

**Mr. Mitchell's (Hard-Learned) Tips for**

# **Not Being Creepy**

**a 2018 talk comprising 79 slides**

# Software Engineer at HomeAway



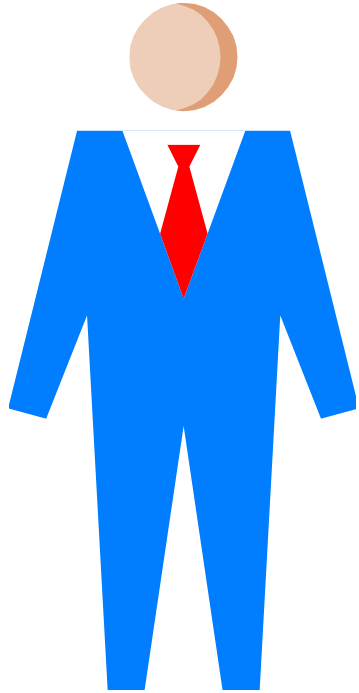
HomeAway®

# 20 Years at Leander High School

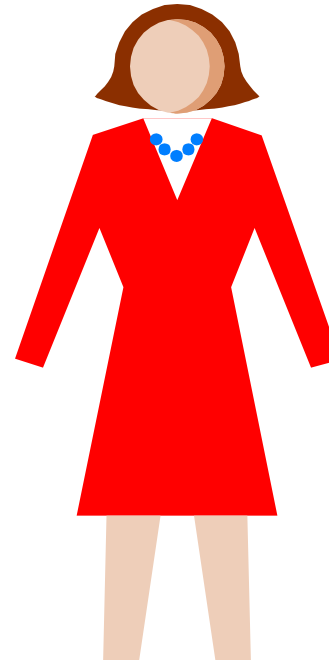


**“Creepy” is when you  
want something  
from another person and  
you pursue or express it  
in a strange way.**

# A case study

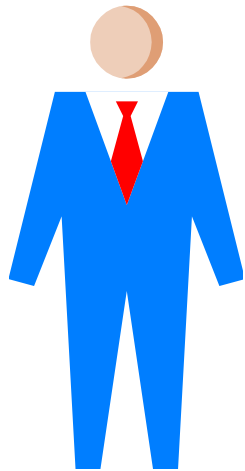


**Bob**



**Alice**

# Rule #1



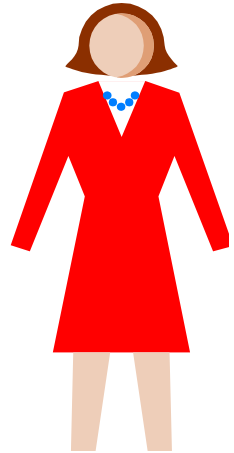
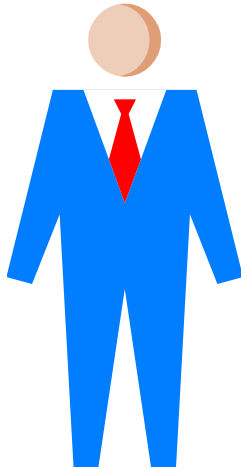
When Bob learns something *about* Alice, but not *from* Alice, then Bob might seem creepy.





# Rule #2

**When Bob wants to tell  
Alice something  
without *talking* to her,  
it probably feels  
creepy.**



**Relationships grow  
by *talking*.**

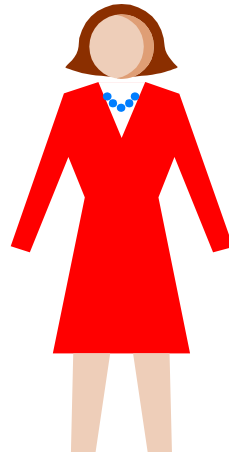
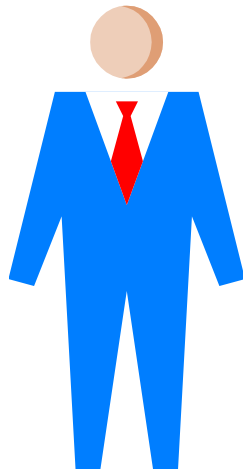
**In person, if possible.**

