

NO MORE MR. NICE GUY



A PROVEN PLAN FOR
GETTING WHAT YOU
WANT IN LOVE, SEX
AND LIFE

DR. ROBERT A. GLOVER



Originally published as an e-book that became a controversial media phenomenon, and now available in paperback, *No More Mr. Nice Guy!* addresses «Nice Guy Syndrome» —trying too hard to please others while neglecting ones own needs, thus causing unhappiness and resentment.

Dr. Glover, a certified marriage and family therapist, explains why unfulfilled Nice Guys lash out at loved ones, and offers advice for men to stop seeking approval, express emotion, enjoy a satisfying sex life, embrace masculinity, form meaningful relationships with other men, and live up to their creative potential.



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No More Mr. Nice Guy!

**A Proven Plan For Getting What You Want in Love, Sex and
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This book is dedicated to Elizabeth. You are my partner, my muse, and my best friend. If not for you, I would still be a hopelessly clueless Nice Guy. You are truly a gift from God.
Thank you.

For David, Jamie, Steve, and Grant. You are the greatest kids a parent could want. You are each so different and unique that you make parenting a never-ending joy. Thank you for all the times you asked, «When are you going to finish your book?» Don't ever stop being just who you are.

For the countless men and women who have invited me into the most personal areas of their lives. I have written this book for you. Thank you for your input and support in writing *No More Mr. Nice Guy!* Especially for all the men who have been a part of my *No More Mr. Nice Guy!* men's groups. You will never know how much being a part of your lives and has changed my own life. Thank you.

For Dr. Anne Hastings. Your wisdom and insight can be found on every page of this book. You have helped me believe that it is OK for me to be who I am, just as I am. Thank you.

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Introduction

Five decades of dramatic social change and monumental shifts in the traditional family have created a breed of men who have been conditioned to seek the approval of others.

I call these men **Nice Guys**.

Nice Guys are concerned about looking good and doing it «right.» They are happiest when they are making others happy. Nice Guys avoid conflict like the plague and will go to great lengths to avoid upsetting anyone. In general, Nice Guys are peaceful and generous. Nice Guys are especially concerned about pleasing women and being different from other men. In a nutshell, **Nice Guys believe that if they are good, giving, and caring, they will in return be happy, loved, and fulfilled.**

Sound too good to be true?

It is.

Over the last several years, I have encountered countless frustrated and resentful Nice Guys in my practice as a psychotherapist. These passively pleasing men struggle in vain to experience the happiness they so desperately crave and believe they deserve. This frustration is due to the fact that **Nice Guys have believed a myth.**

This myth is the essence of what I call the **Nice Guy Syndrome**. The Nice Guy Syndrome represents a belief that if Nice Guys are «good,» they will be loved, get their needs met, and live a problem-free life.

When this life strategy fails to produce the desired results—as it often does—Nice Guys usually just try harder, doing more of the same. Due to the sense of helplessness and resentment this pattern inevitably produces, Nice Guys are often anything but nice.

The concept of the Nice Guy Syndrome grew out of my own frustration of trying to do it «right,» yet never getting back what I believed I deserved. I was the typical «sensitive new age guy»—and proud of it. I

believed I was one of the nicest guys you would ever meet. Yet I wasn't happy.

As I began exploring my own Nice Guy behaviors —caretaking, giving to get, fixing, keeping the peace, avoiding conflict, seeking approval, hiding mistakes— I started noticing numerous men with similar traits in my counseling practice. It dawned on me that the script guiding my own life was not an isolated incident, but the product of a social dynamic that affected countless adult males.

Up until now, no one has taken the problem of the Nice Guy Syndrome seriously or offered an effective solution. This is why I wrote *No More Mr. Nice Guy!*

This book shows Nice Guys how to stop seeking approval and start getting what they want in love and life. The information presented in *No More Mr. Nice Guy!* represents a proven plan to help passively pleasing men break free from the ineffective patterns of the Nice Guy Syndrome. It is based on my own experience of recovery and my work with countless Nice Guys over the last twenty years.

No More Mr. Nice Guy! is unashamedly pro-male. Nevertheless, I have had countless women support the writing of this book. Women who read the book regularly tell me that it not only helps them better understand their Nice Guy partner, it also helps them gain new insights about themselves.

