

# The Score on Scoring: The Guidebook, Stanford Edition

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Foreward by Dr. Philip G. Zimbardo

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A Student Project By

TV, ME, JB, JK, MM, CP, KL, VW, & MG

(We have replaced names with initials in

recognition of the fact that “scoring” goes in and out of fashion during the course of our lives. If an author would like to his or her name displayed, please contact us, and we will gladly restore it.

## Foreword

Human beings not only survive, but thrive by making and sustaining the Human Connection. Social isolation is alien to our nature and breaks the bonds of social support that are vital for our personal health and societal well being. With such lofty principles in mind, a group of Stanford students in my advanced social psychology course decided to do something about an existing condition at Stanford — the failure of many students to form intimate social contacts with others during the four years they are here. A negative social norm seems to have developed which advances the notion that: 'Stanford Students Don't Date.'

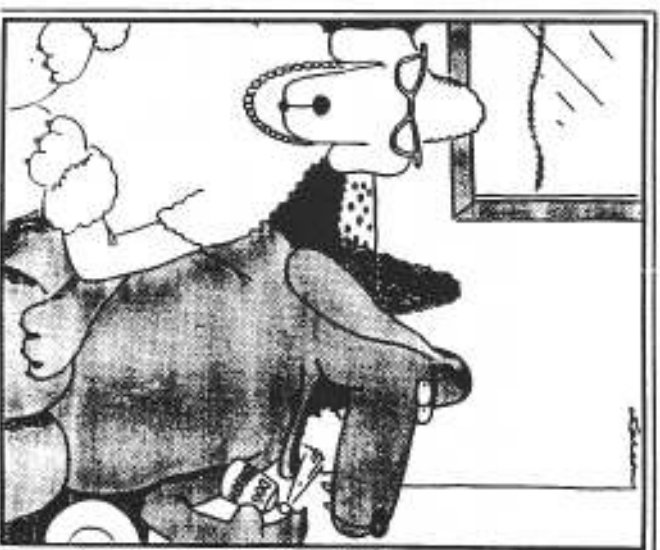
My students want to challenge that norm, thrash it totally, by writing this manual that serves as a practical guide to assist students in breaking through to the other side of sociability. Although group dates are fun and serve valuable functions, they do not replace the value of learning to relate to another person on an intense, intimate, one on one basis. Consider Stanford your training ground to learn how to do that, with the assumption that most others around you are similarly inclined.

"But my initiative might be rejected," is the excuse we give ourselves for not trying, for not taking the risk. Two bits of advice here: Separate rejection of your proposal for a date from rejection of YOU as a person, and then work on improving your approach and style. Secondly, we imagine more rejection in the world than actually exists and then create the prophesy by poorly planned attempts to connect with

desirable others — so don't assume rejection, and do utilize the Scoring Rules in this manual.

What follows is a guidebook of social psychological advice, based on a wise blending of theory, empirical evidence, and the personal successes of this intrepid band of students concerned with helping their peers more fully enjoy their lives by developing more intimate connections. I urge you to read it, think about its messages, try them out mentally, then put them into practice to discover what works for YOU and what does not. Since it is a work in progress, they, and I, would appreciate any feedback you can give to improve its effectiveness — in helping to build the bridges that keep all men and women from becoming islands unto themselves.

Philip Zimbardo  
Professor of Psychology



Rumery makes his move.

## Introduction

*"There's more dating in a monastery."*

— Princeton Review's "Best 250 Universities in America" (1994)

*"Since 1970, with the introduction of coed dorms, men and women seem to treat each other like brothers and sisters rather than potential dates. I think it's sad. I've seen it [dating] work here, and it's possible, but I haven't seen it very often."*

— Prof. Ron Reholz (Feb. '97)

*"Dating? Hmph. People go out in groups, sure. But dating at Stanford? Sex? Pfff."*

— Elizabeth Morse, Class of '95

*"...it is a tradition at Stanford to not ask people out — or to turn someone down if they ask you out — and then to whine that no one dates here."*

— Stanford Tour Guide's Handbook, "The Manual" (Summer '96, p. 107)

So what is the deal here at Stanford, really?

Relationships, love, sex, are important and challenging issues for college students everywhere, but we here at Stanford seem to take a special pride in our ineptitude — real or imagined — in the realm of dating. From an outsider's perspective, Stanford boasts a concentration of some of the most attractive, intelligent, and intriguing young people in the world — so why can't they get together?

Over the years, many potential reasons for the status quo have been thrown out for consideration. Stanford students are too busy. Stanford students are too future-oriented. Stanford students are too stressed out. Or maybe, it's all the fault of Residential Education, with their little ploy to make dorms into "families" and dormmates into "brothers and sisters" rather than lovers.