# Rule #3

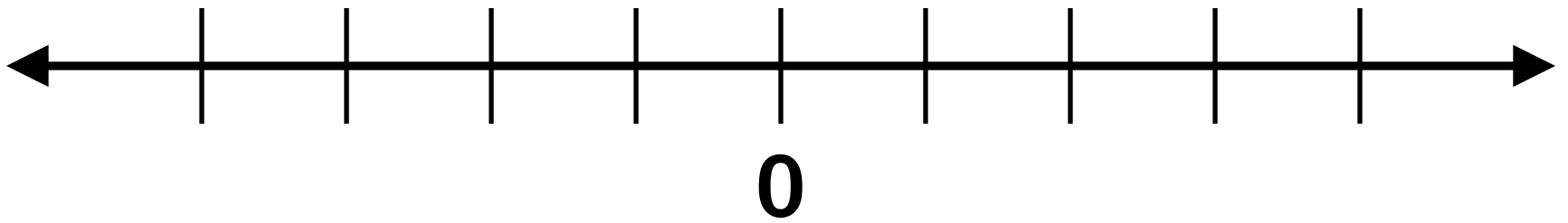
Even if Bob knows  
everything *about* Alice,  
it does not mean that  
Bob *knows* Alice.

And it usually doesn't  
make Alice want to  
know things about Bob.

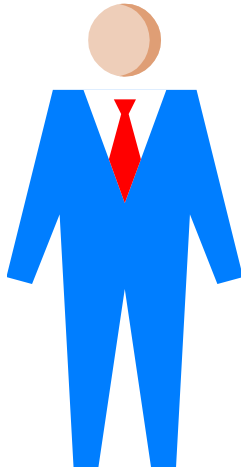
And it doesn't feel good.



# Rule # 4

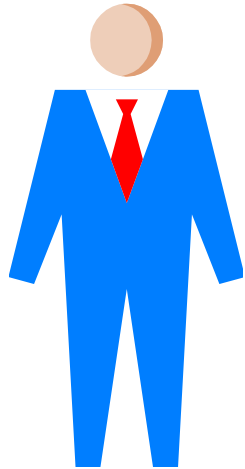


**If Alice “likes” Bob, then she might be flattered when he says or does nice things.**





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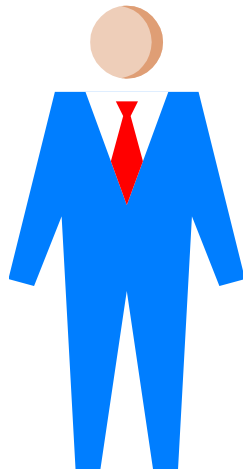


**If not, she will probably be creeped out even if he says or does the same things.**

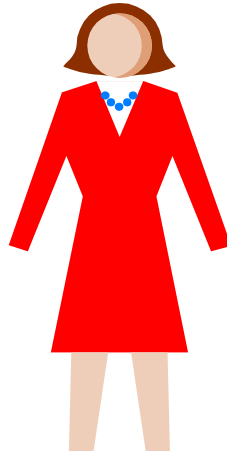


# Rule # 5

If Alice isn't interested in Bob, then *nothing* Bob can say or do is going to change her mind (probably).



Alice may only change her mind by watching Bob interact with others for a long time.



**If she's not interested,  
*leave her alone.***

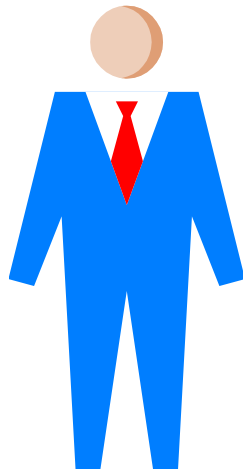
# On Relationships

# Stages of typical relationships:

0. unknown
1. strangers
2. acquaintances
3. friends
4. dating
5. boyfriend/girlfriend
6. engaged
7. married

**Am I Creepy?**

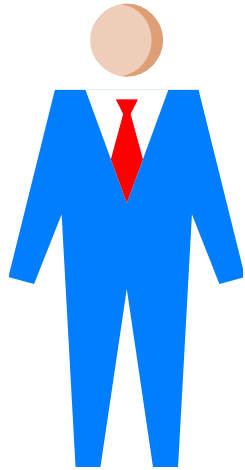
# People might think you're creepy if:



- You follow people around
- You call someone (or email or text or IM) and you haven't asked them first
- You wait for people to show up where you know they're going to be
- You touch people and they rarely touch you back
- You are always the initiator or the one doing the 'seeking behavior'
- You're always trying to buy/do nice things for someone you're not dating
- You leave anonymous notes



# You can tell they're probably not interested if:



- They don't look at you when you're talking
- They never seek you out in a group
- They never ask questions when you're talking
- They have closed body language

# The Test

**In private, ask a friend or two, “Do people think I’m creepy?”**

**(Don’t ask Alice this.  
She’ll probably lie.)**

**Then ask, “What sorts of things do I do that people think are creepy?”**

# On Popularity

## Social norms are usually:

- arbitrary
- temporary
- subtle
- non-verbal



**Popularity is a stupid, shallow game.**

(drink me)



**Popularity is a stupid, shallow game.**

**But you can't choose not to play.**





**What's her favorite band?**

**What's his  
favorite  
video game?**





**What's their major?**

# What'd they make on the SAT?



# What does he do on weekends?





?



