

PRINCIPLE THE FIRST

THE SUBTLE ART OF HOOKING US

There's a big misperception that men never want to be in committed relationships if we can help it, and that we prefer to have the freedom to date a harem of women. Not so. We want to be in a committed relationship, but it has to be with the right woman at the right time.

LET'S START WITH a simple truth. Men don't want to feel like they're being hooked, especially in the beginning of a relationship. This has something to do with our innate desire for freedom and our need to feel like we're in control. Not to say that we're not open to the idea of settling down and being satisfied in a monogamous relationship with you, but the second we detect that these are your intentions, we either stop returning your phone calls or start figuring out ways to escape without hurting your feelings. Understanding the basics of how we think in this situation will go a long way toward producing the results that you desire. So don't judge what follows as being politically incorrect

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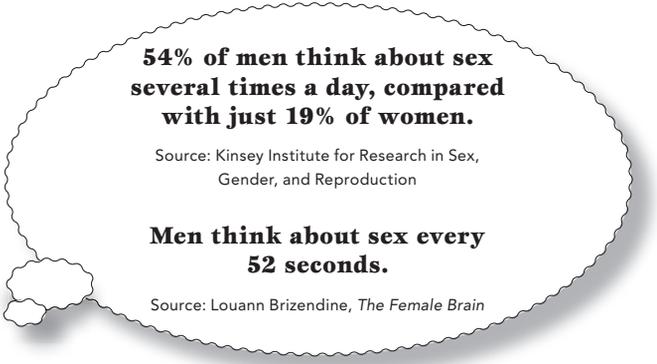
or rude. Be warned that this is not about what's right or wrong, respectful or disrespectful. This book is about one thing—the raw truth.

The Physical Matters—Period

Forget all those relationship expert columns that tell you it's most important to your man that he first see what's in your heart. Bullshit. It's most important to see what's inside your clothes. Now, before you scream, "Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiig!" listen carefully. I'm not saying that we need to get into your pants right away in order to enjoy your company. But I am saying that men definitely need to know that you have the goods and that you take care of yourself. To put it bluntly, a guy's first interest in a woman has nothing to do with the handbag she's carrying or that she graduated from an Ivy League school. **What your (potential) man wants you to know but won't tell you is that his initial attraction is all about your appearance and physical being, which sends a flood of highly charged testosterone racing through his veins.** Yes, the physical is first, and we're not saying we won't eventually fall in love with your intelligence, kindness, and humor. These extremely important attributes are the ones that will ultimately be critical in helping you hook us. But in the beginning the number-one attribute is what you look like and how well you take care of yourself.

The glossy magazines that litter the newsstands do a real disservice to you all by defining beauty in such a narrow way. A quick flip through the pages and it's boringly obvious that most of the models and celebrities featured in these magazines are really a variation on the same theme. The truth for us men,

however, is that beauty is diverse and idiosyncratic. (Great news for you.) Some of us want the well-endowed woman, while others are repulsed by the surgically enhanced. Some of us want tall and slim, while others want short and curvaceous. Some of us want you to have some “junk in the trunk,” while others want it small and tight. There really is some truth to the saying, “There’s a lid for every pot.” The challenge for most women, however, is finding that fit.



54% of men think about sex several times a day, compared with just 19% of women.

Source: Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction

Men think about sex every 52 seconds.

Source: Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain*

For some the search can be long and difficult, and for others it can be quick and easy. A lot of variables go into the length, ease, and success of that search, but the one thing that will boost your efforts is how well you present yourself. It’s imperative, especially early on, that you look your best every time we see you, at least for the first few months of the relationship. This is not men being vain or superficial. Unless your father is Bill Gates, how you look is the strongest magnet you possess. Your hair must be done, your nails neatly painted, and your clothes should highlight your assets and hide your liabilities. Loose sweats, uncombed hair pulled back under a baseball cap, and rundown Ugg boots are fine once the relationship is in high gear, but definitely

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a turn-off when at the beginning. In our minds, if you are not making the effort to look your best when we barely know each other, we dread the thought of what you'll look like a couple of months into the relationship.

