

Girlfriend

BOY ADVICE - CAN YOU LEARN TO LIKE HIM?

Can you learn to like a guy?
Is love to be, or not to be... Pic: Duncan Robinson @ DLM

When it comes to love, is "head over heels" the only variety – or can you make like a spray tan and fake it 'til you make it?

When I was in Year 8, not only did I have an incredibly hectic and uneven bob I had to pin back with heinous school-regulation hair clips, I also had a nemesis named **Christopher**. Every day, Chris would make snide comments at me during class and then incessantly throw five-cent coins and food wrappers at me in the cafeteria afterwards. Oh, how I loathed him! Until... I didn't. I realised all the time I was spending thinking about his taunts was just my brain trying to tell me **I was developing feelings for him**. And that his constant teasing actually meant he was doing the same thing. Brain, seriously – what's up with that?

LOVE/HATE

"The most famous example of this may be **Elizabeth Bennet's** original feelings for **Darcy** in **Jane Austen's** book *Pride and Prejudice*," says clinical psychologist Dr Elizabeth Seeley-Wait (thechildrenspsychologyclinic.com.au). "Initially, she pretty much hates him, but over time she gets to know more about him and realises she had him all wrong." Basically, **love is very rarely black and white**. It's more like a big, fat grey cloud of tingly goodness. Only, it's not really a case of training yourself to like someone, more of having them grow on you. The most common way this happens is... you guessed it – through friendship.

THE FRIEND FACTOR

Wait... make out with my male friends?! You might not see them that way now, but know your feelings could change at any time. "Actually, relationships that start out as friendships can be some of the stronger ones," says Dr Seeley-Wait. "People who are **friends first** can actually get to know each other in an authentic way. The more you **feel comfortable** around a person, the more you know whether or not you could love them." That's not to say you're going to fall in love with your bestie – but as **Biebs** taught us, never say never, sista.

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

Of course, you can fall pretty hard for someone at first glance, too. Picture this: You see him across a crowded movie theatre. For a second, you think maybe **Robert Pattinson** has come to see his own film... then you realise it's only the cutest guy you've ever seen! Cue fantasising about him coming over to talk to you in the queue for the candy bar for the rest of the movie. Could it happen? "Although this is a very romantic idea, real love tends to be something that cannot be known by purely seeing someone," says Dr Seeley-Wait. "However, many people can tell if they're **attracted to someone** at first sight. And this is usually a prerequisite for love down the track."

AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...

If you're going to take two things away from this story, make it these: 1 – If you haven't already, you should read *Pride and Prejudice*. Best. Love story. EVER! And 2 – Love at 597th sight = totes possible. Christopher turned out to be my very **first love**, and possibly the sweetest guy I've ever met.

AND ANOTHER THING...

IT'S OK TO...

Not have a boyfriend – even if all your friends do.
Not want a boyfriend, or a girlfriend.
Not be interested in absolutely everything your guy (or crush) is into.
Let him down gently.
Want to hang out with your friends without your guy.
Have a boyfriend, and have guy friends too.

IT'S NOT OK TO...

Date someone as a joke.
Bitch about him with your friends. If you don't like something he did, let him know (politely!).
Lead him on.
Date two guys at once. Newsflash: your life is not an episode of *Desperate Housewives*.
Pressure him into doing something he's not comfortable with.
Treat him as your slave.

Words: Emma Markezic