

Twelve Things Men Should Avoid in Women

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"Some people don't know where to point themselves."

JF, A Patient (1998)

Gerry's marriage ended on a battle fatigued field of frustration. He spent 26 years of trying to extinguish his wife's smoldering resentment. These feelings rarely flared into a combative inferno but rather appeared in day to day interactions that should have been simple. She was never content. When it was his turn to make a choice, he again was getting his way. When it was her turn, it was tainted with a feeling that it was too little too late. When he attempted to express his concern for her happiness, she stubbornly held on to her dissatisfaction as if it was some sort of a life raft floating upon a boiling sea. For years Gerry lived with a feeling that he was responsible for her discontent. It ended when she walked out certain of her reason and with one half of their assets.

A couple years passed before Gerry ventured out to date. Decades had ticked by since he was single or sought the companionship of a woman other than his wife. These initial tentative steps grew into a steady stream of dinners after reviewing profiles of women at various cyber dating sites that connect people today.

In our discussion about the ladies he was meeting, we began to identify a pattern in the behavior of the women he found attractive. They all tended to become unnecessarily angry in response to minor problems. Furthermore, he was turned-off by a woman who wanted him more than his initial desire for her. The warm, generous sweetheart wasn't as attractive. The clingy, excessively dependent woman didn't stand a chance with Gerry. If they were prone to anger and were demanding, Gerry seemed to find them, although he swore he wasn't looking for this type of a woman.

Similar to Alicia in the preceding chapter, Gerry had to consciously give the woman who was generous and warm more of a chance. He had to push by his initial negative, or more accurately, a subtle feeling of indifference toward this more loving woman. He had to move beyond this *Purgatory of Hope* that Gina struggled with in an abusive relationship.

Our talks about his family relations, where neither his critical dad or mom had much time or love to give, helped us understand the unconscious underpinnings of his attraction. These angry and discontent women offered Gerry a chance to receive love in a style he was raised upon. They seemingly provided him with

an opportunity to finally gain approval from someone where it would really mean something. A person who was as critical and withdrawn as his parents. Not someone who gave it freely and easily. This wasn't the same nor attractive. Receiving this person's love just didn't mean as much. It didn't finish his unconscious need to be loved by his parents. Gerry wasn't picking a partner to marry as much as he was seeking someone to heal childhood wounds. Of course, this unconscious process never resulted in this, just creating more turmoil and pain.

The list of things Gerry was to look for and avoid in women was created shortly after *Twelve Things Women Should Avoid in Men*. The list has been expanded from Gerry's initial items by the stories and lessons of other men.

1. Women Who Rely Too Much on Physical Beauty
2. Women Without Power
3. Women Who Will Not Stand up to Her Parents
4. Women Who Engage in Duty Sex
5. Women Who Are Too Materialistic
6. Women Whose Desire for Sex Does Not Match Yours
7. Women Whose Wish for Children Does Not Match Yours
8. Women Who Share Little or No Interests of Yours
9. Women with Whom You Never Feel Accepted or Ok
10. Women Who Are All Too Willing to Mother You
11. Women Who Cannot Be Vulnerable
12. Women Without Dreams

1. Women Who Rely Too Much on Physical Beauty

Most men are practically helpless when they have the chance to date a woman with a pretty face. Her beautiful body and/or face effectively suspends the average man's ability to look beyond the packaging and discern for himself whether or not this person is someone with whom they can build a relationship. As written elsewhere in this book, the physical experience men have during sexual attraction is powerful and must be controlled if they are to have any capacity to objectively evaluate just whom they are getting involved with. The question they need to repeatedly ask themselves is "*this is nice, but who are you?*" If

they have the courage to ask themselves this tough question a few times, early on in the relationship, the answer will become clear.