The Unnecessary Pressure of Titles

Let the royals care about titles. One of the biggest mistakes you can make during the early hook is to suggest or even hint that things have started to formalize by assigning the labels “girlfriend” and “boyfriend.” Even if you feel like things are going in the right direction and that your relationship is getting more serious, there’s an extremely wide gulf between just being someone you’re dating and someone who has been officially proclaimed a boyfriend. **What your man wants you to know but won’t tell you is that affixing titles to the relationship too early is like holding up a cross to a vampire.** We will often run fast and hard when we feel like we’re being boxed into something we don’t want or is too premature.

So, what’s the resolution for you if calling him your boyfriend and yourself his girlfriend means a lot to you? The first option is simply to wait until you’re absolutely sure he feels the same way about making it official. Often we give subtle signs to indicate we’re ready. If we start talking about dating you exclusively, you can take that as a sign. If we introduce you to our close friends on several occasions, that’s a solid sign. If we let you stay in our apartment when we’re not there, that’s a *really* good sign. The number-one sign that we’re ready to go formal—we invite you to dinner with our mother. (Yes, it’s our mother that counts for this one, not our dad.)

If you're not satisfied with waiting for our signs, or you think you might not be able to read them, here's something you might try that could get the ball rolling faster. Be advised, however, that if you don't do this with the proper amount of skill and cool, then it can dramatically backfire: When he calls you up and asks if you want to go grab something to eat or catch a movie, don't answer him right away. Take a deliberate pause, and in your most apologetic voice say something that will test him. "I'd love to, but one of my girlfriends has been trying like crazy to get me to meet one of her brother's friends, and we were supposed to all get together tonight. I don't want to go, but I feel like I owe it to her since she's been trying so hard to make this happen." What comes next is critical. You need to listen very carefully and might need to read between the lines of what he says. Here are some of his possible responses:

- A. Okay, fine. Well, have fun and call me when you want to get together again.*
- B. You're going on a blind date? What's up with that?*
- C. Oh, I didn't know it was like that. I guess I should be going out with other people, too.*
- D. If I'm not enough for you, then no biggie. It's probably best we not see each other anymore.*
- E. So you were just gonna go out on this date and not tell me?*

There's a lot you need to take in with each of these responses, and how you handle them can work in your favor in a big way.

(A) Depending on his tone, he's either jealous but doesn't want to let on, he's neutral and it's okay, or he's pissed off and doesn't want you to see how angry he is. This

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isn't the most optimal response, because now you have to do a little detecting to figure out what he's really feeling, whether you need to nurse his wound or accept that he really doesn't care, in which case he's probably out there dating others so he's not going to give you a hard time. Your next step is to figure out what he wanted to say but didn't. Once you figure this part out, then you can react accordingly.

(B) This response gives you a perfect opportunity to bring up whether you're officially girlfriend and boyfriend without his feeling like you're pressuring him. Say to him in your most innocent voice, "We never talked about dating exclusively, and technically I'm not even your girlfriend, so I just figured it wasn't a big deal to you." Now the title issue is on the table, and he has to address it directly since he's the one who had a problem with your going out on a date with someone else. If you get this response, you are in a great position to stick in the hook.

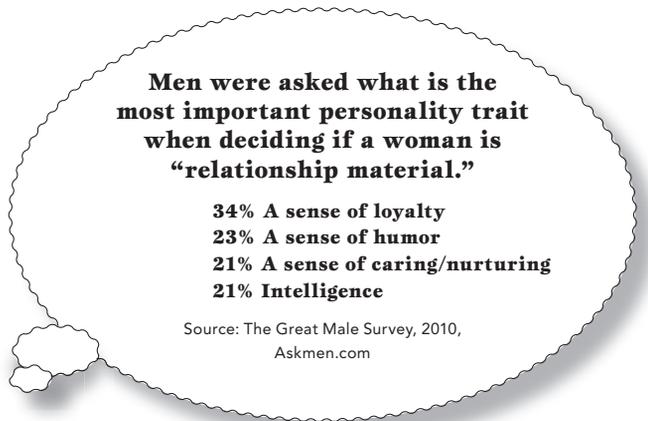
(C) Once again you have a prime opportunity to bring up whether or not things have gotten serious enough to go exclusive as boyfriend and girlfriend. See your response in B.