Or maybe, just maybe, the real answer can be found in the casual observation made by a student in her Psych 1 section. "We create this norm ourselves," she said. "That way, there's no pressure. If there's no dating and you're not dating, then you're normal. Or, if you are dating, then you're special. Unfortunately, it works itself into some self-fulfilling prophecy."

If this student is right — and we think she is — than the infamous "problem" of no dating at Stanford may be more easily overcome than one might think. If the problem is psychological, than the obstacles we face aren't imposed by "the system," they're created by each and every one of us for ourselves. And each and every one of us can simply decide that we won't succumb.

That's where our idea for this little guide started taking shape.

We are a group of students in social psychology who came together while enrolled in the same class one quarter. We decided it would be interesting to see how and if we could harness some of the principles of social influence that we were studying and apply them to romantic relationships, one of the most important social interactions confronting and troubling college students.

Through surveys, interviews and informal research, we have compiled a set of influence principles and grouped them under different concepts. These principles are further broken down as to how they apply to different types of potential relationships — relationships that Stanford students will encounter during their time here. Throughout it all, we have interspersed real anecdotes from real Stanford students (but without their real names) that illustrate what we're talking about.

Our aim has been to take on the role of a coach, a good facilitator — someone who's there to provide information and the motivation to make sure you actually apply that information and apply it correctly. A lot of what we're going to talk about seems intuitive — too intuitive too even try as a "tactic" — and that's exactly why it was so important to put it down in writing.

Now, there's an important point that needs to be made here. This little book may be called "The Stanford Guide to Scoring" because it's catchy and convenient. Unfortunately, this title may also bring to mind other titles, such as *The Code*, *The Rules*, *Guerrilla Dating Tactics*, or maybe *How to Pick Up Trashy Women Without Even Trying*. Believe us, as part of our research, we've read (almost) every one of the "guides" that are out there. If anything, we'd like to see our effort as a response to these less tasteful editions.

In the following pages, we use terms like "tactics." But unless they are used with total sincerity, "tactics" become "tricks" and healthy flirting becomes sleazy scheming. If that's what you want, may we suggest one of the titles mentioned above.

However, even when used in complete sincerity, some people have objections to the notion of using tactics at all. Love, they believe, is best left to fate, and any potential mating that takes provoking probably was never meant to be — or at the very least, will seem "unnatural." Let us emphasize, then, what this book is *really* about:

**At the heart of it, the following pages are all about finding a way to fight the introvert in all of us so we don't lose the opportunity connect with those that would be our friends or lovers anyway...if we just gave it a shot.**

Ninety percent of shyness is based on fear of some rejection that simply doesn't exist. When you take the time to offer part of yourself (personality, friendship, humor, etc.) to others, people will want it. By keeping it all to yourself, you are denying yourself and being unfair to other people.

So at the bottom of it all, this book is our little effort to increase human interaction in the world. Or at least on the Stanford campus.

## Chapter 1: The Basics

### 1. CONFIDENCE

• **Confidence is attractive.** Very attractive. If you're feeling confident, capitalize on every inch of that feeling while interacting with your crush.

• **More likely, however, you are feeling nervous and hyper-vigilant about the impression you are making on him/her.** In which case, **pretend that you feel confident!** Think how it felt when you were last confident, or look to a model of how someone you admire acts when they are acting their most suave. Breathe. Slow things down. Realize that your intention is to *connect with another person* in such a way that you both walk away feeling better about yourselves and happier about life. If you connect deeply enough, rest assured something romantic will happen.

• **Avoid drawing attention to your insecurities.** No one is comfortable responding to the statement, "I can't believe I fit my fat butt into this dress." People appreciate the confidence in allowing one's self to be vulnerable. Low self-esteem is unattractive. (See "VULNERABILITY" for ways to confess insecurities that more deeply connect with your crush, instead of making the situation awkward.)

• **Be sure to strike a balance between acting confident and acting cocky.** Confidence demonstrates that you are at ease with yourself, while cockiness communicates insecurity.

### 2. FLATTERY

• **Flattery is very effective in making someone feel good, and soon they associate this good feeling with you.** Flattery is a powerful tool: studies in Stanford's Psychology and Communication departments reveal that even when the person being flattered is aware that they are being flattered insincerely, the compliments will produce the same positive feeling as if they believe it were honest flattery.

• **Therefore, be intelligent about how you flatter.** Empty praise will make another feel good; but **your desire to connect romantically will be undermined by dishonesty** because soon enough your action will reveal itself as a gross manipulation, rather than a sincere communication of your feelings.

