

6 Ways Men Mask Their Indifference

The Rules Revisited | 24 February, 2014 | by Andrew

Whenever you are dating or seeing a guy, and there is some kind of external impediment to a normal relationship (or to the normal progress of a relationship), be skeptical of what "feels" true. By external impediment, I mean some factor outside the relationship that is making things between you difficult or impossible. You can scan the headings below to get an idea of what I mean. A man's affection in these situations will sometimes feel very much like the real thing, when the truth is that he is only allowing himself to fully express his feelings - or even slightly exaggerate them - because he knows that he is engaging in an impossible (or terminal) relationship. In other words, he will indulge in the relationship because he knows that he has an "out," and commitment will never be demanded of him.

Some men will do this in a manipulative way: they will consciously acknowledge to themselves that the relationship is a dead end, but act like everything is fine in order to continue in a fun or exciting or comfortable situation. More commonly, however, men will simply enjoy the relationship or the interaction with you, and will sub-consciously allow themselves to be more free with their affections or emotions or compliments, because they know in the back of their mind that they will never be forced to prove them by [committing to you](#).

This isn't always the case, and [your intuition is probably a strong guide](#) in judging whether it applies in your case; but that intuition will be stronger still after understanding that this kind of behavior is a possibility, and recognizing the following ways in which this phenomenon can manifest itself:

1. Long Distance

This is probably the most common one. When a man is in another city or country, the pressure is off. He might not be cheating, but he is automatically expected to see you less, call you less, and generally be less involved in your life. Even though there is no impediment to him calling frequently, as he would if he were living down the street, it isn't expected of him. I've never been in a long distance relationship, but a few times I've kept in touch (for several months) with girls that I've met while traveling, so I know what this freedom feels like, and how low-investment those relationships are. The fact is that, if you are in different cities, you aren't on his mind anywhere near as much as you would be otherwise. When you are in the same place as a man, you occupy his thoughts frequently because there is always a possibility that you will be able to see each other soon. He is constantly entertaining this possibility in his mind, weighing it against other options. Even if you don't see each other as much as you'd like, he is still forced to think about that possibility (and therefore you) far more often. You are much more immediate to him. But when you are dating long-distance, there is no possibility to be together, and he mentally "shelves" you - that is, he makes you less of a priority in his life - because he knows that physical intimacy is not possible (and I don't only mean sexual intimacy). So a man in a long-distance relationship can put in far less effort to maintain the same level of commitment from you.

2. Technology

By technology I mean cell phones, [text messaging](#), e-mail, etc. While these might seem to be facilitators of a relationship (as they make communication easier), they can often be exactly the opposite. Technology diminishes the amount of personal interaction that we have when we communicate, and, perhaps more importantly, allows us to multi-task. A guy can chat with you online every day, sometimes for hours, but because he is bored at work, while you are thinking "He texts me all the time even though

he is busy at work." One time a girl thought I was falling in love with her because I called her almost every day for a couple weeks while I was driving home from work. The reality was that I just enjoyed talking to her and flirting, and I had nothing else to do during my commute. By the time I realized how much she'd read into it, it was too late. In extreme instances, a guy could be texting you from another woman's bed. Even if he doesn't multi-task like this, and uses his free time to contact you via chat or phone or video, it is less valuable than it is if you see him in person. If a guy spends an hour with you on video-chatting, for example, he only needs to be in front of his computer (or these days, his smartphone) in order to do it. In order to spend time with you in person, he would have to shower and get changed, travel to be with you, allow extra time for uncertainties like traffic or a change of plans, and then commute back. That one hour would be effectively two or three by the end of it. So interpret anything less than in-person one-on-one time with the caution it deserves.

3. His Relationship

Married men who are cheating on their wives, or guys who flirt with you even though they have a girlfriend, will never have to demonstrate how willing they are to commit to you. They can always hide behind their inability to leave their current woman. Judging from the [e-mails I get](#), it is fairly common for men in marriages to profess their love to a mistress, but simultaneously claim that their hands are tied: "I would do anything for you, you know that - but I have a family; I can't just leave them." Getting involved with married men is a bad idea for many reasons, but this is an important one. He can continue to have the benefits of a secret relationship, always blaming his lack of intimacy on the fact that he is married and has a family, when the truth is that he wouldn't enter a serious relationship with you even if he were single. More commonly, a guy with a girlfriend might flirt with you and get your hopes up, when the reality is that he wouldn't want to be your boyfriend even if he were single; and it is precisely the knowledge that he can't be your boyfriend that gives him the liberty to engage in flirting with you.

4. Your Relationship

You might be dating a guy that you are only semi-enthusiastic about, or thinking about breaking up with. Or perhaps you are married but unhappy. And there is a hot, single guy in your life that gives you a lot of attention. In fact, you are sure that if you weren't tied up, he'd be all over you. [Think again](#). Men often allow themselves to enjoy the flirting, the sexual tension, the affirmation of your attraction and all the other makings of a courtship when they know that there is no pressure on them to follow through. They might not be attracted to you enough to make a move, but they will allow themselves to engage in the fun parts of the exchange because they know they will never have to. This is essentially the same mechanism as described in the previous point, except that it is a little more risky for the man, in the sense that he isn't in control of whether or not you end the relationship that is "preventing" something from happening between you and him.

5. Academic Degrees or Careers

I am sure some readers have been told "I love you, but I can't get engaged now; I need to graduate first." This might be true, but evaluate that statement with a heavy degree of cynicism. He could truly feel the need to get a piece of paper before making a commitment, or he could be uncertain about making a commitment to you at all and using his education as an excuse. Are you willing to [wait until he graduates](#) only to find out that he actually isn't as serious about you as you thought, or that he wants to "spend some time on his own" before he can commit to a future with you? The same kind of thing can be said about getting a promotion at work, or achieving financial stability (whatever that means), or buying a house. It all has potential to be bullshit.

6. Religious or Cultural Differences

Maybe your guy has told you that he "can't marry a non-Indian girl" (and you are American) or "I can't marry a non-Jewish girl" (and you are [Catholic](#)). While both of these might be perfectly true, men will often acknowledge their cultural or religious limitations and still continue to date you. I know plenty of guys who have done this, and the women simply hold on, thinking that maybe he will change his mind. Especially when it comes to culture and religion, you should take these men at their word: the relationship is a dead end. While there are a few [Romeo and Juliet stories](#) in the world, they tend to be played out only when both parties have little else in life to lose, not by people with comfortable lives and limitations imposed by cultures or creeds that they don't actually engage in or practice anyway. If you are trying (for example) to get a Hindu Indian doctor from a wealthy family to marry you, when you are a [dark-skinned](#) Muslim without an advanced degree, and his family has "expectations" about who he will marry, you are fighting a losing battle against unreasonable prejudice: give up and [cut your losses](#).

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