

**THE BLUFFER'S GUIDE
TO
WOMEN**

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THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING WOMEN

There isn't one.

From the beginning of time, women have induced ecstasy, provoked murder, caused wars and left indelible evidence on countless collars – all the while proclaiming ignorance of what the fuss is about.

Men, who claim to know everything worth knowing, are happy to admit that they cannot understand women. As Thackeray put it: 'When I say that I know women, I mean I know that I don't know them. Every single woman I ever knew is a puzzle to me, as, I have no doubt, she is to herself.'

The fact is that both sexes rather like to perpetuate this belief. Women enjoy the feeling of being all – knowing but unknowable: it gives them a rare edge. Men like to absolve themselves of the need to work it out – without a sense of personal failure. If no man can understand women, it's not his fault if he doesn't.

It may be heartening to know immediately that there are a great many things about women that even women don't understand. When discussing women, therefore, it is useful to assume that no – one has the faintest idea

what they are talking about, and the person who wins the argument on the subject can only be a bluffer.

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES

Men and women are now held to be equal, but they are not the same. This has to be acknowledged, even by die - hard males who defiantly see women as flawed versions of themselves, and by women in boiler suits who see men as superfluous.

While men believe themselves to be ordinary, common or garden members of the human race (well, never that ordinary, of course) women know they are different, something apart. They have a perspective on the world that is uniquely their own.

Body Design

Whatever the standpoint, no - one can dispute that men and women are built to totally different specifications:

- a) Women are rounder, softer to the touch and smell a lot better.
- b) Women's most essential equipment is kept tidily within the engine housing. Men have an exterior telescopic urinary device that seems to have a mind of its own.
- c) Women's bodies naturally contain more fat *

25% of their body weight, compared with 121 * 2% in men's. This has advantages as insurance against cold and as an aid to buoyancy.

- d) Unlike men, women have useful breasts that can produce milk when called upon and store fat for times of famine. In fact, only one third of the breast is devoted to the function of lactation, the rest is food - storage. As it happens, big breasts do not necessarily mean successful breast - feeding because they can get clogged with fat glands which obstructs milk - production. It is a well - known maxim of the farmyard that you shouldn't buy a fat cow.
- e) Women are equipped with a magical component that transforms men's impetuous spermatozoa into human beings.

The XX Factor

Every human has a string of 23 pairs of chromosomes (the genetic markers that carry hereditary features such as blue eyes, knock knees and preferred choice of cocktail). Until the seventh week after conception, the foetus is gender - dormant but at this point, if the child is to be male, the solitary 'Y' in its XY pair of sex chromosomes kicks in - and the production of another little lord and master

is set in motion. If the child is to be a female, its XX sex chromosome ensures that the foetus continues blithely on its female path.

The female, therefore, can be seen as what, in computer technology, is termed the 'default' programme – that is, the one the machine is coded to use unless instructed otherwise. So much for the story of Creation: clearly Eve was not made from Adam's rib, but Adam simply a chip off the eternal Eve.

Male bluffers could try arguing that the creative input of the male Y chromosome represents something positive and clever in itself. However, females might respond that it can equally well be viewed as an afterthought, and that the fact that maleness is only accounted for by 1/46th of a person's heredity makes it very small beer. Or in Zsa – Zsa Gabor's words: 'Macho doesn't mean mucho.'

The XX factor has a number of advantages over the XY:

- Women are less prone to colour blindness.
- Women have a more acute sense of hearing, taste, smell and touch.
- Women's eyes adjust faster, so they can see better in the dark, useful for slamming the alarm clock button before dawn.

The XX chromosome also carries a socialising gene, the 'sugar and spice and all things nice' of the nursery rhyme. The male lacks this ready-made factor. He has to learn to be nice.

Doctors are likely to tell you that it is hard enough identifying genes that cause major illnesses, let alone something as vague and fancy as socialising genes. But you should not let science get in the way of a good idea.

Blame Oestrogen

It is the sex hormone oestrogen that effectively makes a woman a woman. Produced chiefly in her ovaries, oestrogen brings about a woman's metamorphosis at puberty from beanbag to egg-timer, activates her womb and controls her moon-like cycle. It is the decline in oestrogen production in late middle age that sets off the menopause and makes women vulnerable to brittle bones. The male equivalent is testosterone, produced by the testes (balls to most of us).

Because oestrogen governs the way their bodies are formed, including their brains, hormones really do affect women's behaviour. Hence a woman's entitlement to blame them for:

- being assailed by lurid fantasies about the window cleaner

- purchasing tins of floor polish when the whole house is carpeted wall to wall
- snapping at her husband for mislaying her keys
- Bobbiting her partner for playing away while he is under the influence of testosterone.

