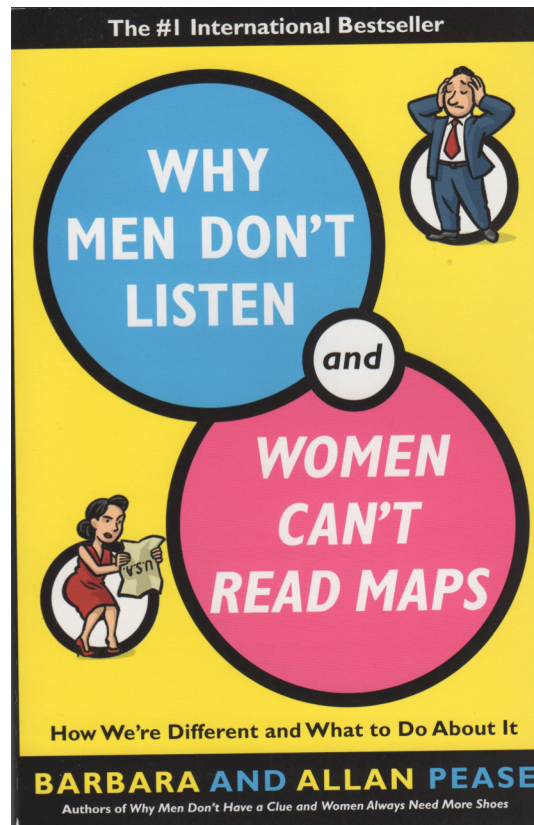

BOOK REVIEW

"Why Men Don't Listen and Woman Can't Read Maps: How We're Different & What to Do About it" by Allan Pease and Barbara Pease

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"Society today is determined to believe that men and women possess exactly the same skills, aptitudes, and potentials – just as science, ironically, is beginning to prove that they are completely different...We seize upon the enormous advances that have recently been made in human evolutionary science and show how the lessons learned apply to male and female relationships. The conclusions we unearth are controversial. They are confronting. They are, occasionally, extremely disturbing. But they give us all a solid and thorough understanding of the many strange things that happen between men and women."

These words from the introduction of *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps: How We're Different & What To Do about It* are a good indication of what's in store in this "self-help meets science" book. It's a light-hearted look at the science behind the differences between the sexes. First published for the world in 1998, it had been self-published for an Australian readership prior to that.

Co-author Allan Pease is a body-language expert, lecturer, and consultant. Co-author Barbara Pease is a communications expert. Together they run Pease International, which promotes business tools, networking and communication education, and personal development and relationship coaching. They also co-authored bestsellers *The Definitive Book of Body Language* and *Memory Language: How to Develop Powerful Recall in 48 Minutes*, and Allan authored several other bestsellers.

While the information in the book is based on brain and social research, the authors are careful to explain that it addresses "average men and women, that is, how most men and women behave most of the time, in most situations, and for most of the past." They spent three years researching their book by talking to experts and studying cutting-edge research of ethnologists, psychologists, biologists, and neuroscientists, though the book is geared to relationship issues as opposed to reading like a scientific text.

Even so, some critics feel their approach was too generalized and addressed only stereotypical differences between men and women. If you take this topic very seriously and can't look beyond the humorous stereotypes to glean the practical applications of the Peases' research, a more technical book on the subject might be for you. Proponents of strictly politically-correct discourse are also probably not going to get past the stereotypes even though the authors disclaim their use of them.

I liked *Why Men Don't Listen* precisely because the authors use funny stereotypes and comics to illustrate their points, the main one being that "the way our brains are wired and the hormones pulsing through our bodies are the two factors that largely dictate, long before we are born, how we will think and behave. Our instincts are simply our genes determining how our bodies will behave in given sets of circumstances." The book succeeds at making sociobiology entertaining.

For instance, it's a funny cliché that when men pass an attractive woman on the street they often physically turn their head to look at her. *Women* probably notice attractive *men* just as often, but the cliché doesn't translate to them – for good reason: Women have a wider peripheral range of vision and a greater variety of cones in their retinas, so they are better built for watching an attractive man on the sly. When humans were

developing, a man's hunting responsibilities required him to develop a narrow range of vision in order to spot and follow prey. A woman stayed near home and developed peripheral vision in order to be aware of threats to her children and her home.

The chapters in *Why Men Don't Listen* are:

1. Same Species, Different Words
2. Making Perfect Sense
3. It's All in the Mind
4. Talking and Listening
5. Spatial Ability: Maps, Targets, and Parallel Parking
6. Thoughts, Attitudes, Emotions, and Other Disaster Areas
7. Our Chemical Cocktail
8. Boys Will Be Boys, But Not Always
9. Men, Women, and Sex
10. Marriage, Love, and Romance
11. Toward a Different Future

The table of contents includes each sub-section so you can scan topics that are of particular interest to you. These are delightfully more intriguing than the chapter titles:

- Women as Radar Detectors
- The Slippery Case of the Missing Butter
- Men and Ogling
- Why Men Can't Lie to Women
- Try the Toothbrush Test
- The Brain-Wiring Test
- Why Males Can't Talk Proper
- Women Think Aloud
- How to Use the Grunt
- The Schoolgirl Voice
- How a Map Almost Led to Divorce
- How to Argue While Driving
- Boys Like Things, Girls Like People
- Shopping: Her Joy, His Terror
- Why Men Have Potbellies and Women Have Large Rears
- Are We Slaves to Our Biology?
- Why Men Want Women to Dress like Tarts (But Never in Public)

- Are There Female Sex Maniacs?
- Where Is Love in the Brain?
- The Feminizing of Business

Sorry if I went overboard listing these, but you get the gist of the book and its humor from this list. And the gist is that in spite of our upbringing, socialization, and views about gender neutrality, there are profound differences between male and female brains that cause frustration in our relationships, and understanding these differences can help forge new and better ways to relate.

The final chapter relates the book's concepts to how things play out in the business world: "Studies confirm that women who wear more 'masculine' clothes have a better chance of being selected for management positions than those dressed in 'feminine' styles – even when the decision maker is a woman...Masculine priorities need to be understood by any person aiming for the top of the heap, but feminine value systems are now much better suited to making the whole show work more efficiently, harmoniously and, therefore, successfully." And in relationships: "Much of the stress we experience in relationships comes from the false belief that men and women are now the same and have the same priorities...Sometimes it's hard to understand why nature would plan such apparent incompatibility between the sexes, but it looks that way only because our biology is so at odds with our current environment."

The concluding concept I got from *Why Men Don't Listen* is "It's only by understanding the differences between men and women that we can really start building on our collective strengths rather than our weaknesses."

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