

How your fiancé's proposal can clue you in on his partner potential

# suggestive behavior

BY RONA GINDIN

**D**id your fiancé propose marriage at the bistro where you had your first date? Or did he arrange for the big question to be flashed on the electronic billboard at a football stadium during halftime?

Whatever his style, therapists say your fiancé's proposal reveals a lot about him and what married life will be like. We assembled a panel of experts: Matthew McKay, Ph.D., author of *Thoughts and Feelings: Taking Control of Your Moods and Your Life* (New Harbinger Publications, 1998); Glenn E. Good, Ph.D., associate professor of educational and counseling psychology at the University of Missouri, and president of the Society for Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity; and Ginger Blume, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and talk-radio host. Here's how they rate his words of love.

## THE FAMILY MAN

Clean-cut and observant, he places the engagement ring with the Irish fisherman's sweater you wanted for Christmas, then waits quietly while you open the box as your parents watch nearby.

Assuming you're close to your family and your parents have been rooting for this union, you've found yourself a winner. "This is a man who marries the family, not just the woman," Blume explains. "He probably has traditional values and takes commitment seriously. He's glad to spend time with your family and will love being with your children one day."

But if he's not sure that you'll accept his proposal, he may have a manipulative streak. "If he uses the family setting as pressure to get a 'yes,'" McKay points out, "that may indicate someone who's going to do whatever it takes to get what he wants."

## THE EXHIBITIONIST

He's the one who flashes "Gillian, Will You Marry Me?" at the football game surrounded by 50,000 fans, or charts a

blimp to fly above town with a banner popping the question. One thing's certain: This guy is going to be fun!

Expect champagne bubble baths in Vegas, dancing on the seats at rock concerts, and zipping along country roads in a convertible. "The Exhibitionist is sensory-based," Blume says, "and that means he'll swing for the best of anything you can feel, taste, or touch." On your honeymoon, don't expect to sit on the beach reading Jane Austen novels: He'll be booking trips for skydiving and white-water rafting.

And one day, says McKay, you may find that you're married to the president—of a company, that is. "This is a man who knows how to get things done. He isn't afraid to take risks."

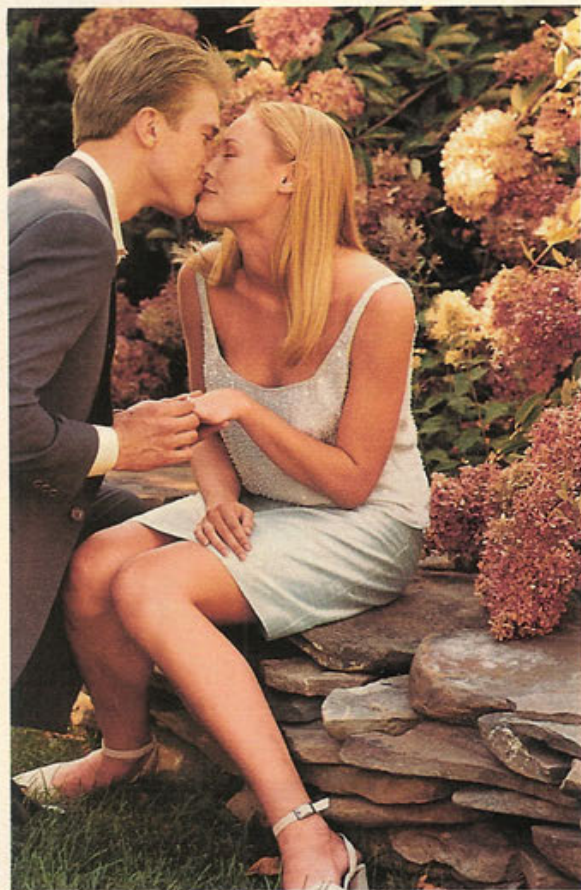
So what's the downside? For starters, hope he doesn't put his passions and his grandstanding ahead of you. "He should only propose to a woman before fifty thousand people if she's the type who'd like that," Good says. Intimacy may also be a problem—asking you to marry him in front of a crowd might indicate a fear of expressing feelings one-on-one.

## THE ROMANTIC

This Romeo asks for your hand using classic moves: He arrives with a dozen long-stemmed roses, takes you on a horse-drawn carriage ride around the park, gets down on one knee, and has a bottle of champagne waiting nearby. He may give a little speech about "happiness" and "forever" before choking out the proposal.

Women who marry romantics can look forward to a lifetime of loving gestures. He'll shower you with poems, flowers, and special little gifts, and work hard to avoid conflict. "This partner is interested in focusing on your feelings," says McKay. "He thinks you're perfect."

