

Men are like shoes

Soon after I began dating, I was hunting for date shoes in my favorite shoe store, DSW (Discount Shoe Warehouse). It is a cavernous store carrying thousands of varieties. One shoe per style and color sits atop a column of that style's variously sized boxed shoes. As I slowly cruised each long aisle scrutinizing each style, I felt like a too-lonely bachelorette prowling a singles bar searching for Mr. Right. Then it hit me — there were many similarities between dating and shoes!

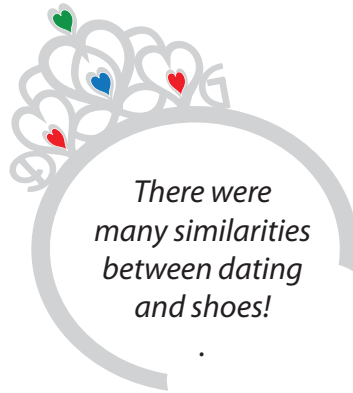
♥ The pictures don't always match what's inside. At DSW, a picture of the shoe appears on the box front. However, sometimes the picture doesn't match the style or color inside. Often a man's online profile picture doesn't match his 3-D self. Or his picture is of him in a tux, when he is much more comfortable in jeans — a mismatch of picture and the true man.

♥ When shoe shopping I pass on 95% of the options. They just don't fit my taste, so no sense even trying them on. In dating, I pass on 95% of the men who the dating services say I match. I just don't find most of the profiles alluring

enough to give them a try.

♥ Finding a great pair of shoes takes time and diligence. You have to look at dozens— if not sometimes hundreds— of pairs to find one that you love. Which is the same with finding your life mate.

♥ Sometimes a pair of shoes can seem perfect until I try them on. Then they pinch or hurt and I can't stand to wear them. I return them to their box for someone else to try. Some men seem perfect on paper and/or over the phone, but within the first encounter, I can see it's not going to work. I return him to the dating pool for some other woman to try.



♥ When I find a pair of shoes that initially fits well, I wear them around the store (or shoe department) while continuing my shopping. More times than not, they begin hurting within 10 minutes. But if I hadn't taken the time to test drive them thoroughly, I would have taken them home with only a 60-second trial. They would languish in my closet and I'd be unhappy I bought them. With men, if you don't give them a thorough trial

period and jump to commitment too quickly, you may find you've made a bad choice. You'll be unhappy with yourself. You need to try out the relationship for a while before making a purchasing decision — I mean commitment!

♥ Some shoes make you feel frumpy and unattractive. While a man can't make you feel anything, some treat you in a way that you feel sexy around them, while others ignore you and you can end up feeling unattractive. Don't ever invest time and energy in shoes or a man with which you don't feel magnificent.

♥ Just as you need shoes for specific purposes, like hiking, running, dancing, golf, business, or formal wear, seek out different men for different events — one likes the opera while another loves country dancing; one cries with you at chick flicks and another accompanies you to a sporting event. So it can be useful to see several men for different outings.

♥ I'm really looking for a pair of shoes that are comfortable, versatile and appropriate for a variety of situations. Of course, I want a man who is all these things as well.

♥ When I find a pair of shoes that I love, I wear them often and treat them well. I polish them and keep them in good repair. When I find a man I love, I work to keep him happy and the relationship in top shape.





Some shoes have good soles and some men have good souls. And there are some obnoxious heels.

So enjoy your shoe/man hunt!



Why men disappear when it gets serious

Gina Barreca authored, *Perfect Husbands (& Other Fairy Tales): Demystifying Marriage, Men and Romance*. Dr. Barreca is an academic who can make all that stuffy research come alive through her gift of humor and insightful writing.

This book tackles understanding the perception of marriage and the evolving roles of husbands and wives. She uncovers men and women's true feelings about commitment and marriage. And no surprise, many men are not thrilled with the concept of marriage! Even (especially?) married ones!

