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Partners in Survival, for Men Only

Matthew J. Loscalzo, MSW

February 25, 2007

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

This program, Men Against Breast Cancer [<http://www.menagainstbreastcancer.org>], is an advocacy group to learn from men how to support women who have cancer. One of the reasons this was founded is that, over the years, women have been left out of some major medical studies, especially in terms of cardiology and cancer. Most of that research was with men. What we find now is that drugs and treatments work differently for women and men. Actually, they work differently based on what age you are. We are really learning a heck of a lot about that.

But we're looking at how you help men in a feminine healthcare system – and the healthcare system is very feminine, as you guys know. Almost all of the nurses, almost all of the social workers – 55 percent to 60 percent of medical-school classes are now filled with women. It's a very feminine system. Men feel out of place in it.

So, when Marc Heyison came to me from Men Against Breast Cancer, when I was at Johns Hopkins – I'm now on the West Coast at the Morris Cancer Center; this was about ten years ago – we said, "We need to develop something for men – really practical and focused for men."

Men Against Breast Cancer is a nonprofit organization. No one takes any salary from it. Nobody's making money on this. What we are doing, though, is pioneering the only program of its kind in the country. We run these groups, [where] we talk about women and men in a deeply respectful way. I'll tell you why that really matters in a second, because it's part of how we have all gotten here.

Men Against Breast Cancer joined with me when I was at Hopkins to develop programs for men. What did we do? We started to meet with men and ask, "What would be of practical use to you?" We came up with a problem-solving model that we've tested with a lot of men across the country. Now I spend a little bit

of my time traveling around, meeting with men and talking about how they can best help women who have cancer.

After this, you will be able to go back and use a problem-solving method with the woman in your life, whether it's a daughter or a mom or a wife or a lover – whatever the context is. We're very focused on how we best help men to support women, because we feel men have a major role. When Marc came to me at Johns Hopkins, he said, "I have this group, and I want to help men to support women. I know that's what your research is in and that's what you care about."

We're going to talk about facts today and talk about how helpful men are individually, and how helpful they are as a team. There are questionnaires on those chairs. What's that about? I'll ask you each to take one. If you don't want to hand it in at the end, that's fine. The information you give us is part of the CDC service grant, which means we are gathering information from you. I will take that from you; we will strip your name off of it and put a code on, so no one knows who you are. We then take that information and put it on some of the slides.

This program is about one thing: getting men to teach other men how to support women with cancer. After this, you will get one or two more questionnaires, and every time you fill one out, you will get a small gift. It will be a coffee card or a hat or a sweatshirt. But the reason you are doing this is because you guys are here. Think about all of the men who are not here who really should be here. You know men are terrified when it comes to anything we cannot control.

We're going to talk a little bit about this. The moment you disagree with me or have a question, don't raise your hand – I'll think you're looking for the men's room. Just start talking. I'm a person who needs to be stopped, so just start talking and

I will stop talking. We're going to go very quickly through why we're here, some of the research. I'm going to do some problem-solving, and we'll do that as a team.

The book you have on your lap we have used with thousands and thousands of patients and their caregivers. It is meant for you to go home and share it with your loved one. You will find this to be one of the most practical books you have ever used. I've used it with thousands of people in churches and in synagogues across this country – that's where I spend a lot of my time.

My name is Matthew Loscalzo. Please call me Matt. If you try my last name, you're in trouble, so call me Matt, and that will be fine.

Marc came to me and said, "Let's do this program," and I said, "This is what I've been doing, because I am very upset with the way that men are portrayed on television, in the news, and the jokes that people make about men." I have been interviewed by newspapers over the years, and they will come to me with such confusion in their thinking, because newspaper people tend to be very busy and very lazy. They don't dig very deeply.

I was once interviewed by *The Washington Post*, and they were doing this story on how men leave their wives when they get sick. I said, "Well, you're doing this story, but you don't have any facts. I am an expert, and I can put you in touch with many others," and, "Where is your data?" Of course, this man didn't have any.

I sort of thought, "Oh, *The Washington Post*. I would think they would be better." Then I get a call from the *Wall Street Journal* two years later, about the same story: "We're doing this story about how men leave their wives in droves." I said, "You should talk to the person at *The Washington Post*, because they do 88 lines of how men leave their wives, and then one note that says, 'but there are people who are experts in the field who feel that this is bogus!'"



Well, it is profoundly bogus, because no research shows that men leave their wives. A lot of research shows that they don't. As a matter of fact, there's research that shows that even when people get re-married, if the person they were married to the first time gets sick, the women and men frequently go back and help them. So, you have every reason to feel proud.

I was so upset about this whole thing – that it seems to be okay now on television to make fun of men. Men are all idiots. Men can't tie their own shoes. The problem is, guys, that we reinforce it. We have to own part of that. We go along with the joke.

I was at this meeting with 500 people, and 95 percent of them were, of course, women – because it's health care. I was at this table. I went to the men's room, which we middle-age guys do fairly frequently. I came back, and this young guy who was sitting next to me, his face was all red. I looked at him and said, "Are you okay?" because it looked like he was going to have a stroke. He said, "They're over there male-bashing." I said, "Why are you letting them do it?"

I went over there, and these were all Ph.D.s and nurses. I said, "This young man feels insulted by you guys making jokes about men." They looked at me, because they didn't know me, and I said, "What makes you think it's okay to make jokes about men?" They just started laughing. And I said, "You know, if we were talking about short, middle-aged, balding guys, you wouldn't make jokes about that. If we were talking about Jews or Christians or blacks or Asians, you would say, 'That's not right.' How come it's okay to make fun of men?" Like, do all these guys who write television shows hate their fathers? We sort of play into that.

That's why Marc and I bonded in terms of a program for men. It's important that you understand where we are coming from. When we talk about women, we have a deep respect for women and we have a deep respect for men also, because I think women get a bad rap on television and in the press, also.

I have done this work for about 20 years. I do have data. I do have numbers. If you have any questions or if you disagree with what I say, please stop me. As I said, I'm a man who needs to be stopped.

This is a program to help men to teach women problem-solving, because men are great problem-solvers. You guys know more than anyone

else that when you have cancer, it does turn your world upside down. The biggest problem is that men on some level think they're supposed to fix it or cure it – that it's within their power – or they feel this sense of shame that the woman got sick, and feel like they should have done something to keep her from being sick.

Whenever we are stressed, all of us try to reach beyond ourselves. It could be to friends. It could be to God. But when we are under stress, most people say, "How do I deal with this? How do I manage this?" You're going to hear about one new way of handling it. It's called COPE, and COPE means to be a man who decides to be healthy and wise – a decision that you make.

In everyone's life, when you're greatly stressed, when something challenges you, you have a moment to decide how you're going to respond. You have a moment to decide whether you're going to be a healthy, wise person, or if you're going to be an impulsive person who's out of control. It's a moment, but if you think about it, it's your moment, and you can have power there.

