

NO MORE MR. NICE GUY

By Dr. Robert Glover forwarded to Everyman by Robert Vibert <http://www.segura.ca>

A few days ago a guy in one of my weekly men's therapy groups posed the question, "I wonder what marriage would be like if we men made the rules?" We decided to brainstorm. I asked the men in the group to make a list of rules that they would want to apply to their committed relationships. The following is a sampling of the rules the men proposed.

<list>

- * Quiet time is OK to do anything or nothing.
- * Domestic chores and tasks balanced between partners.
- * Reasonable expectations of adventurous sex life.
- * Separate spaces (separate rooms or houses).
- * No justifications for requests (it's not a request if you have to argue why you should get it).
- * Communication - open, truthful, frequent, but never forced.
- * Never do things you don't want to do. It creates resentment.
- * Set aside time to be apart (be with friends, work, alone).
- * Sex is NEVER a bargaining tool.
- * Keep passions and interests, which may or may not be shared with partner.
- * I am a Dad and I get to prioritize my kids.
- * I can say no (no long explanation necessary).
- * I can change my mind.
- * Both partners maintain same-sex friendships.
- * My career and passions are a top priority.
- * I won't be treated badly.
- * I won't settle for less than 100% all the way in.

- * I won't settle for less than 100% honesty.
- * Both people will encourage and support one another.
- * Both people will act with financial responsibility.
- * A minimum of one "real" date per month.
- * Disagreements will be handled in a mature, loving manner.

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After hearing the rules these men proposed, I had a couple of thoughts. The first was that maybe we men aren't as shallow as women, the media, and current culture in general make us out to be (you know, like the way men are portrayed in commercials, sitcoms, and those lists of rules that circulate around the internet, i.e., shopping is not a sport, lift the toilet seat yourself, etc.). These guys came up with some very serious, functional, and healthy relationship rules (even if you don't agree with every one of them -- they're a great place to start a conversation).

My second thought was, what if these guys did apply these rules to their committed relationships? What if men took their relationship role seriously and really did think about what they wanted for their relationships and then set the tone and took the lead? What if men quit sleep walking their way through relationships? What if men quit forcing women to set the tone? What if men quit whining like victims when they didn't get what they wanted (but never asked for)?

I'm wondering what relationships would look like if men really did make the rules - you know, made it clear from the beginning of a relationship what they expected? What if men lovingly and powerfully made it clear that they expected themselves and their partner to be honest, available, well-behaved, mature, differentiated, passionate, responsible, communicative, and as affectionate after five

years as they were when the relationship began? I wonder if women would walk out in protest or enthusiastically sign up for that kind of relationship leadership?

So the real question is, are we guys going to keep whining, complaining, withdrawing, and acting passive-aggressively when our intimate relationships don't turn out like we want, or are we going to take some responsibility and do something proactive about them?

In another group of married men a few weeks back, I asked how many of the guys had sat down and thought about what their vision for their marriage looked like? Then I asked how many had shared this vision with their partner and invited her to follow him in moving in that direction? Not one guy raised his hand for either question.

Guys, we can make a difference in our relationships and in the world. It begins with having the courage to ask yourself what you want and then sharing that vision with the people you love. I've been working with men for long enough to know that this kind proactive thinking won't just come up with a few lame-brained rules like the woman has to wear sexy lingerie, act like a porn star, never get fat, and never cut her hair. Look over the list

above again to find out what men REALLY WANT in their relationships.

Guys, it isn't going to happen unless you develop some integrity, speak up, and provide some loving leadership. Don't expect your partner to do your job or figure out what you want. It's not her job, it's yours.

And women, respond to this article on the online forum and let the guys know what you think of the rules on the list above. Let them know whether or not you'd like your man to step up and provide some relationship leadership. I think a few men might be surprised at what you gals write. I won't be

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:: **[robert@nomoremrniceguy.com](mailto:robert@nomoremrniceguy.com)**  
:: **<http://www.nomoremrniceguy.com>**

NOMOREMRNICEGUY.COM | 27 -- 100th AVE NE | BELLEVUE | WA | 98004

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Robert S. Vibert  
co-author of "101 Great Ways to Improve Your Life"  
Segura Solutions Inc.  
**<http://www.segura.ca>**