• **When using flattery, make it personal, interesting, and unique.** It is easy and uncreative to say, "That's a nice shirt." It feels much better to hear, "I keep thinking about the joke you made at lunch. You are a really funny person, you know that?"

### 3. CONTEXT

• **Set up low expectations.** If either of you is interested, things will be anxiety-producing as it is, so when asking someone out, try not to make a big production of it. Pretend you are asking out a good friend to do something you know s/he would also really want to do. Plan something that is fun

whether or not you and your crush “click” on the date so there is no expectation that you will both be falling-over-yourself-in-love after this one dinner.

• **Use social networks.** Friends and friends of friends and friends of friends can help you in two ways:

1) **Research.** Find out what his/her interests are so you can find things to talk about other than “So...what finals do you have?”

2) At times you might be too nervous to talk to your crush. In this case, **hang out in a group with your crush and some close friends with whom you are comfortable. Then you show how funny and interesting you are to the crush while chatting with your friends,** without the intensity of a one-on-one with the crush (which is bound to make you tongue-tied).

#### 4. NON-VERBAL

• **Be mindful of how you enter a room and hold your body.** Not only should you be confident with your words, but enter a room with direction, stand tall, and hold yourself like you have every right to be confident about who you are and your interest in the person.

• **Use “the loaded touch.”** When your intentions are sincere, you can forget about coming across as slimy or manipulative. Therefore, when you laugh at his joke, lightly touch him on the elbow. When you compliment how the color of her ring matches the color of her eyes, lightly grab her hand

and hold it up to her face. When shaking hands, hold on for an extra beat. When walking through a small doorway, touch the other person on the small of the back to encourage them to go first. Hug.

• **Accentuate your positives.** Wear clothes that make you look especially good. Take the hat off so we can see your hair. If it's not too hot, wear your hair down. Women: draw attention to your mouth with a pen or a lollipop (no gum, please!). Men: smile — it lights up your eyes like little beacons which say, “I'm cute! Date me!”

• **Be present-oriented.** The most attractive person to talk to is one who is “there with you,” the person who listens closely to what you say and is focused on just you. That person is in a “present time-perspective.” In contrast, we feel less connected when talking with someone who is thinking about the future — the test on Tuesday, the dream job after she graduates, the meeting she has to run to in five minutes — or the past — how the Bio midterm went, that he shouldn't have thrown the pie in that professor's face, etc. Both of these time-perspectives are communicated in many ways non-verbally: how much eye-contact the communicator establishes, the tone of voice when talking, whether the communicator faces his/her body towards a person when talking, or angles it away.

#### 5. VULNERABILITY

• **Co-opt uncomfortable situations.** When something (inevitably) embarrassing happens in front of your crush, rather than trying to cover up and appear more foolish, go with the

flow of the situation and make a joke. When drinking a glass of water and the ice suddenly falls on your face, call out

“Avalanche!” If your crush points out that you have a piece of chicken stuck on your cheek or some lettuce between your teeth, say with a straight face, “Yes, I’m saving that for later.”

The joke will ease the tension of the situation and make you appear even more attractive.

•**Use strategic confessions.** Although this sounds like a phrase from the military, it simply means you should admit your vulnerabilities very directly and honestly to your crush. If you are nervous, say it! “I gotta tell you, I always feel a little bit nervous around you — you’re so cute and smart and funny.” Being vulnerable actually communicates confidence — that you are comfortable enough with yourself to share what you perceive as your weaker points. Furthermore, being vulnerable lets you connect with a person more deeply than having a conversation about the next dorm boat dance.

•**Use reverse confessions.** Similarly, when you notice that your crush is nervous or uncomfortable about something with which you can sympathize, admit it. If you can see s/he is beginning to get lost while you two are driving in the city say, “You know, I just think about the roads in San Francisco and I get lost.” Or if they accidentally spill a drink at the dinner table say, “You may think you’re cool just spilling your drink, but I once snorted a mouthful of Sprite out my nose while eating lunch with my English professor.”

## 6. ETHICS

•**“Scoring tactics” should be used to exploit opportunities that allow individuals to connect, rather than to exploit others’ feelings.** Since a great many of the principles discussed in this pamphlet are derivatives of psychological studies in influence and communication (i.e., empirically demonstrated as effective techniques) the below suggestions should be utilized to genuinely connect with others.