To get this clarity it could mean fighting off the feelings of doubt and insecurity. These insecurities could include thoughts like *I won't find another woman to love. This may be my last chance. Maybe I am being too critical.* These feelings would have a man ignore and settle with someone who is just not right for them. This question needs serious consideration before the obligation builds and the relationship takes on a momentum seemingly of its own. The goal is to peer into the future knowing that one year or more down the road you will know much more about the person you are with. If you don't realize that the physical beauty will mean a whole lot less than it does now, you're not ready for a long term commitment.

Do not underestimate the power of physical beauty. This relationship will not be your last opportunity. Be very careful of women who are gorgeous and who may excessively rely upon this strength to attract men. This is a time to repeatedly ask yourself "*this is nice, but who is she?*"

2. Women Without Power

Interpersonal power is the ability to influence. Whether it's the ability to alter her relationship with her parents from being a child to that of an adult; to have earned the respect of her friends; to be seen as competent and valuable by her coworkers; or to do all of this with the man she loves; interpersonal power requires the courage to verbalize assertion when needed and appropriate.

Many men are attracted to the softness of passive women. Let's admit it, these traditional women do not challenge the notion of being a man and are initially very easy to be with. It's very comfortable to slide into accustomed roles handed down through the eons of time and the resilient mores of our culture. As if this wasn't enough, there seems to be something about this softness that initially raises within men the role of protector. There's a familiarity that more readily allows men to feel like men. This is much more comfortable than to remain open to examining the roles we unconsciously adopt. We are not questioning whether or not we are being fair or whether we are stifling their need for recognition and mutuality. In short, men relax with these women.

The problem with these women is that you will become bored as the years pass and your responsibilities grow. As your burden builds, your respect for them will slide. At some level you will look at her with a vague feeling of needing help and conclude that she's not nearly strong enough to lend you any credible assistance. This realization will come out in a variety of critical remarks that will further deteriorate her confidence and her scant ability to help you. Meanwhile your vulnerability to an affair will grow at a time when there are children and a mortgage weighing in as part of the equation. If you recognize yourself already in this relationship, you need professional help. If you are unmarried but recognize your attraction to these women without power, deal with your discomfort of being with women who can fully be your partner. In the long run, you have much more to gain by marrying your peer rather than your dependent.

3. Women Who Will Not Stand-up to Her Parents

As you would expect, women without power and women who will not stand-up to her parents tend to go hand-and-hand. As in women without power, these women will prove to be too weak to support you when you most need it. The fact that she hasn't learned to set limits with her parents signals major unresolved issues that will be a source of irritation throughout any marriage.

These women are caught between roles. On the one hand, they are fighting for their independence and trying to establish their personal meaning for life. On the other hand, they're playing the role of the obedient and subservient child while partially enjoying their protected child role. If you marry this women you will feel like a parent coping with an adolescent in years of teenage rebellion.

Why? Because she hasn't fully separated from her parents and hasn't declared her independence either to them or herself. Consequently, an opportunity for cooperation will feel to her like acquiescence. Let me say that again. Any opportunity you might provide for cooperation she will accept and interpret as acquiescence.

These women come with an ever present need to rebel. Imagine how this will impact your relationship with them. They will repeatedly raise the contrarian view. You might say the sky is blue and they will point out how it has white clouds. A thousand times they will bounce-off of anything said by you, driven by a fear that they are somehow being swallowed and losing their identity. Countless opportunities and precious moments to affirm your point of view and to join with you on obvious areas of agreement will be lost. In time it will become predictable and a source of irritation and frustration. The more you press your point of view, hoping to find some validation, the more her merger anxiety will rise-up to only set the stage for more of the same.

The powerful guy with a need to take care of these emotionally immature women frequently finds himself locked into these relationships. Like the guy involved with women without power, you need to look at your discomfort with powerful women. You also need to ask yourself how do you really feel in the presence of a woman who is her own person, who has fully separated from her family of origin.

But if you struggle with her for every morsel of consensus then look to see if she has done the necessary work to wrestle her identity from her parents and laid claim to her adulthood.

