tapping into that insecurity nerve." And just picture yourself if your husband said something about your beauty or compared you to other women or any of those things where you feel like—"Oh, he doesn't really love me"—or puts your love or being cherished in any kind of question and how you would feel. You'd want that to be corrected.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: You'd want to be reassured. So, can you give us any practical things? How do I reassure my husband? If I have transgressed over that insecurity line or tapped into that nerve, what do I do to bring him back?

Shaunti: So, the most important thing, by far, we have found—and when I say, “We have found,” we actually purposely studied this in order to learn: What is it that builds your husband up in the same way that “I love you” or “You’re so beautiful” builds you up?

Believe it or not, it’s saying, “Thank you.” It is looking at what he did—the dishes / the playing in the yard with the kids—whatever the thing is that he did on the outside—looking at it and saying, “Thank you for doing that. Thanks for taking the kids out.”

It’s little things like—“Thanks for putting gas in my car.” It’s essentially saying, “I’m looking at what you did on the outside. I noticed it, and it was good. I appreciate it.” Oh, that just—that fills a man up in every way that he needs to be filled.

Brian: And I think what you said there—“I noticed it”—because I think as women, the feeling of like little daughters when they run out in their dress and they want Daddy to see it. Why? “I want my daddy to notice I’m beautiful.”

Shaunti: Absolutely.

Brian: “I want Daddy to notice that I dressed up.” For guys, it’s like that ashtray illustration. They want their parents to notice they did something. They accomplished something.

So, I know, for me, I do try to fix things around the house. I’m not always successful; but more than anything, I want Jenn to give me the opportunity to try. So rather than her just saying, “Listen, Brian, you’re not going to fix that toilet. Let’s just call a plumber”—she’s probably right; but if I want to try it, nothing blows wind into my sails like when Jenn goes—“Hey, go for it! Yes, try it out! If it doesn’t work, then we’ll call.” Then I’m like—“Okay, I have the freedom now to try.” Then I know—I’m a big enough boy to go—“Okay, I tried, I failed, I didn’t do it. I need help”; but I’d rather me figure that out, than her go—“You can’t do it.”

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: “I know you. You’re going to fail miserably.”

Shaunti: See, even you saying that, the women listening are going—“What? That’s not what I’m saying.”

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Of course, we don’t think of it that way. We’re saying, “Look, let’s just call a plumber.” We have to be honest with ourselves, ladies. Let’s just be really honest that, honestly, is what’s back there in our mind: “Well, obviously, he’s not going to be able to do it right. So, therefore, let’s just call a plumber”—

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: —or “It’ll be too much trouble if he tries to do it.”

Brian: Or “It’s going to take too much time.”

Shaunti: Or “It’s going to take too much time.” We don’t realize that all of those assumptions pale in comparison to his need to try to figure out and show that “I am good at what I do.” That’s actually a true and measurable—in some cases on our survey—a true, measurable, emotional need. It’s not just your husband’s quirk.

Brian: Yes; yes. Well, that’s really helpful.

Shaunti: I mean this is a whole other podcast. This whole subject of why does my husband say, “Did you notice?”

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: “Did you notice I did the lawn?” “Did you notice?” It’s all because of this. We’ve got to do a whole other podcast on this at some point.

Brian: Right. “Did you notice”—that’d be a great one because we do that. We do that all the time. There is that latent need—and I like how you said it, Shaunti, where you’re talking about the fact that both of us have insecurities; and, unfortunately, because we are fallen human beings and because we typically see everything through our own lenses, we don’t even realize when we tap that nerve.

So, if you can pick up on the tells now—we’ve kind of given you, kind of, the poker tells of what happens when your husband does this or says this we’ve probably tripped that nerve without even realizing it. So, to come back and reassure / to say, “Thank you” / to notice / to let them try—anything else you’d add to that before we close up?

Shaunti: Well, the key, honestly, is that you are going to need to learn to use it as a learning tool. You can come back and try to say, “I’m sorry.” I mean because that’s a big deal, honestly. If you realize you really have hurt his feelings, it’s really important to say, “I’m sorry. I’m learning”; you know?

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: “Have grace with me while I’m trying to learn how to avoid sending this signal”; but the better thing is to learn. In addition to that, look back and go—“Okay, what was it specifically that tripped that nerve? What was it that happened in the last five minutes”—because sometimes, it’s not really obvious, Oh my goodness, I didn’t even see that he was just looking for a pat on the back. He was just looking for appreciation.

He had the ashtray up for my inspection. I just—dang it! Look back and figure out what that was and, hopefully, not do that again.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: And practice. Really, honestly, it's a skill. It's a habit that you will build. Let me tell you. It will yield amazing dividends for your marriage. I can tell you that from personal experience because I was one of the worst offenders in this area, and it took me a couple of years of trying and failing and trying and getting a little better and failing and trying. Let me tell you. We have an amazing marriage today. Some it was Jeff was so patient while I was learning that. Honestly, ladies, I can tell you that work is worth it.

Brian: Yes. Well, that's great. It doesn't happen overnight, and you're working on a blind spot—same thing with husbands. I know a lot of ladies are probably listening to this going—"Okay, well, when are you going to talk to my husband?" Well, that's a different podcast. [Laughter]

Ladies, thanks so much for listening. And, guys, we know you're listening, too. If you want more great audio please go to FamilyLife.com/podcasts. You'll find more great shows to help you out.

By the way, we wanted to also let you know that this podcast is listener supported. So, we appreciate many gifts from people like yourself. If you're interested in donating today you can do that there at FamilyLife.com. Just click the word "donate."

I'd love to give a special word of thanks to our audio producer, CJ3 and our project coordinator, Page Johnson for helping to pull this off. We couldn't do it without their help.

Look forward to joining you next time when we're going to tackle a pretty sensitive question. How can my good guy husband be tempted by porn?

I'm Brian Goins. This has been *Married With Benefits* helping you love the one your with. Thanks for listening.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you've benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider [donating today](#) to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2019 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com