•**Be sensitive to your crush’s experience of the situation.** Charging blindly ahead with a new toolbox of wooing techniques with no attention paid to the person you want to woo, will lead to emotional, social, or even legal complications. Using a “loaded touch” in an inappropriate situation or flirty remarks in the wrong context will produce the polar opposite effect of cultivating a connection with your crush. Besides, mindfulness is more sexy than brash any day.

### Chapter 2: Stranger with a distinct relationship

*“I have a...uh...friend...who has a line for every occasion. He can charm the pants off any salesgirl, gets every waitress’ phone number with his check. My favorite line is the one he uses in Starbucks: he places his complex order, which includes blending the coffee with Sugar in the Raw. The coffee girl usually gives him a tight smile — something else for her to remember — and that’s when he chimes in with, “Oh, could you stir a little love in there, too?” So sorry, but it works! I*

*think the corniness is the key because it makes the girl laugh and she turns into a giggling, flirtatious hornball!"*

—Michael, 22

## **INTRODUCTION**

Think of a person that you don't know — they're not a friend, neighbor, or acquaintance — but you have a perfectly good reason to talk to them. They're the latte girl at Starbucks, the cute salesguy at Tower Records, the hot assistant manager at the Gap — you get the picture. Now, it should be said that this is a very tricky relationship to deal with because it is a very specific one. But, even if you don't find your soulmate behind the counter somewhere, take advantage of this incredible practice arena. This is *the* perfect place to try out and work on flirting techniques — see what works and what really doesn't. Practice everywhere. These interactions are great, low pressure, fun situations — and isn't that what it's all about?

*"I was once accused by a past boyfriend of flirting with the drive-thru guy at McDonald's over the speaker. What did I get for my trouble? A free large fries — thank you, thank you."*

—Nicole, 21

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **Confidence.**

In general, these are easy situations to be confident in. First off, remember that you are dealing with someone who is paid to be nice to you, to serve your needs. You're the customer and you're always right! At best, you can't be ignored.

The best way to express confidence is to act totally at ease. This can be done really simply — remember that you have a perfectly legitimate reason for being there and for initiating conversation. Focus on "low pressure" topics of conversation (what the store sells, what you want to buy). Even these subjects will connect the two of you. You've shopped before, why be nervous?

### **Flattery.**

These situations give you prime opportunities to squeeze in some great indirect compliments — comments on your interest's tastes, etc. Try this: get a recommendation from him or her the first time you buy something — a book, music, videos, etc. Then, when you come back a few days or a week later (and if you honestly enjoyed your purchase), thank them for their recommendation. Say you loved the book/CD/movie, and you trust them to pick something else out for you.

Now, what did you just do? Not only did you imply that they had great taste, you implied that they were doing their job very well (maybe in front of the boss, eh?), and you also revealed that you trusted them — this can be a powerful combination in a simple, true and honest comment. You have

also laid some groundwork — established a common interest which can and should be used to set up later opportunities.

### **Context.**

This principle is the key. You can have everything else going for you, follow every other suggestion and end up with a fabulous, flirtatious relationship with your local gas attendant — that stays at the gas station. If you want to turn this relationship into something more, you have to do a little bit of work.

First off, recognize that you are initially seen by this person as just another customer, an anonymous face out of the hundreds that pass through their door every week. What you need to do is separate yourself from the crowd, make yourself stand out, in subtle ways at first. Really simple: talk to your interest and, by all means, *buy something* during your first visit. It's a really easy way to make a good impression and establish yourself as a legitimate customer.

The next step is to upgrade and become a frequent shopper. Not an every day sicko, stalking customer — make it maybe once a week, whatever's comfortable. Once you're a familiar face and you spot that glint of recognition in their eyes, introduce yourself — you probably know their name from the nametag (if not, ask!). By naming yourself, you've just taken the first step away from the customer/salesperson relationship. Now, there's no guarantee your name will be remembered — don't feel bad. So, she or he hasn't realized yet that you may be his or her next Prince/ss Charming. Re-introduce yourself!

During your next visits — if you can do so without getting them in trouble with the boss — start full-fledged

conversations. Lead the topic away from work into more general subjects (movies, music, local events, background info, funny anecdotes you've heard, etc.). Individuate yourself by letting them know that you're interested in more than just their good greeting skills — imply this by showing an interest in what they have to say. Chances are, your interest is going to be really into talking to you, because working retail is not always the most interesting job in the world and talking to customers makes the time go faster.

Importantly, be sensitive to their response. You have the upper hand as a customer and he or she is really *supposed* to talk to you as part of their job. Make sure they want to be in the conversation — offer a couple of escape routes (“I don't want to get you into trouble — is it okay to talk?” or “Do you have to get back to work?”) If your escape offers are ignored, then great! Continue these conversations, and if and when you decide this is a person you'd like to get to know better, let them know.