4. Women Who Engage in Duty Sex

The vast majority of women will consent to sex out of a sense of duty and obligation to some degree. Often times they don't want to have sex but do, knowing that as they warm up, it becomes an intimate and enjoyable experience. This is OK to some degree and men need to accept this especially in light of what we will discuss in number six, *Women Whose Desire for Sex Doesn't Match Yours*. What they are doing at these times are being generous, because they care and are attempting to meet your needs. It's OK to accept the slow start up; listen to what they say about foreplay and kindness to gently ease into sex.

You do want to avoid, however, the woman who engages in too much duty sex. You'll feel rejected by this woman for years in an area that is very important to men. Gerry had this problem. What do you look

for? Look for the woman who initiates sex on her own at least occasionally. This is a good indication that she has her own well developed libido and will bring something to your sexual relationship greater than compliance and duty.

5. Women Who Are Too Materialistic

Most women have high on their criteria list a partner who can help them build home and hearth. They are looking for a good provider. This is consistent with their desire to raise a family. Obviously this is a very constructive use of a couple's resources and benefits society as a whole. Women sometimes help to remind us of this priority. However, there are women with too much emphasis upon loving a rich man and living a life style they deem essential and foremost. This life style is a world of the *finest things* that can only be bought.

There's a private night class you can take in San Diego that purports to teach how to marry a millionaire. They will tell you where these "*successful*" (notice how we automatically assume success means money) men congregate, the interests they have, the behaviors of a woman who would attract them and more. The assumption is that having money correlates with contentment when in reality it offers nothing of the sort. Lots of money can contribute to financial security, provided you live within your financial means. It can free you to pursue more worthwhile opportunities. Assuming you would know what they were and that you had the self discipline not to let your life slip into the abyss of profane consumption and social class isolation.

Men already experience an inordinate amount of pressure to succeed financially. Becoming involved with a woman with excessive desires for materialism will exacerbate this pressure and prevent the couple from focusing upon what's meaningful and fulfilling in their lives. Financial security is fine, providing you know the costs it will exact upon you to achieve it. Most men never evaluate this cost. The fortunate ones make a midlife correction as their financial security builds and they sense the limits of the tool we call money. The unfortunate men continue to hone their ability to acquire more junk and stuff that they will never use to build a life worth living. If they are not extremely careful, this financial resource will saddle their children's ability to develop self discipline and purpose. We live in a society that is consumer oriented and does not fully appreciate the limits of money. We're still dazzled by it beyond what it can really help you do. It's value is still way over the top as evidenced by our fascination with the rich and famous. Be careful of the woman who is fascinated with glamour and *success*.

6. Women Whose Desire for Sex Doesn't Match Yours

On *average*, women are unlikely to ever want as much sexual contact as men. Of course there are exceptions to this general trend where the woman is much more sexual than their male partner. But by and large, men frequently feel there isn't enough sexual activity in their relationships. This fact was poignantly revealed in a Dear Ann Landers column several years ago when a disturbingly large number of women admitted that they could go without sexual intercourse providing there was enough hugging, cuddling, and communication! This doesn't bode well for marriage in general and becomes the bed upon

which seeds of discontent are sowed, where men drift away with only vague notions of the rejection they feel.

We are not that far from that time and place when Puritan and Victorian ethics suppressed women and any notion of their sexuality. Although significant progress was made during the twentieth century, thousands of years of cultural indoctrination have not been fully undone. However, some women are further along in nurturing their sexuality than others. Given how important sexual intimacy is to men in a relationship it is wise to pick one of these more developed women.

A confident thirty year-old single male said to me in session,

I want to meet a woman who wants to go to Mardi Gras and yank up her shirt. This was a guy unafraid of a woman that understood the power of her sexuality and had the courage to use it. To him, this was a woman who would be adventuresome, creative, playful and make the commitment of fidelity not seem so dreary or burdensome. This was a woman who could feel her own lust and who required her desire to be satisfied. This was a woman who would be open to new ideas and experiences that keep the intimacy alive. Although public displays of nudity are not the criteria for an adventuresome mate, look for signs of playfulness and comfort with her sexuality.

