

Don't Be Outraged by this Teacher's Dating Advice. Pass it On!

About a decade ago, my husband took me to dinner at the famous 21 Club in New York. The former speakeasy opened in 1930 and still has an old-fashioned air about it. After staring at the menu for a few minutes, I looked up puzzled. "Psst, I don't see any prices," I whispered. My husband gave me an equally puzzled look. "What are you talking about?" It turned out that women, at least back then, were given menus without prices.

The idea that women and men had different roles on dates was not such a radical idea when the 21 Club first opened. But these days it is considered the height of insult, and perhaps insanity.

Take the example of the high school teacher from Utah who recently [gave her students](#) an assignment called "The \$5 Date," in which the students were supposed to find partners and go on a date that cost no more than \$5. The assignment also included separate instructions on dating behavior for the boys and girls. According to an [article](#) on the website, Babble, these instructions are "sparking confusion, disbelief, and even outrage."

In fact, these instructions are perfect, and more men and women should take them to heart.

The instructions included suggestions such as, "If you don't want to go out with the guy, tell him, don't make excuses." What a nice start. "Eat the food you order. Don't waste his money." This is also good advice when you are out with anyone else too, including your parents. So is "dress appropriately" and "be ready on time."

But then there are some other ideas that are clearly directed specifically at women for behavior they might be tempted to demonstrate on dates. "If you think you're too fat, etc., keep it to yourself." "Don't fish for compliments." "Be feminine and lady-like. Don't use vulgar language or swear." "Don't talk about, flirt, text or check out other guys when on a date."

Perhaps the folks on the Internet who are outraged by these suggestions believe that women have every right to use vulgar language and swear. Or that they can be completely insufferable when it comes to their appearance. Or that they should keep shopping around while they're out with someone else. There's no law stopping women from doing these things, of course, but women who do shouldn't expect that their dates will want to go out again.

And what about the men? Well, the assignment advises them to make a plan for the date, use good table manners, refrain from gross noises and also to dress appropriately. Who are the women who would object to these instructions? Maybe they dislike the part where men are told: "Don't feel *entitled* to a kiss (or more)." Sure, it's no ["affirmative consent,"](#) but it seems to be a more thoughtful and effective approach to teaching men about respecting women's right to refuse their advances.

Perhaps Internet folks are upset that men are supposed to show respect to the girl's parents or consider bringing her flowers, other advice offered by the teacher to the men in her class. Is it the notion that men should be on time? Or the suggestion that men shouldn't exaggerate to their friends about what happened on the date?

I'm pretty sure that most young women I know would be *thrilled* if the men they were hanging out with adhered to such rules. But that's all beside the point. According to *Babble's* Leslie Gaar, "Reducing young women to the role of the subservient,

‘ladylike’ follower and elevating young men to that of the strong, ‘superior’ leader is the quickest way to set back gender roles several decades.” I have no idea why the word “superior” is in quotes since it’s not used in the guidelines. Perhaps Gaar hasn’t noticed that things are not going very well in the world of male-female relations. From drunken hookups to sexual assaults to Tinder, most young men and women don’t seem all that thrilled with the dating world they’ve been thrown into.

Gaar makes the ludicrous claim that women who adhere to the dating standards suggested by the teacher—like not criticizing his driving, unless it’s unsafe—are actually at greater risk for sexual assault. This is the worst sort of fear-mongering. Any suggestion that men and women have different roles drive people like Gaar over the edge, but the notion that men who are instructed to “look out for her well-being on a date” will take it as a cue that they are entitled to act like some kind of Neanderthal is absurd.

If teachers aren’t allowed to pass out such instructions—in a country where we regularly offer the most explicit sorts of sexual education in schools—then parents should do us all a favor: Take a moment and print them out for your children tonight. Heeding the advice of this teacher couldn’t make matters in the dating world any worse. And it might even make them a little better.

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