

Sisters -in- law



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ENTERTAINMENT

An Uncensored Guide for Women Practicing Law in the Real World

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For sisters' eyes only: The Y-Factor

Despite the increase of women in our profession, men just don't understand us. Admittedly, we can be emotional, high strung, controlling and overly sensitive. But hell, we've got good reason — not only must we battle our raging hormones, we also must try to understand, nurture and at times even manipulate these guys. We now will explore the unique challenges faced by Sisters, both professionally and personally, in their never-ending quest to comprehend the Y-Factor.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Sisters-in-Law: An Uncensored Guide for Women Practicing Law in the Real World," is a book that every reader of The National Jurist, both male and female, will enjoy. Written by three female attorneys, it chronicles with irreverent humor and insight some of the real-life challenges the women face in the legal profession. Here is an excerpt from the book, from Sphinx Publishing.

With two-thirds of the profession's genetic makeup containing the Y chromosome, we can't ignore 'em, but it doesn't mean we can't try to understand 'em. There are endless differences between men and women, ranging from their inability to ask for directions to their inability to talk to the opposite sex without picturing them naked. Although you will face many Y-Factor eccentricities at some point in your practice, we will focus on two of the most prevalent: The Sports Gene and the Testosterone Tyrant.

The Sports Gene

It's obvious — most Y Factors are carriers of the sports gene, which enables them to bond with their brethren over anything sports-related. We have shoes, they have sports, what can we say? Even the most reserved Y-Factor will transform into a raving maniac as soon as another Y-Factor utters a sports score. Just like love at first sight. The blinders go up and the rest of the world is shut out. Foreplay consists of screaming at the TV, analyzing meaningless statistics and one-upping each other when recalling fourth-quarter garbage touchdowns to cover the spread. Next thing you know, all bets are off. Even if you stood in front of them butt naked, they are too self-absorbed in their March Madness basketball pools or fantasy football drafts, to care. (OK, maybe not a good example, but you get the idea).

This is not one shining moment, Sisters. Sports will inundate every aspect of your life and you don't even know it, or if you do,

by Lisa G. Sherman, Deborah L. Turchiano & Jill R. Schechter

you choose to ignore it. As wild as it seems, watching grown beefy-men in tight multi-colored-Spandex battle over an oblong ball can be your ticket into the Y-Factor's state of mind. Hobnobbing over the latest scores occurs in courtrooms, negotiation sessions, dog & pony shows, happy hours, parties and dinners — you name it! Our advice? If you can't beat them, join 'em. Knowledge is power in law, and even more so in sports. If you don't play the game (no pun intended), a Y-Factor may win over a potential client simply by engaging in a 30-second exchange about some team's pitching staff.

Do we recommend that you memorize stats and purchase the NFL package? No, but if you can stomach it, (no offense, of course, to those Sisters who actually enjoy sports) learn enough to engage in "cocktail talk." Instead of using the sports page to line the kitty litter

box, scan the headlines and topic sentences of the top stories. If it's football season and you live in California, for example, know the big names and how they are faring against other rival schools (i.e., UCLA, Cal, Stanford and USC). After you hone up on the basics, be sure you size up your audience before bashing another team. It's like celebrating an Al Qaeda victory in a room full of Americans. Your baseline knowledge will not be enough to defend an all-out offensive attack on views lifted from the headline of the sports page. This friendly advice is especially critical during important men-in-Spandex games, like the World Series or Super Bowl, when you

should know the scores and listen to a brief synopsis of the game on talk radio, ESPN or a local news show.

One Sister reports that she participated in her firm's unofficial (and illegal) NCAA basketball pool. Halfway through the tournament, the pool master distributed the stats and this Sister was leading the pack to win the \$1,000 pot — 100 times her initial \$10 investment. When everyone got wind of her lead, she received more compliments and recognition from the male partners and senior associates — in the hallway, the cafeteria, the conference rooms and even via e-mail — than she EVER did

for her work product. Even her boss ran into her office to ask her how she chose Marist College to beat Duke. Just think, 900 extra bucks could almost buy you two pairs of Manolos!

Taming the Testosterone Tyrant

We've all encountered the testosterone tyrant (the insidious "TesTy") in our lives. The TesTy lives in all men, in varying extremes. Sometimes it manifests itself in the member of the old boys' club who respects no one, especially women. He doesn't understand why women don't stay barefoot and pregnant. Explaining to him that you like shoes too much just doesn't fly. When he's forced to work with you, he will either withhold all challenging assignments or will crush you with them, mostly because he thinks you can't handle "man's work" and/or you will crash and burn into the maternal wall.

Trying to convince him that you're just as capable as your Brother-in-Law counterparts is like trying to talk a meter maid out of a parking ticket. The best you can do is to know the law and your case or the deal as well as you know the aisles at Ferragamo. The only way to win an inkling of respect from this beast is to show him how smart you are and how willing you are to work hard for him. If that doesn't work, bribes can go a long way — a little Fisher Price noise-toy for the rug-rat grandkids may buy your way to respect. At

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the end of the day, it will seem enormously unfair that you may have to work even harder than the pompous half-witted brethren, but the best we can tell you is to keep a stiff upper lip (no problem if you've had botox injections) and try to get on assignments with some more open-minded attorneys in the office.