**You choose to be  
stereotyped.**

Do you know the rules?





# Observations



**In 1995,  
I discovered that people  
sometimes tell me things  
they don't mean.**



**7% - words used**

**38% - tone of voice**

**55% - nonverbal**



Juliet: No, no. But all this did I know before.

What says he of our marriage? What of that?

Nurse: Lord, how my head aches! What a head have I!

It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.

My back o' t' other side, - ah, my back, my back!

Beshrew your heart for sending me about

To catch my death with jauncing up and down!

Juliet: In faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.

Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

Nurse: Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous,  
and a kind, and a handsome; and, I warrant, a virtuous - Where is  
your mother?

Juliet:                                   Where is my mother? Why, she is within.

Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest!

'Your love says, like an honest gentleman,

"Where is your mother?"'

Nurse:                                   O God's Lady dear!

Are you so hot? Marry come up, I trow.

Is this the poultice for my aching bones?

**from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* 35**

“Bella,” my mom said to me — the last of a thousand times — before I got on the plane. “You don’t have to do this.”

My mom looks like me, except with short hair and laugh lines. I felt a spasm of panic as I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now, so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost, but still...

“I *want* to go,” I lied. I'd always been a bad liar, but I'd been saying this lie so frequently lately that it sounded almost convincing now.

from Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*

**(Observations)**

# 0. “Clothes make the man.”



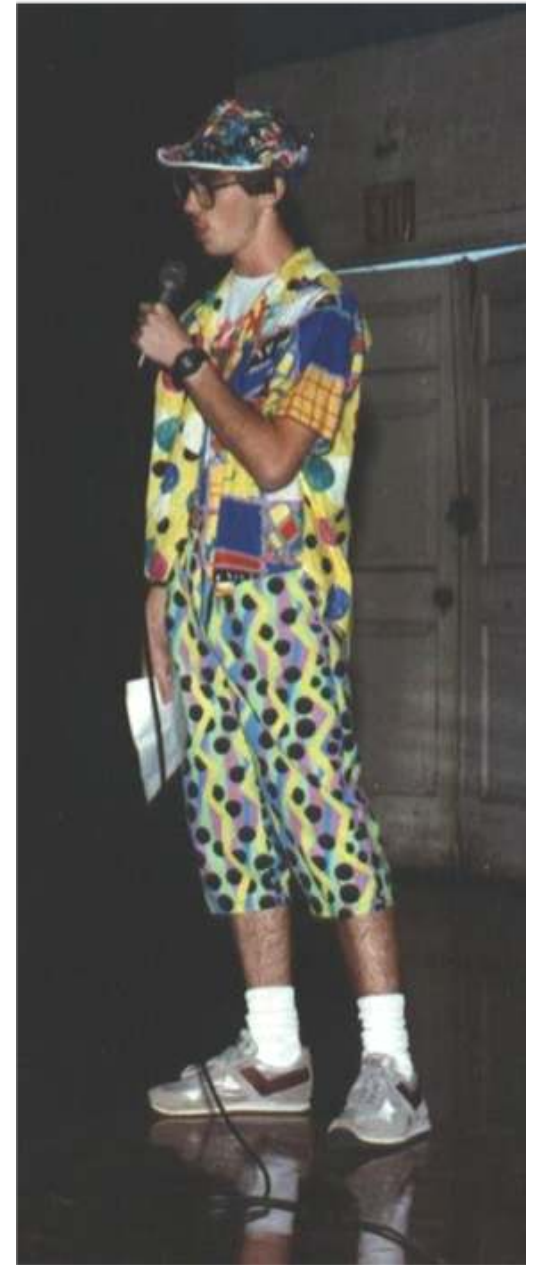
# 0. “Clothes make the man.”





