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[ARTICLE]

Etiquette of apathy overcomes sexual revolution

By Sascha Liebowitz

Here's a little puzzle for you: A man and a woman meet. They have a wonderful conversation, hit it off, exchange numbers, and promise to call. Neither one does. Have they:

- a) decided that the other wasn't so fascinating?
- b) become too immersed in work to make room for new social additions?
- c) died?
- d) none of the above?

The fact is that each one is waiting for the other to call. What is it about this generation? When it comes to dating, why are we so paralyzed? It's too facile to put all the blame on AIDS, date rape, or the old standby, Fear of Rejection. Why has there been such an increase in social reticence since our parents' day, and even since the days of our older siblings?

Both men and women complain that their social efforts are met with passivity. It may be that we have become desensitized by the sex in advertising, movies, and music, but somehow I doubt it. The desire for love and sex is a great equalizer--a base of unity, if you will. Our paralysis stems from a fundamental breakdown in the systems of communication on all levels.

Words have become so overloaded with meanings that they are meaningless. There are gender specific differences in the way we communicate both verbally and behaviorly. Proper etiquette, once clearly defined, is now ambiguous, and consequently useless.

Cliches, stereotypes, and gender roles provided a framework to our social dances. Gone are the days of hanky dropping. The gradual

cementing of the sexes' feminist enlightenment has brought intense confusion. Masculine and feminine have become "bad," uns-poken words. But of course men want to be masculine and have feelings while women want to be, yes, feminine without sacrificing feminism. I don't know how these concepts of "feminine" and "feminism" have come to be seen as opposing since they naturally coexist. We have become spokespersons rather than people; our humanity has become submerged beneath a layer of loaded words and "signifiers."

Like most good things, a strong bond of equality between the sexes will come only after a stage of unpleasant transition. This period of flux may be necessary. But at the shakedown, we'll make the startling revelation that feminism is about respect, not shaving, and men are sentient beings too.

But for now, we're in this unpleasant phase. It is not anti-feminist for a man to ask a woman out on a date. It's quite pleasant. A woman is not pushy, aggressive, or licentious if she asks a man out; she just wants to go out with him. These statements are so tired, but in our frenzy to reconcile getting laid and being politically correct, we've missed the point. The etiquette of apathy is the anti-climax of the sexual revolution. Inertia has been our response to the opportunity to act according to our desires rather than to social codes.

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