It has been said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. That statement may have been true in the past or in places in the world where food is scarce, but here in the United States, I tend to agree with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

He wrote that physiological needs (food, clothing, shelter) are at the base of the pyramid of needs, followed as you move up by safety, love and belonging, and esteem. The higher up on the pyramid, the more internal the needs become and the more the heart is engaged in the process. Because of this, I believe the true way to a man's heart is through his esteem or ego.

First and foremost, to reach a man's heart, his ego must be understood. It can be summed up in three things, his mastery, money, and manhood. One, he must master something in life. A man that feels he is good at something (mastery) also believes he can be good at other things. His time, energy and heart are spent doing things that he is good at. Next, he must have money or the ability to get it. Money is the means in which a man provides for himself and his family. Poverty destroys a man's self worth and attacks his self esteem. Lastly, he must feel good about his manhood. This is represented by his sexual ego and his belief that he is able to physically and emotionally satisfy his woman. This ego is influenced by what is between his legs and is controlled by what is between his ears. Both shape his manhood, and to attack either could be relationship suicide.

Secondly, to get to a man's heart, a man's ego must be fed. Maslow's hierarchy of needs noted two versions of esteem needs. The lower one is the need for the respect of others, recognition, fame, and attention. The higher one is the need for self-respect, competence, mastery, and self-confidence. The second cannot be reached without the first being fulfilled. The male ego must be fed a steady diet of affirmation to remain healthy. No human being can live on negativity. Words that build up a man will reach his heart. Telling him the things that he is doing right helps him do other things right, while focusing on the negative things will only make him want to do them even more. A man's self confidence is fed by the respect and recognition of others.

Finally, to get to a man's heart, a man's ego must be supported. His esteem is at the top of the pyramid of needs, and it is only trumped by self-actualization (the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming). His ego or view of himself fosters his overall self-esteem and opens his heart up for the potential of love. Although some women do not feel they need to stroke a man's ego, they should be cautioned not to challenge it. When it is challenged, he will defend it with his life. But when it is supported, the man's heart becomes open and he feels loved, safe, and secure.

Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. For questions, comments or more information, go to www.tlhouston.com .