Her insights shed some light on why some men, even mature, sane, caring midlife men — can run the other way when it seems the dating relationship is getting too serious. One telling story was an exercise she had her college classes complete. She asked each student to anonymously and candidly write one word they associated with the word “husband.” The only thing they added was their age and gender.

Granted, we could argue that their responses were skewed by their age — generally under 22. The majority of responses by the men were things like trapped, caught, p-whipped, while women's were nearly all positive: partner, companion, friend, lover, provider. Coupled with interviews of older men, both married and unmarried, she reveals that many men see marriage as something they are tricked into and they got the short end of the deal. After the first few years of the honeymoon stage, many men report they feel stuck.

While we can't declare this one book to be the reporting of a trend — especially since it was published in 1995 — we can better understand why men would feel like bailing when a dating relationship gets closer than he'd like. All is blissful when he can see his lady on his terms, when he wants and for how long. However, when talk shifts to long-term plans, moving in together, even marriage, some see their lifestyle switching in a way they didn't really consider before. After all, he likes his condo, his boys' night out, his ability to leave his underwear on the floor until someone is coming over. He can eat directly out of the can over the sink, use paper towels for napkins, and his shirt sleeve for a tissue. Who's to care?

Gina quotes Rita Rudner, "If you never want to see a man again, say 'I love you, I want to marry you. I want to have children' — he'll leave skid marks."

So what are you to do if you want a committed relationship, perhaps even marriage? My suggestion is to discuss the concept academically. Not "How do you feel

about marriage?” but something like, “I read a book about how men and women feel differently about the words ‘husband’ and ‘wife.’ When you hear the word ‘wife’ what words come to mind? And ‘husband?’” Play this with him and share your words — honestly. And see what comes out of his mouth. Don’t argue or get upset. Allow him to say negative words without jumping on him. He may just be letting you in on the truth.

I remember on a first date that was going really well, I asked my date why he was now online dating when he’d been single for a few years. “My secretary signed me up. She said I needed to get laid.” I said, “And why did you let her post your profile?” “Because she was right!” While I thoroughly enjoyed this man’s company, it was soon apparent he only wanted one thing — and it wasn’t to have a meaningful relationship!

People will tell you the truth if you ask gentle questions and don’t argue or make them wrong for what they say. Just listen and see if what he says aligns with your values. And know that while some men can say the “right” things and act like they want commitment, they may still go poof when things get too serious for them. Of course, there are others who yearn for a long-term love and know all that this means. The trick is to separate the ones who don’t really know they want to stay single from those who know they want to be coupled.





*Chivalry isn't dead
— but it seems to be
hibernating*

A few of my dates have had impeccable manners. Most weren't brought up in a house of privilege. Some were taught how to treat a woman by their mothers. However, if their mothers didn't teach them, at some point they decided it was important to learn and practice chivalry.

What do I mean? Holding doors, holding the chair and seating a woman at a restaurant, opening the car door, helping put on and take off her coat, walking on the outside of the sidewalk, making sure she orders first, walking together instead of ahead. These aren't big behaviors to learn and practice. However, I've noticed few men — even educated, successful, accomplished men — do any of them at all, or if they do, it's happenstance, not consistent.

Am I expecting too much? My women friends don't think so. Nor do those who practice chivalry regularly. I love it when a gay friend escorts me to important events when I'm in between beaux, as he is the epitome of chivalry.

So why don't more men practice chivalrous behaviors, even if they are not with a woman in whom they are interested? Holding a chair for a coworker or standing when a gal pal walks into a meeting is over the top. But opening doors for them isn't.



Are these difficult behaviors to learn? Hardly. Carolyn Millet holds classes on manners to 12-year-old boys and girls. She teaches the boys how to be chivalrous and the girls how to respond graciously.

I know sometimes women respond poorly to well-meaning chivalry. They confuse respectful manners with demeaning behaviors. I don't. In fact, I think chivalry indicates a man's respect for a woman.

So how do we awaken the manners hibernating in a man? Employ the "catch him doing something right" technique. Always thank him when he opens the door, helps with your coat, etc. If you want him to help with your coat and he hasn't in the past, gently hand him