

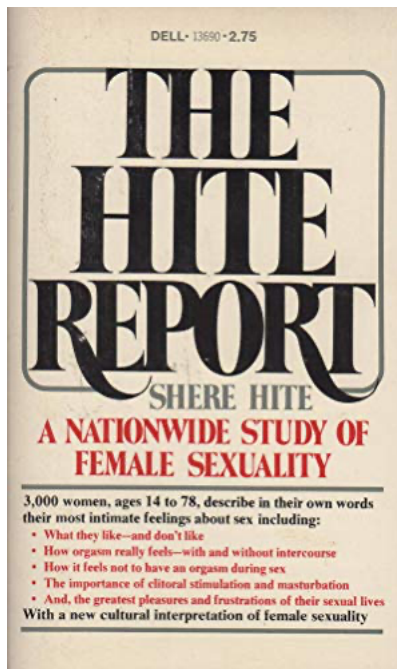
## The Hite Three

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The Hite three, as I call them, are three precepts, prescriptions, rules to live by, somewhere in there, that you might want to try out to see how they work for you. Hite refers to Shere Hite, a woman who was big in American life back in the 1970s and '80s. She came up with the Hite three, though she didn't call them that.

Shere Hite was best known for a book she wrote in 1976 on women's sexuality that sold in the multi-millions called *The Hite Report*. She wrote other books, all of them on sexual practices and perspectives, men's as well as women's, that got attention though none made a splash like *The Hite Report*.



This is not the place to go into *The Hite Report's* content in any detail. Enough to say here that it was controversial. A major example, Hite's claim that women do way better coming to an orgasm through masturbation than from someone lying on top of them thrusting in and out, which results in them faking it a lot of

the time. You might want to read the book. It'll give you a sense of the who-needs-men posture of the emerging second wave women's movement in those years, as well as the tone of the '70s in general.

The success of *The Hite Report* was increased by the “wow” quality of young, glamorous, fashion-model-esque, super cool Shere Hite, who was everywhere in the media—TV, newspapers, and magazines, including nude *Playboy* poses. No internet back then of course.

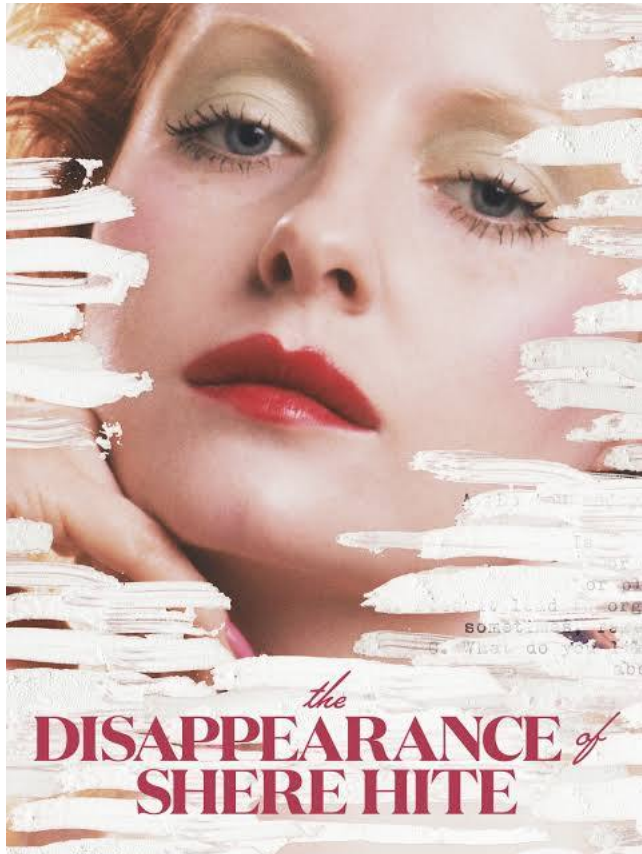


Here's a video of her in 1976.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxRPpTC-hcY>

Hite came to my attention recently watching an excellent 2023 documentary on her, “The Disappearance of Shere Hite,” something else you might want to check out. The actress Dakota Johnson—Don's daughter with Melanie Griffith for those of you

old enough to remember--was major in producing it and does the voice of Hite when needed.



The title of the documentary gets at the fact about Shere Hite that particularly intrigued me and got me thinking: in 1990, she disappeared from view. She went from being in the public consciousness to, in a flash, no segue, no farewell speech, gone, and for good. According to the documentary, she got fed up with the static she was getting about her books and her persona and decided who needs it and hit the road.

