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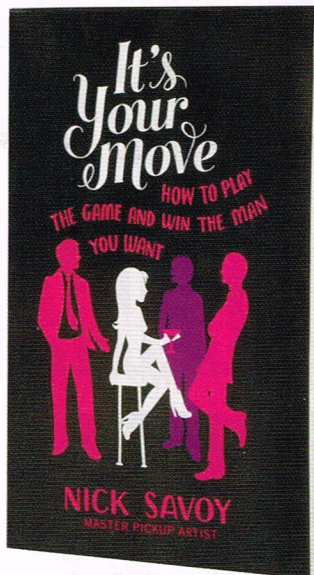
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RULES OF ATTRACTION

The self-help industry peddles so much relationship advice every February, it can feel like you're going back to college—the school for love. If some of the lessons these books impart seem a bit frothy, don't despair. They'll make great conversation fodder for that venerable institution: the Valentine's Day date. *By Justine Harman*

STUDY GROUP



“Master pickup artist” Nick Savoy is responsible for some of the most obnoxious dating advice for men out there. (Proof: his online series on how to ensnare porn stars.) In *It's Your Move: How to Play the Game and Win the Man You Want* (Grand Central), he clues women in to what occupies the minds of men—or, at least, the ones like him.

• According to Savoy, you don't need to be Doutzen Kroes to get

a guy's attention. “There's a level of attractiveness where a man asks himself: ‘Based on looks alone, would I be proud to be seen with her?’” More than that can be overkill.

• Forget reverse cowgirl: “A man doesn't leave a woman to be with a woman who's better in bed,” Savoy says. “A man leaves a woman to be with a woman who thinks he's better in bed.”

• If all else fails, Savoy recommends the “bump into him” technique. Yes, it's as lame as it sounds.

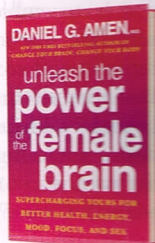
HUMAN BIOLOGY

With *Unleash the Power of the Female Brain* (Harmony), Daniel G. Amen, MD—who is famous for drawing big conclusions from brain scan patterns—breaks down the intoxicating impact of love:

• Lust is distracting; love is productive? Research shows that subliminal exposure to a beau's name during a decision task can improve performance.

• The same reward centers activated when cocaine is inhaled are triggered by the experience of love. Withdrawal is also similar: 40 percent of jilted lovers can become clinically depressed, studies suggest.

• Crazy love: When you're in love, your brain produces less serotonin, and low levels of the hormone are linked to that pesky obsessive thinking.



HISTORY

In her survey of irresistible men, *Swoon: Great Seducers and Why Women Love Them* (Norton), Betsy Prioleau finds that it's not the square-jawed cad who wows us but the guy who's energetic, kinda girly, and subtly flawed:

• “As an aphrodisiac,” Prioleau explains, “gusto can't be beat.” She traces our infatuation with brio back to Greek mythology and its lore of the limitless energy of Dionysus and other gods.

• To prove that “ravishing androgyny” turns us on, Prioleau cites Lord Byron and Gary Cooper, as well as psychologist Meredith Chivers, whose research on how women react to erotic movies suggests we're aroused by both genders.

• “A hint of vulnerability—either physical or psychological—can turn a woman inside out,” Prioleau maintains. Unlikely lothario Jack Nicholson apparently has this irresistible “soupçon of fallibility.” “I saw such a wonderful vulnerable person,” explained actress-ex Cynthia Basinet. “I vowed never to hurt him.”

PSYCH 101

In *Mating Intelligence Unleashed: The Role of the Mind in Sex, Dating, and Love* (Oxford), psychologists Glenn Geher and Scott Barry Kaufman comb through research from a half-dozen fields—including neuroscience and evolutionary psychology—for insights into how we make dating decisions:

• Being “good” can make us “bad”: In one experiment, researchers asked 32 monogamous college students to chat online with members of the opposite sex. Prior to the exchange, half of the subjects were told to reject cookies in favor of radishes. Those who abstained from indulging were more likely to accept a date from a virtual stranger.

• Men might take greater pleasure in one-night stands than women, but they *think* they want something else. When asked to rate their interest in online-dating profiles, only 24 percent preferred a woman interested in a fling, while more than half chose someone who promised to “rub your back when you throw up.”

• Fertile ground: When ovulating, women initiate sex at higher rates and are also likelier to cheat.