The information and tools presented in *No More Mr. Nice Guy!* work. If you are a frustrated Nice Guy, the principles presented in the following pages will change your life. You will:

- **Learn effective ways to get your needs met.**
- **Begin to feel more powerful and confident.**
- **Create the kind of intimate relationships you really want.**
- **Learn to express your feelings and emotions.**
- **Have a fulfilling and exciting sex life.**
- **Embrace your masculinity and build meaningful relationships with men.**
- **Live up to your potential and become truly creative and productive.**
- **Accept yourself just as you are.**

If the above traits sound good to you, your journey of breaking free from the Nice Guy Syndrome has just begun. It is time to stop seeking approval and start getting what you want in love and life.

Chapter 1

The Nice Guy Syndrome

«I'm a Nice Guy. I'm one of the nicest guys you're ever going to meet.»

Jason, a chiropractor in his mid-thirties, began his first session of individual therapy with this introduction. Jason described his life as «perfect» —except for one major problem— his sex life. It had been several months since he and his wife Heather had been sexual and it didn't look like anything was going to change soon.

Jason spoke openly about his marriage, his family, and his sexuality. An affable man, he seemed to welcome the opportunity to talk about himself and his life.

More than anything, Jason wanted to be liked. He saw himself as a very generous, giving person. He prided himself on not having many ups and downs and for never losing his temper. He revealed that he liked to make people happy and that he hated conflict. To avoid rocking the boat with his wife, he tended to hold back his feelings and tried to do everything «right.»

After this introduction, Jason took a piece of paper out of his pocket and began to unfold it. While doing so, he stated that he had written a few things down so he wouldn't forget them.

«I can never do it right,» Jason began, looking over his list. «No matter how hard I try, Heather always finds something wrong. I don't deserve to be treated this way. I try to be a good husband and father, but it's never good enough.»

Jason paused as he looked over his list.

«This morning is a good example,» he continued. «While Heather was

getting ready for work, I got our baby Chelsie up, fed her breakfast, gave her a bath. I had her all ready to go and was about to get ready myself. Then Heather walked in and got that look on her face. I knew I was in trouble.»

«'Why'd you dress her in that? That's a *good* outfit.'» Jason mimicked his wife's tone. «I didn't know she wanted Chelsie to wear something different. After everything I did to get her ready this morning, it was still wrong.»

«Here's another example,» Jason continued, «the other day I cleaned the kitchen and did a real good job.

I loaded the dishwasher, did the pots and pans, and swept the floor. I thought Heather would really appreciate all that I was doing to help out. Before I was finished, she walked in and asked, 'How come you didn't wipe off the counters?' I wasn't even done, for goodness sake. But instead of noticing all that I had done and thanking me, she focused on the one thing I hadn't finished yet.»

«Then there is the'sex thing,» Jason continued. «We only messed around a few times before we got married because we're both Christians. Sex is real important to me, but Heather just isn't interested. I thought once you got married, everything was supposed to be great. After all I do for Heather, you'd think she be willing to give me the one thing I really want.»

«I do a lot more than most guys. It seems like I'm always giving so much more than I get.» Now, looking like a little boy on the couch, Jason pleaded, «All I want is to be loved and appreciated. Is that too much to ask?»

Some Of The Nicest Guys You Will Ever Meet

Men like Jason walk into my office on a surprisingly regular basis. These guys come in all shapes and sizes yet they all have the same basic world view. Let me introduce you to a few more.

Omar

Omar's number one goal in life is to please his girlfriend. Nevertheless, she complains that he is never emotionally available for her. In fact, every one of his previous girlfriends has had the same complaint.

Since Omar sees himself as such a giver, he can't understand these

accusations. Omar states that his greatest joy in life is making other people happy. He even carries a pager so his friends can get in touch with him if they need anything.

Todd

Todd prides himself on treating women with honesty and respect. He believes these traits set him apart from other men and should attract women to him. Though he has many female friends, he rarely dates.

The women he knows tell him what a great listener he is and often call him to share their problems. He likes feeling needed. These female friends constantly tell him what a great «catch» he will make for some lucky woman. In spite of the way he treats women, he can't understand why they all seem to be attracted to jerks, rather than Nice Guys like him.