Keep it small at first. Offer to continue talking over coffee during their break. Even a “safe” 15 minutes outside of their store will let you put your relationship in a new environment. If things go well, proceed as you would with any budding interest. Get their number. Offer yours. And if it doesn't work out, remember there are plenty of other fish in the retail sea!

NOTE: This situation is a lot easier for girls than for guys. For girls, finding a guy at a store can be a good opportunity — you already know where he can be found and that he's accountable enough to hold down a job. Also, you get a lot of “safe”

opportunities to hang out with him and get to know him, before you actually go “out.” Guys have a potentially unbalanced situation, as the girls you seek may feel uncomfortable not knowing anything about you while you know where they can be found. Overcome this by sharing information — let her know that you’re a Stanford student, you’re from Wisconsin, other details. Raise the comfort level.

#### **Non-verbal.**

This is somewhat of a “touchy” area. Since we are dealing with a “distinct relationship,” there are certain behaviors that are acceptable, and many that are not. Physical contact has to be as normal and natural as possible. In the initial stages of the interaction, the “loaded touch” or “extra hold” won’t fly — they’ll probably weird the other person out. However, eye contact is all the more important in these situations. Retail people are so used to being ignored by the general public — by making eye contact with them initially, you individuate them and establish a nice connection. Continued eye contact throughout the interaction helps you read their reactions and makes things more fun and flirtatious.

#### **Vulnerability.**

Also tricky. This isn’t the kind of thing you want to fale and it may not come up naturally in these situations. Salespeople are used to questions — stupid or otherwise — and won’t see a strategic confession as an endearing admission of

ignorance. But keep in mind the idea of co-opting negative situations. If an awkward moment comes up, don’t ignore it and don’t make a big deal of it. Make a small joke and move on.

### **Chapter 3: Power Relations**

*“I didn’t really get involved with Sharon until after winter break. Sharon was my, uh, my professor for a PoliSci seminar I had first quarter. Um...it started like any relationship. We had class twice a week and because there were only six people in the class we had some really good discussion. She was really engaging. I started going to see Sharon during her office hours. She brought her lunch and I brought mine...”*

— Josh, 20

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In power relations, one partner has a greater degree of influence or capability, mutually recognized and seldom acknowledged, in a realm where interaction between the partners occurs repeatedly. Dating your professor qualifies as a power relation, dating your kitchen manager does not. This is because in a power relation the partner with less power can lose or gain favor in the original context that the relationship developed. Usually, the repercussions significantly outweigh the advantages; and there are always repercussions.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **Confidence.**

Should you become interested in dating someone that wields more power than you do in the environment in which you interact, you must appear to be on the same level, emotionally, intellectually, socially, economically. Confidence either eliminates or allays the concern for these outside issues. Often, maturity will be questioned by virtue of confidence, which is a double edged sword. If you want to date your boss who is seventeen years older than you are, she will first see if you are comfortable in that relationship and then see if you are mature enough to engage in that relationship. Confidence as a social grace will prove maturity; confidence as arrogance and self-satisfaction will prove childishness.

### **Context.**

If you are a student, most likely the power relations that you involve yourself in will hold you as the partner with less power. If you get involved with a professor, a Teaching Assistant (TA), a Resident Assistant (RA), a professional boss, your lawyer, your doctor, or your stock broker, they will wield more influence over your life than you do in theirs. Therefore, practice subtlety. You do not want to make clear and overt passes at your boss unless you know they are going to be reciprocated, or that you will not suffer if they are properly interpreted.

Start by increasing interaction. If it is a professor, go in for office hours, call him/her on the phone, email him/her. In

addition to distinguishing you as a person, this will change the context of the relationship from one of pure academia to one of personal interaction. Without much effort, and a few measy visits to office hours, you could be out to lunch with the professor, and then out to dinner. The idea is to develop a frequency of interaction that you become a fixture in the life of the person and they notice your absence. If every time you see this professor, you make him or her feel good, the associations with seeing you will be positive, and not seeing you will be negative.

Once mutual interest has been established, innuendo becomes your best friend. Carry on normal conversation, but let your intonation say what you really mean. Then you can progress into being a bit more risky, more honest, and more forward. You should not speak freely about your feelings until you have had a higher degree of contact.

**NOTE:** Experience dictates that innuendo works particularly well with professors and TA's in the Comparative Literature, Drama, English, Psychology, any foreign language, and law. Philosophy and Engineering professors and TA's usually need a direct approach, unflinching delineation of what you want.