(D) His ego has definitely been bruised. He wants to tell you that you mean more to him than someone he's been casually dating, but he's having a hard time saying it. Rather than get into a back-and-forth about being more into you than you are into him, he makes the

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decision to just cut ties and run. Once again you have a chance to reel him in (as he has now exposed a vulnerability), but you must be strong and patient as you do so or he might slip away.

(E) Needless to say, this is a response from someone who is not exactly delighted about the current state of affairs. This response could go a couple of ways, so listen to his tone and make a judgment call. If it sounds



like he’s really upset and thinks that you were “cheating or being sneaky,” first you need to calm him. Once this is accomplished, then you can introduce the possibility of taking the relationship to the next stage. But you must be careful. If he’s really upset and becomes reactive or irrational, now is not the time to have the conversation about formalizing the relationship. However, if he appears somewhat annoyed but still reasonable, then go ahead and explain to him that you were not aware that the relationship was exclusive,

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especially since you weren't officially girlfriend and boyfriend, but if he wants to take the relationship to the next level, you're more than happy to go there.

Occasionally Unavailable, We Want You More

What your man wants you to know but won't tell you is that he is even more attracted to you when you're not always available to him. It's true that a guy looking for a one-night stand will only continue to converse and set you (and your girlfriends) up with drinks if he knows that at the end of the night he's going to get what he wants. That's not the guy you're looking for, so let's ignore that relatively small percentage of my brethren. But if you're looking to establish a relationship with the typical guy who's not some horn dog, you need to know that although he wants to spend time with you, he also wants to feel like you won't always be able to drop everything just because he calls you up and says, "Let's go out in an hour."

It's true, especially of us men, that what we can't have we tend to want even more. Not that we want you to be unavailable the majority of the time—that won't work, either, and we'd eventually stop calling and start looking somewhere else. While we hope you want to be with us every time we call, not being able to because you have other commitments is acceptable. The other commitments, of course, should not be dates with other men, and if they are, then don't tell us. Even if you don't have something else to do, it's still in your best interest to turn us down every once in a while. Just make sure you do it with your uniquely feminine charm, and leave the conversation on an up note. Telling us that while tonight won't work, but you want to see us

really soon prevents us from personalizing the rejection, because now we will leave the conversation feeling that if you didn't have other commitments you would've hung out with us. Even though we might not get what we want, that small ego stroke will go a long way.

A significant part of hooking us early means being careful not to send the wrong message. Though you think you're making us happy by always dropping everything to be with us, it can send unintended messages. And remember, we're men. In most cases you don't want to leave us to our own devices to interpret the nuances of what you're trying to convey. In our minds, being always available to us could mean more than you simply like us a lot. We might start thinking that you don't have a life of your own and have nothing else to do but hang out with us. If, in the beginning of our relationship, you already seem quite wrapped up in us, then we worry about what's going to happen when the relationship gets more serious. Are you going to suffocate us to death?

Too available can also mean too easy. If you don't present somewhat of a challenge to us, then we lose what is often one of the most exciting aspects of a budding relationship—the thrill of the hunt. **What your man wants you to know but won't tell you is that he doesn't mind having to put in some work (but not an overwhelming amount) to win you over.** Too much work—calling you more than three times before you return the call or agree to go out on a date—is also a problem. We're not going to stick around if we feel like we're at the bottom of a steep hill trying to push a two-ton boulder to the top. Still, we enjoy challenges, so if you can throw in some twists and turns on our path to your heart, we'll be more inclined to put forth a greater effort and see things to their culmination.

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THE SITUATION

You meet a guy at a friend's birthday party. You're attracted to him immediately. He's good-looking but not cocky, funny but not trying to be the life of the party. He is obviously well informed and has something smart to say about everything from politics to the recent slate of Oscar-nominated films. All the single women at the party have made their attempts, but he has politely sent them away empty-handed.

The two of you strike up a conversation, because he's interested in the gold and jade earrings that you're wearing. He says his grandmother had a similar pair that she passed down to his mother. You tell him the story of your earrings and how your grandfather bought them for your mother when he was stationed as a young serviceman in Japan. One conversation leads to another and before you know it, you're standing on a balcony overlooking the city, laughing at each other's jokes and comparing notes on the television shows you love to hate. He leaves with your phone number and e-mail address in his BlackBerry.