Bill

Bill is the person to whom everyone turns when they need something. The word «no» just isn't in his vocabulary. He fixes cars for women at his church. He coaches his son's little league baseball team. His buddies call on him when they need help moving. He looks after his widowed mother every evening after work. Even though it makes him feel good to give to others, he never seems to get as much as he gives.

Gary

Gary's wife has frequent rage attacks in which she verbally shames and demeans him. Because he is afraid of conflict and doesn't want to rock the boat, Gary will avoid bringing up subjects that he knows might make his wife angry. After a fight, he is always the first one to apologize. He cannot recall his wife ever saying she was sorry for any of her behaviors. In spite of the constant conflict, Gary says he loves his wife and would do anything to please her.

Rick

Rick, a man in his early forties, is in a committed relationship with an alcoholic. Rick came to counseling to help his wife Rebecca with his drinking problem. Rick complains that it always feels as if it is up to him to hold everything together. His hope is that if he can help Rebecca get sober, he will finally have the kind of relationship he has always wanted.

Lyle

Lyle, a devout Christian, tries to do everything right. He teaches Sunday school and is an elder in his church. Nevertheless, he has struggled since adolescence with an addiction to pornography. Lyle masturbates

compulsively, often three to four times a day. He spends hours every day looking at sexually explicit websites on the internet. He is terrified that if anyone ever finds out the truth about his sexual compulsions, his life will be destroyed. He tries to control his problem with prayer and Bible study, although neither of these approaches has done much good.

Jose

Jose, a business consultant in his late thirties, has spent the last five years in a relationship with a woman he considers needy and dependent. Jose began thinking about breaking up the day she first moved in. He is afraid that his girlfriend wouldn't be able to make it on her own if he left her. Although he has made several aborted attempts to break up, his girlfriend always becomes such an «emotional basket case» that he gets back together with her. Jose spends just about every waking moment trying to figure out how to get out of the relationship without hurting his girlfriend or looking like a jerk.

Who Are These Men?

Though all of these men are unique, each shares a common life script: *They all believe that if they are «good» and do everything «right,» they will be loved, get their needs met, and have a problem-free life.*

This attempt to be good typically involves trying to eliminate or hide certain things about themselves (their mistakes, needs, emotions) and become what they believe others want them to be (generous, helpful, peaceful, etc.).

I call these men **Nice Guys**.

Up to now we haven't paid much attention to the Nice Guy, but he is everywhere.

He is the relative who lets his wife run the show.

He is the buddy who will do anything for anybody, but whose own life seems to be in shambles.

He is the guy who frustrates his wife or girlfriend because he is so afraid of conflict that nothing ever gets resolved.

He is the boss who tells one person what they want to hear, then reverses himself to please someone else.

He is the man who lets people walk all over him because he doesn't want to rock the boat.

He is the dependable guy at church or the club who will never say «no,» but would never tell anyone if they were imposing on him.

He is the man whose life seems so under control, until BOOM, one day he does something to destroy it all.

Characteristics of Nice Guys

Every Nice Guy is unique, but all have a cluster of similar characteristics. These traits are the result of a script, often formed in childhood, that guides their lives. While other men may have one or two of these traits, Nice Guys seem to possess a significant number.

Nice Guys are givers. Nice Guys frequently state that it makes them feel good to give to others. These men believe their generosity is a sign of how good they are and will make other people love and appreciate them.

Nice Guys fix and caretake. If a person has a problem, has a need, is angry, depressed or sad, Nice Guys will frequently attempt to solve or fix the situation (usually without being asked).

Nice Guys seek approval from others. A universal trait of the Nice Guy Syndrome is the seeking of validation from others. Everything a Nice Guy does or says is at some level calculated to gain someone's approval or avoid disapproval. This is especially true in their relationships with women.

Nice Guys avoid conflict. Nice Guys seek to keep their world smooth. To do this, they avoid doing things that might rock the boat or upset anyone.

Nice Guys believe they must hide their perceived flaws and mistakes. These men are afraid that others will get mad at them, shame them, or leave them if some mistake or shortcoming is exposed.

