Sex Relations — how real men and women are supposed to be

Start sentence with — *"A real man..."* and/or *"A real woman..."*

Example: *A real man stands up for himself. → (weak)*

References: Column 3 Instructions | Common Fears | Examples

How to Identify This Area

If I don't think others are acting right in a sexual scenario, my **sexual relations** are affected. *(ref. 02-column-3.md)*

Using Bill's actor metaphor from Step Three — Sex Relations is **my deep-seated ideas of how a real man and/or real woman would be in this situation.** It is not limited to sexual encounters — it is about gender identity, what it means to be a "real" man or woman, and the standards I hold for masculine and feminine behavior. It touches any resentment where my beliefs about gender, strength, worth, or identity are affected.

How to Write It

Start each sentence with **"A real man..."** or **"A real woman..."** and write what you believe a real man or real woman would do, be, or have in this situation. Then bracket the fear — what you're afraid is true about yourself.

These statements reveal core beliefs about gender identity and personal power. *"A real man stands up for himself"* reveals: *(weak)*. The fear is that I don't measure up to my own standard of what a man or woman should be.

Template:

- A real man _____. *(_____)*
- A real woman _____. *(_____)*

Tips:

- Sex Relations is about **gender identity and how real men/women should be** — not just about sexual activity
- If it's about how the relationship should look (non-sexual), that's Personal Relations
- If the arena is specifically sexual, the answer goes here instead of Personal Relations
- These beliefs often connect to power, control, strength, desirability, and self-worth
- The gender can match or differ from the writer's — write what comes up
- No *"I think..."* or *"I feel..."* statements *(ref. p.62-¶1)*

Examples from the Inventory

- *"A real man stands up for himself." (weak)* — #1 Mr. Brown
- *"A real man is wanted anywhere." (unwanted)* — #2 Mrs. Jones
- *"A real man commands the respect of others." (not respected)* — #3 My Employer
- *"A real man commands the respect of their family." (not respected)* — #4 My Wife
- *"A real woman (me) commands respect and can control the situation." (lose control, not respected)* — #5 Susie
- *"A real man would not have to ask for a raise." (unwanted, not respected)* — #6 Mr. Brown Alternate
- *"A real woman would get on with her life and not let the past bother her." (weak, defective, crazy)* — #7 My Father
- *"A real woman should know how to treat men in a decent manner." (single for the rest of my life)* — #8 My Sister
- *"A real man commands respect."* — #8 My Sister

- *"Real Men and Women don't get abused. Real Men and Women don't need anyone to protect them." (victim, weak, powerless)* — #9 God Does Not Care About Me
- *"Real Women/Men have Power, Control Others and get what they want." (undesirable, no control, unwanted)* — #10 Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship
- *"Real Women/Men are cared for, loved and sacrificed for..." (disgusting, broken)* — #11 I Am Unloveable
- *"Real Men and Women buy happiness and get whatever they want." (miserable, broke)* — #12 Not OK Without Money

Additional Examples

These additional examples show both the gender-identity form and the sexual-behavior form of Sex Relations.

Gender identity beliefs (non-sexual contexts):

- *"A real man commands respect of their family." (not respected)*
- *"A real man commands respect of others." (not respected)*
- *"A real man is wanted anywhere." (unwanted)*
- *"A real man stands up for himself." (weak)*

Sexual behavior scripts:

- *"He should fancy me."*
- *"He should initiate sex with me."*

Power and control beliefs:

- *"A real woman (me) commands respect and can control the situation." (lose control)*
- *"Real Women/Men have Power, Control Others and get what they want." (undesirable, no control)*

Identity and worth beliefs:

- *"Real Women/Men are cared for, loved and sacrificed for..." (disgusting, broken)*
- *"Real Men and Women buy happiness and get whatever they want." (miserable, broke)*

- *“Real Men and Women don’t get abused.” (victim, weak)*

Trauma-related beliefs:

- *“A real woman would get on with her life and not let the past bother her.” (weak, defective, crazy)*
- *“Real Men and Women don’t need anyone to protect them.” (powerless)*

Common Fears Under Sex Relations

These fears commonly appear under Sex Relations in the inventory. Each one is what I’m afraid is true about myself as a man or woman.

