

WHEN HE SAYS HE'S NOT READY...

And other guy clichés.

We find out what their excuses really mean – and how to tell if they're genuine. Or not...

You meet a guy, things between you are going well, you start to fall for him and then – bam! Ready to burst your happy, hopeful little bubble of 'this could be it' is a line – a line that could be the truth, but could also be a Big. Fat. Excuse. So how do you work out if he really means what he says, or if it's just a cliché he's using as a ploy to be let off the hook? And more importantly, how do you react once you work it out? We've gone to the experts to find out, but beware: sometimes the truth isn't for the fainthearted...

"I'm not ready"

WHAT IT MEANS: Whether you're sitting down for a Define The Relationship chat, or you're looking to take things to the next level, like introducing him to your folks, this line can derail everything. But according to the experts, it doesn't necessarily mean it's over completely. If he's recently come out of a relationship in particular, he could be speaking the truth. "Your guy is starting to freak out about the prospect of a serious relationship. He wanted to get you, he did everything

he could to get you, now he has you and realises that this thing is actually starting to go forward," explains Alex Matlock, dating expert and author of *How To Take The 'Single' Out Of Single Woman*. He's weighing up his options. "This kind of statement is driven by the man's fear of hurting the woman or by wanting to have it both ways – having her without committing," explains Alon Gratch, PhD, author of *If Men Could Talk: Unlocking the Secret Language of Men*.
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT: The key to coming away from this relationship roadblock successfully is patience. After all, when Prince William apparently fed Kate Middleton a similar line, she took a step back, taking the pressure off and earning herself the moniker Wait-y Katie. And it worked. It sounds almost counterintuitive, but "you can stop him from pulling away by giving him more space," says Alex. "Tell him that you understand him and that there's not going to be any pressure. Continue to see your girlfriends/friends as often as before, or even more often and try not to give him more importance than he deserves." With any luck, he'll be back in your life in no time – and if not, he's not worth being there anyway.

"....." (Complete silence)

WHAT IT MEANS: Simply, that he's male. Guys are hardwired to derive less enjoyment than women do from conversations, says science. "Talking through emotional issues releases oxytocin, and, in women, estrogen enhances that hormone's calming effects," explains Carol Kinsey Goman, PhD, an authority on body language and communication. Testosterone, though, blunts oxytocin's properties; that's why, for men, such discussions can increase anxiety and distress. And when that happens? "Stonewalling is an automatic response to feeling emotionally flooded," says Katie Ramsburgh, a marriage and family counsellor. "He is mentally fleeing the situation."
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT: In this state, "parts of the brain actually shut down," says Katie, even more so if he thinks you're blaming him for something. So come at a touchy topic in a non-accusatory way. "For example," says Katie, "if the discussion is about how much time he spends at work, start with 'I know work is important to you, but you've been practically living at the office, and I really miss you.' This is less likely to bring on the poker face than 'You're always working, and we never have time together anymore.'"



When Greg cancelled dinner because he needed to wash his hair, Kelly knew it was just an excuse

BY BROOKE SEVER. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXA MILLER. *FOR MORE INFO, VISIT THE SINGLEWOMANGUIDE.COM

"It's not you, it's me"

WHAT IT MEANS: This one, sadly, is a bit of a full-stop. "It doesn't really matter if it's the truth or not, the bottom line is that he wants to break up with you," says Alex. It's harsh, but realising this will end up saving you a lot of time – and extra heartache. "Any attempts to salvage this 'relationship' will eventually get you nowhere," he warns.
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT: So apart from walking away, how can you retain your dignity? You should take it as it is – not personally, since it's not you, it's him, that's got the problem. "You don't need men that don't even have the decency to elaborate on why they want to break up with you," explains Alex. Kaneisha Grayson, author of *Be Your Own Boyfriend*, agrees. "Your job is not to be his mother, his

therapist, or the midwife to his unbirthed emotions. Your job in a relationship is to present your most authentic, happy, and healthy self to another person, and to be willing to accept and love the other person. If he doesn't want that, it is not your job to convince him, help him prepare, or show him the way to loving you," she says.

"Let's be friends"

WHAT IT MEANS: This is the type of line that's served up in the early stages of a relationship. "This generally means that this guy is not attracted (more specifically, physically attracted) to you and is therefore trying to put you into the friend zone," says Alex. But there's an upside, too. "At least some of the men that use this line probably genuinely

want to be friends with you," write Jessica Massa and Rebecca Wiegand, authors of *The Gaggle: How the Guys You Know Will Help You Find the Love You Want*. "You'll be able to tell who they are because they'll follow up their speech with actions – they'll invite you to things, email and text you, make an effort to get to know you better, etc. They'll work to cultivate a real friendship with you." And who knows, they might even have a cute friend who's just your type!
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT: Either embrace the beauty of having a platonic guy mate in your life – if he shows with his actions that that's what he wants too – or embark on a riskier experiment if you're still head-over-heels for him. The key is persuading him to see you as most definitely *not* just a friend. "Use your femininity to hit on him like he's never been hit on – touch him, get close to him, let him smell your perfume, look into his eyes, laugh at his jokes, make him sweat, and then ask him: 'Do you still want to be just friends?'" suggests Alex. "I doubt he'll say yes!"

"I love you, but I'm not in love with you"

WHAT IT MEANS: The hardest line of all to digest. It generally happens in a longer relationship in which the guy is fond of you and has become comfortable with you, but that spark you once had has fizzled away. Natalie Lue, author of *Mr Unavailable and the Fallback Girl*, translates the line into: "I don't feel enough for you. You're not 'The One'." She says that it's generally said when a guy is at a loss to explain his confusion.
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT: It could be worth trying one last time to reignite the spark that made him fall in love with you in the first place. "Athletes experience what they refer to as a 'second wind,' which often occurs after the point at which they feel that they are on the edge of depletion," write Linda and Charlie Bloom, psychotherapists and authors of *Secrets of Great Marriages*. "Being in a relationship is not unlike being an endurance athlete or a marathon runner. It may require the willingness to hang in there and go past the point where you feel like quitting in order to find the hidden strength or energy needed to finish the race." Regardless of how to try to get that second wind, the key is not taking it lightly, according to Alex. "Make sure you give this statement a lot of importance. Men hardly ever use this line as a lie. It generally represents their actual feelings," he says. ■