### **Nonverbal.**

Two indispensable nonverbal tactics, which are obvious but always effective, are to smile and use intense eye contact. Besides saying that you are a friendly person, that you are easy to get to know, and approachable, smiling calls attention to your eyes, and that is a technique that cannot be accomplished with words. As the cheesy cliché says, "eyes are windows to

the soul.” While your smile may announce you as approachable, your eyes can tell the person that you’re looking at them. Similarly, a strong look, when not smiling makes the person that you’re looking at them as though there is nothing in the world that you would rather be looking at or listening to.

## **Chapter 4: The “Masked Date”**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

You are at the CoHo trying to pay attention to the reading sitting in front of you, but instead you keep glancing across the room at that guy who is laughing with a group of friends. You’ve met him before at a party, but you were both drunk and your not sure if he’d remember you. Then his friends start to leave and he takes out a book. This is your chance to go talk to him. What do you do? What do you say?

What about when a group of your friends (both sexes) go out for dinner. The person you are interested in is there but has no idea that you are interested. How do you make this group outing a date-like situation for the two of you?

Your roommate thinks they have found the perfect date for you and they set you up. What do you do when you are out with the blind date you have never even met before?

Any situation like this we have termed the “masked date”. The situation is ambiguous and could be potentially date-ish if you know how to approach it and what to do.

### ***PRINCIPLES***

#### **Confidence.**

The first thing you must remember in this type of situation, or any scenario in which you want to succeed, is to have confidence. Don’t go rushing in though, and overwhelm someone with your enormous ego. Be relaxed, clam, and appear comfortable with yourself. If you seem uncomfortable or nervous it is likely the person on whom you are trying to make a good impression will feel uncomfortable or anxious while talking with you. Your confidence will set the tone for the entire conversation. This may sound too easy, we know. Confidence is an extremely difficult thing to master, especially in a situation in which you have anxieties. Therefore practice being confident in other aspects of your life that are less stressful or difficult. It will carry over and you will be impressed with how well you can handle these types of situations.

#### **Flattery.**

A little flattery never hurt anyone. Let’s go back to the CoHo where you are talking to that guy. You’ve sat down and re-introduced yourself and now you are asking him what he’s doing right now. Okay, this will only take a second for him to answer. You need something else to say. Ah, flattery. Tell him you like his shirt or his hat, but be sure to tell him that it looks good on him, and not just that you like it. It is important that he know that you are complimenting him and not just his taste in clothes, yet this way is also subtle and casual. This technique can also work in the blind date and group date

situations. Letting the person who you are interested in know that you have noticed them and how they look is a good first step in the right direction.

### **Context.**

On the first date it is important to set up low expectations. You do not want to frighten your interest away by overwhelming them with a lavish evening, yet you also do not want them to think that it isn't a date by making things too casual. Getting coffee or dinner at a local casual place is a good way to keep things non-stressful yet still qualifying as an actual date.

But let's go back to the asking. How you ask someone out on a date all depends upon the situation that you are in. In a group scenario where everyone is friends — yet you would like to start something up with one of the members — you will need to approach the situation carefully. A creative way to get a date without the other person even realizing is to make a bet. The loser of the bet (about whatever) has to take the winner out to dinner. Even if you already know that you've lost as you are making the bet, it doesn't matter, you still have a date. This technique is so crafty that it has worked on me even after I've used it myself.

### **Non-verbal.**

Sometimes one doesn't even need to talk to express interest. Let's go back to your group of friends that are out to dinner. First off, make eye contact with your interest. Sit next to or across from them during dinner. Not staring, but

maintaining eye contact shows that you are confident and interested.

Then there is the "loaded touch". As noted previously, this entails adding a little extra to a seemingly everyday touch or physical contact. It can be brief, yet it will unconsciously demonstrate interest. When you greet your interest just put a little extra into your pat on their shoulder or an extra squeeze of their hand. Couple this with eye contact for devastating effects. Remember the "loaded touch" should only be used when you are comfortable, and should never be or feel forced.

## **Chapter 5: In-dorm Relationships**

*"I remember freshman year. I lived on the first floor. It was cold and there was this really hot guy who lived down at one end of the hall. He would walk to the shower in practically nothing! So, over time, all the girls along the hall worked out this system: one of us would notice him setting out for the shower and she would knock on her wall and it kind of formed a chain reaction, so that we all knew to open our doors just as he was passing by! It was great and my friends and I would laugh about it. But I never really got to know him as anything other than a casual friend..."*

— Wendy, 19

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ah yes, **dormcest!** Everybody at Stanford has some direct or indirect experience with it. A recent informal survey

of students shows that being interested in someone in your dorm is not uncommon. However, all too often, any resulting romance seems to include little more than a drunken encounter or two that doesn't lead to much. Less often, dorm friendships do turn into successful dorm relationships.