Nice girls are often very safe girls. Although these are desirable traits, they shouldn't be at the exclusion of a woman with a strong sexual identity. It is frequently a troubling sign if she wants to undress in the dark, is reluctant or embarrassed to be seen naked, or has feelings of guilt associated with her sexual behaviors. Make sure the woman you choose has a strong and secure sense of her sexual identity that will not atrophy through the years into duty sex that too many married women perform only as another chore.

7. Women Whose Wish for Children Does Not Match Yours

If you do want children and the woman you love doesn't, you're in trouble. More likely, you don't want children and she does. The formula still amounts to trouble. As her biological clock ticks its relentless count down toward infertility, she'll begin to press for children or become resentful that you refuse. It's imperative that you raise the issue of children with the woman you have just begun to love and listen carefully. Many women camouflage this issue, not wanting to scare off a man who just might turn out to be a great provider, companion, and father. That's why you have to listen carefully. If you're sure you do not want children, and she does, then you have problems. Or perhaps the issue is that you want two children and she wants five and she wants to stay home as a full time mother.

A word to those men who are convinced you do not want children. Although I wasn't totally closed to the idea of having children, I was among you. I was perfectly content to live my life with my wife, family, friends and career and without children. I was apprehensive about the changes that were entailed with the decision to bring another life into my world. I wasn't quite sure whether or not I would feel that it was worth it and that I could sustain the effort needed to raise a child for two decades. In the latter part of discussions with friends around this agonizing decision I would joke how *it's the one decision in life that*

you couldn't get out of. My wife would seek to reassure me with.... "don't you think you're underestimating the love you'll get out of the relationship with your child?"

Her words meant very little until the day my first daughter was born. The love was practically instantaneous at birth and it was overwhelming. I repeatedly marveled at my underestimation of the joys of parenting and just how much it changes one's house into a home. I feel like I almost missed one of the most important roles in my life had it not been for the gentle persistence of my wife. Consider carefully.

Nevertheless, if you are quite sure you do not want children, make sure you are not marrying a woman who wants to be a mother.

8. Women Who Share Little or No Interests of Yours

If playing and watching sports, building your career, tackling home improvement projects and hanging-out with your friends is what you enjoy prior to marriage, it's likely what you will continue to enjoy after you get married. Think of the conflict that will be generated for any couple where interests are not shared. Contrast this with a couple who have a shared interests in tennis or golf. These can be very positive points of connection as the years pass.

Similarly, try to determine whether or not your prospective partner will share your patterns involving finances, home decoration, interests in current events, politics, reading, movies, music and friends. A prospective married couple doesn't have to be a perfect match. However, I would advise that the woman you pick to be your life long mate share a minimal of one out of every three of your interests to help insure that the relationship is viable for the long term. This is a modest number but the third that she does share has to be real. That is, if she's just tolerating attending the baseball games you love, than this does not count towards the necessary one third. If she asks to see the sports page after you're done, then her interest is legitimate and you have something you really share.

9. Women With Whom You Never Feel Accepted or OK

Some people are attracted to and are driven by negative reinforcement. These men (or women) are not attracted to partners who are generous with their love and acceptance. I have found that when they stop and examine how they feel, they are actually turned-off by warm and positive overtures and tend to experience them as insincere or even pathetic! To them, approval and acceptance feels the sweetest when (rarely) given by a person who primarily is critical, cool and nonaccepting.

The result is a tendency to connect with women who fuel your feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. You'll spend years trying to please this partner who will only occasionally support you with a morsel of approval. As the years pass, this partner will respect you less and less while your exhaustion builds and your ability to please her becomes less and less. This was Gerry's experience.