Nice Guys seek the «right» way to do things. Nice Guys believe there is a key to having a happy, problem-free life. They are convinced that if they can only figure out the right way to do everything, nothing should ever go wrong.

Nice Guys repress their feelings. Nice Guys tend to analyze rather than feel. They may see feelings as a waste of time and energy. They frequently try to keep their feelings on an even keel.

Nice Guys often try to be different from their fathers. Many Nice Guys report having unavailable, absent, passive, angry, philandering, or

alcoholic fathers. It is not unusual for these men to make a decision at some point in their lives to try to be 180 degrees different from Dad.

Nice Guys are often more comfortable relating to women than to men. Due to their childhood conditioning, many Nice Guys have few male friends. Nice Guys frequently seek the approval of women and convince themselves they are different from other men. They like to believe that they are not selfish, angry, or abusive —traits they link to «other» men.

Nice Guys have difficulty making their needs a priority. These men often feel that it is selfish to put their needs first. They believe it is a virtue to put others' needs ahead of their own.

Nice Guys often make their partner their emotional center. Many Nice Guys report that they are only happy if their partner is happy. Therefore they will often focus tremendous energy on their intimate relationships.

What's Wrong With Being A Nice Guy?

We might be tempted to minimize the problem of the Nice Guy Syndrome. After all, how can being nice be such a bad thing? We might even chuckle at the Marvin Milquetoast behaviors of these men as portrayed in comic strips and television sitcoms. Since men already represent an easy target in our culture, the caricature of a sensitive guy might be an object of amusement rather than concern.

Nice Guys themselves frequently have a difficult time grasping the depth and seriousness of their beliefs and behaviors. When I begin working with these passively pleasing men, almost without exception, they all ask, «What is wrong with being a Nice Guy?» Having picked up this book and puzzled over the title, you may be wondering the same thing.

By giving these men the label Nice Guy, I'm not so much referring to their actual behavior, but to their core belief system about themselves and the world around them. These men have been conditioned to believe that if they are «nice,» they will be loved, get their needs met, and have a smooth life.

The term Nice Guy is actually a misnomer because Nice Guys are often anything but nice. Here are some Not-So-Nice Traits of Nice Guys:

Nice Guys are dishonest. These men hide their mistakes, avoid conflict, say what they think people want to hear, and repress their

feelings. These traits make Nice Guys fundamentally dishonest.

Nice Guys are secretive. Because they are so driven to seek approval, Nice Guys will hide anything that they believe might upset anyone. The Nice Guy motto is, «If at first you don't succeed, hide the evidence.»

Nice Guys are compartmentalized. Nice Guys are adept at harmonizing contradictory pieces of information about themselves by separating them into individual compartments in their minds.

Therefore, a married man can create his own definition of fidelity which allows him to deny that he had an affair with his secretary (or intern) because he never put his penis in her vagina.

Nice Guys are manipulative. Nice Guys tend to have a hard time making their needs a priority and have difficulty asking for what they want in clear and direct ways. This creates a sense of powerlessness.

Therefore, they frequently resort to manipulation when trying to get their needs met.

Nice Guys are controlling. A major priority for Nice Guys is keeping their world smooth. This creates a constant need to try to control the people and things around them.

Nice Guys give to get. Though Nice Guys tend to be generous givers, their giving often has unconscious and unspoken strings attached. They want to be appreciated, they want some kind of reciprocation, they want someone to stop being angry at them, etc. Nice Guys often report feeling frustrated or resentful as a result of giving so much while seemingly getting so little in return.

Nice Guys are passive-aggressive. Nice Guys tend to express their frustration and resentment in indirect, roundabout, and not so nice ways. This includes being unavailable, forgetting, being late, not following through, not being able to get an erection, climaxing too quickly, and repeating the same annoying behaviors even when they have promised to never do them again.

Nice Guys are full of rage. Though Nice Guys frequently deny ever getting angry, a lifetime of frustration and resentment creates a pressure cooker of repressed rage deep inside these men. This rage tends to erupt at some of the most unexpected and seemingly inappropriate times.

Nice Guys are addictive. Addictive behavior serves the purpose of relieving stress, altering moods, or medicating pain. Since Nice Guys tend to keep so much bottled up inside, it has to come out somewhere.