Three months have passed and dating him has gone extremely well. Your girlfriends think he's the catch of the year, and his friends couldn't be more welcoming. One day, at the encouragement of one of your girlfriends, you decide to join Facebook. You've resisted joining all this time because you've seen so many people get addicted to it, but she insists that it's so much fun and a great way to find and stay connected with old friends as well as make new ones. It takes you a few weeks to get comfortable in this whole social-networking arena, and you find that despite your early doubts you're actually enjoying it.

You decide to find your boyfriend's page, so you do a search. His surname is unique and you find him within seconds. You get to his page, and it's not like you're trying to be nosy or anything, but you decide to look around a little. The first thing you notice is the info section and it stops you cold. Under the section "Interested In" it says "Women." Under the section "Relationship Status"

it says "Single." When you set up your Facebook page, you made certain to list men as your interest. In the "Relationship Status" section, you had indicated you were unavailable. You go to his wall and look at his photo gallery. There are 115 photos and the only one of you is in a group shot taken at a restaurant. You weren't even sitting next to him. You search his entire page and there's no mention or even an indication that the two of you are dating. You go back to his info page and can't take your eyes off the line that says he's single. He isn't acknowledging that you are dating. *So now what do you do?*

(See The Handle #1)

Mandates Will Keep You Manless

One of my best friends and I were having dinner at a very popular restaurant in the Meatpacking District of New York City. The place was crowded with hip young professionals out after work for a drink and great food. It was a classic scene— attractive women decked out in the latest designer fashions and guys with expensive oversized watches, full of bravado, sending drinks up and down the bar in an effort to catch the attention of women. A table of women sat next to us, and in this restaurant the tables were practically on top of one another, so it felt like a community dinner. Things happen the way they often happen with single, fun-seeking people, and before dessert had been served my friend scored the number of one of the really attractive women who had been full of conversation and flirtatious banter.

The following week, after they had talked a couple of times

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on the phone and exchanged a few text messages, he asked her out to dinner. My friend has never suffered from lack of female attention, but I noticed that he was really excited about this date. All was set and he had lined up a reservation at one of the city's hottest restaurants. I wanted him to be successful for his sake, but admittedly there was an underlying selfishness to my rooting for him. If they hit it off there was a really good chance I would once again be in the company of her girlfriends—all of whom were attractive. I went to the gym while they went out, anxiously waiting to hear the report.

Disaster! My heart fell two feet when he recounted what happened. Yes, she looked amazing. Yes, she was successful in her career. Yes, she made great conversation. But where everything turned south was when she got on a riff about what she required from men who wanted to date her. Her list was longer than an Amtrak commuter train. It was one mandate after another. *A man must bring me fresh flowers when he picks me up at my apartment. A man must always take me out to eat before or after we go to the movies. A man must never pick up his phone if we're in the middle of a conversation. A man must always carry my drink from the bar to our table when we sit down to eat.* I was getting nauseous just listening to him. Needless to say, despite how physically attracted my friend was to her, it was their first and only date. He found himself staring up a hill that had a ninety-degree slope. Forget it. **What your man wants you to know but won't tell you is that if there're too many rules in the beginning of a relationship, he's gone.** Too complicated too soon is a strong indication to us that things will only get worse. We are well aware that the numbers are in our favor, so we'll play the odds and wait for someone who doesn't give us so much hassle.

It's completely fine for you to have certain requirements that you expect a man to meet if you're going to have a relationship. We know that you all have your list of *musts*, and you should. But you have to be careful of the length of this list or you will find yourself creating an ideal that simply doesn't exist in the real world. "He must be over six feet, have a college degree, make six figures a year, speak two languages, have washboard abs, never have been previously engaged, live on his own, like the same kind of music, be sensitive . . ." I've heard about these "must lists" from some of my female friends who were frustratingly single. There was no doubt in my mind why they couldn't hook a man. There was no chance in hell they could find a man who could meet their ridiculously long list of mandates. The first thing I told them was to either cut the list down or create an A list and a B list. The A list should be the things that were non-negotiable, while the B list should be things that they would like to have in an ideal situation but could do without and still be content. Two of my female friends took my advice and literally within three months their year-long drought ended and they were happily dating again.