People always reach beyond themselves. COPE is in Chapter I of this book; you'll hear it so often in the next 70-ish minutes that you will know it. You don't have to memorize a darn thing with COPE, because we're going to do it here. COPE is an acronym: creativity, optimism, planning and expert information. Help me to help myself and my loved ones – this is about men helping women, okay? Let's be really clear about that.

Why teach problem-solving? Well, because men are great problem-solvers. We got out of the caves a long time ago. Fish can swim better than us, but we can build submarines; and birds can fly, but we can build planes. Men are really great problem-solvers. Think about what we do. Men, in particular, like to focus on one problem and solve it over time.

Women can multi-task because they have a different brain. This is not psychobabble. This is fact. Women and men have very different brains, and if you know that, all of a sudden how we interact with women gets a lot easier. Women feel things so intensely because women are very good at sensing the emotional environment. Men are less good at doing that. Women have much better hearing than men. Women have much better speech than men. If you just look at stutterers, there are six boys to every one girl. That's not social; that's biological. A lot of what we talk about is really biological – built into the brain.

When I speak as a man and when you speak as a man, about two parts of our brain light up when we hook you up to a functional MRI. When a woman speaks, six parts of her brain light up. You don't think that has an impact? Of course it has an impact. That's why women are so much better at multi-tasking. We really can't find our keys.

Problems are a normal part of life, and men are good at them. Stress makes it harder to solve problems, and that's biological. I'll talk about that later. Men can learn new problem-solving skills and teach them to the women they love. That's why you're here: to help women solve problems the way you do. That adds to what they do, and that makes them much more powerful.

It also enables you to feel less powerless, less frustrated and less shamed. Women feel a lot more guilt; men feel shame. With guilt, you feel bad about what you did, but with shame, you feel bad about yourself. Men often feel shame because they're irrational and unrealistic about what's expected of them.

We've asked thousands of women this question: "What are the two things that men do that are least helpful?" Who wants to guess what that is – two things that men do that are least helpful to women? This is not a test. This is supposed to be fun, so don't try to work too hard on this.

MAN:

Give advice?

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Give advice. That's right. Fix it. It drives women crazy when we try to fix it. That's No. 1. Does anyone want to guess what the second one is?

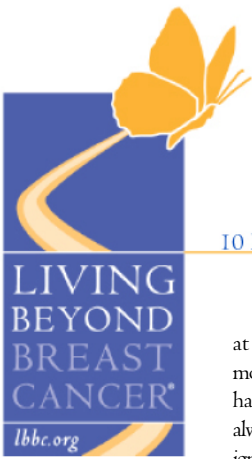
MAN:

Withdraw.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Withdraw. That drives women crazy. Nothing makes women more upset than to be disconnected from the people they love. If you want to drive your wife crazy, or your daughter crazy, or your mom crazy, pull into yourself and be the strong, quiet type, because that will really be the least helpful you could possibly be.

The second thing is very clear: "I need for the men in my life to at least admit that I might die. I know I'm going to live for a very long time, and I'm probably going to be cured from this, but I need for them to at least accept and tell me, look



at me and know that at three o'clock in the morning, that's on my mind. And I need him to have the courage to at least hear it rather than always being a cheerleader." Fixing it, cheerleading, ignoring terror and fear makes women feel isolated and alone.

The biggest complaint is: "They want to fix it and they're cheerleaders; no matter what happens, he says I'm going to be okay. I may not be okay. And by him telling me I'm going to be okay every second, it means I cannot tell him what my concerns and feelings are." We know that when we tell someone we don't want to upset them, we're talking about ourselves.

What's the big deal if we're sitting there and the woman tells us something we can't fix? Well, I don't know about you, but from my childhood, I was told, "Turn your feelings off. Just do it, man. Nobody cares about a man feeling. You're supposed to fix things and do it." That's an old message that doesn't work when people are under stress.

What I'm sharing with you is what we've gotten from hundreds of thousands of women talking with us. It's amazing – when you open that door, you will see a light go on, because women do not do well with feeling disconnected. Men disconnect to get their wits about themselves; it drives women crazy. If you tell them that's what you're doing, then they can cope with it.

Men can learn new problem-solving skills. People with good problem-solving skills have a better life. If you want to find people with the least-good problem-solving skills, on a Friday night, they're in a bar. The people with the really worst problem-solving skills are in jail, because they're impulsive, they don't think things through, and they react without thinking. That's why we say to people, "When you're stressed in life, you have a decision to make: 'Am I going to be a healthy, wise man, or am I going to be impulsive?'" That's a choice, and most people don't even know that's a choice. But think about it in your own life: When you're stuck in traffic or in an airport, you have a choice to make about how you're going to respond.

We teach this model, which we've done with thousands of people. There's a lot of research that shows that this works. Teaching people to make that decision to be a healthy, wise person is the first step, then using creativity, optimism, planning and expert information – I'll walk you through how that works.

This is a paper that we published a few months ago. It's not going to surprise any of you. When we asked women and men how they coped, and we looked at a couple of hundred patients, [we found that] males manage physical symptoms. . . . We found that men will take care of their wives, they'll bathe their wives, they'll drive them to their appointments, and they'll feel really good about it.

However, when men feel most stressed is when women talk about their emotions. Now, the trick is that talking about emotions is a lot easier once you know what the formula is. And the formula is what? Who wants to guess what women need most when they want to talk about their feelings?

MAN:

Listening.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Listen. That's it. They don't want you to fix it. If you fix it, it's telling them "I'm minimizing your problems." They want you to shut up, listen and give them time. This is not off the top of my bald head. This is from research. They just want you to listen – shut up and listen.

For us, when we talk, we talk to accomplish a goal. If we're going to be talking, we're going to say, "Why are we here? What are we doing? Let's get it done." I think most of us are like that. However, for women, there doesn't have to be an outcome. They can talk and repeat themselves, and they do that because they feel connected. For them, that's enough. For us, it isn't.

We've got to sometimes teach women that, "You know what, I know talking about this really helps you, darling. It doesn't help me, or it may help me, but it doesn't help me as much as it helps you. But I'm going to do it because I'm committed." You let them know that. You don't lie to them. You are honest. If it helps you, then you say that. If it doesn't, you tell them that, too, but "I know that it helps you." They want you just to listen, not to give answers – don't try to fix it – and give them time. This is what women tell us, and they want you to accept that they are fearful.

What stressed out men is having women tell them something they couldn't fix. I know you have all heard this: "I begged him to get help." This is how most women see us, because they do not understand. I've done many counseling sessions with a husband and a wife or a dad and a daughter, and the woman has beaten this guy into submission, and he's talking about his feelings, and he's crying and they're crying. She

looks at him, and she says, "Don't you feel better now, darling?" He says, "Yes."

I look at him and say, "Is that true?" He says, "No." And she says, "I know you feel better; I feel it so intensely," because women believe they have a right to mind-read. You need to challenge them on that. You need to say, "I know you feel it so intensely that you cannot believe that it's not what you're feeling. You're good at that. But there's also what I bring to the table: some more objectivity. It does help me to know that I'm helping you. But to tell you the truth, it doesn't help me to talk with you, so much as you want to talk."