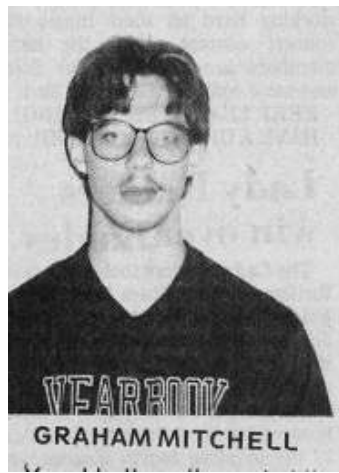
**“When you pretend to be something you’re not, you become the thing you pretend to be.”**

**Marc S. Lewis, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
The University of Texas at Austin



# Graham Mitchell

“former” weirdo





# 1. The little things matter.

**shaking hands**

**eye contact**

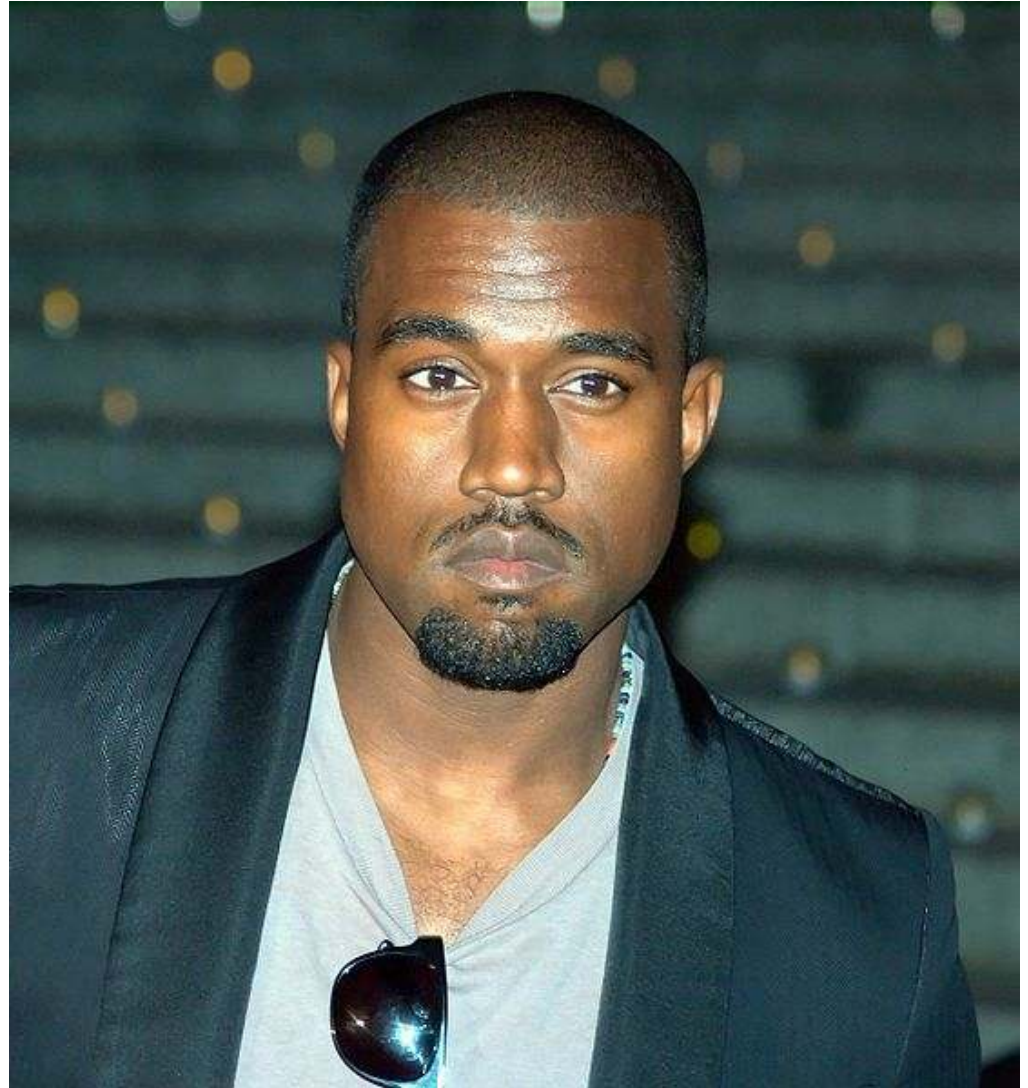
**hygiene**

**(breath or body odor)**

## 2. Most people value feelings over truth.



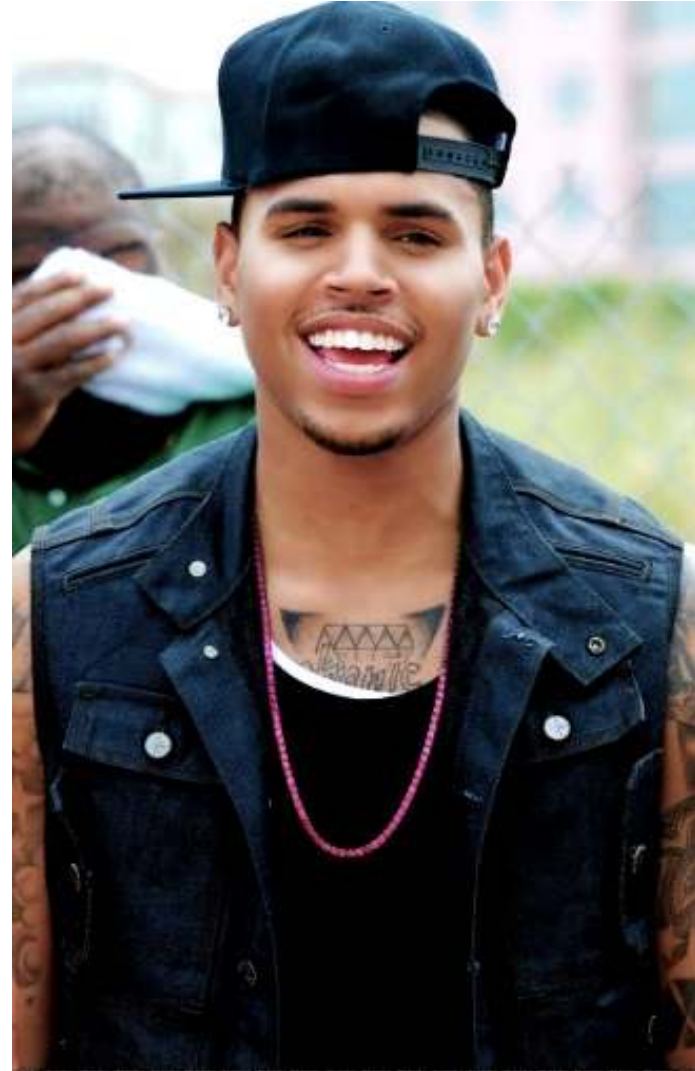
# 3. Tact is incredibly useful.



# Pet Peeves



# 1. “only jerks get women”





WINTERFEST

TOURNAMENT

# Friend Zone

# Stages of typical relationships:

0. unknown
1. strangers
2. acquaintances
3. friends
4. dating
5. boyfriend/girlfriend
6. engaged
7. married

**The “friend zone” is an important milestone.**

**Have something  
going on.**

**“All women  
deserve respect.”**

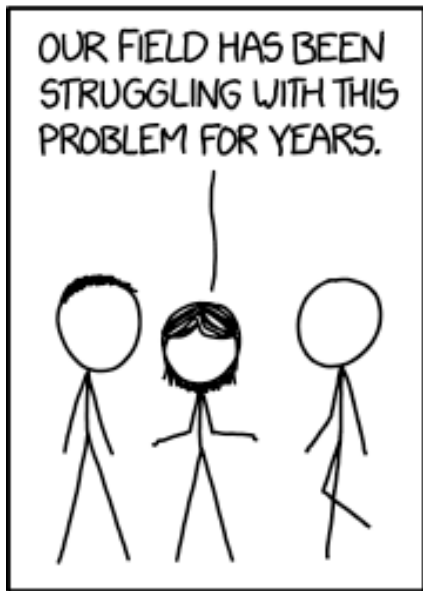
**“All *people*  
deserve respect.”**



**Treat them like a  
person, and you'll  
pick up nonverbal  
cues early on.**

# Pet Peeves

**2. Thinking intelligence  
alone is an acceptable  
substitute for domain  
knowledge and/or  
experience.**



**Learn to admit  
when you're wrong.**

**3. “Everything  
causes cancer.”**

**Actually, some things  
increase cancer risk, and  
others decrease it.**

# **Increasers:**

**tobacco smoke**

**processed meats**

**x- and gamma-radiation**



# **Decreasers:**

**healthy weight**

**exercise**

**vegetables and fruits**

**Don't drink  
your calories.**

**Don't drink  
your calories.**

**black coffee  
unsweetened tea  
water**

**Don't drink  
your calories.**

**avoid diet drinks**

# 4. Learn to cook.

**4. Learn to cook.**

**(It's basically  
a superpower.)**



How to Cook  
*Everything*<sup>®</sup>  
the basics

All You Need to Make Great Food

— WITH 1,000 PHOTOS —

Mark Bittman

**You can play their game  
without  
becoming one of them.**



**Don't** **Be** **Creepy**

**<http://dontbecreepy.com/>**