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ULTIMATE CHEST WORKOUT

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The Men's Health Guy

Ryan Phillippe

*"I want my head clearer.
I want to feel capable and strong."
Ryan wears a Vince sweater and
7 for All Mankind jeans*

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I



It's 7:30 p.m. You're tearing into a work file on your laptop, a beer on the table next to you and a ball game muted on the TV across the room. Enter your best girl; trailing closely behind her, inevitably, is The Question.

"How was your day?" she asks. This is a test. Can you engage?

It's not that men don't, won't, or can't talk. In fact, a 2007 University of California at Santa Cruz meta-analysis concluded that men are more talkative than women. Although women take more turns during conversation, men make more statements overall. Men also speak longer and make more suggestions.

Which she really hates.

Here's the problem: Women use language to bond, while men use it like a power tool. "Men are literal communicators," says Audrey Nelson, Ph.D., a gender communication expert. "It serves them well in the business world but often causes them trouble with women."

Learn how to minimize verbal damage, and you'll achieve more-satisfying intercourse—both the social kind . . . and the other kind.

SHE ASKS . . .

"How many women have you been with?"

Right answer
"I've had relationships with different women, but none worth holding on to."

Wrong answer
"Fourteen. And a half. Not counting rounding errors."

What she hears: "Unlike those other women, you're worth holding on to, babe." She hears that even if you don't yet know how you really feel. No woman wants to be a conquest, says Nelson. She wants to know you value her as a partner in and out of the bedroom. "Emphasize

the fact that your past behavior isn't an indication of where you are now," says Sandor Gardos, Ph.D., a sex therapist and founder of mypleasure.com. "You don't have to give her a spreadsheet."

SHE ASKS . . .

"Do I look fat in this?"
(She does.)

Right answer
"It just doesn't do you justice. Wear that black dress you look so sexy in."

Wrong answer
"I wouldn't say fat . . ."

You call it annoying, blatant, and desperate. Psychologists call it "fat talk"—a way women bond with other women, but also a tactic to show that she pays attention to her body, according to a 2010 study in *Body Image*. Take "fat" out of your vocabulary—if you drop that f-bomb, she won't receive the message, says Nelson. "Accentuate the positive instead." No need to point out her muffin top. Just pull out a more flattering outfit and compliment her on the way it plays to her best assets.

SHE ASKS . . .

"Do you think that woman is hot?" (She is.)

Right answer
"She's attractive. What do you think?"

Wrong answer
"In a slutty kind of way."

If your girlfriend springs this question, she knows the woman is sexy. The key is tempering your honesty, says Chris Fariello, Ph.D.,

of the Council for Relationships. That means using mild, nonsexual words, such as "attractive" or "pretty," while avoiding erotic words that tip her off to your own lusty feelings. Then ask for her opinion; suddenly you're paired *Idol* judges, not individual ogglers. "You take the focus off the other woman by turning it into a conversation," says Justin Lookadoo, author of *Dateable: Are You? Are They?*

YOU SUSPECT . . .

She's cheating.

Say
"I may be totally off base, but I'm concerned about your relationship with John. Will you be honest with me?"

Don't say
"You're screwing John, aren't you?"

In a *College Student Journal* study, 63 percent of men agreed that they'd cheat if they knew their partner wouldn't find out. Only 52 percent of women said the same. You're wired to be suspicious; male jealousy evolved to prevent the unknowing nurturing of another man's child. "Men tend to sling insults when they suspect infidelity," says Todd Shackelford, Ph.D., an evolutionary psychologist at Florida Atlantic University. "It may be an attempt to decrease her sense of value as a mate so she won't look elsewhere." But if you act like a litigation attorney, she'll react defensively and be more likely to hide the truth. Ultimately you need the truth, so proceed in a way that's most likely to lower her defenses so you can coax it out of her. "Present your suspicion not as a fact but as a feeling or concern," says Sheenah Hankin, Ph.D., a psychotherapist and the author of *Complete Confidence*. "You've opened the door for the truth."