Does this ring any bells for anyone in the room? Really? Does anyone have any experiences that they want to tell us about where this happened? It happens with my wife on the phone probably once every three weeks. "You go around the country talking. Now, just shut up and listen." My wife is not shy. I used to be six feet tall. She's just pounding me. (Laughter)

So, why did we create this workshop? This workshop is a male-friendly intervention to teach each other how to use problem-solving, how to take a typical problem that a woman has and how to help her with it. We're going to get to that shortly.

I travel all around the country in spurts to do these workshops. Sometimes we have ten men, and sometimes we have 50. I was in Chattanooga about two weeks ago and Salem, Ore., before that. We all do this as part of this grant. Nobody gets paid for it. We are committed to making sure that men are not left out of the healthcare system, because in the future, the healthcare system is going to be much, much, much more feminine than it is even now. It's not built for men.

MAN:

I want to make a comment on the last thing you spoke about. There have been times when my wife comes to me and . . . makes it seem like she's asking me to help her because she's feeling these different kinds of emotional traumas that I'm not really understanding fully. I do try to listen to her and, like you say, offer a solution to it. But it doesn't seem like it helps. It's kind of frustrating, because the way I feel is, "You're coming to me because you're asking me to help you, and I see that you're in distress," and I feel the need to help her. How do you deal with that frustration? Because I said, "Okay, well, I thought I did what was required or what I needed to do, and it didn't do anything at all." I walk away frustrated, wondering what to do.



MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

This is a wonderful challenge that men have, and it happens on two separate levels. I'll give you another situation. I was working with a woman who had a [gynecological] cancer. She has two young children. She said to her husband, "I'm going to be in the hospital for three days. You are to stay with those children. I don't want my sister taking care of them. I want you doing everything. Do not come here. Take care of those children." At the end of the third day, I go into the room, and she's crying. She's enraged: "How can he not come and visit me?" (Laughter)

One, women will give us conflicting messages and not know they're doing it. Two, when women ask for help, they don't want you to fix it. They want you to listen. When we feel frustrated and powerless, it's very upsetting for a man because it challenges our sense of manhood. Women feel much more comfortable with powerlessness. If there's nothing to do about it, they don't mind. They just want to talk about it to feel connected, because that makes them feel safe.

What the woman is asking is, "Connect with me, listen to me, respect me. You don't have to fix it." What you were hearing as a man is, "You're coming to me; you want me to do something." Men are very action- and outcome-focused. Women are much more process-focused. It's just the way it is. We are very different.

The next time she comes to you, you can say, "I want to listen and deeply understand what you're feeling," and just shut up and listen. But the second part of that is what you have to do: You must help women to realize when they're giving you conflicting messages, because they don't see it. You have to say, "You're asking me to be the strong, in-charge male and sensitive and caring at the same time. What do you want from me? You have to tell me when you want which."

MAN:

But she still won't see it. In my case, she says, "Don't go to the doctor with me," so I don't go to the doctor with her, and I go to work. I come home that night, and she says, "Why didn't you go to the doctor with me? Why didn't you meet me there?"

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Right. Women test men. Women test. The most important thing to women is the emotional connection. Women give men conflicting messages because they feel conflicted. Because, A, they want

to be supportive of you and thoughtful of your feelings, but, B, they're feeling scared and they're testing, and they don't even know it. That's why you have to feel comfortable. That's why we are meeting here, to say, "You know what? I was with these other guys. It's not just you and I."

Women and men achieve the same goals differently. They're equally smart – we know this from testing and research – but they get to the outcomes differently. So, "If you tell me don't come with you, what do you really mean? Because I'd like to come with you," or "I can't come with you," and just to try to be honest.

Women ask men to do diametrically opposed things pretty frequently, and quite often they don't know it. What you could say is, "When you tell me you don't want me to come, and then I don't come, I feel trapped. I feel like either way I'm going to disappoint you. It hurts me, and it makes me feel like I'm letting you down. I really need for you to tell me what you really want. And I know you may not know, but let's take 15 minutes – not three hours – just to talk about it. Would you emotionally feel better if I came with you?"

Challenge women. Men too often just say, "Oh, screw it," and walk away and don't deal with it. That's the failure, guys. That's what makes women feel abandoned and isolated and really scared. Women feel most from you abandonment. That's why this whole thing of "I told him to stay home with the kids; how dare he stay home with the kids; I'm in the hospital" is not an uncommon experience. But if we talk about it, then it works.

That's also why women have much wider social networks than men. Our data shows that if you ask women, "Who is your best friend?" about 50 percent of the time, they'll say, "My husband," because they have all these girlfriends and male friends all over the place. They have bigger social networks. If you ask a man who is his best friend, who will he say 90 percent of the time?

MAN:

His wife.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Absolutely: His wife. Our social networks are much smaller; we tend to focus much more on family and right within there.

Why do we even train men to teach women how to cope with some of these problems? The most obvious reason is because that's who they count on. But also, men are great problem-solvers, and we are loyal and protective, and people can

count on us. The data show that women can count on men. Men have to be there.

If you're going to be there, you have a choice. I could be there and resent it, or I could be there and be effective and helpful and be a healthy and wise person. It's a decision you make. Every time a woman says something to you that's provocative, you have a decision point: I could be someone I'm proud of, or I could just respond; I could reflect and think, or I could react without thinking.

MAN:

I never thought about being trained as a caregiver. I was thrust into it in three different situations. The first one was when she had a blood clot and she almost died. We weren't married at that time; we were dating. I had to call her parents and say, "You've got to come down," but she didn't think they would come. I had to take control, and legally I didn't have any rights. The second time was when she almost died in a hospital up in Syracuse. She had an anticoagulant condition there, and she almost died in my arms. We had an intern come in eating an apple, and I told him to get out of the room.

The last time was when she had breast cancer, when she was first diagnosed with it. She was still wondering whether she was going to survive this anticoagulant condition, and on top of it gets breast cancer. First she kept saying, "Well, if I die, here's what I want you to do." I said – and this is going to sound kind of cold – "Get to living. Go on about it."

I think it took her off guard. I said, "Now, we're going to go through this minute by minute, day by day, but I don't want to hear this about planning the funeral, none of that," and then I didn't say anything else. I said, "Tomorrow we're going to see the doctor. Next week, we've got to see the doctor." To this day, she tells her friends about it, and they laugh. But I had to get her out of that thinking.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

I am so glad you told that story. That's an important story. Last week, I was speaking with a group like this, and two of the guys there who had taken care of their moms said, "The surgeon sent us home and said, 'Keep her cheery.'" This was an 85-year-old who was dying, both of them – they both had elderly parents who were dying. They said, do you know what it was like to be sent home and be told by the surgeon to keep them cheery when they were in pain and they were scared?



What you just said is a beautiful story of what men bring to the table. What men bring to the table is, "Stay focused, Darling. We have accomplishments that we have to make." What women bring to the table is what makes us human – our emotional and spiritual connections to each other. We need both. Women need what we bring, and we need what women bring. That's why we work so well as a team.

