

# 'How to Handle a Woman'

Now, there's a title that will wake the woke, particularly females, and send them roaring my way with brickbats and scalping knives. That word "handle" in particular splashes kerosene on the fires of rage, implying as it does some sort of manipulator.

Yet "How to Handle a Woman" is the name of a [song](#) in the 1960 musical *Camelot*, later made into a movie with Richard Harris playing the part of King Arthur. Utterly confounded by his wife Guinevere, Arthur recollects in song some words of advice from a "wise old man."

*'How to handle a woman?  
There's a way,' said the wise old man,  
'A way known by ev'ry woman  
Since the whole rigmarole began.'  
'Do I flatter her?' I begged him answer.  
'Do I threaten or cajole or plead?  
Do I brood or play the gay romancer?'  
Said he, smiling: 'No indeed.  
How to handle a woman?  
Mark me well, I will tell you, sir:  
The way to handle a woman  
Is to love her ... simply love her ...  
Merely love her ... love her ... love her.'*

Solid advice, but for decades we Americans have made a Himalayan-sized mess of love, romance, and the timeless relationship between women and men. We've spent 50 years "empowering" girls and women, remodeling them with traditional male traits like assertiveness while, at the same time, trying to make boys and men more feminine. Search online for "[what is a woman](#)" and "[can men have babies](#)," and you'll see we've even mucked up the basic definitions of a man and a woman. We've

allowed everything from academic theories to political propaganda to set up barriers to one of the most intense of human needs and emotions: the love between a man and a woman.

What follows here is a brief message aimed primarily at men in this wintertime of our confusion. Ladies—yes, yes, I know, that complimentary title offends some among you and increases my risk of being pilloried, but I’m old-school—are welcome to come along if you so choose.

Recently, gentlemen, I reread Anne Tyler’s novel [Vinegar Girl](#). Modeled after the vexatious Kate in Shakespeare’s [The Taming of the Shrew](#), Kate Battista is an unhappy, tactless woman in her late 20s. She is finagled into a relationship with her scientist-father’s brilliant assistant, Pyotr, who is about to be deported. Her dad cooks up a scheme for Kate and Pyotr to marry, which will allow Pyotr to remain in the United States, and it’s then that the sparks fly. Eventually, Kate comes, in her own way, to love and cherish Pyotr—so much so that, at a family celebration of her wedding, she offers an explanation and defense of male pride and stoicism that should make most of us stand up and cheer. Here’s a part of that speech:

“‘It’s *hard* being a man. Have you ever thought about that? Anything that’s bothering them, men think they have to hide it. ... No matter if they’re hurting or desperate or stricken with grief, if they’re heartsick or they’re homesick or some huge dark guilt is hanging over them or they’re about to fail big-time at something—“Oh, I’m okay,” they say. “Everything’s just fine.” They’re a whole lot less free than women are, when you think about it.’”

Now, here is an author who understands something of what it is to be a man.

About the same time, I watched [The Proposal](#) where Sandra Bullock stars as Margaret Tate, an insensitive, hard-driving editor who makes Shakespeare’s Kate look like an angel. Her

co-workers despise and fear her, and she treats her assistant, Andrew Paxton (Ryan Reynolds), like an indentured servant. Like Pyotr, the Canadian Margaret finds herself in danger of being deported after allowing her visa to lapse, and by threats and bribery, she induces Andrew to marry her, promising to promote him to editor if he'll appear at the altar. After a series of comical mistakes and missteps, Margaret has an attack of conscience and flees the wedding. Andrew pursues her back to New York where he "handles" Margaret by declaring his love for her, asks her to marry him, and kisses her.

So, how do these two very different men, Pyotr and Andrew, win the hearts of these forceful, embittered women?

It's simple, really: Pyotr loves Kate, and Andrew loves Margaret. As a result, they are loved in return.

Not all love is reciprocated, but for the right two people, it will be. And that's the foundation of marriages, which form families, which are the foundation of society. For years now, our culture has bombarded us with countless lectures and commentaries, scores of books, and an eternity of hours spent with therapists, all trying to explain men to women and women to men. All have failed, and thank heavens for that, for what would romance be without mystery? So, here's the key takeaway, guys: We don't have to understand the women we love. All we have to do is love the women we love.

Make "*vive la différence*" your motto, and you'll be a happier person.

Oh, and don't forget: Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Here's just one more chance to say, in some very special way, "I love you."

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