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STRAIGHTFORWARD
RELATIONSHIP ADVICE
FOR MEN

Getting the Love You Want Without Turning into a Jerk

Dr. Laura Dabney —*the Intimacy MD*

Straightforward Relationship Advice for Men

Getting the Love You Want Without Turning into a Jerk

by Dr. Laura Dabney, the Intimacy MD

With any luck and no small amount of perseverance, we've all achieved significant things in life: completed our educational goals, built successful careers, and maybe even raised children. Every one of us can claim *at least* one major success in life. When we want something badly enough, we'll work until we get it.

And yet, why do our love lives often feel so *impossibly difficult*?

I get some version of this question almost every week. My response: Yes! Getting the love you want is tough. But the skills you need for intimacy aren't much different than the skills you've already developed for life. You just need to learn why and how to apply them.

Believe it or not, success in any aspect of your life—including love—requires aggression. Sounds contradictory, I know. We think of our *ideal love* as gentle and forgiving, while aggression is best saved for the board room and rush hour traffic. But those are just two examples of aggression. What I teach in both love and life is the concept of *constructive aggression*—the ability to assert one's self for the purpose of self-preservation. In other words, it's a fancy way of describing the act of *sticking up for yourself*.

In a relationship, you may notice that a feeling is nearing a tipping point. Something about your partner, something they do or *don't do*—pay attention when you want it, offer help when you need it, talk when you'd rather they listen—is wearing you down. Maybe it's on your mind all the time or causing symptoms such as excessive alcohol use or destructive fantasies. This is the perfect time to call on your constructive aggression to resolve the feeling.

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Here's how.

You have to either present your need to your partner or deal with your anger. For example, you could say, "I need you to please talk to your mom less during our evenings together," or "I'm furious that you interrupted me when I was talking."

I admit that this can be tough. We tend to fear that using our constructive aggression will come off as mean or selfish. The problem though is that focusing on other people's feelings more than our own is a recipe for disaster. For starters, you can't determine in advance how or what people are going to feel. Plus, taking care of their feelings is *their job, not yours*.

In contrast, constructive aggression actually helps your relationship by settling your emotions. You're not allowing the feeling to build and blow up later, and you're not letting it eat away at you until you are not pleasant to be around.

When you act with constructive aggression, you walk a middle road between sticking up for yourself and causing pain to those you love. With practice, it is possible to express your needs confidently and with kindness. It is possible to accept that the ones you love may not like what you say, but that they will respect and honor it. And if they can't, then maybe you don't have the level of intimacy you'd hoped for.

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Want to learn more?

Call now for your free, 15-minute consultation with a member of Dr. Dabney's team. Geography is never a problem and your access to one of the nation's top relationship experts is unparalleled, thanks to our *Live & Online* therapy options.

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About Dr. Laura Dabney, the Intimacy MD

Relationship stress is no match for Dr. Dabney. Every week, she works with patients in dozens of cities across the United States, helping them break the patterns of past relationships and beat a path to a happier, healthier future. She owns a leading clinical practice in Virginia Beach and has been Board Certified in Psychiatry. Download her latest articles, read real-life case studies and learn more about her offerings at www.DrLDabney.com.