

It's not about the nail—except when it is

By [April Yamasaki](#)

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The video below made the rounds recently. It's well done, but does it really describe the different ways that men and women communicate?

I've heard comments all the way from "how true—that really hits the nail on the head" to "how demeaning to women." There's obviously a nail in the picture, but the woman seems completely unaware. The man quite reasonably sees the solution. Are women and men really like that? Is our communication really that simple and stereotypical?

My own experience is that with both men and women, sometimes I just need to listen. When my husband has a tough day, he doesn't want or need me to fix it. When a church member—man or woman—has family issues, I can't fix things by pulling out the figurative nails. I need to be present, listen and pray. For both men and women, it's often not about the nail; in fact, my trying to pull it out would only do more damage.

At other times, for both men and women, actually it *is* about the nail. When I'm having a stressful day, actually I don't just want someone to listen—please do deal with my nail by making me dinner, offering to run that errand I really don't have time for, helping me fix the latest problem with my laptop. For the man or woman with family issues, sometimes both want and need more than listening—they want practical help in setting appropriate boundaries, finding a good counselor and other problem solving.

Instead of relying on stereotypes that may or may not apply to particular individuals or situations, I think communication is much more personal. In premarital counselling, I tell engaged couples this: you're not marrying a stereotype, you're marrying this particular man, this particular woman. So don't try to communicate with a stereotype. Know who you are, and know your partner.

The art of communication is, well, an art. It's not a formula where all men are x and all women are y, or the other way around. The art of communication is knowing when to listen, when to speak, when to be silent, when to lend a helping hand. As I see it, for both women and men, it's not about the nail—except when it really is.

*Originally posted at [Yamasaki's blog](#)*