

Journalism–Sulk Wars – Daily Express

The next time a woman asks you to name one thing - just one thing - at which men excel naturally over women (having first loaded the question by disqualifying all the obvious contenders - starting wars, vomiting in public, devising new and imaginative nicknames for our genitalia - on the grounds that they don't count because we do them purely by instinct), don't act as you usually act. Don't stammer " Erm, you know, shelves and stuff...I mean, not me, obviously, I'm rubbish at DIY." Just because you've watched too many fiercely matriarchal soap-operas (Ilan from Eastenders? Steve McDonald and his amazing triangular hairline? These are our role models?) is no reason to let slip your last, desperate, tattered remnants of pride. Oh no.

Look her in the eye and, in quiet, measured tones, reply "Well, since you're asking, sulking."

Then go all quiet and moody.

Because it's true. Sulking, the art of taking a nano-second of white hot temper, letting it cool, feeding it, nurturing it, watching it grow and bloom into hour upon hour of vaguely unspecified but deeply discomfiting bad feeling, is one at which we men are still, by many a mile, the undisputed champions.

When a woman sulks she does so in blazing neon letters a mile high; sighs, stamping, shouting - all the glitzy showboating of the gifted amateur, but ask her what the matter is, and she blows it. She says "Well, honestly, if you've really got to ask, I mean..."

See? Presented with a conversational open goal, the sulking woman mutates into Andrei Schevchenko in gum boots. The sitter is missed, the sulker has cracked and the sulk is now over, for conversation has been joined.

A sulking man, on the other hand, knows precisely how to answer the question

'What's the matter with you?' He replies, in a voice stripped of even the tiniest fragment of feeling or emotion, and without looking up from the newspaper or book he's been pretending to read during the last two hours of ever more uncomfortable silence, "Nothing."

And that's it. A verbal cul-de-sac. A linguistic brick wall. You're a man, you know how to sulk, there's no way you're going to let her find out why you're as gut-wrenchingly angry as your body language and the Sulk-vibes you're emanating make it screechingly plain you are. Talking? Explaining? Thrashing things out? Where's the fun in that? Whither the sport in settling your differences like two mature adults? And if all else fails, you know how to leave the room and shut the door just so; hard enough to count as a slam, not so hard that you can't justifiably claim "I don't know what you're talking about, I was shutting it, that's all..."

And, when you've made up, and the years have flown by, and you're married and you've got kids, and you're reminiscing one still summers evening, like you do, and your darling wife turns to you and says "D'you remember, that time you sulked for days, just because I said you looked like Ilan from Eastenders?" then you can take both her hands in yours, stare deep into your beloved's sparkling eyes, and reply "I haven't got the faintest idea what you're talking about," and then go all quiet and distracted.

For a true sulker never admits, ever , that he is now or has at any time been a sulker. Because if you do, it doesn't count. But then, you're a man, so you knew that.

Right?