Although in the movies there's a sex war and there's gender war, that's ridiculous stuff. Women and men – nobody's perfectly meshed, but we have accomplished a lot over thousands of years, and what you just said is a big part of what women need from men. But they need more than that.

I don't know if you were here when I said this: The No. I think that women tell us when they get sick is, "I need the man to at least acknowledge that I might die. Once we get that out there, we can have a conversation, because I cannot be trapped with only being able to think this and not being able to share. Because that's overwhelming, and that makes me really, really scared."

The other part they complain about is that men always want to talk about good news, and that shuts them down. That makes them feel scared because it feels like you're protecting them. Nothing makes another human being feel more fearful than when you're protecting them from something that you have no control over, because they know you don't.

They need that push forward. They also need something else, they are saying, and that's what the research clearly shows: They need for us to be emotionally connected to them. Most of that is easy: It's listening, just keeping your mouth shut and listening. You don't have to fix it. If you try to fix it, you will alienate them and make them feel scared.

This is a totally nonscientific slide. We got it from men like you. Women and men are different, not only physically but psychologically, and in a whole host of ways.

Men are more likely the ones to cut the grass. Men tend to want to avoid weddings and baby showers, especially if it's someone in the office. We will clean the gutters. We will take out the trash. Yes, we tend to forget to put down the toilet seat; that's probably true of us. Women claim that we have poor aim even when we forget to put down the toilet seat. Men tend to drive themselves. Women tend to like much hotter showers, and biologically, women can take much hotter showers than men can.

Men have this thing about openly sharing their bodily sounds; women will do it much less often. Men are sort of proud of it; women leave the room. Men tend to care less about how they dress. If you walk around this room, you can see that we guys tend to dress down a little. Men love gadgets much more than women do. Men much less frequently have exact change. Now, some of you will say, "That doesn't fit me," and, of course, you will be right, because nobody fits any stereotype.

Men tend to have sexual interest very early. When you tell a woman, "When I was in the second or third grade, I wanted to undress my teacher," they look at you in shock, because that doesn't happen for them until the fifth or sixth grade. They say, "You must be a pervert." Well, if you look at the data, boys have sexual interest very, very early, and girls have it later. If you have kids, you will know that. Now, I'm talking about sexual interest, not an interest in having friends and pals, because women are much more social.

Men do complain about the lights being left on. Men tend to like long-distance telephone conversations less. Men do tend to forget special events. It is amazing how many guys will forget their anniversary, and how many times I've said, "I'm going to remember it this time." Women just have better brains for those social things. They have a better place for it in their brains. Men tend to like bed-and-breakfasts much less often, maybe because the walls are so thin that they can't make noise. Men do tend to read the sports page more often at first.

Men avoid asking for directions. The reason why is really easy: Men avoid asking for directions because we're never lost. We're explorers. If you ask a woman how to get to a place, she will use landmarks. This is research. Turn left at the Burger King; turn right at the church. Men will say, "Well, it's northeast of here, and I'll go this way." That's who we are, if you think about us in the jungle, which was only 3,000 to 4,000 years ago – and for many of us last week. We still live in a jungle. If you look at how people drive, we live in the jungle. We don't avoid asking for directions. We just don't feel lost.

Women say we feel like we're always right. Men definitely eat much more red meat than women do. A man will initially ignore sounds in the night until the woman kicks him out of bed. After we make love, we sleep while the woman vacuums.

Does any of this ring bells for anyone?

MAN:

Some of it.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Some of it? ... The bottom line is that people like you give me this information, and I just throw it up there and say it's not scientific, but some of this is, actually. We are different human beings.

When women see this, they say that women do not frequently [not] flush the toilet when they pee at night. Then, when you do this with a group of women, they nod their heads and they all giggle. You say, "Well, why don't you do that?" "Oh, it's insensitive. I'll wake up everyone in the house." It's this; it's that. Then I say, "Well, you may be right, but there's an alternative to that."

The alternative is that women do have much more sensitive hearing than men. It's biological; it's not psychological. The other thing is that probably when we were in the jungle, a guy could pee on the side of a tree and get a 360-degree view and see if there's a tiger coming. Women are smaller than men. Women feel much more physically at risk than men. They had to squat, and because they had to squat, they were more vulnerable. They learned early on that if they made a lot of noise peeing, a tiger would eat them.

When we say, "Think about your past," you guys think, "Oh, when I was 12 years old." Well, this planet, no matter where you come from, is about 4 billion years old. Even if you think we were only here 10,000 years ago – and if you think that, that's fine – but even if you go back 10,000 years, think about where we were 1,000 years ago or 2,000 years ago. Three hundred years ago, most men died by the age of 40. We didn't live very long. So it's important that we get beyond the last 100 years to say, "Why do we do some of the things that we do?"

Women and men are perfectly meshed. Men are very good at throwing the spear. Men are very long and pointed. Women are round. If you think about how women talk, they never get to the point. They go like this, "Zoom, zoom, zoom," and men say, "Let's go." We tend to be different, and that's a good thing.

Women react to stress – and this is essential for you to learn today, because this will help you. ... We are different biologically. Women react to stress by reaching out, circling the wagons. Men react to stress by going inside of themselves and figuring it out first, and then retrospectively talking about it. That drives women crazy.



You go to a party. The woman has had breast cancer. By the end of the night, everyone at that party knows that she's had breast cancer. The guy has prostate cancer; nobody will know, because men generally don't share vulnerabilities. Women feel safer by sharing vulnerabilities and imperfections. Men feel much more vulnerable. That's why you will see couples in parties arguing, and he'll say, "Why are you telling everyone? What's wrong with you? Don't tell them I have prostate cancer." This is typical. You know this story?

MAN:

I do a lot of advocacy work for the Lance Armstrong Foundation, and I hand out survivors' notebooks and things. I work for local government, so I'll get a lot of phone calls and e-mails, introducing people in church, and they'll say, "Hey, you need to come see my husband. He's just been diagnosed." I'll give the guy a call or I'll see him, and he'll say, "How in the hell did you find that out? Who told you?" (Laughter) Then they're mad at their wives when I show up at their house with the notebook.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Women love details. They have a different brain; they love the details. That's why they can find keys and know where the kids are. They're great with multi-tasking. Men cannot multi-task as well. It's biological. We have different brains. Men have bigger brains, but in the portion of the brain that connects the two hemispheres, women's are much denser. They are much better at moving information and at multi-tasking. It's important that you know this because it's not like you can just be different. This is important, that women tend to circle the wagons.

MAN:

That's interesting. My wife has had a brain metastasis and had surgery to remove it. As a result, she has a short-term memory situation, and she doesn't deal with multi-tasking. But she's still better at it than I am. She can still remember things better than me. I'm thinking, "Get over it. You might be 50 percent less, but you're still 100 percent better than me." But it drives her crazy, and maybe that's because she's used to a different norm.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Yeah. For women, their job in their minds is to maintain safety and emotional equilibrium in the environment. They do this by dealing with all of these multiple tasks. For guys, we see ourselves as more providing, hunting and gathering. That's why women can put something down, and we can look for it for 40 minutes, and they'll just say, "Oh, God. It's right in that drawer." And you say, "No, it's not there." You open it, and of course the damn thing is right there. You know? It's a plot. They have a different brain, so for her, it's a bigger loss. Yeah, you can see why it would be.