One of the most common addictive behaviors for Nice Guys is sexual compulsiveness.

Nice Guys have difficulty setting boundaries. Many Nice Guys have a hard time saying «no,» «stop,» or «I'm going to.» They often feel like helpless victims and see the other person as the cause of the problems they are experiencing.

Nice Guys are frequently isolated. Though Nice Guys desire to be liked and loved, their behaviors actually make it difficult for people to get very close to them.

Nice Guys are often attracted to people and situations that need fixing. This behavior is often the result of the Nice Guy's childhood conditioning, his need to look good, or his quest for approval.

Unfortunately, this tendency pretty much guarantees that Nice Guys will spend most of their time putting out fires and managing crises.

Nice Guys frequently have problems in intimate relationships. Though Nice Guys often put tremendous emphasis on this part of their lives, their intimate relationships are frequently a source of struggle and frustration. For example:

- Nice Guys are often terrible listeners because they are too busy trying to figure out how to defend themselves or fix the other person's problem.
- Because of their fear of conflict, they are frequently dishonest and are rarely available to work all the way through a problem.
- It is not unusual for Nice Guys to form relationships with partners whom they believe to be «projects» or «diamonds in the rough.» When these projects don't polish up as expected, Nice Guys tend to blame their partner for standing in the way of their happiness.

Nice Guys have issues with sexuality. Though most Nice Guys deny having problems with sex, I have yet to meet one who isn't either dissatisfied with his sex life, has a sexual dysfunction (can't get or maintain an erection, climaxes too quickly), or has sexually acted out (through affairs, prostitution, pornography, compulsive masturbation, etc.).

Nice Guys are usually only relatively successful. The majority of Nice Guys I've met have been talented, intelligent, and moderately successful. Almost without exception though, they fail to live up to their

full potential.

«But He Seemed Like Such A Nice Guy»

It is not unusual for unsuspecting people to mistake the passive, pleasing, and generous characteristics of a Nice Guy for those of a healthy male. Many women have told me that upon initially meeting these men, they believed the same to be true. Because he seemed different from other men they had been with, the Nice Guy seemed like a real catch.

Unfortunately, the negative traits listed above find a way to ooze out into Nice Guys' lives and personal relationships. As a result, **these men tend to swing back and forth between being nice and not-so-nice**. I have listened to countless wives and girlfriends describe the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde qualities of Nice Guys:

«He can be really wonderful and he can also hurt me deeply. He'll do all the extra little things like picking up the kids and fixing dinner when I have to put in extra hours at work. But then out of the blue, he'll throw a tantrum about me never being sexually available to him.»

«Everyone thinks he is such a great guy and I'm really lucky to have him. But they don't know what he can really be like. He's always helping people out with their car or something else that needs fixing.

When I ask him to do something he tells me that he can never make me happy and that I'm nagging and controlling like his mother.»

«He is constantly trying to please me. He will do anything for me except really be there for me. He'll go shopping with me even though I know he doesn't want to. The whole time he will just sulk, which makes me miserable. I wish he would just tell me 'no' sometimes.»

«He will never tell me when something is bothering him. He'll just keep it in and it will build like a pressure cooker. I won't have a clue that anything is bothering him. And then out of the blue, he'll explode and we'll end up in a big fight. If he would just tell me when he is upset about something, it would make it a lot easier.»

«When I try to talk to him about something that is bothering me, he tries to fix it. He thinks that if I just did everything his way, it would solve all my problems. He always tells me I dwell on the negative and that he can never make me happy. All I really want is for him to listen to me.»

«After all the other crummy men I've been with, I thought I had finally

found a nice guy that I could trust. Five years into our marriage I found out that he was addicted to pornography and peep shows. I was devastated. I never even had a clue.»

«I wish I could wave a magic wand, keep all of his good traits, and make all the others disappear.»

The Integrated Male

After enrolling in a No More Mr. Nice Guy! therapy group, Gil, a pleasant man in his early fifties revealed that his wife was supportive of his joining a group. Nevertheless, he harbored a secret fear that she would be angry at what the name of the group seemed to imply —«How to stop being a Nice Guy and become an S.O.B.» Using typical Nice Guy logic, Gil questioned why any woman would be supportive of men becoming «not nice.»

