

The Vulnerability of Men *by Vincent Bach*

http://www.stopcirc.com/vincent/vulnerability_of_men.html

I have been gathering my thoughts on what I think is the primary force behind circumcision in our culture - circumcised men. I'm not discounting secondary forces such as Medicaid and other health insurance providers, kooky doctors, foreskin aftermarket, etc. However, if there weren't so many circumcised males running around, I think the secondary forces would quickly disappear.

I see on the boards many times where a pregnant wife is frustrated when attempting to discuss the issue with her circumcised husband. She wants to leave her son intact but he won't listen to reason. Well, the rest of this article is written specifically to try and offer some insight and suggestions for those ladies. I hope it helps someone. As an intact man who grew up and has lived among circumcised men, I think I have some insight into what drives their behavior on the issue of circumcision. Of course this doesn't apply to all of them, but I think my generalizations may be useful for you in dealing with this issue with your husband.

First of all, you need to understand that circumcised men are cornered on this issue. They were circumcised without their consent and have no inherent knowledge of what being intact is like. Even though they rarely will discuss the issue, they are keenly aware that they have been surgically altered in a very private way. There are several ways for a man to deal with this issue but the safest way, psychologically speaking, is to believe at all cost that the surgery performed on them was an enhancement and is preferred by women. Confirmation of this belief is essential to their sexual self-image. Do I need to tell you that sexual self-image is a major issue for men? Didn't think so.

Now put yourself in the shoes of the circumcised man. He asks for very little. All he wants is football on Sunday and to be assured that there is nothing wrong with his package. A nice bonus would be that women actually prefer it the way it is. Then along comes the newly pregnant wife and the issue of circumcision is no more personal to her than a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and she starts openly discussing it with him with all the casualness that she would with her gal pals down at the salon. Yikes! Batten down the hatch. Incoming torpedo!!!! At first the strategy is to dismiss her without appearing to be alarmed. He'll probably toss back the usual "It's not clean" or "That could cause health problems" hoping this will scare her off since he assumes she's heard those things before. He won't seem particularly disturbed at first. It's part of being a man to not show vulnerability.

If this doesn't work and the wife mentions that she heard otherwise, he'll be shifting uncomfortably in his chair just a little but still keep his cool. At this point he may try plan B which is to make fun of you for your silly ideas. Maybe make a joke about turtlenecks. If you persist, he'll bring out the ol' "I want him to be like me" knowing you women are suckers for us men when we talk of bonding and emotional attachment - any kind. Finally, if this doesn't work, he's probably going to relate some made up or exaggerated story from his school days when some uncircumcised kid at school was teased mercilessly until he circ'd himself right in the middle of Shop class. The resulting low mark the kid received in Shop kept him out of

Harvard and he had to settle for a life as a carnival worker. Do you REALLY want that for your son?

If you haven't given in by this time, he is probably now showing signs of agitation. You're close to getting the ol' "I have the penis so I have the last word!" Most men won't go beyond this point in the discussion. They will clam up and refuse to discuss it any more. If he's particularly panicked, he'll probably enlist the help of sympathetic family members or friends to weigh in on what a mistake it would be not to circumcise your son.

I think it's important to acknowledge that it's perfectly understandable that our circumcised friends react this way. Men who have been circumcised have an extremely difficult dilemma. For them to acknowledge that the practice is unnecessary and harmful means that they must acknowledge a painful personal reality. For that reason circumcised men can be forgiven if they don't want to lead the parade in the fight against routine infant circumcision. I can empathize and therefore understand completely why so many men will voluntarily offer their sons up for the same procedure without giving it a second thought. To do otherwise opens them up to some vulnerable feelings that can be most unpleasant. Society puts lots of expectations on women but it also puts a couple on men. One of them is that he be sexually virile. You know - masculine, strong, potent GRRRRR!! I think many circumcised men accept without question and perpetuate the myths regarding the intact penis in order to cope with this particular expectation.

So, the problem is how do we save our son's genitals without psychologically emasculating their fathers?

Hmm...well I think the first step is having a better understanding of just how personal an issue this is for him. The reason I spent so long discussing it is because it's extremely important and he's not going to tell you about it.

Going into the discussion, you'll be much better off knowing what's really bothering him. Trust me, he really doesn't give a hooey whether his son's penis looks like his. What is important is that his bulb is not dimmed. Probably not a good idea to refer to the practice in initial discussions as genital mutilation (although it certainly is that). The thing that you need to get across to him with all your female charm is that you love him EXACTLY the way he is and wouldn't change a thing. In other words, I think the best strategy is probably to build him up as high as you can before lowering this boom on him. The ship can only take a hit so big before going under. So get your armor out and start fortifying his self-image. What means everything to him is that he is the best lover and provider that you could ever hope for.

Please don't use my lame words exactly. I ain't got no feminine charm :-). I suspect you get it and can take it from here. Ironically, if you succeed, you'll be giving your man a huge future reward in that his son will someday be a man and will know all too well the tremendous courage it took for his father to break with this barbaric custom and leave him intact. With circumcision rates falling drastically and RIC possibly even being illegal by then, I predict he'll be forever thankful to the both of you. Good luck! Your son and family deserve your best effort.