



Good men in the real world

by Rick Belden

A recent post by Kellen Von Houser titled [“I’m looking for a good man...”](#) absolutely nailed the very center of the bull’s-eye, and it also struck a nerve for me ... more like a nerve bundle, actually.

As a man in his early 50s who’s been single for a long time, I’ve encountered an enormous number of women who are frustrated by their lack of success in finding a “good man”. I’ve also found that many of these women (and I’m talking about women who are independent, intelligent, and capable) have ridiculous expectations that many men simply cannot satisfy.

Women who are 5’2” are “looking for a good man” who’s at least 5’10”. Women who make 50K a year are “looking for a good man” who makes at least 75K. Women who make 75K a year are “looking for a good man” who makes at least 100K. And so on.

Many of the single women I’ve met who are “looking for a good man” have also demonstrated an almost pathological degree of self-centered behavior. I recently had a 45 minute phone conversation with a woman I met through a dating website. It was our very first call. She talked about herself the entire time and never asked even a single question about me. When I ended the conversation, she wanted to know if I was going to call her again. When I said no, she sounded disappointed and confused.

I wish I could say that the experience was unusual, but it wasn't. I've literally lost count of the number of times in the last ten years that I've had a prolonged "conversation" with a single woman who talked non-stop about herself the entire time, without missing a beat and without showing even a flicker of interest in me beyond my role as a receiver for her egocentric broadcast.

I've also noticed that many of the women I've met who just can't find a "good man" are quite comfortable going on about what rotten, useless idiots men are. One single woman I know would positively light up with enthusiasm, bordering on joy, when telling me about getting together with her female friends (married and single) to laugh about the moronic antics of their clownish, clueless husbands and boyfriends. I cannot recall, nor can I imagine, ever getting together with any of my male friends to laugh it up about how stupid and deficient the women in our lives are. Nor would I want to.

This same woman plowed through bodice-ripper romance novels as fast as she could turn the pages and once asked me if I thought she should get back together with an ex who'd previously cheated on her twice. She considered me boring and once told me I was "abnormally sensitive" (not a compliment). She also told me I was obviously unable to commit to a relationship because I didn't have any plants or pets in my home at the time, one of many "facts" about men that she frequently cited from the "Venus and Mars" school of self-help books she regularly read along with the romance novels.

I agree, and always have agreed, with what Kellen said in [her post](#):

A good man needs a good woman to stand beside and work with him to build their life together.

What I want, what I've always wanted, is a partner and a peer. Two equals who work together, as individuals and as a couple, for the betterment of both. And I've always assumed that women wanted the same thing. However, I've come to the unfortunate conclusion, based on my inherently limited experience as one person, that there are an awful lot of women out there who believe a man's function in a relationship is to take care of and entertain them.

The profiles I see on dating websites consistently emphasize three qualities that women in their 40s and early 50s are seeking in men: security, excitement, and fun. You must be successful. You must love your job. You must be financially secure. You must be in great shape and a good dancer. You must wine and dine. You must be well-traveled and available for frequent vacation trips to multiple destinations, domestic and international. You must be sensitive when she needs you to be and "manly" the rest of the time. You must defer when she feels like making decisions and "take charge" when she doesn't. And of course, you must be *at least* 5'10" to satisfy the requirements of even the most diminutive [heightists](#). (The [average height](#) for an adult male in the United States is 5'9". I'm 5'8".)

In the real world, many good men are not 5'10". In the real world, many good men demonstrate their capacity for commitment every day by doing jobs they don't like because they don't have, or don't know, another way to make a living. They're not in great shape and they're trying to do something about it, but it's not as easy as it used to be. They live quiet lives and they can't dance worth a lick. They'd love to enjoy expensive meals, expensive clothes, expensive concerts, and expensive trips here and there, but they're trying to live within their means and save some money for a retirement that may never come.

In the real world, good men have financial issues, health issues, family issues, emotional issues, you name it ... just like women do. They're pressed for time. They're stressed at work. They're doing their best just to hang in there sometimes. They want to do better, to be better, and they're trying. They're works in progress ... just like women are.

For those of us who are unable to make ourselves taller, richer, more "successful" or more "interesting/exciting" the prospects can appear rather dim. I can't know for sure, but I suspect that a lot of "good men" are simply taking themselves out of the game these days for that very reason. I know I have. I've been trying to get back in there again, but it sure hasn't been going very well so far.

Do I sound frustrated? I am. I know there must be single, attractive, available, self-aware, self-possessed women out there, maybe lots of them, who don't fit the profile I've been describing in this post, but for whatever reason, I'm not meeting them. I'm still hoping to find one, but optimism is wearing thin as the years (and the one-sided conversations) wear on.

Addendum: Shortly after I wrote this post, a trusted female friend advised me that I should list my height as at least 5'9" on dating websites because all of the single women she knows assume that men are lying about their heights in their profiles. Therefore, listing my true height (5'8") would lead these women to believe that I'm actually shorter than I am.

So in order to appear attractive, I have to lie, because the women looking at my profile will assume I'm lying. I wonder if women assume men are lying about their incomes as well. And who knows what else.

This is insane. Is this really how men and women want to interact with one another?

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Rick Belden is a respected explorer and chronicler of the psychology and inner lives of men. His book, [*Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood*](#), is widely used in the United States and internationally by therapists, counselors, and men's groups as an aid in the exploration of masculine psychology and men's issues, and as a resource for men who grew up in dysfunctional, abusive, or neglectful family systems. His second book, [*Scapegoat's Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within*](#), is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas.

More information, including excerpts from Rick's books, is available on his [website](#) and [blog](#). You can also find him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).