The second thing to be careful about when sharing your mandates with a prospective boyfriend is timing. It's fine to reveal a couple of items from your list, but releasing them all at once in rapid fire is overwhelming. Think of it as the difference between being fired upon by a single-action six-shooter versus a machine gun. We can duck and dodge the six-shooter, but we stand no chance against a machine gun, even if the shooter's aim is bad. If your goal is to kill a potential relationship, delivering all of your mandates at once is a sure way to reach it.

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The More Others Look, the More We Want You

Men want other men to want their women. It's that basic, and it's all related to male ego. I remember one of my best friends dating a stunning woman who was almost six feet tall, with an angled jaw, thick dark hair that fell generously down her back, and light blue eyes that glowed like headlights. She was so attractive that even women would stare at her in awe. Some of my friend's proudest moments were when he watched other men watch her as she walked across a crowded room or bar with those long, purposeful strides cutting a direct path to where he was sitting. Those ten or fifteen seconds that it took for her to complete her journey felt like an hour as heads swiveled, mouths opened, and eyes squinted. **What your man wants you to know but won't tell you is that he wants you even more when others want you.**

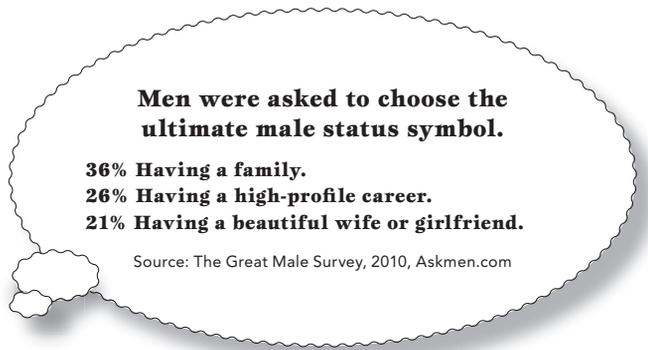
When the hottest woman in the room that every eye is following sits down and kisses us, it feels like a crate of fireworks is going off inside our body. Not only is it a quiet statement to the other guys in the room that we have our act together, but it is an absolute turn-on. I, too, had gotten lucky meeting a great woman from Chicago. Every time I watched other guys watch my date, I not only wanted her even more, but it was another affirmation that I was fortunate to have her and should do everything in my power to keep her. She didn't know this, but she was hooking me simply by others wanting her.

Being desirable, however, doesn't mean you go out and get the shortest dress, the highest heels, and a severely plunging neckline that all scream you want attention. Any guy is going to take a second look at a woman dressed like that, so it doesn't count. But there are other ways to be desirable that don't require physical

beauty. You can put yourself together in a classy way that still draws the immediate attention of others, and something magical happens to the guy who walks out of the restaurant with you on his arm. Carrying yourself with confidence and elegance can go further and last longer and is always going to make us want you even more.

The Eight-Letter Word

Marriage. This word is one of the greatest land mines on your path to a stable and deepening relationship. Let's first dispense with the myths. Men *do* want to get married. Not all men are look-



ing to be bachelors into their eighties only to marry a relatively pubescent twenty-something-year-old. Marriage does not scare us. It's so easy to blame everything on us for not wanting to get married, but the simple truth is that we are open and excited about marriage—with the right person at the right time, of course.

What your man wants you to know but won't tell you is that early use of the word "marriage" is an instant red flag, even if you're using it in the most innocent of ways.

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Men are programmed to stay as far away as possible from marriage conversations, because once we go there we know it's like opening up a floodgate with the exit blocked off. There is no way out. We are coached on this subject by our fathers and uncles and older friends. Usually they start with, "Listen, champ. Don't make the same mistake I made," and then the lesson begins. Typically they explain that it wasn't a mistake to get married, but it's the timing of their marriage that they regret, be it from getting married too early in life before they had a chance to sow their oats to wishing they had been with their wife longer so that they understood her better before tying the knot. It's when we enter into our late teens and our relationships with girls start taking on more serious consequences and overtones, we start getting counseled on the perils of rushed or ill-advised marriages.

