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 [Home](#)

All the Lehigh News First

News

- [» Lehigh](#)
- [» Sports](#)
- [» Business](#)
- [» Science](#)
- [» Lifestyle](#)

Opinion

- [» Editorial](#)
- [» Edit Desk](#)
- [» Columns](#)
- [» Letters](#)

Reviews

- [» Movies](#)
- [» Music](#)

Features

- [» Photo Gallery](#)
- [» Photo Essays](#)

Diversions

- [» Cartoons](#)
- [» Day in History](#)
- [» Horoscopes](#)

Services

- [» Search](#)
- [» Weather](#)
- [» BW History](#)
- [» Join Us](#)
- [» Advertise](#)
- [» Masthead](#)
- [» Staff Center](#)

If you want a kiss, why not just ask for it?

By Andrea Oliveira
Lifestyle Writer
11/2/2005



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What does a hand on the knee mean? What does one make of an arm around the waist? How do you know if the person who is responsible for making your hands so clammy and your body temperature spike wants to kiss you back?

Well, just ask.

On Monday, dating and sexual assault expert Mike Domitrz presented his audience with a verbal alternative to sexual body language in his “Can I Kiss You?” program.

The program, held in Packard Laboratory Auditorium, was sponsored by the Women’s Center, FORWARD, Delta Gamma sorority and Chi Psi and Delta Upsilon fraternities.

Domitrz addressed the issues of relationship abuse, sexual assault and healthy dating by interacting with the audience through real-life examples and role-playing. His program demonstrated a reverse stand against the “No Means No” approach and offered a new way to look at intimacy.



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Domitrz presented the audience with an alternative to “Can I Kiss You?” called “Do You Ask?” which offers a different perspective on the same issue.

“‘Do You Ask?’ puts the responsibility where it belongs – on the person taking the action of touching another person,” Domitrz said.

To begin his talk, Domitrz asked for a “wild and crazy guy” to come on stage. Three or four hands went up, and Domitrz pointed to a male sitting in the first couple of rows, a student named “John.”

“John will represent all the males on campus when it comes to dating and intimacy,” Domitrz said.

Domitrz turned to the audience and asked, “Do you think most people ask, ‘Can I kiss you?’ [before making a sexual advance]?”

As members of the audience quickly answered with an emphatic “no,” Domitrz asked John to give the audience his best impression of “that look,” you know, the one a girl gives a guy to let him know she’s interested, wink wink.

Domitrz then picked a female volunteer, introduced as “Mandy,” to demonstrate how good women are at sending body language. Sitting on a two-person couch facing the audience, Domitrz asked Mandy where she would place her hand to let a guy know she is interested. Keeping it PG, she answered, “On his knee.”

Domitrz turned to the spectators and

asked if they agreed that the typical male response would be “she so wants me.” The audience laughed at this observation.

During the program, he also asked the audience, “Why don’t more women ask?”

Although most of the audience agreed with Domitrz that women should take initiative more often, one male in the audience gave a reason as to why they don’t.

“Women don’t want to seem like they are coming on too strong,” he said.

Another girl added, “Girls don’t want to seem like sluts.”

When asked why guys don’t ask, another male answered, “That’s not how you play the game.”

Playing the game, however, relies mostly on body language. When asked if body language fails, most of the audience agreed with Domitrz. If there is so much confusion when it comes to body language, why do we rely on it when it comes to dating or hooking up? Wouldn’t it just be easier to ask?

The idea of asking for a kiss, or anything else for that matter, may seem foreign to some people. Hardly any image of a romantic moment in a movie, book or TV show starts with someone asking, “Can I kiss you?”

When Domitrz began to apply the “Can I Kiss You?” approach to a real-life situation, some audience members

became skeptical.

“It would ruin the moment,” a male student said.

After role-playing a scene, however, in which the man asked for a kiss, women responded positively.

“It’s genuine,” a female student said. “When you give them a choice, it’s a compliment because you care to ask and because you want to kiss them.”

A male student disagreed.

“It’s nice if it could be that way, but its not realistic,” he said.

Domitrz took issue with those sentiments.

“It’s not realistic because you don’t do that,” he said. “If the majority of women responded positively, and if you want to date women, wouldn’t it be common sense to ask?”

Although Domitrz used laughter to engage the audience, he delivered his message somberly when he told the story of his sister’s rape. Asking for something so simple like a kiss may seem trivial, but the message of the “Can I Kiss You?” program was to give the other person a choice in what happens to them and place the responsibility in the hands of the person initiating intimacy.

According to CanIKissYou.com, “When a sexual assault case is covered by the media, have you ever heard people ask, ‘Did she say ‘no?’ Such questions place

emphasis on what 'she' did instead of focusing on the illegal and damaging actions of the perpetrator.”

Kristin Handler, director of the Women's Center, said Domitrz may have struck a chord with the Lehigh males.

“I saw a lot of men gather around afterwards,” Handler said. “It seems like he won them over.”

Domitrz wasn't surprised by the men's response.

“Last night is a great example of how males respond to the ‘Can I Kiss You?’ program,” Domitrz said. “A group of men came up to me after the presentation, and we had a great conversation about asking. Most males want to do the right thing, so they really appreciate being given skills on how to do the right thing. Asking makes all the difference.”

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