



the art of FLIRTING

Gone are the days of brazen women who fluttered their eyelashes at every dusty cowboy looking for laughs—today, women have elevated the act of flirting to a dignified high art. To discover the finer points of modern flirtations, *CW* Assistant Editor Lora Wintz spoke with Susan Rabin, author of *How To Attract Anyone, Anytime, Anyplace*. This flirtatious expert reveals what every woman needs to know to become a master at tempting love . . .

The Purpose of Flirting.

When you get ready to play nice, your ultimate goal should not be to get married, it should be to have *fun*. "Flirting is acting amorously without serious intent," proclaims Susan. "Your goal is to have a good time, be playful, to meet people."

Where The Flirting Is. "Anyplace is a flirting place," declares Susan. Some of today's most popular hang-outs: coffee bars, bookstores and interest groups. Susan suggests trying a place where you know you have something in common with the men. "That way you can strike up a conversation about what you share."

What To Wear. Dress flirtatiously, of course! That means, "in a feminine, stylish, pretty way . . . and accent your best features, that's always a good idea." Susan warns, though, against dressing too seductively. "Men say to me, 'When women dress sexily, we can't help it, we think they're interested in sex.'" So if you're flirting for fun, not for action, avoid the low-cut, skin-tight, thigh-high special . . .

Flirting With Actions. There are 52 gestures a woman can use to let a man know she's interested. According to Susan, some of the tried-

Lessons For Tempting Love

and-true tricks include: *Eye contact*—"Linger a little longer with the glance, then look away, then linger." *Smile*—"Not a wide grin, but an inviting smile." *Little gestures*:—"The head toss, playing with the hair, fingering the jewelry—invitational body language that's not seductive, but invites the man to approach."

If you're an especially attractive woman, Susan warns that you may need to try a bit harder to get those signals across. "Men get intimidated by (beautiful women)."

Flirting With Words. Small talk will get you everywhere, says Susan. She suggests starting with questions that require more than a yes or no answer, perhaps keying into something around you. "What did you think of that lecture?" "Do you like the band?" Then start asking questions about him. "Get him talking and be a good listener . . . ask him what he likes, what he does for fun. (Remember) first impressions are important. If you come on strongly, very sexual as opposed to open and friendly, that's the way you're going to be perceived," points out the author.

How To Flirt With A Stranger.

"You have to remember that men are shy," explains Susan. "They don't always know what to say and they need a little encouragement from women. You should be open and available in your body language, eye contact and smile so that a man (feels he) can come over and start a conversation." Susan tells the story of how she saw a man on the bus and made eye contact with him across the aisle. When they both got off the bus, and went into the same store, he joked with her, "I'm not following you, honestly." They started talking and that conversation led to a five-year relationship. Susan says, "I was open to it. I sent off signals and I watched for opportunities to open a conversation."

If you don't feel comfortable making eye contact with strangers, Susan suggests using props as an invitation. "If you have a book, or something somebody can mention, it could help start a conversation."

How To Flirt With A Friend.

If you suddenly become interested in a man who has up to now been "only a friend," there are ways to flirt and catch his attention in a new light. "If they've always seen you in jeans, go out one day with them all dressed up and looking gorgeous . . . show yourself as a sexy woman rather than just a friend. Or you could talk about other men you've gone out with and see if there's any reaction." Susan also suggests

When He's Flirting With You

Now that you've got your part down, it's time to learn a little bit about the opposite sex. How will you know when he's flirting with you? What can you do to make it easier? Susan Rabin has a few pointers to keep in mind the next time you see him staring at you from across a crowded room . . .

• **Watch for body language.** "Men will pump out their chest a little bit, fidget some and stroke their hair. They'll lean in and have a little pelvic tilt. A man will also give eye contact—that's

really important. Sometimes he'll stare . . . he won't have the subtle eye contact . . . because he really finds a woman attractive."

• **Encourage him.** "Men are shy and confused about women—they're definitely looking for your signals and encouragement. You may even have to coax the flirt out of them."

• **Be patient.** "Most men think they have to have a line. They feel awkward and they want those magic words that will make

them look good. Women should forgive them a little bit if their first line isn't too clever. Give them a chance to go through the second sentence or the third sentence."

• **Be nice.** "A lot of men have said to me, 'Women are so bitchy, so nasty, so rude.' They've had bad experiences with women putting them down or cutting them off, and so they're a little reticent. You should never be rude. If you don't want to be with him, then you should just politely excuse yourself." *CW*

getting a little more romantic. "Get a little touchy, give little compliments. Say things like, 'We're such good friends—it's a shame it's not a romance because (friendship) is the basis of a good relationship.' Put a little idea in his head."

When He Doesn't Flirt Back.

When you realize you've attracted the attention of everybody around you except for him, try giving him a little more time. "Then, if he doesn't hold the glance with you or he doesn't respond to your conversation, go on to someone else. It's a numbers game, you know, and he's not the last man in the world. You want somebody who's interested in you. It's no fun to be the only one involved in a relationship."

If you don't think you can just give up, Susan proposes one last attempt. "Give him a card with your name and telephone number and say, 'I just met you and too bad we don't have more time.' You put the ball in his court. If he wants to call, yes! If not, it's over. You should know that when you make an aggressive move, you may be rejected. But that's okay—it's part of the game."

How To Flirt When You're Not A Flirt.

Flirting isn't just for the overt anymore; even if you consider yourself conservative, you *can* flirt. "You've (just) got to change your attitude towards flirting," says Susan. "Flirting is not negative, it's not manip-

ulative, it's not cheesy, and a woman is not slutty (for flirting). It's just a way to meet someone."

If you're still a little uncomfortable about flirting, Susan advises taking baby steps. "Start in a quiet and comfortable place and make eye contact with someone. Set a goal to make eye contact with five people a day. The next step would be to say hello, then start a conversation. Start with men you feel natural, comfortable with, then move onto someone you think you might be interested in. Like everything else, you have to practice."

How Not To Flirt. "You should never ask a man right away what he does for a living, or 'Is that a Mercedes I see? Is that a Rolex? It sounds like you're a gold-digger and men hate to be success objects," proclaims Susan. "Also, a woman who's very shrill and loud, overbearing and pushy and aggressive turns men off."

On a safety note, Susan warns, "There is danger out there. Sometimes even a nice guy, if they're drinking too much, can push it and get out of control." She recommends keeping a clear head to avoid getting into any potentially harmful situations. **CW**

Susan Rabin is a relationship therapist based in New York. Along with her partner, Robin Gorman Newman, Susan opened "The School of Flirting," in New York City during the month of October, with plans of going national shortly thereafter. The School consists of monthly socials held at comedy clubs and will include a variety of social games, discussions, mixers and other activities designed to promote socializing. For more information on "The School of Flirting," please call 1-800-95-FLIRT.

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