Even if you think that we are marriage material—even if you are really excited about getting married—it is not the smartest move to broach the subject before you've been going out with someone for at least a year. Why a year? Well, there's nothing magical about it, but if your relationship has lasted at least a year, something is working and things are stable enough that a mention of the eight-letter word isn't going to freak your man out and make him run. But even then, you have to exercise caution. Rather than take the direct approach, you might make an innocent comment related to something you're reading—a celebrity getting engaged or an invitation you've received to a friend's wedding. The stealth approach almost always works better than tackling this issue head-on. Coming at it sideways won't scare your man, and he will be more inclined to participate, because it will strike him as just another casual conversation rather than a full-on, intense talk you've been waiting to spring on him at the right moment.

On the flip side, a lot of women think that they're making themselves more attractive to men by stating that they don't want to get married, or don't want children. This might not matter to a guy who's in his teens or early twenties, but for an older guy it's something that will undoubtedly backfire. You might think that making these proclamations—whether true or false—will create the appealing image in your man's mind that you're just a free spirit willing to have a good time without any need for commitment, but you're really boxing yourself into a position from which it's going to be difficult to escape. Yes, your man might lower his marriage guard and partner with you in what he thinks will be a relaxed and satisfying relationship. You even may have him hooked, but that hook is attached to a very flimsy string that can break any minute.

Men don't mind having a good time with women, but if they perceive you to be someone who doesn't have long-term potential, you've placed an automatic cap on your relationship, and we will think of and treat you in a manner consistent with someone who will not be around years down the road. If this is what you want, then you're all set. But if you really want a deeper relationship, then you are in trouble for the simple fact that his mindset and the way he views you are going to be difficult to change. You've offered him an extended version of going to Vegas or South Beach or wherever the good times roll, and that it's completely acceptable to hook up with a girl he might not see past the weekend. In a sense you now have become that weekend girl—permanently. Because you're the one who voluntarily put yourself in that box, he feels completely fine having fun with you, all the while still looking for that "right" woman, the woman who will bear his children, take long walks on the beach, and grow old with him. You might not notice any obvious signs of his

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pursuing another relationship, but you can be certain that his mind is open and he is quietly surveying the landscape for that special someone. And when that person flies across his radar, he's going to lock target and fire. He will leave you in a second to go collect his prize and not feel a single ounce of guilt, because you're the one who gave him the gun permit by saying that you don't see yourself getting married or having children or both. Remember, the danger of playing games in a relationship is that there's always a chance—regardless of how small or large—that you might come out on the losing side.

THE HANDLE #1

Before you ask him any questions, ask yourself the first one: Have the two of you agreed to be in an exclusive relationship? If the answer is yes, then you should definitely have concerns about his status posting. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, he might've forgotten to change the status after the two of you got together, but this is unlikely. Avid Facebookers regularly update their pages.

The other thing that should give you pause is that there are no real photos of the two of you showing you're together. The only photo out of 115 of you is in a group shot, which is another strong sign that something is amiss.

If the two of you have not agreed on an exclusive relationship or haven't discussed it, now is not the time to attack him, but you do need to have this conversation ASAP. You need to confront the issue without being confrontational. The worst thing you could do is go after him in an accusatory fashion that would immediately provoke him to defend himself or strike out verbally, and this would not be productive.

Try a softer approach. It might even be helpful to throw in a little humor:

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"Can I submit my application?" you jest.

"Application for what?" he says.

"To be in a relationship with you."

"What are you talking about? We're in a relationship."

You give him that squinted-eye look with your head half-cocked. Your body language remains light and accessible.

"I was hoping you'd say that," you say. "Then you might want to update your Facebook page. It still says that you're single."

There are several ways to execute this conversation, but the bottom line is to get an honest answer from him without accusing him and getting into a shouting match. You want him to tell the truth about what he feels about your relationship but you don't want him to give you answers under duress because he's simply trying to placate you. Remember, you can attract more bees with honey than you can with vinegar.

CHEAT SHEET

WHAT YOU KNOW NOW

A man's initial attraction is all about your appearance and physical being that sends a lot of highly charged testosterone racing through his veins.

Affixing titles to the relationship too early is like holding up a cross to a vampire.

Men are even more attracted to you when you're not always available.

Men don't mind having to put in some work (but not an overwhelming amount) to win you over.

Too many rules in the beginning of a relationship and your man is gone.

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