

INTIMACY, SEX & RELATIONSHIP

Just Not That Into Shallow Analysis Of Relationships



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With all the publicity about the best-selling book (and movie) “He’s Just Not That Into You,” I thought I’d better go and check it out.

I sat in a packed theater (mostly female — but a fair share of guys). The opening scene was a grabber . . . “A girl will never forget the first boy she likes, even if he doesn’t like her,” says the narrator as a little girl gets pushed down and insulted by a boy. We hear her mother’s reframe, “He did that because he likes you,” she says.

I smile, recalling my childish crush on Jason Lowrey — the most handsome boy in the third grade. He tripped me as I walked down the school corridor — books flying everywhere as I hit the ground. The cold stone floor and gales of laughter from the other kids are still imprinted in my memory. I remember collecting myself, red-faced, and thinking, “This is a nasty boy. How could I have ever liked him?” An important early life lesson.

Over the years, other lessons followed. Being swept away by some handsome high school hunk, then waiting breathlessly for a call that never materialized taught me that looks aren’t everything. Discovering that Peter Clancy, captain of the freshman football team, was “going steady” with me and two other girls at the same time taught me to value honesty above muscles. By senior year, I had my relationship “deal breakers” pretty clear — he would have to be kind, loving and trustworthy — bad boys need not apply.

Many women find themselves attracted to “bad boys” who take more than they give. These women are often socialized to think about the needs of others before their own. “I’m fine” masquerades as strength and self-sufficiency, but leads to accepting less pay, less love and less appreciation in the long run.

“He’s Just Not That Into You” has helped some women experience less blame. It offers a simple tough-love solution to accept reality and move on. Although the concept is cute, catchy and entertaining, it worries me when women are presented as clueless desperate souls anxiously waiting for their phones to ring and men are depicted as deceptive players who lack depth, complexity and sincerity. Neither is true.

It’s understandable that we long for an easy explanation when relationships fail.

When a 45-year-old recently divorced client of mine, new to the dating scene, remarked, “Maybe he’s just not that into me,” to explain why her Internet love-interest pulled a no-show, I just about fell off my chair. “Not into you?” I said in disbelief. “He hasn’t even met you!” It suddenly hit me that this six-word formulaic prescription has entrenched itself into common parlance.

In real life, there are a variety of reasons relationships don’t fly. Sometimes stuff just happens. Maybe he’s just not into short brunettes. Perhaps he really is intimacy avoidant or wounded by an unstable embattled family or origin. Or maybe he’s not calling because you spent the entire date droning on about yourself and your insensitive ex.

Anyone who has ever searched for his or her special someone to be prepared for the pain of rejection. Whether you’re in an opposite-sex or same-sex relationship, the challenges are equally unpredictable.

Although there are countless “sure-fire” romantic guides, each journey is unique.

We all need some tough love advice once in a while. All partners — men and women — need to set healthy realistic emotional boundaries. Men aren’t all just one trick ponies and women have more power than this suggests. It takes courage to accept that (for whatever the reason) you may just not be that into one another.

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