

The background of the book cover is a close-up photograph of two hands. The hand on the left is wearing a blue denim sleeve, and the hand on the right is wearing a striped shirt sleeve. The hands are positioned as if they are about to hold each other. Overlaid on this image are several colorful rectangular blocks in shades of green, yellow, blue, pink, and orange, creating a modern, graphic design.

FLIRTING FASCINATION

THE SCIENCE OF FLIRTING.

**BY JOANN
ELLISON RODGERS**



The capacity of men and women to flirt turns out to be a remarkable set of behaviors embedded deep in our psyches.

Exactly how do we signal our amorous interest and intent in each other? It's been trivialized, even demonized, but the coquettish behavior indulged in by men and women alike is actually a vital silent language exchanging critical-and startling-information about our general health and reproductive fitness.

"She was," he proclaimed, "so extraordinarily beautiful that I nearly laughed out loud. She... [was] famine, fire, destruction and plague... the only true begetter. Her breasts were apocalyptic, they would topple empires before they withered... her body was a miracle of construction... She was unquestionably gorgeous. She was lavish. She was a dark, unyielding largesse. She was, in short, too bloody much... Those huge violet blue eyes... had an odd glint... Aeons passed, civilizations came and went while these cosmic headlights examined my flawed personality. Every pockmark on my face became a crater of the moon."

So Richard Burton described his first sight of a 19-year-old Elizabeth Taylor. He didn't record what happened next, but a growing cadre of scientists would bet their lab coats and research budgets that sometime after that breath-catching, gut-gripping moment of instant mutual awareness, Liz tossed her hair, swayed her hips, arched her feet, giggled, gazed wide-eyed, flicked her tongue over her lips and extended that apocalyptic chest, and that Dick, for his part, arched his back, stretched his pecs, imperceptibly swayed his pelvis in a tame Elvis performance, swaggered, laughed loudly, tugged his tie and clasped the back of his neck, which had the thoroughly engaging effect of stiffening his stance and puffing his chest.