- **broke** — *“Real Men and Women buy happiness and get whatever they want.”* — #12
- **broken** — *“I am important. I matter! I am loved.”* — #10, #11
- **crazy** — *“A real woman would get on with her life and not let the past bother her.”* — #7
- **defective** — *“A real woman would get on with her life and not let the past bother her.”* — #7, #10
- **disgusting** — *“Real Women/Men are cared for, loved and sacrificed for…”* — #11
- **lose control** — *“A real woman (me) commands respect and can control the situation.”* — #5
- **miserable** — *“Real Men and Women buy happiness and get whatever they want.”* — #12
- **no control** — *“I’m worth caring for and protecting.”* — #9, #10
- **not respected** — *“I want the respect of others.”* — #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6 | fear example
- **powerless** — *“I’m worth caring for and protecting. I am valuable.”* — #9
- **single for the rest of my life** — *“A real woman should know how to treat men in a decent manner.”* — #8
- **undesirable** — *“I am desirable. I have what he/she wants.”* — #10
- **unwanted** — *“A real man is wanted anywhere.”* — #2, #4, #6, #10, #11, #12 | fear example
- **victim** — *“Real Men and Women don’t get abused.”* — #9
- **weak** — *“A real man stands up for himself.”* — #1, #7, #9, #12 | fear example

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Deeper Understanding

Sex Relations is often the most misunderstood area. It is not only about sex — it is about **what it means to be a real man or a real woman.** These beliefs run deep, often formed in childhood, and they touch resentments that seem to have nothing to do with sexuality.

Notice where Sex Relations appears in the examples:

Workplace resentments: *"A real man commands the respect of others"* (#3), *"A real man would not have to ask for a raise"* (#6). These aren't about sex — they're about whether I'm a "real man" at work.

Family resentments: *"A real woman would get on with her life and not let the past bother her"* (#7), *"A real woman should know how to treat men in a decent manner"* (#8). These are about gender identity in family relationships.

Abuse and trauma: *"Real Men and Women don't get abused"* (#9). This is one of the most painful Sex Relations entries — the belief that what happened to me means I'm not a "real" man or woman.

Control and power: *"A real woman (me) commands respect and can control the situation"* (#5), *"Real Women/Men have Power, Control Others and get what they want"* (#10). These reveal the connection between gender identity and the need for power.

The pattern across all examples: **"A real man/woman would..."** sets an impossible standard, and the fear in parentheses is the evidence that I have failed to meet it. The resentment isn't just about the situation — it's about what the situation says about who I am as a man or woman.

Two Distinct Uses of Sex Relations

The examples and additional material reveal that Sex Relations serves two distinct purposes in the inventory:

1. Gender identity beliefs — beliefs about what a "real man" or "real woman" would do, be, or have. These show up in *non-sexual* resentments: at work (#3, #6), with family (#7,

#8), with friends (#5), even with God (#9). The beliefs are about **identity and power**, not about sex.

2. Sexual behavior scripts — beliefs about how people should behave in sexual or romantic contexts: *"He should fancy me," "He should initiate sex with me."* These are the scripts we give others in the sexual arena, parallel to Personal Relations scripts in non-sexual contexts.

Most of the twelve worked examples use the first form — gender identity beliefs. This is because the BBA format starts with *"A real man..."* or *"A real woman..."*, which naturally draws out identity beliefs rather than behavior scripts. Both are valid. Use whichever form opens up the resentment.

The Pain of Trauma-Related Entries

The most painful Sex Relations entries come from the principle inventories:

- *"Real Men and Women don't get abused"* (#9) — if I was abused, does that mean I'm not a real man/woman?
- *"A real woman would get on with her life and not let the past bother her"* (#7) — if I can't move on, am I defective?
- *"Real Men and Women don't need anyone to protect them"* (#9) — if I needed protection and didn't get it, am I weak?

These entries connect abuse and trauma directly to gender identity. The belief is: *what happened to me proves I'm not a real man/woman.* This is one of the deepest and most damaging patterns the inventory can reveal — and exposing it honestly on paper is the first step toward freedom from it.

What Sex Relations Reveals About "My Way"

Like Personal Relations, Sex Relations entries are scripts I've given others (and myself) to follow. They define what masculinity and femininity mean — and those definitions become standards I measure myself against.

The problem is the same: the standards are impossible, the measurement is constant, and the result is always the same — I fall short. *"A real man stands up for himself"* means every

moment I don't fight back becomes evidence of weakness. *"A real woman commands respect"* means every moment I'm disrespected becomes evidence of failure as a woman. The standard generates the suffering.

This list is not exhaustive — your inventory will reveal sex relations beliefs unique to you. Use this as a starting point to help identify your deep-seated ideas about what real men and women should be.

From the Big Book Awakening Step Four guide at bigbook.it/step-4/ · a page of the guide, not the workbook itself: the workbook's own pages are linked from "Originals & sources." · source sex-relations.md