

Julian Huguet is an actor and a writer with a special interest in science. He has created *The Science of Empathy*, a reality TV mini-series, but is best known for “The Science of Happiness” and “The Science of Love” on *SoulPancake*.

SoulPancake is a popular channel on *YouTube* that has 1.5 million subscribers and more than 210 million views. The platform was founded in 2009. The idea behind *SoulPancake* is to make viewers think about life’s deeper meanings on love, faith, and death.

Julian Huguet

Can Men and Women Be Just Friends?

Transcript:

Julian Huguet: Can guys and girls be just friends? Can they do it in spite of attraction? What if you find yourself in the friend zone? What about friends with benefits? What...

As you can see this all gets complicated, fast. Cross-sex friendships are actually shockingly recent to human history. It’s really only annoyed us for the past one percent of our existence. Only like a few thousand
5 years. Before that, for the first 99% when we were mostly nomadic¹, there’s almost no ethnographic
evidence² of men and women having platonic friendships. But even though we’re not wired for it, socially,
we are way ahead of the curve³. Men and women work together, learn together, and socialize together. So
if you want to thrive in the modern world, you better get good at having platonic friends. Now, at their core
friendships are social exchange, each of you has needs, and the trade’s got to be fair. When two people’s
10 needs are very different, one person usually gets hung out to dry. Now if you need someone to be more
than a friend, but they only need a friend, you might feel trapped in a friend zone.

What about if you’re in a friends with benefits⁴ relationship and you develop a need for emotional support
and commitment, but your partner is just content with the physical side?

We so often find ourselves on one side of the fence because we only know what *we* need out of a
15 friendship. But we never even *think* about what the other person’s needs are. So, today, we gathered a
group of male-female friends and have them take a crack at awkwardly figuring it out⁵.

Huguet: So, we have here a board of needs.

Participant 1, P1: Okay.

Huguet: ... and we want you to consider looking over all this in your friendship, what do you need out of
20 that.

P2: What I need from a friendship?

¹ nomader, dvs. ikke fastboende

² *ethnographic evidence*: vidnesbyrd om forskellige racer

³ *ahead of the curve*: på forkant

⁴ *friends with benefits*: venskab som inkluderer sex

⁵ *crack at awkwardly figuring it out*: (her) forsøg på at blive klogere på dette vanskelige spørgsmål

Huguet: Yeah, things that you need from this friendship. Go ahead, take your time, consider what you want. When you do, just put them in the circle, alright?

P3: Okay!

25 **Huguet:** Go for it!

P4: That's an easy one.

P5: Criticism.

P5: So, here we are.

Huguet: So, what do we have?

30 **P6:** Well, I have a lot of needs.

P1: I picked money, humor.

P4: Stimulating conversation.

P7: Dependability.

P6: Optimism.

35 **P3:** Romance, in the platonic way. He's like a romantic guy!

P8: Keep me sharp and focused, okay?

P1: Criticism.

P7: An ear to complain to.

P2: And healthy competition.

40 **Huguet:** Okay.

Since everybody was such a pro at talking about *their* needs, we had them take a stab⁶ at telling us what the other person needs out of the friendship.

[*Soft music*]

P8: Let me see...

45 **P4:** Here we go. I won't overthink it. I'll just throw it on there because I could keep reshuffling⁷ many, many times.

Huguet: Okay, have you ever really considered what it is she might need out of the friendship before or was this the first time?

P1: This probably would be the first time. [*Laughs.*] It's kind of sad.

50 **Huguet:** Was it difficult to pick these five out?

⁶ *take a stab*: forsøge sig

⁷ *starte forfra*

P3: It was a little tougher.

55 **P6:** I feel like in friendships it's this, like, system of checks and balances⁸ where it's like, alright I want to make sure that I'm getting my needs met, and I'm not really thinking about if they're getting their needs met. So it was nice to be able to actually think about, like, what Matt does want from me in a friend, even if I totally ignore it. [Laughs]

P3: I guess I never really thought about what *he* needs from me! I guess I'm just selfish!