The dating dilemma

Now Sisters, we know you are perfect in every way and it's hard to believe you don't have suitors knocking down your door, but we just wanted to point out by way of the above example that dating as a Sister may be a tad bit harder than if you were a humble non-Sister. The longer you practice, the more particular and demanding you become because you are programmed for perfection in your work. You expect no less in your personal life. The most trivial flaw or annoyance becomes a deal breaker. Thus, all Sisters sooner or later experience the Dating Dilemma.

Nevertheless, we will continue the arduous search for Mr. Right. Let's analyze (which we LOVE to do) some of the dating scenarios most Sisters encounter in their quest for Mr. Right.

Sisters dating brothers: incestuous?

What happens when you lock up hormonally charged lawyers in their 20s and 30s in a building for days at a time barring any contact with the outside world? You guessed it, Sister: sex, sex and more sex. When we enter this noble profession, many of us take a vow never to date at the office. It will be easy at first because you will think all of your colleagues are boring, annoying and repulsive. After you live at the office for a few weeks and lose contact with your non-Sister friends, however, your colleagues who are still boring and annoying, are now desirable and worthy. Take it from us, incestuous dating (Sisters dating Brothers-in-Law) is as common as developing blisters after wearing a brand new pair of pumps. Although inter-office dating can't do anything good for your reputation at the office, we must admit that having a little fling may make an otherwise unbearable place just a tad more interesting. It will also provide you with some much needed TLC and an ally only a few floors away when you have been tormented day after day by the TesTy.

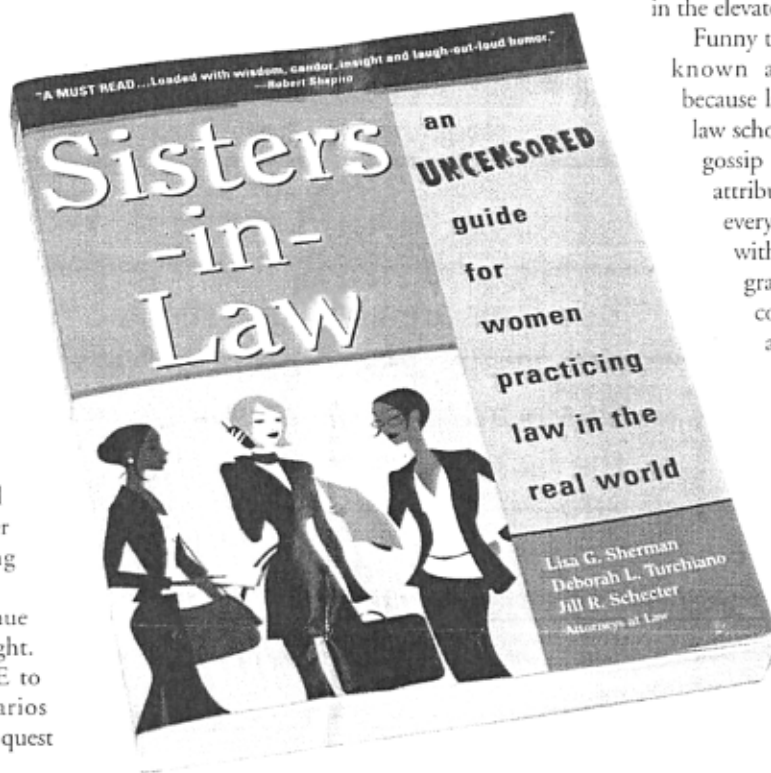
Most interfirm affairs follow a certain paradigm that goes something like this. The dating (or flinging in the case of commitment-phobe Sisters) will start after glaring into each others' beer goggle eyes after some late night holiday party or closing dinner. Afraid that

her fragile little reputation will be tarnished (even if nobody knows who she is), the Sister will behave as clandestine as a politician having an affair with an intern. On more than one occasion, we have witnessed a Sister and her flame snuggling up on the subway ride into the office, sharing a latte and musing over the previous night's sleepover party. As soon as the Sister gets out of the station, she & Mr. Associate-du-jour part like the Red Sea, not even as much as looking at each other in the elevator bank.

Funny thing is, this so-called secret is known already by EVERYONE, because law firms (even more so than law schools) are like high school, and gossip spreads like wildfire. This is attributable mostly to the fact that everyone at the office is so bored with his and her own lives. The grand irony of the paradigm, of course, is that once the Sister and Brother go public, it will be interesting for about seven hours (the average amount of time a non-lawyer spends at the firm per day) and then you're old news. This affair will end in one of two ways: either the couple will fall blissfully in love and marry, or they will have a nasty breakup, the details of which everyone knows

about, and one of them will leave the firm.

That is probably why the semi-blissful post-breakup Ross and Rachel can co-exist on *Friends*, but not in a real-life law firm.



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