

# WHAT WOMEN REALLY WANT FROM YOU

Award-winning writer Sali Hughes claims that the last thing the opposite sex expect is perfection



If men are now feeling the pressure to be all things to everyone, then I urge you not to join the club. Women like me have long since been expected to steer an enviable career, maintain a healthy social life and be home in time to play Lego and whip up a dozen cupcakes, all with a loving smile across a meticulously well-preserved face. And do I pass muster? Of course not, because it's all a thankless, unwinnable game. Career women are viewed as selfish and emasculating, stay-at-home mums dull and lacking in ambition. The rest of us are spreading ourselves so thin that we're barely anywhere at all.

The last thing women need is you lot buying into the same ludicrous myth that's already got us against the ropes and begging for the bell. Just share the load instead. That doesn't mean being some perfect dad that only exists in the Boden catalogue, it means viewing time with the kids as everyday 'parenting', not 'babysitting' as

cast of thousands with Heston's snail porridge, it means having a bash at a chilli for two without leaving every pan in the house to wash up afterwards, or buying your own mother's birthday card and remembering to send it. And it's fine to play to your strengths. I can cook. I quite like cleaning the bathroom and doing the laundry (note: do not ever, ever touch my clothes). Meanwhile, I have zero desire to Hoover, take out the bins or lift anything heavier than the kettle. The idea of having to change a tyre brings me out in hives. I'm really very happy for you to keep doing that stuff, whether it plays into gender stereotypes or not. I don't want to launch a political campaign, I just want my bookcase assembling.

You'll be amazed how sharing these everyday tasks makes you appear instantly more attractive to the opposite sex. Though the expectation to look good is less trauma, more treat in my experience. I don't see anyone pointing a gun to my man's head as he paws my Crème de la Mer, or forgoes the barber to receive a scalp massage from an 18-year-old

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some favour to the little lady. Turning up at the park once a week to posture with a papoose and the new model Bugaboo may look modern and enlightened, but it is not the same as entertaining a toddler when it's hammering with rain outside and the potty is proving a tough sell. Never mind the PR stunts, this is the stuff that makes a man.

Modernity doesn't require you to impress a

junior at Toni & Guy. And I know not one woman who craves a man with pecs you could bounce a 50 pence piece off (give me Seth Rogen any day). Grooming is fun, just like beauty is fun for us. The day it stops being about expensive aftershave and becomes leafing the Yellow Pages for the nearest Botox clinic is the time to worry about your expectations, not ours.



Change a tyre? Check.  
Do your partner's  
laundry? No thanks

The truth is, women don't expect perfection from you, any more than you want us to be as thin as Victoria Beckham, or demand that we hover near the sofa, Betty Draper-style, waiting to plump any flattened cushions. In reality, we don't want you to be good at *everything*, we need you to contribute *something*. And just as importantly, appreciate what we contribute too. The rest we can just muddle through, the way real people do. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a pile of ironing to finish before my one o'clock meeting.