This whole thing is about problems and problem-solving; so what is a problem? We define a problem very specifically. You're driving your filthy, dirty, gross car. It's dirty outside. You're driving it and driving it. That's an issue: "Gee whiz, I'd like to have a cleaner car." You break your axle – that's a problem. A problem is something you have to deal with or manage, or your life just isn't working.

If you and your wife, you and your daughter, you and your mom are really isolated, that's going to impact your life. That's a problem, and that's something you can do something about. For us, a problem is something that you care about, something that you're motivated to change, something that you could have some influence over.

Guys, women do not expect you to cure their cancer. They do not expect you to find a cure. They do not expect you to fix them. They do not expect you to save their lives. They expect you to be there and to make them feel safe. If you just do some of the things that we've already talked about, listen, let them express their emotions – and what they like most is when you tell them your vulnerabilities. For us, it's not pleasant, but women love it when you tell them what bothers you. It makes them feel deeply connected to you, whether it's your mother or your daughter. Tell women your problems, and they will feel calmer.

MAN:

I'm seeing that: When my wife was depressed off and on with the treatments, of course I would never break down, but if I ever did even for an instant, she would, like, come out of her thing and be all happy.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Yes!

MAN:

"What can I do for you?" I started figuring that's a ploy I could use to get her out of her depression – to show her that I needed some help or something, and she'd jump right on.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

What you just said has been happening for thousands and thousands of years. That's what women are good at. They want to be there to support you in a way that they can. We need to teach women how we can support them in a way that we can. We need to teach women, "I can't be one of your girlfriends. You're going to get something different from them. But I can be the man in your life who you can count on."

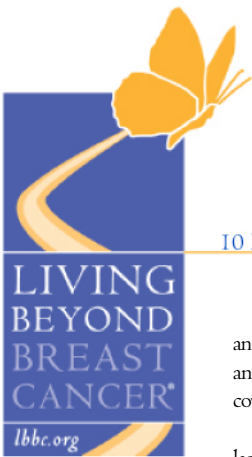
Women need to feel needed. When we give them a doctor's note from life, they get more depressed, isolated and lonely. It doesn't help when we "protect" them, because we're men here – you're not protecting anybody; you're protecting yourself.

If you're a guy who cries often, you know what? It's not psychological; it's not manly. It's totally biochemical. You just have different chemicals. Some guys will cry at the drop of a hat; some won't. The ones who won't aren't any stronger than the ones who do. It's all hormonal.

If you're the guy who never cries and you think that you're a man's man, you just happen to be born with different hormones. It's biological. If you want to say to me, "Well, the courageous guy is the guy who sits in the corner and watches television and has a beer, rather than the guy who sits there and has a good cry with the person who he says is the center of his life," who is really the courageous person, when you know that having a good cry or expressing your feelings to your wife makes her feel better? You tell me who is the more courageous person and who is the more unselfish person.

Women don't have to see you cry – but the world's not going to end if you do. It does make them feel better, because it makes them feel that you at least accept that they're struggling, and all women want to know is that you're in there with them. They don't need for you to fix it.

With us, a problem is something you can have some influence over. Too often, men pick the wrong problem – the problems are too big. A problem has to be clearly defined. That's what the COPE model is all about. The COPE model is that the decision as a man is to be a healthy, wise person



and to cope, using creativity, optimism, planning and expert information. Chapter I of the book covers it, and I'm going to talk about it now.

People who are better at solving problems are less distressed than stressed, and they cope with life better. If you think about it, it makes sense. If you break an axle on the road and you have children in the car, going to go have a beer is probably not a great way to deal with it. Someone who is going to say, "How do I protect my family?" – I think I'd rather be with that second person who is going to say, "This is a terrible thing that is happening, so let's work as a team."

That's what this is all about. This whole program, COPE – creativity, optimism, planning, expert information – is to help you to teach your wife how to solve problems in a different way, and to help her to teach you how to help her better. We challenge women, because we respect them, and we say, "You have an obligation to understand who I am as a man, and I have an obligation to understand you as a woman. We respect each other, and we're going to teach each other how to work as a team." There's no other way of doing that.

So, we teach COPE creativity, optimism, planning and expert information. We have research that shows that this model helps people to cope with cancer, anxiety, depression, eating problems and impulsivity. Research, data – we got it. We know this works, and it especially works when you sit down with the woman in your life and say, "Look what I learned. You can get upset."

We had a man who had prostate cancer. His wife had road rage, and it was stressing him out every time they came in for the chemo. She saw a counselor to express her rage and talk about it, on and on and on, and she kept having road rage. She was ashamed of it, and he was really upset because he hated being in the car with her. In California, you have reason to have road rage like you do here in DC, because DC and California are very well matched in terms of awfulness when you get into your cars.

She started to use COPE, so she used creativity, optimism, planning and expert information. With her husband, she sat there – and I'll show you how we do this – and she got expert information about her problem, what happens when this happens. She just sees red. She gets enraged. She thinks people are insulting her and disrespecting her. The husband is there, like, "Darling, give it a break. You don't even know these people," but that never helped. They were married for, like, 40 years, and that never helped.

We began to brainstorm using creativity: ways that she could express her anger and not feel so ashamed later. Then, from brainstorming, we made this list. When we work on COPE, you can't do anything unless you're brutally honest – no theater. Be honest; be blunt. "You've made a list of ten things you can do. I need for you to pick one or two of them that you're going to do in the next 48 hours. Maybe in the next 72 hours, but not more than that, because then you won't do it, right?"

Then she began to think about what she was teaching her children about how to respond as a person and what she looked like; she would get a picture of herself, when she was screaming and cursing, outside of this window. This is a lovely lady who just lost it in the car. About two weeks later, she ran up to me, literally behind me, and said, "I know you think I'm just going to be nice, but I'm a different person. I no longer put my head out the window and curse at people. I no longer do this, because what I do is I see myself with my head out the window and how ridiculous I look. I also look over and see that my husband really needs me not to be out of control."

It goes back to women needing to feel that they're doing something for someone else, or else they're feeling selfish – and women don't like to feel selfish. Men need to feel that they're doing something for someone else. It brings out something better in us when we go beyond who we are as people and realize that we have an impact on other people.

The other thing is, for those of you who have grandchildren and children, where else are they going to learn how to cope with something as difficult as cancer if you don't teach it to them? You're teaching them how to cope with this.

What does it look like? Well, creativity for us is very simple: It's brainstorming, generating as many options or ideas as you can. I'll show you one on depression, because depression is much more common in women than in men, especially after women get treatment – some of the treatments cause biological changes.

Optimism is simply persevering. This is what men do really well: You persevere; you keep trying. Problem-solving is like driving your car; you're constantly making adjustments: a bit more gas, a bit more brake, a bit to the left, a bit to the right. People who problem-solve are like that, and, in an optimistic way, do best.

