

RED HOT *Romance tips* FOR WOMEN PAM & BILL FARREL

Lower His Stress: Your Husband's Plimsoll Line

In the late 1800s, Samuel Plimsoll discovered that nearly 1,000 sailors a year were being drowned on ships around British shores because ships were being overloaded. He headed up a campaign to require that vessels bear a load line indicating when they were overloaded. The Plimsoll line is a mark located on a ship's hull that indicates the maximum depth to which the vessel may be safely immersed when loaded with cargo. Your husband has a "Plimsoll line". Load him up too much—his life or health or your relationship will sink. He needs you to watch the plimsoll line. He needs you to be aware of the load on his back. And he needs you to care—and fight for him, his life and his relationship with you and the family. You are the dock guard checking his "water-line" to keep him free from overwork, over commitment, and over the top stressors. Only a woman of virtue can be trusted with a task so vital.

One of my favorite verses of the Bible is a tiny phrase Boaz says to Ruth (a woman he is interested in romantically): ". . . all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. " This word "excellence" can be translated virtue, valor and valiant and is the same word used of David's mighty soldiers. You are a warrior wife God has called you to be a defender of your husband, your marriage, and your family.

And for a man in ministry stress is one of the main enemies. Part of the fall was Adam and Eve getting booted out of the garden and part of the punishment for rebelling was God declaring to Adam: ". . .By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground . . ." (Gen 3:19) And men have been stressed out by work ever since!

How well do you know your husband's stress? Is he carrying stress about his work (or lack of it), the kids, your finances, his health, your health, the church, the headlines and plight of evil in our society, those under his leadership, the community, the extended family, or a country or mission God has laid on his heart? If you are like most clergy couples, you would likely say "all the above!" God calls us to seek to understand how to help our mate process his stress as it nears Plimsoll. I am motivated to care by verses like Col. 3:12: "Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." Futhermore, to keep on caring, often we need a better understanding of how our husband might process the stress of life.

In *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*, we layer on God's foundational truth of Gen 1:27 (God made us male and female) and share that biology explains that men and women process stress differently. We women talk our way through stress. When I am stressed my sister knows it, my mom knows it, my best friend knows it—the clerk at the grocery store will know it! Men on the other hand, when they are stressed, they go to their favorite easy box to rest and recharge. But God helped us girls out so we can recognize these recharger boxes, most are actually shaped like boxes: the TV, the garage, the football field, baseball diamond, basketball court, tennis court, pool table, soccer goal, the computer, the refrigerator and the bed! In fact the bed box, that sex box is a favorite box for men to go to when they are all stressed out. It is kind of like the free square in the middle of a BINGO card—they can get there from every square on their waffle!

Since we started teaching this, we developed a new code word for wanting sex, “Want to play some Bingo?” (Just seeing a BINGO card in his brief case or on his desk lowers Bill’s stress!) So where does your man like to go when he is stressed: Fishing, hunting, for a run, TV or a movie, sports, a hobby, the garage, surfing, boating? Some choices are healthier for managing stress than others. If you offer to schedule some R and R with some physical activity he enjoys it might keep him away from the burger and fries—or other unhealthy habit—that could put him in an early grave.

Ask him about his favorite pursuits then schedule a visit to his “favorite boxes”. In *Red Hot Romance Tips for Wives*, there are 26 traits to help you become a more loving wife, including this “virtuous” warrior for my man attitude. We also arm you with ideas on ways to offer help when your man’s load is approaching the dangerous Plimsoll level:

- ♥ **Be a High Tech Hostess:** Visit a tech store that offers free use of a massage reclining chair or if your church asks how they can bless your husband, have ideas ready: a massage chair, a health club membership, or a new gadget. Something as simple as a new tool can lower stress. For example, a set of headphones that block out white noise or enhance his favorite music can make even a spare five minutes renewing. For my husband, a new set of running shoes with headphones were perfect to create a renewing running routine in his daily life.
- ♥ **Be a travel agent:** Know where to whisk your guy away to for a midweek getaway that will relax, renew, revive him: Is it a cabin for some hunting, a beach resort for some surfing or sailing, or a lake for boating and bonfires? Several of my pastor’s wives have created a “man cave” in their home for a getaway without going away.
- ♥ **Be the Spa owner:** Run a hot candle lit bath, give him a foot or body massage or offer a facial designed for a male. (Try a mud mask. Boys and mud have been a winning combo for ages!) Join him in the Jacuzzi but let him take the lead. Does he want silence? A listening ear? Something else? Tune into his way of unwinding, be aware of how God wired your mate, and seek to personalize the TLC.
- ♥ **Be a comedian:** Send him humorous cards, emails, video clips of clean comedians or funny things kids say or do. These quick quips can add a bit of fun in the middle of a very responsible day. Personalize your humor too, Kathi Lipp, author of *The Husband Project* shares an example: “When Roger and I were first married, we spent a small fortune at our local bath and body shop. . . As our collection of oils and lotions grew, we realized that many of the names- Mango Oil, Almond Paste, and Lemon Rub—sounded a lot like our favorite salad ingredients. So when we go on vacation, we make sure to pack, “The Salad Kit”, our not-so-undercover code name for the massage kit.” Yes, “a joyful heart is good medicine” (Proverbs 17:22)

God is aware the life of a leader is stressful, and if we pray, God will give each of us the discernment we need to give the encouragement our man needs.

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