

Anarchic Love by Brook van der Linde

I lie on my bed grossly entrenched in a stack of the latest issues of *Cosmopolitan*. Some of the cover stories include “25 Things They Never Want You To Say,” “How to Talk to Him So He’ll Listen,” “55 Things You Can Learn About Him in 10 Minutes,” “All About Your Guy-Inside His Head, Inside His Heart, Inside His...,” and the list goes on.

In 1997, Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider wrote a book titled *The Rules*. The book serves as a guide to finding Mr. Right and having him fall madly in love with you. Thirty-five rules are given with the promise that if followed religiously, the man of your dreams will become the man of your reality. Rule 3 states, “Don’t Stare or Talk Too Much.” Rule 5—“Don’t Call Him and Rarely Return His Phone Calls.” Rule 33 claims, “Do The Rules and You’ll Live Happily Ever After!” Correct me if I’m wrong, but I believe Cinderella found her happily ever after without *The Rules*.

We see a lot of material on both of these subjects—there are books, magazines, research, and theories which all claim to have the answers to our greatest inquiries. With so many guides out there, it’s hard to determine which rules we’re following, which ones we’re breaking, which ones are new, and which ones have been dismissed. Should we be a quiet girl, a party girl, play hard to get, or give him everything he wants? The time has come to discover the truth behind the great schism of the sexes, and how we women can really win a man’s heart. We can now disprove the notion that “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,” and prove that we’re not as different as we may think (don’t be scared, this is a good thing). Finally, we are able to denounce the rules that are so pressed upon us and realize that all is fair in love.

Of course we must mention at least some of the most obvious and distinct male characteristics before we can draw any similarities between the sexes. We women have all been exposed to those super-human noises and aromas that guys take such pride in producing. We’re so grateful when they leave the empty toilet paper roll for us to replace, and they’re so considerate that they’ll even leave the empty cookie box in the pantry, just to give us that small glimmer of hope. If there’s one behavior that I have come to understand most about guys, it is that they tend to stray from the rules. True story—I was about seven years old, helping my mom prepare dinner in the kitchen. All of a sudden my brother rushes through the front door, takes a swig of O.J. from the container, places the container back in the refrigerator, and resumes his outdoor activities. “Lesson number one,” says my mom. “Don’t ever let me catch you drinking straight from the carton—it’s the perfect way to spread germs. If you’re thir.....” As she continued with this lecture on proper refrigerator etiquette, my not-so-timely dad comes wandering into the kitchen, opens up the refrigerator, takes a swig of juice, swishes it around like a mouthful of Listerine, and lets out a satisfied, “Aaaaaah.”

For the most part we accept these differences in behavior and don’t give any one of them much thought. However, one aspect of the male gender has led to great efforts of understanding and analysis. Women are perplexed by a man’s approach to dating and finding the perfect partner. How do we become this desirable woman they’re searching for, and how do we maintain their interest to win their heart forever? We remain in deep thought on this perplexity.

By now you’re probably saying, “Get to the point. How do I find the key to his heart?” You can start by accepting this one simple fact: men and women are really very similar when it comes to their views on relationships and their desires for companionship. Just as women are attracted to intelligent,

witty, charismatic men, so, too, are men attracted to women that have more than just an attractive physical appearance.

Now, let me be the first to say that if I were reading this work I would stop right about....now. But, reason with me for just another moment. I know we've heard it all our lives, "Beauty's on the inside," "Guys go for girls with personality." And then what do we see?—our three-year crush turns us down for some long-legged, fake blonde with the personality of a rock, and the IQ of well . . . a rock. There's a delusional time in any man's life when he attaches true love with a pretty face, or a "hot bod." Trust me, though, the good ones make it to the other side. Believe it or not, they begin looking for something . . . more (I realize this is shocking, but I urge you to continue reading). These girls serve their purpose during the time when guys feel they must prove themselves to one another. Soon enough, they accomplish this and begin on a search for inner qualities as opposed to a nice tan or big set of.....blue eyes.

Still not believing the whole "Maybe we're not as different as we thought" deal? If you aren't buying my logical argument, consider this more scientific one. It is proven fact that all humans begin life as females (Sanghavi 216). Dr. Darshak Sanghavi, a graduate of both Harvard and Johns Hopkins University, as well as an established pediatrician, describes it as such: "It is the presence of a single piece of DNA called the SRY gene—the key portion of the Y-chromosome—that turns males into males." He goes on to conclude, "Not only are we all programmed to become female, but those of us who do become male are only so because our mothers' bodies decreed it." Outstanding evidence, I would say, that although we may sometimes feel we are from separate worlds, we all start from the very same place.

So, how should all this "we're one-and-the-same" business affect our approach to dating? When we realize that we're not so different we can ease up a little and act more natural. These various sets of rules that have been devised for women to follow take the assumption that men and women are two completely different species, only furthering the belief by both sexes that a great gender divide exists. If both men and women were to alter this mindset before entering the realm of the dating world, the rules could be ignored and love could return to its natural state of lawlessness. Sure a little hard-to-get may spark some initial interest, but where's all the fun in an endless game of cat and mouse? Let *The Rules*, or your rules, or anyone's rules for that matter, go.

One dictionary definition of the term love is to "take pleasure or delight in" ("Love"). Personally, I find it hard to take pleasure in a set of guidelines that rob love of its spontaneous nature. Someone who acts naturally, and follows their heart is all anyone, male or female, could ever really ask for. Embrace the small differences (even when it's hard because the bag of double-dipped chocolate fudge cookies you pulled from the cabinet is empty) and realize that many of the major differences we've come to believe exist, really don't. We are not so different from men that we must try to "catch" them, as Fein and Schneider put it. Take a few lessons from our male counterparts. Drink from the container, be real, and love without *The Rules*.

Works Cited

- Darshak, Sanghavi. *A Map of the Child: A Pediatrician's Tour of the Body*. New York: Holt, 2003.
- Fein, Ellen, and Sherrie Schneider. Introduction. "The Rules." 1997. Rpt. In *Writing Logically Thinking Critically*. Ed. Sheila Cooper and Rosemary Patton. New York: Longman, 2001. 569-573.
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