



CLEARING THE MIST

THE RULES OF ATTRACTION

BY ELODIE BARAKAT

What sets your attraction radar off? What do we look for in a partner? Are there really general rules in terms of attraction? Biology or psychology? Let's try clearing the mist a bit and see what makes your meter run on high.

“Hungry Like the Wolf”

If we stick to biology and evolution, we're not very different from animals. The key isn't "how?" but "why?" and the answer is so simple that it might shock you: Reproduction. Why do men look for beautiful women? To increase the chance of having the most attractive (and by default –healthy) offspring. Why do women look for strong and masculine men? So that she can ensure protection for the family and guarantee the survival of her children. Why are men attracted to large-breasted, youthful women? Because these characteristics

suggest health and therefore are processed as a sign of strong fertility. Though those factors might sound a bit primal and even prehistoric (I can hear the romantics out there complaining), they still play a part - mostly subconscious - in today's attraction map between men and women. "It's genetically programmed in human DNA," explains sex therapist Sandrine Atallah. "We look for the person better suited for reproduction." If women no longer need a big, strong hunter, they do tend to look for a man with a stable situation that will be able to provide for the family. Health, genetics, fertility... everything Darwin discussed. Still, the biological (evolutionary psychology) position doesn't explain everything. It doesn't take the complexity of human choice into account and it doesn't account for matters of sexual preference such as homosexuality and fetishism.



OPPOSITE PAGE:
STILL SHOT FROM THE MOVIE "ET DIEU CRÉA
LA FEMME", 1956

"SEVERAL SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT SIMILARITIES BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN PLAY A BIG PART IN THE FIRST STAGES OF ATTRACTION"

Connecting the Dots

Another way of looking at attraction is to focus on the interactions between individuals. One saying sums it up quite well: "Likes attract likes". Though "opposites attract" sometime turns out to be true as well- this might be explained by a kind of research that explores what we aren't. "Several sociological studies have shown that similarities between a man and a woman play a big part in the first stages of attraction," explains Atallah. "It has also been observed that complementarity plays a part in the durability of the relationship and that although we might be attracted to a very different person, the relationship hardly lasts and is very complicated". Don't panic, this doesn't mean your relationship won't last if you don't mirror your partner. Similarities can be anything from education, interests, religion, to tastes and personalities.

Culture and society also figure heavily here: Both play a big part in our way of seeing things. In many African countries, round and heavier set women are considered more attractive than the thinner Western preference.

Twisted Sister

Finally, the seduction process plays a huge role in attraction. According to Gisèle Harrus, French psychologist and author of "Qu'est ce que la séduction?" there are a certain number of methods that mostly border on male chauvinism. The enchantress-type is often mysterious and silent: Saying little but is unlike the other women he may come across. The seducer is reassuring, caring and makes her laugh. The man charms the woman, giving her the incentive to continue. Things like privation, distance and unanswered requests intensify the attraction, supposedly ■



CHEAT SHEET

Men (tend to) look for women who fit the following description

- shorter than themselves
- youthful appearance
- symmetrical face
- high pitched voice
- full lips, breasts and buttocks
- healthy figures
- friendly and smiling
- rather mysterious and not too talkative

Women (tend to) look for a men who fit the following description

- taller than themselves
- symmetrical face
- broad shoulders and a V-shaped torso
- masculine appearance
- deep voice
- funny and kind
- confident and protective
- able to provide for and protect a family



ATTRACTION FACTS

- Women tend to be more attracted to men in relationships according to 2009 American study by researchers at Oklahoma State University. A group of women were presented with a fictitious 'perfect' man. 59 percent of them declared being interested when he was presented as single as opposed to 90 percent when presented as in a relationship.
- The more we are 'exposed' to someone the more we are attracted. This theory, developed by Rowland Miller, an American professor of psychology also works in the opposite case scenario. The more we are in contact, the more we can hate someone.
- Ovulation plays a role in attraction. During ovulation women tend to show themselves off to advantage and it's been scientifically proven that men have brain receptors for pheromones excreted during menstrual cycles.
- Scent is a way to scan genes: Several studies showed that women tend to prefer the body scent of men who are most genetically compatible with them for reproduction, especially during ovulation.