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Does laughter equal love?

By Bob Strauss

Granted, it's not the type of event women tend to circle on their calendar, but April Fool's Day is fast approaching. This prank- and joke-filled holiday could be a good opportunity to evaluate how your sense of humor measures up to that of the person you're seeing. Specifically, what's a gal to do if the guy she's dating has a broad, lad-magazine, slapstick mentality? Does he like nothing better than to curl up in bed with a cup of Earl Grey tea and read a novel? Or is he having a giggle over a clever British novel? Let's take a closer look.

The humor connection

No one doubts that it's a great feeling to find someone who "gets" your sense of humor. Says Paul, 38, of Warwick, RI: "When I met Sue and she got my references to old *Saturday Night Live* skits — going back to the days of John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd — it was a wonderful thing. I felt like, I've found my girl!"

But it's equally true that "in a relationship, humor can be a deal breaker," says Debbie Mandel, author of *Turn on Your Inner Light*. "If one of you is too outrageous and the other is more formal and constricted, that can be a problem—and two Robin Williams-type personalities may be too much for one relationship to worry, Mandel says: "In most comedy teams, there's one funny person and one straight man. In that same way, a couple can play to each other's strengths and show each other off in a way that is light."

When your comedic senses clash

That's fine, but what are your options when (say, after a long day at work) you just don't want to be playing straight gal to your budding boyfriend's raunchy comedy act? "I once dated a guy who was a TV reporter and loved attention," says Jill from Houston. "He would haul out his not-back-to-the-camera Nicholson impression at the drop of a hat. He would slick his hair back, do that Nicholson hair and arch his eyebrows and say, 'I always like a little [expletive deleted] after a long day.' Needless to say, that relationship didn't last very long." Dave from Seattle had a similar experience with Cheryl: "She was a beautiful woman, smart, and we had a great relationship. She had this habit of embarrassing me in public—either by making me the butt of loud jokes or standing up at restaurants and loudly saying things like, 'Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you the Prince Charming?' She thought it was hilarious, but I was beyond mortified. I broke up with her because I couldn't bring myself to tell her the truth about why."

Is your comedic timing on or off?

April Masini, online advice columnist and author of *Think and Date Like a Man*, offers a 10-point guide for determining, early on, whether you and your potential beau are compatible when it comes to humor:

Situation #1: "If he makes a joke, and you're still waiting for the punch line long after the punch line's been told, you could have a deal breaker on your hands."

Situation #2: "If he makes a joke and you get it, but you don't think it's that funny, you probably learn to live with it. Not everybody can be everything for everyone, and your partner is no exception."

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