

Can men and women be "just friends" essay sample

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Can men and women be just friends without any sexual tension between them? I don't believe so. I believe, both from personal experience and from several scholarly sources, that there is always, at some point, a sexual attraction between two people of the opposite sex who have a friendly, pleasant relationship. There are too many natural human instincts that drive us to be sexually attracted to a person for male-female friends to not ever experience physical attraction towards each other.

From my personal experience, I have learned that it is very difficult to be friends with a male who is sexually attracted to you when you do not feel the same way. For example, my sophomore year I befriended an adorable, nerdy kid named Bob. He was someone who I could easily talk to and our friendship quickly blossomed. One day, I was informed that he liked as more than a friend. This unfortunate occurrence was the demise of our relationship because it made for quite an uncomfortable atmosphere since I did not share his feelings.

In an article by Susan Foster Ambrose, which was written to convince people opposite-sex relationships do work, she says people involved in these types of friendships “ enjoy the subtle chemistry of having men [or women] as intimate friends” because “ you're playing with a sexual component.” She goes on to quote Dr. Marilyn Ruman, “ In any male/female relationship, there's going to be some sexual tension” which is the key component to make the friendship fun. Ambrose then explains that her good male friend actually asked her out on a date. Even though she did not take it him up on it

(and they remained good friends), this still proves the sexual tension does exist in all male-female relationships.

In another article, Letty Cottin Pogrebin argues that men and women cannot be friends because of social inequalities. The only time the two genders are compatible is in reproduction. This is because of the different worlds boys and girls grow up in- one with dolls, the other with action figures; one with tea parties, the other with fist fights; both with cooties. All these social differences leaves us compatibility in very few departments, such as love, sex, marriage, but not friendship. Pogrebin insists that real platonic friendship is only possible between those of similar social upbringing. This causes us to be ' gender loyalists' because we are raised to live in such different ways that we can only truly relate with those raised like us.

Similarly, Aristotle believed that true friendship was not possible between a male and female because they were unequal (though in a different way than inequality Pogrebin refers to). To best explain this, one must understand that Aristotle believed there were several kinds of love, two of them being eros and philia. Eros is an erotic, passionate love between lovers; it is selfish and jealous. Philia was the greater love in Aristotle's mind, being the love shared between friends; the love of character and common interests. For simplicity's sake, eros is the equivalent of lustful love and philia the equivalent of friendship. Aristotle believed philia was better than eros because it was love " grounded in a trait of character" whereas eros was a bond born of emotion.

Clearly, a love of character would last longer and be more valuable than that of emotion as emotion is so fickle but character, unwavering.

Likewise, writer C. S. Lewis stated: " Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest." This explains the jealousy or erosian love- when lovers are " absorbed in each other" there is no time for any third party; all focus must remain on the partner to sustain the relationship. This causes anxiety, jealousy and a need to explore other people and ideas, eventually leading to the break down of the relationship grounded in emotion.

All the personal experience and philosophy aside, male-female relationships without sexual attraction are simply not biologically possible. All humans, male and female alike, have hormones coursing through their veins, swimming on their skin, and emitting from their bodies at all times. One type of hormone in particular, the pheromone, plays a key role in sexual attraction. Pheromones are scentless hormones released into the air and received into another's body through an organ in the nose called the VNO. There are three types of pheromones: the first two, androstenol and androstenone, are made by both sexes and have been found to positively affect human attraction; the third, copulins, is found only in females and has been shown to increase testosterone in males (which leads directly to an increase in sex drive) and to make females appear more attractive to targeted males.

Another hormone which greatly affects sexual attraction is oxytocin. Oxytocin is released in the body when touched. It is also released when

thinking about someone you love. Since love is a very relative term, this could apply to both eros and philia love. Furthermore, oxytocin increases testosterone in men and women which in turn increases sex drive. Also, in combination with estrogen, oxytocin creates a desire for intercourse in women. Oxytocin is also released during sexual intercourse and orgasms, leading to a yearning for more and more sex.

As you can see, many people, from Susan Foster Ambrose to Aristotle, Letty Cottin Pogrebin to C. S. Lewis, agree with me that men and women will always have sexual tension in their relationships. Given the jealousy of eros, the real life experiences of myself and Ambrose, and the completely different cultures boys and girls are raised in, purely platonic male-female relationships are unachievable. Moreover, the hard facts of biology make it nearly impossible to coexist with the opposite sex without sexual attraction due to the effects of multiple pheromones floating in the air and the provocation of oxytocin streaming through our bodies. It is simply unfeasible to have sexual tension-free opposite-sex friendships.

Sources:

<http://www.themarriagebed.com/oxytocin.shtml>

<http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9306/articles/meilaend.html>

Articles:

"Men and Women Can Be Friends" Susan Foster Ambrose

"Men and Women Cannot Be Friends" Letty Cottin Pogrebin

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