Then, developing a plan: The plan comes from the options that we develop from brainstorming.

I'll show you some slides where we did that, and then we'll do a problem. Then, expert information: Think about in your lives, think about in our leaders – people who go on bad information do really stupid things. That's all of us, not any one person I'm talking about.

If you have bad data when you start, it's a disaster. If you think that what your wife wants from you or your daughter wants from you or your mother wants from you is to fix it, you're going to go down the wrong road, you're going to feel frustrated, and they're going to say, "Why even bother? He just doesn't get it."

You need to have expert information and data first to understand what's really going on. That's why we say you must be able to talk about the problem in simple language. "My wife has pain." "She is depressed." "I don't know how to talk to our children." "I, myself, am depressed." "I don't know how to approach her when I would like to have sex with her now." "I don't know how to cope with hot flashes." These are things that men all around the country tell me are the biggies. "I don't know how to deal with her menopause." These are very typical questions that men have. You need expert information.

With sex, it's very common that women will say, "He never touches me anymore." He says, "How can I think about touching you? I'm being a selfish pig." She feels that he doesn't love her and maybe has someone on the side now, and he says, "Oh, my God, how can you think like that?" But sometimes that thought did go through your mind. It does; it's a thought. Then this cycle happens because the information is faulty. You have to have good information.

In most circumstances, it's right there. With women, you just have to ask. You have to say, "You know, we have not had sex in six months. I do not want you to think that I do not want to have sex with you. It's really frustrating. And I want you to know that when you feel ready, I am ready."

Men are always floored by the things women tell them. They will say things like, "Well, I wish you would have told me this five-and-a-half months ago, because we could have done something. We could have had other kinds of sex. Or we could have talked about it. Because you've got to know that I feel like I can." Or, "I'm so tired, I don't think I can. I just can't do it now. I'm really sorry, and I feel so guilty. I'm so glad that you brought it up." And, all of a sudden, the door is open.



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MAN:

It's interesting that you say that, because I had that conversation, the frustration and all. What I get back is, "I don't feel pretty. I don't feel good about myself. So I have to get in the mood." I don't know what to say about that. I can't make her feel better. I try to enforce that she's beautiful and is going to be ...

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

This is what we're going to do. We're going to use that problem and use COPE, so people can see how it works. We're going to use all of these people in the room. This is going to be fun. We're going to be able to help. That's such a common problem: "I don't feel attractive. I don't feel sexy." Then, we pull back and they feel worse.

I'm going to go through three or four more slides, and then we, as a team, are going to cope with this problem. The problem is: How do you keep romance in the relationship? We're going to use this model and work with that problem, because that is such a big one.

Let me tell you how the actual model works. It's creativity, optimism, planning and expert information. Wouldn't it be nice if we could start with the "C"? Life is much more complex than that. You have to get expert information first. Then, you brainstorm with an optimistic mode. The options we come up with through brainstorming – we cross off the ones we don't want and keep the ones we do want. We're going to come up with a bunch, because this group is a bunch of problem-solvers.

"Can we spare a few seconds to minimize my problems?" Have any of you ever experienced this? This is what I always get. Then I get, "Well, we never talk about it." Well, you've talked about it 50 times, but women feel like you have never talked about. You know what the right thing is, guys. You sit there and say, "I feel that we have talked about this, but I see you need to talk about it again. I love you, so let's talk about it. Let me tell you what I think and feel about it, without fixing it."

Coping with depression – this is an example, and then we're going to go to [the romance] problem. Women get depressed much, much more than men do – like three times more. Men commit suicide four to five times more, because men are action people, unfortunately. Men die five to seven years younger than women do, so if you live to be 80, you're going to have a lot of dates; you'll have no shortage of women.

Women suffer from depression more because they're emotionally tuned in more; their brains are different. It's a common problem. There's a chapter in that book you have, *The Home Care Guide*, that talks about this. What you first do is define the problem in simple language. "How can I help her with her depression?" If it was yours, you could do the same thing; you would use the same process.

The first thing is expert information. What do you need to know about depression? Is this the first time she's had it? Has she been a happy person in the past, or has she had depression her whole life? These things matter. It involves identifying what you can do to help, using creativity, thinking about possible problems or things that would get in the way of you solving this problem, and then getting the facts. Review what can be done. Decide on the best strategy.

Now, if we started with creativity and brainstorming, brainstorming is the process by which we come up with as many ideas as we can beyond our own thinking. Just make a list. If you judge them, it gets in the way. You get to judge later, but not now. When we brainstorm, it's just generating as many creative ideas to help her with her depression as you can. We did that with a group last year, and I wrote all the stuff down.

This is one that we did with a group like you. This one happened to be in a church in Memphis, and we said, "Tell us how to help her with her depression." This is their list, and this is about two-thirds of the list, not the whole list: go to the doctor; pastoral counseling; see a social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist; mini-vacation; meditation; list of things that make her sad; visit from favorite relative; take her shopping, shopping therapy; allow for some personal time; ask her about it; favorite spot to hang out; visit grandchildren; join support group; night out with friends; rent some funny movies; express love; hire babysitter for weekend; ask about symptoms.

This is what it looks like. It's not that complex. When you do this with women, they love it, because you know women like to do things with men. They like to share things, even if it's to ask you to take out the trash, that's their way of feeling that you're doing something for them, that you're connected with them. You could work 18 hours, seven days, and if you come in and your wife asks you to do something, that's her way of saying, "Show me that you care," rather than her sort of putting you down. That's a very common thing.

This is typical brainstorming. Now, no one would do all of those things. That's why this only works if you're honest with yourself and with the person with whom you are working. Some of these make perfect sense, but if they say, "I know I should do it, but I'm just not going to," we say to them, "Then cross it off." Be honest, because if you ain't honest, you can't do anything.

This is one that this actual couple later came up with: visit the grandchildren; allow some personal time; pastoral counseling; and expressing love. This woman was not suicidal. If a person is suicidal, you do not go to your pastor, you do not go to your nurse – you go to your doctor or some mental health person, because people who are suicidal, you have to take that seriously. Creativity is weaved throughout the entire process.

I'm going to go now [back to that] common problem: How do you keep romance in the relationship? That's the problem clearly stated. There's no ambiguity in there. It's not, like, how to be happy. The more specific a problem is, the more likely you are to solve it.

We're going to go around the room. If you get stuck, I am here to help you. We'd like you to come up with a thought or an idea. It doesn't have to be realistic. Something you could do to keep romance in the relationship.

MAN:

When we came out of the surgery reconstruction, she had the same issue – self-image and whatnot. What we tried to do is think of where we could go that she was not known for that – like the mall.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

The mall, good.

MAN:

Where we could protect her. She wore clothing that was not, you know, tight-fitting or anything. When people didn't look at her, point at her and laugh at her, she realized she wasn't a freak.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

There are two things that you did there. We're going to go around more than once, so you don't want to give them all up. The two that gave us was to change the environment, and to protect her with clothing so she doesn't feel so conspicuous. Beautiful.