Oestrogen is metabolised by the liver which might explain why women have a lower alcohol tolerance than men, especially when at their most fertile – their bodies are too busy making them fecund to process the booze. This may also be nature's crafty way of ensuring that a woman is at her most uninhibited at the very best time to conceive.

The Brain

Women's brains are also constructed differently. Men's brains are on average bigger by about five ounces – the weight of a small hamburger, without the bun.

Research reveals that women's brains contain a higher concentration of cells in the cortices associated with listening and language ability, have a bigger passageway connecting the left and right hemispheres of the brain and more movement of signals between the two hemispheres. This may explain why, as some observers claim, men have a linear way of thinking, while women's thought

patterns follow a more circular configuration - which could be another way of saying that men think only of one thing, while women just go on and on. It also means that women:

- learn to talk earlier than men (there are signs that they start practising with their lips while still in the womb)
- display greater manual dexterity (female fingers are better at finicky jobs like computer assembly, sutures and applying nail - varnish)
- are less prone to dyslexia and stuttering
- have more acute verbal skills ('Darling, your dinner is in the dog. ')
- pay more attention to detail. If a group of boys and girls are asked to draw a house, the boys will almost always draw the framework first, then add a chimney, whereas girls concentrate on the doors and windows (with curtains) .
- chart a route by focusing on landmarks, rather than map or compass ('There was a bent lamppost on the corner') . Many men believe that women navigate conversations the same way .

In conversation you could show how these differences have been reinforced culturally over the aeons. In the

past, when men went off in droves armed with weapons in search of bison or any spare women they fancied, talk was superfluous. They could survive with grunts and hand signals. Meanwhile, the women were stuck in the cave with the babies - an environment which called for nurture, empathy and good communications:

‘I’ve been at him for moons to fix that rock in the rock, but he’s done nothing.!’

‘If you use these berries you can tenderise the aardvark.’

‘She’s overdone the woad again.’

‘Personally, I wouldn’t touch him with a spear pole.’

‘That’s the last time I’m telling you - don’t draw on the walls.’

GUILES AND GUISES

Whereas men go through various distinct phases in growing up (to use the term loosely) but end up as basically the same model, women encompass a bewildering variety of different types. They have a battery of disguises at their disposal, and select the ones that best suit them to achieve their own ends.

To complicate matters further, many of the guises overlap, and most women are capable of switching between even wildly incompatible ones to match the occasion. And since, to a woman, an occasion may be as brief as an argument – clinching sentence or a passing greeting, she can often seem to epitomise the full range simultaneously.

The system being therefore far from foolproof, you need not try to fathom it beyond recognising a few general traits.

Poor Little Me

Soft – spoken, prettily self – deprecating, and with a whim of iron, Poor Little Me has discovered early on that the helpless female usually gets everything done for her by indulgent parents and older siblings.

Seeing no reason to change a winning formula as she

grows up, she makes great play of her physical feebleness, mechanical and intellectual incompetence and general dependence, and thus almost always gets her own way with minimum amount of trouble to herself.

This technique can be a great success with men, whose fragile egos are easily flattered, but it usually irritates or even infuriates other women. Knowing that women can always cope, they despise Poor Little Me's pretence that she can't; they feel she is letting the side down by trading on the erroneous stereotype of the helpless female, and resent her easy entrapment of gullible would-be knights-errant. Above all, of course, they are jealous of her rate of success.

The downside is that Poor Little Me can become as clingy as she intended to be. Few men see through her because she dazzles them. Even other women find her hard to unmask.

It is impossible to win an argument with someone who says sweetly and simperingly: 'I'm sure you're right, it's just that I have no memory/am so stupid about money/don't understand anything mechanical,' and then goes serenely on to do exactly what she wanted to and what you swore you wouldn't countenance.

Bimbo

The oddest thing about Bimbos is that they really don't seem to mind the label. This could mean that they are as air-headed as the image they project, or that they have everything much better sussed than anyone gives them credit for. After all, it must be quite relaxing to sail through life turning heads, willing to be attentive to a series of egotistical males, and ready to party at the drop of a wallet.

On the surface, Bimbos have much in common with Poor Little Mes, but they lack the manipulativeness * all they want is a good time.

Most women, and about a quarter of men, deride them, but fairly indulgently: the general view tends to be that they really can't help it. Besides, the phenomenon is temporary. Bimbos mysteriously vanish in their mid-twenties, becoming trophy wives if they're lucky, or doormats if they aren't.

Bimbos are not subtle, and therefore their game is easily routed. Just stop paying.

Doormat

The Doormat subsumes all her own interests to the