What had been going on, and it was intensifying, is that men in particular weren't taking to Hite telling them—or so they thought anyway, I think they were overreacting—that they were needy and unnecessary annoyances in women's lives. A lot of people, women as well as men, came at the validity of the research methodology Hite employed to generate the data that supported her conclusions. She distributed surveys with open-ended questions

here, there, and everywhere, and people mailed in completed surveys to her in New York City. She based *The Hite Report* on what the 3,000 women who chose to mail in their surveys reported. By the way, nobody ever questioned Hite's work ethic—she toiled away day and night to get *The Hite Report* and her other books out.

To be sure, the survey responses Hite compiled for *The Hite Report* didn't comprise a representative sample of all women, but she came on as if it did. If I'd been around her, I would have suggested she acknowledge that her data didn't hold up as a random sample, but still, what 3,000 women, and that's a lot of people, think about their sex lives, whether or not they are representative of the total population of women, should prompt the rest of us to think through how we come down on these same concerns, and that's a worthwhile activity apart from whether or not her pool of respondents to her surveys would pass muster in Statistics 201.

Another criticism of Hite is that some people were rubbed the wrong way by what they perceived as her haughty, better-than-thou manner. Not me. In the clips I'm seen of her, I found her to be articulate, gracious, and charming.

The documentary reveals that Hite went to Europe and stayed there until her death in 2020 at seventy-seven after years of suffering from a Parkinson's-like illness. I find it hard to imagine young, vital, beautiful Shere Hite as a physically ill, diminished, dying old woman. I don't know of pictures of her after she dropped out of sight, so Shere Hite remains, per the Bob Dylan song, forever young.

From the documentary, I picked up on what I'm calling the Hite three that she used as personal guidelines, including cutting out for Europe. I've thought about them and put my twist on them and tried them out and they've seemed to help me live better.

The three:

1. *Take your life very seriously.* As time goes along, do what you can to boost your “take my life seriously” level and be vigilant to anybody or anything that lowers it. This can get subtle: A relationship can be good but at the same time trivialize your existence. An article, say in this internet magazine, can be excellent but make you feel as if you are on the outside looking in at life’s drama. A conference speaker can make a superb presentation and leave you feeling that he is the star of the show, standing up high, in the spotlight, and you’re a lesser being in the audience, sitting down, in the dark. Tucker Carlson could do a fine interview and the best thing you can think of to do after it is watch LeBron James shoot free throws. The ideal is to develop a healthy perversity of sorts: if somebody/something, which includes what you think and do, cues you to take your life less seriously, make that a prod to take yourself more seriously.

2. *If anybody is laying a negative concept of who you are on you, leave.* Leaving can be what Hite did, vacating the premises, heading out to New Mexico or going in the next room or to the garage to work on your car. It can also mean leaving in place, as it were: right here, don’t go anywhere, make the other person invisible, no energy positive or negative sent in his/her direction; you’re in the room but not in the room as far as this person is concerned. Speaking of Bob Dylan, a couple nights ago I watched the documentary “Dont Look Back” (Dont is not a typo) about his 1965 concert tour of Britain. The singer Joan Baez, who once was personally close to Dylan and seemed to think she still was, was smiling and chattering away a few feet from him, but to Dylan it was if she wasn’t there. He didn’t as much as look at her. No animosity, no coolness toward her, no agenda with her at all, just nothing. She finally went back to the U.S., and you might imagine Dylan’s reaction, or better, non-reaction, to that. I’d put what Dylan did in the category of leaving.

3. *For three days, shut your personal act down.* Get away from everything and everybody, which in our time, for just about all of us, means work, people, rituals and habits, the entertainment industry, news shows, the internet, social media, and texting. Just you here and now, a walk by the lake, cook a meal, sit in a chair. Books and movie streaming and journal writing are OK, or I guess, or maybe not, I don't know. Another metaphor to get at this idea, put a "Closed" sign on the door of your particular business, what you try to sell to your customers (the people in your life) every day all day. No to-do list for the three days, no topics and issues to ponder. Breathe in and breathe out and let whatever comes up present itself to you, and if you want to, think about it, give it meaning, identify its implications, and if you don't have the impulse to do any of that, that's fine too. Another way to say it: for three days, don't do, be.

I did the three-day shut down. It's not necessary to get into what came out of it for me. Enough to say it was well worth my time and I recommend doing it.

As for the two other "Hites" during the three days:

Not that I'm not taking my life seriously now, but I should take it more seriously. During the backed-off time, what and who (including me) is impeding getting that done came into focus.

And yes, I have to some leaving. And since the opposite of a good thing is most often also a good thing, I have to get better at staying. I need to say YES rather than yes to some people.

It's only been a few weeks, but I've already gotten on with doing some good things in a "Hite" direction, which has been gratifying and encouraging. I feel—and I mean that literally, the organism I experience, feel, as me—clearer and stronger, less vulnerable, and more directed after working with The Hite three, enough to put the energy into writing this up. Your call as to what, if anything, to do with what's here.