If your dating or marital history suggests a pattern of attraction to this partner, it would be wise to invest in professional consultation. If you are already married to this partner, you need individual and marital

therapy in that order. You and your counselor will need to understand why you cannot accept love that is freely given. There is a reason....one that you're probably not going to like, but will find invaluable in time. A word of caution. If you are quick to anger and you discover that your spouse is seemingly withholding and unavailable, resist the impulse to blame her. The cause is fear not malicious intent. Give them a chance to grow with you. If she refuses then move on without her.

10. Women Who Are All Too Willing to Mother You

There are some men who are looking to marry women who will mother them. This is frequently confused with a woman's ability to nurture them. They won't be disappointed in their search for these women. There are many women who will eagerly volunteer to fulfill this need. In the long run, however, these men become depressed and their future wives are often angry. How could this quid-pro-quo possibly turn so negative as time goes on? One only needs to look at the reasons this couple came together. It is here we find the sources of attraction in this couple who so adroitly do the steps in a dance others often readily recognize.

The woman who volunteers to mother you are looking for two primary things. The first is a high need for control. These are women who can be identified by a demeanor that is overtly strong, who have very definite ideas and taste, and who tend to get their own way. It is their tendency to get their own way that negates the value of the previous two attributes. Nevertheless, they can't imagine depending upon others. The idea of sharing decision making seems fool hearty and an unlikely proposition. And in time, they tend to help create men that are truly inept.

The second reason why these woman volunteer to mother their man has to do with their fear of becoming involved in any relationship that would open normal levels of vulnerability. Their discomfort with their vulnerability can even include a feeling of dislike for this part of themselves. Long before your relationship began they decided that they were unlovable when vulnerable. Even if it was momentary or otherwise appropriate. They select men therefore who are unlikely to reach this part of themselves. In time however, they resent these men which fuels their anger and disparagement. This often gives rise to her husband's depression.

If you are single and your pattern of dating reveals a tendency to get involved with women who want to mother you, you're not ready to get married. Find a psychologist to work with you to find why you look at women with an eye toward what they can do for you and why you're so afraid to form adult attachments. This isn't rocket science but missing this call can very well explode in your face.

11. Women Who Cannot Be Vulnerable

As mentioned above, this woman may appear to you as a woman who wants to mother you but not necessarily. She may be very feminine in dress, many aspects of behavior and in the roles that she plays. However, this is a woman who rarely cries or who is willing to engage you with a heartfelt comment. Like the mothering woman above there is an underlying fear of becoming involved in any relationship

that would open up in them even normal levels of vulnerability. These women are afraid to become close which will show up in a diminished capacity to participate emotionally and sexually in the relationship.

12. Women Without a Dream

If a woman's primary purpose in life is to marry and stay home and have babies, be careful. As a goal in life, this needs to be distinguished from the woman who has perhaps completed her college education, has actually begun a career, has lived on her own and then decides in conjunction with her husband to stay home and raise their children. The sequence doesn't have to be career first and then family. It can be family first and career later. But she does need to be her own person. The distinction is between a woman who has not risked being independent and autonomous, versus one who has emerged from this developmental challenge of adulthood. The woman without a dream has not fully grown-up, she is not her own person, she's really not making a choice, she is playing a culturally prescribed role, and in time she will find you controlling and perhaps resent the function she allowed herself to drift into. If you're are attracted to these women, you also likely are attracted to #2, *Women Without Power*. The risk is you'll become bored and feel like they are a burden.

Gerry is still in therapy and dating. He's yet to find anyone to settle down with although I feel he may have prematurely let go of a couple of relationships that may have had real promise. The time he is investing in dating has been worthwhile. Gerry is quite conscious of his tendency and I believe he will avoid marrying a woman who is angry and unsupportive.

Extracted from the book "*If These Walls Could Talk*" by Thomas A Habib.

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