

# Romantic Availability

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The #metoo and #timesup movement have brought the problem of sexual harassment to the forefront of public attention, and I applaud the courage of the women who have come forward with their allegations. Thanks to them, we are moving toward a fairer, more equal society.

There is a danger to the movement, as some people have pointed out. Unproven allegations can ruin a reputation, even if they are fabricated. So the movement can be used as a weapon against an innocent person. But so far I think that almost all the allegations are corroborated and justified.

There is another danger to the movement, also pointed out by others. A man (since men are the main culprits) who would make a romantic or sexual suggestion to a woman (since women are the main victims) risks being accused of harassment. The woman might be open to the suggestion, but the man cannot know and cannot find out without the danger of having his life ruined by a charge of harassment. Flirting becomes too dangerous. Great relationships are missed.

The problem has been solved on some south Pacific islands. If you wear a flower behind your left ear, it means you are married, taken, have a significant other, or maybe you just don't want anyone bothering you. If you wear a flower behind your right ear, it means you are single, available, and approachable.

In this essay, I propose a more convenient and discriminating sign. I propose that wearing a pink pin means "I am open to female attention", wearing a blue pin means "I am open to male attention", wearing a white pin means "I am open to attention from any gender", and wearing a black pin means "I don't want any romantic or sexual attention right now".

These same signs can even be used within a marriage to indicate current mood, saving awkwardness and misunderstandings.

Perhaps you can suggest better signs than colored pins. But I think some signs would reduce sexual harassment, and increase confidence in starting relationships.

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