

YVONNE ALLEN & ASSOCIATES

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Crossed Lines And Hang-Ups

Setting the scene

Okay, you're familiar with the scenario...Saturday night, candlelit dinner, easy conversation, a spark of flirtation, the drive home zinging with promise, then a doorstep kiss and the dreaded, I'll call you....

By the next evening, the waves of panic are increasing in frequency. Was it a polite rebuff to cover his cowardice...and expose her paranoia? Two days later, it's black depression. What's wrong with me?" "It was that red dress, wasn't it....it makes me look like a lobster." And by Friday she knows she has all the appeal of a celery stick at a kid's party.

Things are more focused by Saturday: "Lying bastard.... they're all the same!" In just a week, it doesn't matter any more because she didn't really like him anyway...then the phone rings. "David here, I'm just off to squash, but I thought you might be free to do something on Friday evening."

The brain buzzes with options:

- to coolly announce that she's made other arrangements
- to retort, "David...I remember the name, but I can't put a face to it"
- to say, I'd love to", and hope that the sigh of relief doesn't carry over the phone.

David has had a busy but carefree week. Certainly he hasn't suffered it in trauma. He'd said he would phone...and he did. His actions were simple, straight-forward...but apparently lethal to the female psyche!

The rationale

Often men and women have different expectations, attach different meanings to seemingly innocent words, and generally march to the beat of a different drum in developing relationships. At Yvonne Allen and Associates we have 26 years of experience in consulting to partner-seeking men and women, and we well know the risk potential of the telephone.

Women often view it as a means of connecting with others...a way of nurturing relationships and of being intimate. A woman will use the phone to say "Hello" because someone has been in her thoughts...and she imagines that a man who cares will do the same. However, many men regard the phone as a method of getting or giving information, and for making appointments. Men have been socialised to be single-minded in their approach to the various facets of their lives, allowing them to compartmentalise issues such as work, sport, interests...and relationships, as they go through their day. On the other hand, even the

busiest career woman manages to maintain relationships close to her consciousness throughout the day. Someone special is likely to intrude into her thoughts frequently regardless of whether she is in the boardroom or at leisure. It's unrealistic to expect the telephone line to blend the warmth at one end and the coolness at the other into a relaxing tepid flow of easy communication. But we can untangle the crossed lines with tolerance, awareness, and acceptance of the fact that men and women often say the same things very differently.

Marianne Dodds, psychologist, and previously national manager of Yvonne Allen and Associates for 10 years.

THE CALL THAT COUNTS...

When a man says, "I'll call you"...

She Don't automatically brand him as a spineless wimp who's quite happy to let you and your self-esteem dangle. Take control and call him...but watch your timing. With office calls, consider that he may be in business mode. If he sounds constrained and fails to initiate any conversation, there's the possibility that he's not alone...at work or home. Keep your cool, balance your values of yourself, and give priority to enjoying the present rather than fantasising about the future. After all, if he doesn't call, you've saved yourself the angst of a relationship with someone who says whatever is convenient.

He If you say you'll call, do so, if only to say that you've decided not to follow up with another meeting. A face saving "I'll call", will cause more pain and dented self-image than the truth. Call before the week is out. A few minutes of your time can make or break a promising relationship. A week might flash by for the person with the initiative, but it can drag for the person who is waiting. Remember that the tone of your voice is important, especially if the last time you spoke, you whispered tenderly in her ear.