

## Chapter 20 - Mr. Know-It-All

### Personality

I once spotted a handwritten flier pinned to a notice board with the words:

FOR SALE  
Encyclopedia Britannica, complete set.  
Like new, hardly used. Don't need it.  
Friggin' husband knows everything!

Although I gather it was penned by someone with a good sense of humor, it happens to be a perfect description of *Mr. Know-It-All*. Indeed, this guy is convinced he knows everything. He's sure he is never wrong. He will discuss, argue, and rant about religion, art, business, medicine, politics, the Yankees, the stock market, biodynamic gardening, Civil War history, and any other topic you might mention. No matter the subject, he believes himself to be an expert.

How did he come to acquire his supposed wisdom? It varies. Some *Mr. Know-It-Alls* graduated from Ivy League schools or earned advanced degrees. These men feel they have proof that they know it all. Others might rule the roost at work or might have made money in financial fields or real estate markets, so in their minds, their financial success is their credential. Still others read a lot of arcane journals or books that they feel have bestowed upon them a rarefied degree of knowledge.

It is hard to tell which type is the most intolerable. On the opposite end of the spectrum of the overachiever, *Mr. Know-It-All* is the guy with no more than a high-school education, limited professional success, who never cracks a book, yet somehow thinks himself smarter than everyone else around him. These self-proclaimed Einsteins are the kind of men who attract and lord over women with poor self-esteem.

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But all of these *Know-It-Alls* share one thing in common. Regardless of their real or imagined wisdom, they have an overwhelming need to be right. Should you make the mistake of questioning their expertise, you are fishing for an argument.

Several friends and I were out one evening. We had gone to the theatre and were enjoying a late-night snack at a restaurant. My friend, Kate, had come with her new boyfriend, Gary, who seemed nice enough. After talking a bit about the Stephen Sondheim musical we'd just seen, we asked Gary to share his thoughts.

He proceeded to explain why our interpretation of a particular lyric was dead wrong and then illuminated us as to "what it really meant."

As it happens, all of us were rather savvy in the Sondheim arena and were major fans of his work since the 1970s. Gary was entitled to his opinion, but when we learned that this was the first Sondheim musical he had ever seen, and because he spoke to us in an inflexible and patronizing tone, he'd lost all credibility. To spare our friend Kate's feelings, we maneuvered the conversation in another direction.

Over dessert the conversation had turned to the challenge of balancing the chore of walking one's dog each day with all of the other demands on one's time. We were all busy professionals, and although I have a yard in which to play with my two dogs, a couple of friends who lived in apartments spoke of their struggle to find time to take their beloved pooches on a robust daily romp.

Gary, apparently as much an expert on dogs as he was on Sondheim, chimed in, "People who live in apartments shouldn't own big dogs. They should have only small dogs, cats, or birds."

For a moment, the table fell silent. Then we spoke up. The debate escalated, and Gary never relented. He was so adamant in his beliefs that he couldn't hear a word of our case. No matter that the dogs in question were exercised daily or spent Saturdays with other dogs in a friend's large yard. We even pointed out that my friend's Rottweiler, Cupcake, was a rescue dog that would have been put to sleep if not taken in by my friend. No matter, Gary had dug in his heels, and the rest of us were dead wrong.

We got up from our coffee and dessert and fled. Kate let us know the next day that Gary was out of the picture.

Of course, there are also men out there who are worldly, well traveled, and well read. One type is deeply curious about the world and loves sharing and discussing his ideas. The other type, like Gary, simply wants an audience and the opportunity to show off.

### **Attractiveness**

What's most attractive with this guy is that he often does know a lot about certain subjects. Anyone who becomes a pro at something can be a turn-on. His expertise speaks well of his discipline, commitment, and focus...

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