Huguet: Do you think most people only consider their own needs in a relationship?

P3: Well, now I'm thinking that probably, yes!

60 **Huguet:** Right. Jared, Jennifer, what we have here is two Venn diagrams⁹. The one over here on the left is what each of you thinks the other person needs, and the one on the right is what you each said you yourselves need.

So, looking over all this information... seeing that you kind of seem to understand what each other needs, how do you think that affects your relationship with each other?

P3: I think that's probably why we're such good friends and that's why it's just easy being friends!

65 **P2:** That's why we're staying good friends!

Huguet: Is there anything specific that you guys get out of male-female relationships that you don't get out of relationships with members of the same sex?

P5: Yeah!

P6: Just a different perspective, a different point of view.

70 **P3:** Because I, like, really don't know.

P2: We've had these conversations.

P3: What's going through a dude's brains and I feel like "Alex, what does this weird thing mean?"

P5: In my female relationships I can be emotional and they get it, whereas like I think of like going out to lunch with my guy friends and they're like "Hmm, what's up man?"

75 **Huguet:** Why do you think a lot of people seem to have difficulty with male-female friendships?

P2: It's... sex!

P3: Sex, yeah.

P7: Self-control.

P2: Sex!

80 **P1:** Because hormones!

P8: Hormones, yeah!

⁸ *checks and balances*: (her) ligeværdighed

⁹ *Venn diagrams*: Venn-diagrammer – som viser, hvor begreberne er fælles

P7: Yeah, I think really it basically comes down to a matter of self-control and respecting the other person so much.

P1: You don't try to stick your thing in everything.

85 **P8:** Thank you! [*Laughs*]

P1: It complicates things!

P6: Just because one person might be attracted to the other person, you know, doesn't mean that you have to act on it, you know, if you value their friendship enough, you know.

90 **P7:** That's the big part... is momentary pleasure, does that defeat long-term rewarding fulfilling relationships?

Huguet: What we found was really interesting. Not only did almost all of these cross-sex friends feel some attraction towards each other, they had openly discussed it and then opted¹⁰ to continue the friendship without moving into a romantic relationship. Why? Because they realized the benefits of these particular friendships outweighed those of a relationship.

95 **Huguet:** Are there benefits to just being friends that you *don't* get out of a relationship?

P3: Yeah, because there's not... I mean there's less of a responsibility, I guess.

100 **P6:** With boyfriends I feel like it's always, like, "The relationship! Let's talk about the relationship, what's up with the relationship, the next level." Like, with you [*pointing at her male friend*], it's just like, whatever, it just is what it is, you know. There's not a lot of maintenance¹¹ that I have to do to, like, maintain a friendship with you besides just being myself.

P5: I'm low-maintenance.

105 **P4:** In romantic relationships where there is sex involved, a lot of times a lot of it gets shifted and gets put heavily on sex. To where, with Jennifer and I, there's no sex involved, there is so much focus on a lot of these things that we both, you know, picked because that is what we share together and all the intensity stays right there.

P6: I love that I don't want to have sex with you. I wake up every day and I'm, like, "Thank God, I don't want to have sex with you!" So that, then we can keep being friends, you know! And you're able to fight your attraction of me.

P5: Yeah, I'm able to fight my attraction to her that I can't bear.

110 **P6:** Are you attracted to me at all?

P5: Yeah.

P6: Is this a question? I just want to know.

P5: I mean, I think..., I think you're attractive.

¹⁰ valgt

¹¹ *there's not a lot of maintenance*: (her) det kræver ikke så meget opmærksomhed

115 **Huguet:** Attraction only breaks a friendship if you let it. Feeling attracted to somebody isn't your choice, but addressing it is. The key isn't to repress it, but to acknowledge that it exists.

Huguet: I'm Julian, and this has been "the Science of Love"!

(2014)