There are, of course, advantages and disadvantages to in-dorm relationships. They can be very personal and build from, or lead to, a strong friendship. They are also convenient. However, having a relationship "right at home" can suck up too much time and cut off other social outlets. If things don't work out, it can spell disaster since you still have to see this other person every day. And anything good or bad that happens between you will soon be discovered and discussed by the entire dorm. But even though the general feeling on campus is that dormcest is bad, many people are interested in someone with whom they live and wouldn't mind doing something about it.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **Flattery.**

Use flattery to individuate the other person. Show special interest in them by asking about things they're involved in. Ask about home. Ask to see pictures. Go into their room to "hang out." Look around and compliment their stuff. People are suckers for flattery and they enjoy talking about themselves and showing things that they own. Living in a dorm with someone is a great opportunity to be aware of what they are involved in and demonstrate your interest in those things. If

your crush is performing in something, go and watch. It is normal to want to get to know people that you live with, so it won't be seen as flagrant romantic overture for you to get involved.

### **Context.**

Start off by solidifying your relationship in the dorm. As a result of living together, you will be spending time together, but take advantage of it. Build your common experiences by going together on dorm trips, hanging out at dorm functions. Party together, hang out in their room, stay up all night talking. Hell, find a DR that you both need and try to take a class together. Be sure to respect their personal time and space, but casually you will find great bonding experiences.

Next, changing the context is very simple: get out of the dorm. Go out to dinner because dorm food sucks. Ask them to go to Safeway, the post office, anywhere with you. Ask them to go to a formal with you "as friends" (or just ask them!). It's very easy to become a good friend/brother/sister figure to someone when you live with them. If you can change the context and spend time with them outside of the dorm, it will give them the opportunity to see you in a different way. For example, even if you do ask someone out to a formal "as friends," by being dressed up and in a new situation, you can make it more convenient for them to find you interesting and attractive. If you can get them to go out to dinner with you "because dorm food sucks," you've got yourself a masked date.

## **Vulnerability.**

You are automatically going to find yourself vulnerable just by living in the same dorm as this other person. Chances are, you'll be seeing each other in your worst states — having just woken up, having just come back from a party, etc. So don't be afraid to leave your room without make-up on. This way, you give a sense of what you're really like — there's not much to hide when stumbling to the shower before that 9 AM class. The same is true for the other person. The result is the chance to know each other better and build a closer, personal relationship.

*"It started out at a dorm party. I guess you could say we were friends and I was a little sweet on him, but there didn't seem to be any potential until that night. We started talking and then we went for a walk and wound up talking all night. Later, he asked me to a dance in the city. I'm not sure when the exact moment was, but I can say now that we've been dating for a year-and-a-half and it's awesome."*

— Janet, 20

## **Chapter 6: Close Friend**

*"At the beginning of my freshman year, I was close friends with a boy who lived in my dorm. We were both going through the usual traumas of new-collegedom. I would come to him and*

*cry about my friends from home, I missed them, and so on. He was teary-eyed over a girlfriend from home who was still in high school. She wrote him these heartbreakingly needy letters. He felt totally helpless to help her from far away. He would also prefer to see other people but felt guilty. At one point it became obvious that we were attracted to one another. I found him, very drunk and dejected after a party, and made a classic mistake. When he told me that he was upset about the girlfriend, I began to put her down, saying she was selfish for putting him in such a hard position. I told him that he needed to move on. I kissed him, then asked him, 'What do you want right now? Her or me? Because if it's me, you can have me...'"*

*He kissed me back. We promised we'd stay friends no matter what. But we were stupid and shy around each other after that. He no longer felt like he could share his feelings about the girlfriend, so when they consumed him, I didn't see him at all. Needless to say, I learned a few helpful tips on what not to do when approaching a friend on a new, romantic level."*

— Chris, 19

## **INTRODUCTION**

What is a close friend? Common answers include: a person you have fun with; someone you trust; someone you can confide in; a person you would never be able to replace with anyone else. This sounds like the desirable qualities in a meaningful, committed relationship. Many agree, the best lovers are first and foremost best friends. Nonetheless, making that transition from friend to "best friend with benefits" can be

extremely difficult and frustrating because the goal is to move the relationship to a new context without threatening the important friendship underneath. But it can be done.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **Confidence.**

Confidence should come easily enough when you are hanging around with a good friend. Remember that this other person considers you a friend and associates all those good attributes with you to begin with. Draw on this fact of your relationship to maintain your confidence as you start to work to enhance the context around it.