MAN:

From my experience, it was being able to go away somewhere after she had recovered from surgery, somewhere where we could be alone together.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Great. Be thinking about your next one, because we're going to come back to you. Go ahead.

MAN:

We started doing things that she enjoyed before. She likes to hike, so we went to the park.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Excellent. Do things that were once highly enjoyable or very pleasurable. Beautiful. If you get stuck, I'm here to help you.

MAN:

So, for brainstorming ...

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Okay, how do we keep romance in the relationship? We're just coming up with as many creative ideas as possible. They don't have to be rational.

MAN:

Set some time aside.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Set some time aside. Perfect.

MAN:

Our lives get so busy right now.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Set time aside. That's a major one, even when cancer isn't in the picture. Great. Sir?

MAN:

She likes to play. When we have alone time away from the kids, we play games.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Wonderful. The whole thing about playing games is that you're changing the context.

MAN:

Like I was telling you yesterday, buy flowers.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Buy flowers, absolutely. Women love small gifts rather than really big ones – many small gifts.

MAN:

Take a weeklong trip.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Take a weeklong trip, absolutely.

MAN:

I think my wife likes me to take care of the kids and let her have time alone. She likes time alone.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Time alone.

MAN:

Proactive and spontaneous reinforcement of her looks, beauty, when she's not expecting it, when it's not solicited.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Yes. That's one of the major things that women say, by the way: "When he just comes up behind me and kisses me on the neck and tells me I am beautiful, even though I know I have all these physical changes and I may not even look normal like I used to look, that makes me feel loved." That's very powerful.

MAN:

She's vulnerable about these new changes to her body. Taking time to explore those with her, kissing in those areas that she may feel are not beautiful portions of her body that may have previously been your favorite areas, and really focusing on those and letting her know that they're just as beautiful, if not more beautiful now, because they've kind of – whatever has transpired, the surgery has saved her life.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Women say that to us all of the time. Women like details, and if there's a vulnerability, they like to talk about it and explore it and go there, and they take their cues from men. If men act really queasy, then they'll start to hide. That's beautiful.

MAN:

Another thing is, during the chemotherapy, when they lose their hair and all this stuff, you treat them like before they even found out that they had cancer. You show them the love, the little petting and all of the little things that make them feel that you love them for who they are before and after the cancer.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

That's exactly what women tell us. This is exactly what they're saying. And you? You started this.

MAN:

Come on.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Come on. (Laughter)

MAN:

What I do is, she likes to go to the movies, so I take her out to the movies and have somebody watch the kids.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Great. Away from the kids, watching the movie – there's something about getting a woman where she doesn't feel like she has to be on top of things, where she can relax a little bit.

MAN:

Set the mood.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Set the mood – what does that mean? A little bit more specificity, and I can't say that word twice, so you have to get it right the first time.

MAN:

For my wife, she likes a hot bath, and so ...

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Hot bath. Did you hear that?

MAN:

Hot bubble bath, candles.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Right, women like that. Great.

MAN:

Maybe, related to what's been said, if she feels like she's not pretty anymore – "How could you think I'm attractive?" – practice, just show her, and she'll get over it. She'll realize that you must really think I'm attractive, because here we are.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Absolutely. Wonderful.

MAN:

I think having sex and spending even more time than before on the foreplay aspect, the cuddling and all this stuff that led up to it. Whereas before, you might get away with the drive-by, now it's much more important that you do up-front stuff.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

That's beautifully said. Especially after a period of not having sex, it's really important that you start slow. Go slow, and do all the circular things that women like, and sort of build up to it. That's really very nice, because vaginal drying is a big problem. If men are stressed, you're not going to get as hard as you once did, and if she's dry and if you're not very hard, it gets harder – not you, but "it." That's very nice.



MAN:

I was going to say the same thing. The other thing I've tried to do that my wife has requested is more intimacy that doesn't necessarily involve sex.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Very nice. Like what?

MAN:

Like cuddling in bed. When I go to sleep, I like to turn over and go to sleep. I normally don't sleep very well when she wants to lie on me and [have me] hold her. But I've tried to do a lot more of that because ...

MAN:

As long as she's not having a hot flash. (Laughter)

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Yes, that's right.

MAN:

That's what happens. It doesn't take too long until the hot flash kicks in, and she's back on her side of the bed.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Right. The hot flashes make it harder.

MAN:

But I've done my part.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Cuddling, yeah.

MAN:

With us, it's more intimacy, too. And it's simple things, like fondue and food.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Feeding. If you remember the first or second date you had with the woman in your life, you cannot get anywhere unless you feed them first. This has been going on, guys, for hundreds of thousands of years. Men feed women. If the men didn't bring in food, the men didn't get access. Some things don't change. There's something special and investing and resourceful about a man nurturing a woman, giving her food, especially because that's who takes care of children. Food is very powerful. Go ahead.

MAN:

We get a little bit closer and so on, too. I express my fears, too. I have fears of her getting pregnant. Not only would it stop her treatment, but also, did the fact that we were coming out of a pregnancy feed the cancer all the more? All around, I have a lot of concerns about her being pregnant, too, so I have inhibitions as well. What certainly has helped us in getting closer together is just talking through that rather than giving up on that talk.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

You're the first one who has said this about this problem. The problem is how to keep romance in the relationship. What makes women feel most loved and romantic is talk. We are not necessarily into that same mode. But thank you for saying that. That's really crystal clear: Talk. There's something about the human interaction of using verbal speech that makes women feel better.

MAN:

My wife had reconstructive surgery, and at the same time she had a mastectomy, and since then – that was a fairly erogenous zone for both of us, and now that's different. There's no sensation really there, so we're exploring different areas that give her that same feeling.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

What you just said is so powerful because that's something women do with their friends. Women like details. They experiment. They do things. What you're doing with her probably makes her feel very safe, and she knows that that's not all she is – that damaged part. There's this whole other part of her body and of her world, and that's very powerful that you are doing that.

MAN:

Before my wife was diagnosed, and we didn't have kids, we were getting to having kids talk. Once you do have kids, there's a lot of time and energy focused on children over anything else. We kind of had the same problems – you know, there was focus on the kids, and the time and energy is just not there. You have to be done; you have time for yourself; and oh my God, phew, finally – date nights.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Date nights, right.

MAN:

Take her on a date night, and not just the standard dinner and a movie. Get creative and go someplace that's just – if you want to do a dinner and a movie, maybe do dinner some place other than a restaurant downtown. I live in California, and I found a place in Long Beach where you can go to dinner, but there's a canal, there's a little place called Belmont Shores. They have it in Venice, actually. They have a boat; they have a little paddler on a boat. The guy is Italian, and they'll sing whatever through the canals, like they're in Venice. You can bring your own drinks. They give you bread and cheese and whatever else.

That was something completely different. I didn't tell her where we were going, but it was something completely different that we did that my wife was like, "Wow, this is really cool. Where did you find this?" I don't remember exactly where I found it, but it's one of those different things. You've got to think outside the dinner-and-a-movie box and think of what else is out there that I can do to make the night something different.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Not only was that event totally different for her, to give her a break from the real world that she has to cope with, but she knows how much energy you put into that. For women, that really makes a difference. It doesn't have to turn out okay. They just have to know that you're in there. Very nice.

