

# There's an art to a good pickup line

I sometimes feel bad for men. Despite the luxuries they enjoy from living in a patriarchal society and having the ability to pee without having to sit down on a messy public toilet seat, they have one burden that women have only if they choose to take it: Men are expected to make the first move.

At this point in our semi-progressive society, few people are offended if a woman sees a man across the room, struts up to introduce herself and suggests they get together sometime. Nonetheless, some might be surprised because it's just not the expectation.

And in public settings outside of bars and clubs, women don't tend to be on the prowl. That is, we're not usually aware of all the potentially available men

surrounding us in the mall, at the gym, in the grocery store or at the bus stop, so we don't approach them.

Men, on the other hand, are always looking at us. And in my experience, most are willing to approach, no matter how unlikely a union between us might be.

Here's an example: As I left the gym one day, a young man in the lobby followed me out the door. He said, "Excuse me, what's your name?" Before I could

answer, my cell phone rang. The number belonged to a potential source for a story I was working on at the time. I said, "Excuse me," and obviously, I answered the phone in my most professional voice and tone. The would-be suitor heard about 20 seconds of my end of a professional conversation before I returned to the lobby to complete the call.

He waited. When I returned, he said, "So what's your name, li'l red-red, li'l redbone?" (Redbone refers to a light-skinned black person.) I told him, figuring he had heard my name anyway when I answered the phone.

He proceeded to tell me that I looked good and that he was at the YMCA not to work out, but rather to look for a job and temporary housing. He had been directed to the wrong building.

I realize times are hard and that desire works on its own schedule, but really, if you're unemployed and don't have a place to live, perhaps you

shouldn't be seeking a date. And even if that's acceptable, he lost me at "li'l red-red."

I have a rule: If a man can't read me well enough to know how to approach me, I'm not interested. The way I see it, he didn't take the time to consider what approach might elicit a positive response from me, so I don't want to take the time to get to know him.

Admittedly, that's a little harsh. Men have the onus of expectation, and no one can get that analysis right 100 percent of the time.

I once asked a guy I was dating how he would have approached me if he had first seen me in person instead of through an online dating profile with details about my personality. He got nervous. He fumbled through his answer, afraid of failing this unexpected and previously avoided test.

But he said something on point: He would have observed me for a while before he tried anything. And

having done that, I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have approached me with "li'l red-red."

Maybe some of the men I've encountered are simply the most daring and not the most interested. The fact that they approached at all speaks to their confidence, and confidence is attractive.

But taking the time to observe a woman, picking up on clues in the way she talks, paying attention to her mannerisms — that speaks to a higher level of interest.

The man at the gym got my name.

The man who made intelligent small talk and then said, "Here's my card. My cell phone number's on the back. Can you give me a call please, because you are just stunning" — he got a call. ♣

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