

path best left to fairytales and Disney movies, surely.

Not so fast. Who is this handsome, broad-shouldered, ginger-haired prince getting around with a glint in his eye making the whole oppressive caper seem appealing to otherwise sensible young women?

Harry. Harry makes duty look like fun. Harry is the reason etiquette instructor Myka Meier teaches people how to sit in a chair properly at The Plaza hotel in New York.

Meier, the founder of Beaumont Etiquette, trained in London under a former member of the Queen's royal household. Her less formal credentials are that she has met both Prince William and Prince Harry socially - the brothers even turned up unexpectedly to her husband's birthday party a few years ago, with William manning the DJ booth towards the end of the night while Harry danced.

To a nation of royal watchers in Australia who witnessed from afar, Harry grew from a cheeky kid who bore the weight of the untimely death of his mother, Princess Diana, with admirable grace, to a still cheeky but handsome man, who has juggled his army service with official royal duties, while appearing to have a rollicking good time.

What's he really like, then? "He's beautiful, charming, wonderful and charismatic," says Meier. "A perfect gentleman. He's fun - you wouldn't know he's a royal." Sounds like a catch. What else? "He's arguably the most eligible bachelor in the world," she says.

Thank goodness Meier launched her Marry Harry course in April. What do they say? Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

Well-documented case studies of commoners-turned-princesses Kate and Mary have proven this to be the case.

Meier says she can turn absolutely anyone into princess material in four hours. And even if you don't meet and marry Harry (there's no money-back guarantee), you'll be primed for a "Harry-style" person. What might such a person look like? Perhaps the new Duke of Westminster, Hugh Grosvenor, who at 25 has just inherited a \$15 billion fortune, along with a substantial chunk of London.

Meier has received enquiries from women (and men) all over the world, and most clients are women in their 20s and 30s. She is often asked where one can actually meet Harry - answer:

at polo tournaments or one of royal chum Guy Pelly's restaurants or clubs.

But back to the complex art of chair-sitting. We are in The Rose Club bar, a mahogany-panelled space decorated in gold and red that looks over The Plaza's lobby. "You think anybody can sit in a chair, right?" asks Meier, and demonstrates how a regular person sits in a chair. It looks, well, normal.

Then she shows how a graceful lady sits in a chair, slowing her pace right



ROYALLY GOOD
Myka Meier with a princess-in-training.

"The next high-performance princess move is the 'Duchess Slant', named after Kate Middleton's sitting style"

down and gliding towards it. And this is the clincher: *she never looks at the chair*. She looks above the chair, and when she feels it touch her calf, that's the sign to "graciously lower herself down". If you look at the chair as you approach, you break posture, which is something one should never, ever do. Pretend you have a water balloon under your chin to keep your head up (the old book-on-head trick makes your posture too stiff, apparently). And slow everything down. Walking, talking, gesturing... As Meier says, "You could never imagine Princess Grace running down the street in heels."

The next high-performance princess move is the "Duchess Slant", named after Kate Middleton's sitting style. Proper etiquette is to sit with your knees and ankles together as though

there's a rubber band around them both. Never cross your legs at the knees - if you must, cross at the ankles. This minimises the chance of photographers getting the upskirt shot they're hungry for and reduces the likelihood of foot jiggling - fidgeting reads as "negative emotion", which Meier says is a big no-no. Kate has an advanced move, which is to lean her legs on an angle. This is, frankly, painful - it apparently works better in heels (town car required).

After these lessons, which also include how to meet and introduce people of different ranks ("No touching the Queen!" is a rule former Prime Minister Paul Keating once famously breached), we move to The Palm Court for a champagne afternoon tea, where Meier runs through dining etiquette.

She says sticking your pinky finger out when you're drinking tea is poor form and something "created by Disney movies". When you're eating, "take four bites and break" is a good rule of thumb. How do you know you've taken too big a bite? "If someone asks you a question and you have to give them the 'one moment' signal with your finger, then you've taken too much," she explains.

Another lesson that will come in handy should a graduate and Harry end up visiting the Queen at Balmoral to play with the corgis and announce their engagement is "the Queen of England finishes last". That is, if the Queen's finished eating, you're done, too. The same rule applies to the guest of honour at any function.

But between afternoon tea with Harry and announcing this engagement is one particularly thorny question of etiquette. How long does Meier think someone dating Harry should wait to sleep with him? "No one has ever asked me that," laughs Meier. After a pause she ventures: "A significant amount of time - long enough that you know he respects you."

Does Meier think the people who take her course have thought through the realities of marrying Harry? How would they cope if, like the Duchess of Cambridge, they were to go from the freedoms of a commoner to the restrictive life of a princess? "People think about the perks, and yes, there are massive perks," says Meier. "But she will never live a normal life again and that, I'm sure, has been very difficult for her." ★

The Marry Harry course costs AUD\$1150. There are also online courses that cover social graces and etiquette; beaumontetiquette.com.