Because Nice Guys tend to be very black and white in their thinking, the only alternative they can see to being nice is becoming «bastards» or «jerks.» I frequently remind Nice Guys that *the opposite of crazy is still crazy*, so becoming a «jerk» isn't the answer.

Recovery from the Nice Guy Syndrome isn't about going from one extreme to another. The process of breaking free from ineffective Nice Guy patterns doesn't involve becoming «not nice.» Rather, it means becoming «integrated.»

Being integrated means being able to accept all aspects of one's self. An integrated man is able to embrace everything that makes him uniquely male: his power, his assertiveness, his courage, and his passion as well as his imperfections, his mistakes, and his dark side.

An integrated male possesses many of the following attributes:

- **He has a strong sense of self. He likes himself just as he is.**
- **He takes responsibility for getting his own needs met.**
- **He is comfortable with his masculinity and his sexuality.**
- **He has integrity. He does what is right, not what is expedient.**
- **He is a leader. He is willing to provide for and protect those he cares about.**
- **He is clear, direct, and expressive of his feelings.**
- **He can be nurturing and giving without caretaking or problem-solving.**

- **He knows how to set boundaries and is not afraid to work through conflict.**

An integrated male doesn't strive to be perfect or gain the approval of others. Instead he accepts himself just as he is, warts and all. An integrated male accepts that he is perfectly imperfect.

Making the transformation from a Nice Guy to an integrated male doesn't come about by just trying harder to be a good man. Breaking free from the Nice Guy Syndrome demands embracing a totally different way of viewing oneself and the world, a complete change in one's personal paradigm. Let me explain.

Paradigms

A paradigm is the road map we use to navigate life's journey. Everyone uses these road maps and everyone assumes the map they are using is up-to-date and accurate.

Paradigms often operate at an unconscious level, yet they determine to a large degree our attitudes and behaviors. They serve as a filter through which we process life experiences. Data that does not fit our paradigm is screened out, never reaching our conscious mind. Information that does fit our paradigm is magnified by the process, and adds even greater support for that particular way of believing.

Paradigms, like road maps, can be great tools for speeding us along on our journey. Unfortunately, if they are outdated or inaccurate, they can send us in the wrong direction or fruitlessly driving around the same old neighborhood. When this happens we often keep trying harder to find our desired destination while feeling more and more frustrated. Even though an individual following an inaccurate or outdated paradigm may think his behavior makes perfect sense, those around him may wonder what he could possibly be thinking to make him act the way he does.

Most paradigms are developed when we are young, naïve, and relatively powerless. They are often based on the inaccurate interpretations of childhood experiences. Since they are often unconscious, they are rarely evaluated or updated. Perhaps most significantly, they are assumed to be 100 percent accurate—even when they are not.

The Ineffective Nice Guy Paradigm

The working paradigm of the Nice Guy is this:

- **IF I can hide my flaws and become what I think others want me to be**
- **THEN I will be loved, get my needs met, and have a problem-free life.**

Even when this paradigm is ineffective, Nice Guys only see one alternative: **try harder**.

Nice Guys are notoriously slow learners and amazingly quick forgetters when their paradigms are challenged. Their inclination is to hang on to belief systems that have proven to be consistently unworkable, yet are so embedded in their unconscious mind that to challenge them is tantamount to heresy. It is difficult for Nice Guys to consider doing something different, even when what they are doing isn't working.

Jason, whose sexual difficulties with his wife, Heather, were introduced at the beginning of the chapter, is a good example of the frustration that can result from an ineffective Nice Guy paradigm. Jason had a controlling, perfectionist father who put unrealistic demands on Jason and his siblings. His father believed there was one right way to do everything —his way. Jason's mother was an emotionally dependent woman who lived through her children. When his mother was needy, she would smother her kids. When the children had needs, she was often too emotionally distressed to respond.

Jason learned to cope with his childhood experience by developing a paradigm that included:

- Believing that if he could figure out how to do everything right, he could garner his father's approval and avoid his criticism.
- Believing that if he responded to his mother's neediness by being attentive and nurturing, she would be available to him when he had needs.
- Believing that if he was never a moment's problem, he would get love and approval.