### **Flattery.**

This principle has less direct application in this situation. Since your interest is a good friend, it can be assumed that honest, supportive flattery is already a part of your daily relationship. As a special "tactic" therefore, it isn't going to pack that much of a punch.

Therefore, you should think of using flattery to cultivate your similar tastes. If your friend says he loves something that you've never heard, ask him to share it with you. Flatter your friend with your obvious interest. Be openly curious and experimental. Be introduced to new things. When you honestly enjoy something new that you've experienced through your friend, let it be known! Flatter away... Just remember, however, to be *sincere*. Stay true to yourself or you'll both know that something's not right.

Also, don't ever put down his or her preference in other possible romantic partners — it only makes you sound petty. You certainly don't have to set your friend up with all of your attractive friends, but be mindful about whether you're wanting what is best for both of you, or just best for you.

### **Context.**

Start off by staying close as friends. Fight that urge to treat a good friend as a new person once you feel a new, romantic attraction — it will only make you drift apart. Part of this equation requires staying social with your common friends. Never try to dominate your friend's time or pull him or her away from your larger group of friends.

Simply, always treat your friend as a friend first. Listen objectively about problems, about other men/women, about all things good or bad. In so doing, you form a trusting atmosphere that your friend will in turn feel obligated to create for you.

Once you've decided to reveal your interest, you may choose to express it in a relaxed situation where neither of you feels fully responsible to take the situation too seriously or awkwardly (tipsy at a party, etc.). Test out the waters this way. If you get a positive reaction, wait and try again with your friend when you can be held fully responsible.

And don't give up! Never lose a friendship over an "I'm not interested." Make sure you can go on as friends and that that is understood *at the time* you confess your interest. Try romance with this friend later, if you really feel that you've found The One.

### Non-verbal.

Friendships are great forums for initiating different types of physical contact as a way of elevating the context of the relationship. Make those friendly hugs last just a little longer. In conversation, use intense eye contact and friendly "loaded touches" to emphasize your interest in what your friend is saying. There are plenty of other opportunities to initiate contact that could be (non-threateningly) construed in a romantic manner. Look for opportunities for backrubs, casual hand-holding, etc.

### Vulnerability.

This principle is simple: be vulnerable to breed closeness. Tell secrets. Do anything which makes the friendship-part of your relationship grow. Tell about your ideal special someone and learn about your friend's. Store this information.

NOTE: Don't ever take advantage of a drunk or down friend. A *good relationship was never made this way*. Never use a bad situation to lead into an intimate encounter and you'll be more likely to see that any romance that does follow will be based on something real, something more than alcohol or pity or the first opportunity.

*"We'd been at my house all night. We'd been drinking but definitely weren't drunk anymore. It was wonderful, we were telling stories from being little kids. We told happy secrets, depressing family histories, everything. We were closer than we'd ever been before. I took the opportunity, during a comfortable silence, to kiss her. I looked straight into her eyes afterwards and said, 'Was that okay with you? Was I out of line?' She shook her head no and kissed me back. We've been together for two years in June."*

—LePasha, 21



## Finally, our favorite success story:

"At the end of last summer I went to a three-week Stanford program for Frosh in science, math, and writing. There were 19 of us living in the house, the girls on the top floor, the guys were on the bottom floor. I guess it all began when one night, I had my window open and was singing some songs. When I was tired, I just stopped singing, but then I heard a voice say, 'Please don't stop.'

"I didn't know where the voice was coming from, but I went towards the window and realized the window below me was open and the voice had come from there. I asked who it was and he told me. I thought it was kind of funny and strangely romantic since the guy was kind of shy. Almost every night we would stay up 'til about three in the morning talking through the window. He was kind of shy so I didn't expect him to talk to me when other people were around, and we didn't

have phones, so the window was our only way of talking to each other, except for the occasional flirty email. [At the end of the three weeks] I was getting a little sad, realizing that we might not talk once we come back later to Stanford. But...

"On the last night, I wanted to do some laundry and he noticed I was waiting in the lobby alone because it was really late. So, he said he'd wait with me. I could tell he was sleepy, but he didn't want to leave. Of course, I didn't tell him when my laundry was done because I was excited that we were finally talking face to face. Before we knew it, we looked out the window and noticed the sun rising in the horizon. My first sunrise at Stanford was with him, and now we have been together for almost eight months. It's true he is a shy person, but even a shy person can find a way. If he did, anyone can."

