

# Are you dating a player?

By Dustin Goot

Ever had that feeling that the guy you're dating might be too good to be true? As in, he's so handsome, charming, and amazingly romantic that you're wondering whether he's pulling the same moves on various gals all the while wooing you? Nancy Kalish, Ph.D., a psychology professor who has researched and written about lost loves, has observed this phenomenon so many times among her female patients that she decided to get to the bottom of it. Over 18 months of study and interviews, Dr. Kalish found that philanderers share a startling number of characteristics. Know what those red flags are, and your play-dar will be right on target. So, here are five warning signs to watch for—as well as five signs the guy you're seeing is an upstanding, sincere sort that you should consider keeping around.

## 5 signs you could have a player on your hands...

**He's bold.** For the player, the pickup is a game. He doesn't approach women with the same nerves or awkwardness of a normal guy. He'll walk up confidently, with a big smile and great eye contact. His manner will be smooth and put-together. This doesn't mean you should look for the opposite — a stuttering wreck — but be wary of a guy who acts completely bulletproof. A little anxiety is natural.

**He declares his feelings right away.** Players employ a "fast come-on," according to Dr. Kalish, making sweeping statements of affection (e.g., "You're the most perfect woman I've ever met") from the word go. These declarations can feel very welcome, especially if you've been in a string of relationships that lacked such intimacy. Just remember that true closeness takes time, and it's normal for a guy to be more guarded about his emotions.

**He always plans romantic dates.** Dating for the player is kind of a performance art. And he's going to be good at it. "He won't just bring a box of chocolates," Dr. Kalish warns. "He'll take you to a state fair and offer to share cotton candy." Nice guys can be romantic, too, but life with them won't always feel like a John Cusack movie. Non-stop rooftop picnics and weekends at the cottage could be too much.

**He has lots of acquaintances, no close friends.** The player tends to be a lone wolf. That doesn't mean he lacks for drinking buddies. The same way he charms women, he can charm lots of people in his life. The key is that, in friendship as in romance, his affections run broad but not deep. If solid pals are hard to come by with this guy, consider yourself warned.

**He's a thrill seeker.** A guy who spends his spare time looking for a rush — fast driving, bungee jumping, kite-boarding, heli-skiing — should give you pause. This type, says Dr. Kalish, craves the high that comes from conquering a difficult challenge, and that goes for his relationship goals as well. Once he's "conquered" you, your allure may quickly fade.

## ...And 5 signs he's just a nice, upstanding guy

**He's goofy.** The sincere suitor is not suave. He doesn't always say the right thing. It may sound weird to go into a date hoping for a pratfall, but it's not a bad thing. "Believe me," Dr. Kalish says. "The false charmer does not trip. He knows where his feet are at all times."

**He remembers personal details and events.** It's the most basic way to show someone you care—by learning about his or her life and interests. Players can't be bothered with this. One of the most common complaints Dr. Kalish fielded about false charmers was that they failed to show up at important events. "They are narcissists," she says. "Dating is all about them." Trifling as it sounds, if a guy remembers to bring over your favorite ice cream or shows up at your pal's birthday party, he might just be a keeper.

**He treats his mama right.** Generally speaking, a loving family begets a loving person, and the opposite is also true. Dr. Kalish often heard about alcoholism in the families of insincere boyfriends. While this might incite an understandable desire for you to reach out and help, you should also be cautious. The wounded outcast who is betrayed by his parents makes a hot lead in a soap, but not the best boyfriend. Try the good-hearted guy who flies home for his mom's birthday instead.

**He can mingle.** "The sincere guy doesn't mind being in a room with people who are more accomplished than he is," Dr. Kalish says. Conversely, the player wants to be in situations that will glorify only himself, especially around his woman. He doesn't want to listen to another man's interesting story. A loving guy, on the other hand, can mix

with others even when he's not the star of the show, and actually enjoys learning things from them.

**He says, "I love you."** As fawning as a player's affections are, there's still something sacred about the L-bomb. Kalish found that insincere men would say, "I want to grow old with you," or "I want to have children with you," but "I love you" remained somehow off limits. A guy who says those three magic words may very well mean them.

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