MAN:

When I buy my gifts, it's not like I got a card, just sign my name to it, "I love you" or whatever. It's the thought that I put into giving the gift or creating the gift or whatever, so for her, it's this whole ...

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

It's an experience.

MAN:

... which is really cool. She knows I put thought into it, and I thought this out and planned it out. That's what really kind of helped.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

That's very nice. Thank you. Next – if you're stuck, I'm here to help you.

MAN:

I'm stuck.



MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Good. We need to know – give us an option to keep the romance in the relationship.

MAN:

In my situation, my wife has always been sexy and attractive, but after she had the second breast cancer surgery, I pretty much didn't try to pressure her. I just let her, and I said, "Let's go. Let's get it on." It's never been a problem. But I will say this: When you see the scar on her breast, don't act like it's not there. And I say that because ...

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Acknowledge the damage that was done to her.

MAN:

Absolutely.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

So she can mourn it, and you can share that space with her. Absolutely. Thank you.

MAN:

You can't act like it's not there.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

You have said, like, three different things that all go into our list. If we had this list here, it is getting longer. Thank you.

MAN:

My wife had breast cancer nine years ago, had a lump removed, and then five years later, it metastasized to her bones. She's had a hysterectomy and different radiations, and she has the dryness. I mean, she takes Femara, and it takes all of the estrogen out of your body. I think it's been a long period of time for her. She gained a lot of weight, which makes her feel like she's not pretty anymore.

Just convincing her that "I love you no matter how you look" has been probably the hardest part of it – letting sex go for a while. It's not going to kill us. We've done it all our life. But just convincing her that I'm still here, I'm not going anywhere – I think her biggest problem was that she thought surely I was leaving if she gained all this weight and the sex. I did the little things that convinced her I'm still here: Don't worry; I'm still here.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Great. That will keep the romance in.

MAN:

We also had that stuff we used for the vaginal dryness, because that was a problem, too.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Right. Astroglide.

MAN:

Don't be stealing people's answers, now. (Laughter)

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

You see? That's why I tried to not go backward, because this guy's ready up here. (Laughter)

MAN:

Well, we've talked a lot about breaking routines in general, which also applies to breaking sexual routines, pushing boundaries, still letting her know that you're interested in exploring.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Absolutely, that's great. Give permission for her to know that you are open to exploring new ways to experience each other sexually and romantically and intimately.

MAN:

Revisit that courting that you did originally – when you were dating, and us, as guys, we're trying so hard to convince them that we're the man of their dreams, and we can provide them with all of these things. Revisiting all of those things that you did originally that may have gotten pushed aside now that you have her and life has taken over: cards, flowers, dates and all those other things that you may have done in the beginning. Fall in love all over again.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

That's great. That's great.

MAN:

The cards work for my wife.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Cards work. Cards work.

MAN:

Flowers don't work. Ben and Jerry's works. (Laughter)

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

My kind of lady.

MAN:

She gets all down because she's had the double mastectomy; she's got scars. In September, she was going to do the free TRAM flap. They found more cancer in her, so they had to close her up, so she's got a big smiley face right here – a scar. Whenever she feels down, I just take her to Disneyland and stay at the hotel, and it makes her feel like a princess again.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Good for you. ... So, we went around the room twice with this. We have about eight or nine minutes left, so I want to make sure that I keep to our contract. I'm not rushing off, but we have a deal. I want to make sure you have a sense of what we just did here. We defined the problem, we brainstormed, and we used creativity to come up with as many options as we could.

Usually, with a group like this, we would go around four or five times. The fourth time is when people really start to come up with things that they never thought of, but you've come up with so many great things. We would then make that list. If you were there with your wife sitting there, or with whomever you're there with, you would have written all these down.

Then you say, "Now, let's be brutally honest and be harshly judgmental. Knowing who we are as people, what are we likely to do with the next two to three days to try to keep the romance in the relationship?" Then you cross off everything, chip away at the statue and see what is left, and then pick something you know you can do.

Once you know you can do it, cut it in half, because especially with a woman who's tired and fatigued and has been through stress as you have been, you want to make the first attempt at COPE – creativity, optimism, planning and expert information – successful. It's really much, much better to start off very slow and then to go faster later. If you use COPE ten times, it will become a habit. You'll be stuck in traffic, you'll be at the airport, you'll be dealing with difficult people, and you'll make a decision to be a healthy, wise man.

Once you make that decision to be a healthy, wise man, now you have a systematic approach to solving problems called COPE – using creativity, optimism, planning and expert information.

MAN:

Another thing: We all need to make our wives feel better, and we're at this conference.

MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Yes. This is a biggie.

MAN:

My wife really appreciates the fact that we went, and I'm sure all of yours feel the same way.



MATTHEW J. LOSCALZO, MSW:

Let me share with you what women say they want from men, and then we can talk about a couple of more questions, and then I'll end. This is what women tell us they really want: unconditional love. They want time. They want a presence, and sharing and tolerating uncontrollable situations. They don't want you to fix it. They want you to acknowledge the fact that they might die. So that they don't have to live with that fear on their own, they need to share it with you. They need ongoing emotional support. They want to be able to repeat their concerns many times. They want you to tell them about your internal emotional struggles. They want very little advice.

What women say is, "I want to share with a man. I don't want him to take over my life." That's the big complaint that women have: "When I have a problem, they want to fix it. I don't want them to fix it." They want to feel safe. They want to feel protected, as I said, while not feeling controlled by you. They want you to know without being told how they feel and what they want. They need to be confronted about demanding things of you that are diametrically opposed and unrealistic. You've got to gently confront them on this and tell them that you're in an impossible situation and work it out as a team.

They need a sense of feeling deeply connected emotionally as well as intellectually. They have practical needs. They want an advocate. Women have told me over and over again – because I ask them in groups like this, "Women, what do you want from men?" – "It depends." (Laughter) There is no formula. It changes.

If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day; if you teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime. In the hour and a half that we just shared, we talked about the challenges that women have; we talked a bit about what men have to deal with, which is very hard, because we come from a different brain and a different framework; and then we talked about a way to manage problems, and that is: When you're stressed or challenged, decide to be a healthy, wise person. Then use COPE – creativity, optimism, planning and expert information.

In the home-care guide that you get for free just for coming, Chapter 1 is all about problem-solving, but all of the other chapters are about problems that you brought up here. I think this book will be really helpful.

Before I ask you if you have any other questions or concerns, I will ask you if you could fill out those questionnaires, because that information goes on these slides so we can help other men. There are so few opportunities for men to teach other men – if you could do those questionnaires, that would be great. On the last page, there is a consent form, and you have to sign it and date it, or we can't use this information.

I thank you all for being here, but I know that the women are especially grateful that you guys are here, because you're the guys who have the courage to be here. Think about those guys who should be filling these seats. There are 800 women here, and we have two, four, six, eight, ten, 12 – we have about 15 men here, right? You are the courageous ones.

[End of transcript.]