

Why you should “play games” over text

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There is a rule about texting during dating: *You should wait as long to reply to him as he has taken in replying to you.* Have you thought to yourself, “I’m not going to do that; I don’t want to *play games*?” I’d like to make the case for why you should.

Mirroring

Good communication—especially in the realm of persuasion and dating—involves mirroring your conversation partner. "Research has shown that by simply mirroring a person’s body language and manner of speaking, they’ll trust you and find you more attractive. Psychologists speculate that mirroring creates limbic resonance between two individuals, making them more empathetic to one another." ... "if they speak softly, bring your own voice down a notch; if they lean back in their chair, lean back just a bit too." (From The Art of Manliness blog)

Nonverbal Cues

Nonverbal communication (physical cues) and context make up the majority of our clues as to how our conversation partner feels about us and about the interaction. Posture, eye contact, facial expression, gestures, tone, volume, and speed of speech, are all valuable clues that we are constantly and unconsciously reading while in face-to-face conversation. Even phone conversation gives us a good percentage of the clues: tone, volume, speed, and possibly facial expression can still be registered.

Texting is a difficult form of communication for romantic pursuit, because you have to read nonverbal cues and mirror communication without physical clues.

Overcoming the Texting Disadvantage

Persuasion expert Scott Adams says that the most valuable thing you can learn from a text message is the amount of time it takes to receive a response. Response time is a critical data point and must be leveraged if we are to utilize text messages as effective communication in a romantic context.

Overthinking?

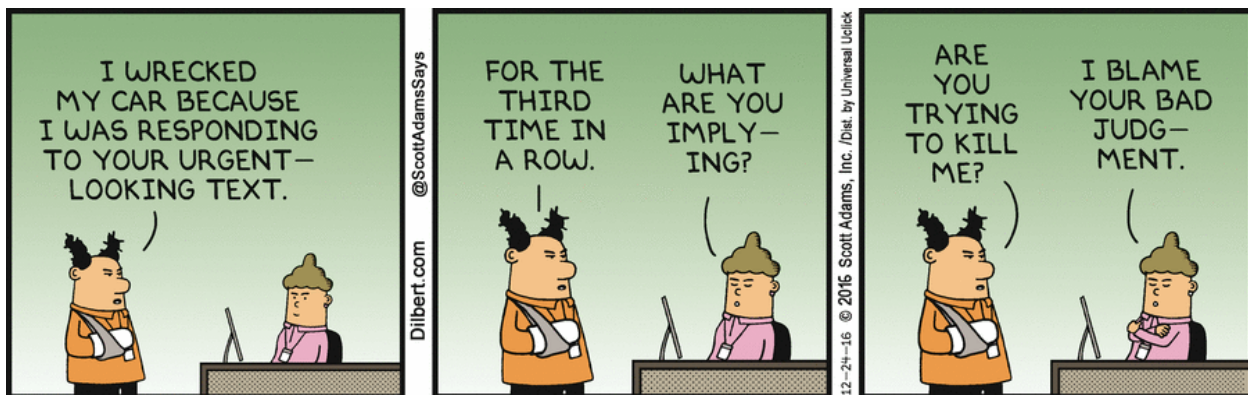
It's normal and natural for women to "overthink" these relationship dynamics as compared to men. Once we've settled down and gotten married, it is our job as wives to manage these dynamics to keep the relationship healthy. But not in a controlling way. Rather, we must manage our own desires, feelings and expectations to keep ourSELVES happy, which in turn will ensure a satisfying relationship for both spouses. To those ends, slowing down our text responses to match our partner will accomplish two goals at once:

1. We can take the time to center ourselves and ensure a balanced emotional state prior to engaging with our partner.
2. We act empathetically to consider that our partners' needs in the relationship are different than our own. Just because *I* enjoy the steady stream of dopamine hits from texting with him all day, does not mean *he* feels best at that pace.

Using response-time cues to mirror our conversation partner

It's considerate and empathetic to take things as slowly as he does. Maybe he is busy. Maybe he's still deciding if he likes you. Maybe he likes you a lot. If you're not willing to follow at the same pace as he is, you may be prone to stepping on his toes in other areas of the relationship. Take a moment to think about how you feel when a man comes on stronger than you want him to, and doesn't heed the "slow down" signals you put off. Coming on too strong (aka responding more aggressively than he does) would detract from his ability to pursue you, and will portray you in a less-flattering light.

How do you know that he will interpret quick responses as "coming on too strong"? See above: response time is the most valuable contextual clue we receive via text. Like it or not, and whether he (or you) realizes it or not, he is taking in those clues from your response time and interpreting them (most likely unconsciously) to gauge your interest level, busy-ness, priorities, etc.



“But I’m not too busy to respond right away. Why would I wait?”

Prioritize.

Maybe you should be busier. Are there any priorities you are neglecting because you are texting too often, and waiting eagerly for his reply? What made you attractive to your conversation partner originally? Take the time between texts to work on those interests.

Strategize.

Can't think of anything more important than replying to his text right away? That time may be best spent reviewing your dating strategy and writing down your priorities. Think strategically instead of impulsively. The more dating options you have, the less pressure you will feel to respond immediately. Go out for a run. Clean your house. Read something that makes you a more interesting person. You could even work on improving your "dating pipeline." Do you have any other messages waiting for a response? Even if they're not your preferred suitor, texting and dating other men while have a positive impact on your marriage prospects. (I'll explain more in a separate post.)

Prevent regret.

Have you ever sent a text and then wished you had said something slightly different? Take the time you are waiting between texts to "try on" your response. Slow down and see how you will feel. Does considering your replies for an extended time seem obsessive? If so, you may be taking this too seriously and should consider "lighter,"

more easy-going responses. Sometimes a slower response can seem more relaxed, even if you say exactly the same thing.

Savor his words.

Do you enjoy his texts? Has he said something sweet, given you a compliment, made you laugh, or surprised you? Slowing down your replies gives you more time to soak in the positive attention and savor his words. Take the opportunity to appreciate his jokes, wit, intelligence, affection, etc. If he's not saying anything that you can appreciate more by slowing down, perhaps you should consider that you're not getting what you want from this conversation.

Take time to observe your feelings in the conversation.

A happily-married woman shares her experience when she "bombarded" her now-husband with text messages during their courtship:

'Well, because he was sure of himself, he confronted me saying that "All is good on my end. I feel happy when I'm with you and enjoy texting you during the day. I text when I can, otherwise I'm busy working and focusing on my duties at work. You seem to be panicking about these normal things that stop me from texting and I think it isn't something I can fix, especially once I've assured you of my feelings." That quickly led to the realization that I was insecure and had to deal with it head on. I didn't want him to become annoyed so I tackled it pretty fast with a therapist. My therapist said I was taking my insecurities about myself and moving them, or projecting them onto my partner in hopes that he could deal with it. It was all very helpful. Not pleasant, but necessary.' -SM