Just make sure your fiancé hasn't built you up to be such a goddess that he'll be-



come distraught when he finally notices a flaw in his beloved, notes Blume. Another potential pitfall: He may be so busy trying to make you happy that he neglects himself, and ends up in a state of depression. Also keep in mind that the rich inner life he pursues (he got rid of his TV so he'd be more motivated to read Shakespeare in the evenings) may keep him from taking out the garbage on Thursday mornings.

Finally, notes Good, make sure that his romantic gestures are aimed only at you and not at every woman he meets.

## THE CREATIVE TYPE

Come proposal time, he dresses as a fireman and climbs a ladder to your bedroom window. Or he places scores of votive candles in your bedroom to set, as he explains later, "a mood."

"This man will make even the humdrum parts of life interesting and fun," Good says. On a snowy night, he'll break open a bottle of wine and a jar of peanut butter and say, "Let's pretend we're in prison, and this is all we have."

Don't worry about being heard when married to a creative type. Says Blume, "You can talk" (Continued on page 628)



## Suggestive Behavior

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things out with this guy. He's intuitive and good at understanding what you're feeling." Self-fulfillment and expression will be important to him, she notes, and he's likely to find a cause to champion, like Greenpeace or the Brazilian rain forest.

Just don't count on him to be home for dinner. "If he's on a creative bender at work he may spend all night at the office, which means you'll have to leave your job early to pick up the kids from day care," warns Good. "He may feel trapped by routine, which might not be a problem right now, but can be a few years from now when you have a house full of children."

### THE SENTIMENTALIST

The Sentimentalist is the man who proposes on the crosstown bus where you met. Or he asks you to marry him on the back-porch

*The Blurter spills out the words "Wanna get married?" while snuggling with you on the sofa watching ER.*

swing at his parents' farm, where he'd planned this moment his whole life. His proposal will be rehearsed, sincere, and extremely emotional.

"Everything touched by your relationship is precious to The Sentimentalist: pebbles the two of you collected from the beach last summer, even the wool sweater he wore for your first date," observes McKay. "The Sentimentalist often has strong, fond feelings of attachment to the past, which creates a strength in the relationship and indicates the love has a true depth to it."

"You can count on a sentimentalist to be there for you when the going gets tough," adds Blume. "If you're sick, he'll make you a pot of chicken soup—or at the very least he'll run out and buy a can."

But do make sure his attachment to the past doesn't preclude living in the here and now, warns McKay. "Even twenty years after you've hung up your backpacks, he may hold on to his Sierra Club membership, which reminds him of the hikes you used to take together." You may find yourself in the role of instigator, prodding him to try something new.

Adds Blume, "The Sentimentalist will rarely surprise you in any way. Then again, he'll never forget your birthday."

### THE BLURTER

The Blurter spills out the words "Wanna get

married?" while snuggling with you on the sofa watching *ER* or as he's getting in the car to pick up Sunday-morning bagels.

"You will always know what this man is thinking," says Good, "because he'll always tell you. You don't have to worry about him holding things in and building up resentments. If he's not satisfied with your sex life, for example, he'll come out and say, 'I'm getting restless here.'"

Just don't expect him to be the life of the party. "People skills are not his strong suit," notes Blume. "He may be shy and lacking in self-confidence." Rather than telling you how much he loves you, "he's likely to try to please you by helping with the dishes."

Domestic life with a blurter can be surprisingly serene. This man won't blow your savings on unnecessary purchases, Blume adds. "He is a responsible money manager." And though he loves his kids, he will expect you to make most of the decisions.

However your fiancé proposes, keep in mind that it's only one part of a much bigger picture. "Past behavior is the best predictor of a spouse's future behavior," Good emphasizes. "Regardless of the proposal, what makes a good marriage is if he respects your views, wants your input on decisions, is willing to work out differences, and plans to share in household chores and child rearing." And always lets you hit the snooze button while he gets up to make the coffee.

## Lucky in Love

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(leave that for the craps table), they should call ahead to schedule a time for the ceremony. Many couples arrive by limousine, often provided by the chapel, and the first order of business is selecting a wedding package.

The most basic one usually includes pre-recorded music, witnesses, the minister's service, the marriage certificate, photos, a bouquet, and a boutonniere. (If you have your heart set on an extravagant or very specific arrangement, the chapel will refer you to a local florist.) A deluxe package might include a videotape of the wedding, live music, extra photos, and additional flowers (for any attendants, perhaps). Forgot to pack a garter? No problem. Most chapels have a supply of them, plus other necessities such as veils, rings, and cakes.

Then it's time for the I dos, which generally take 10 to 15 minutes. Most chapels are fairly simple, with five or six rows of pews on each side, some stained glass windows, carpeting in red, pink, or purple, and flower arrangements. They may not take your breath away, but they won't make you cringe, either. And some are downright charming. Which goes to show that just because brides choose the neon lights doesn't mean they don't want some candlelight, too.

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