


Letting Go of Past Loves



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Move on to Find Real Love

One of the main reasons singles in their late thirties and beyond (who are longing to be married) stay solo has nothing to do with “not meeting the right one.” The “good ones” meet lots of potential right ones. The problem is that they compare potential partners to their great love (actual or imagined). The new guy or girl doesn’t stand a chance.

“I had a shot at my dream person, and there’s no way I’m giving up and settling for anything less. I’ll wait until I meet my ideal Mr./Ms. Right again.”

The only problem is that these folks forget that they were at least ten years younger when the relationship that’s seared in their memories occurred. They were different people. So were the men and women they were dating. In their minds they are still the same fun-loving, upbeat twenty-somethings with unlimited options and time. Instead of updating their software to reflect their changing environment, they choose to remain blissfully entrenched in the old programs they remember enjoying. They choose to stick with their Atari instead of switching to the latest Xbox. Remember how challenging those space invaders were?

I’ll drop the analogies so as not to throw anyone off topic and keep it as raw as I can. If you think you can attract the same guy or girl that you did when you were 29 now that you are 39, you are living a fantasy that is destroying your future. You are trading real happiness for the promise of “true love” that exists only in your imagination.

Here are some of the most common examples of ways we hold on to past loves:

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1. Being stuck in a different decade: Daniel is in his late 40s. He's got lots of hair on his head and money in the bank. Most importantly, he's got a heart of gold. Seriously, he's truly a *mensch* and will make a wonderful husband and father, if he gives himself the opportunity. You see, Daniel has a very specific taste in women. It's basically the exact same taste that he had when he was in his 20s. I won't go into details, but let's just say that what he's looking for was probably out of his league in his prime. Now it's impossible. Like I said, he's a great guy, but he's much too old for the girls he's yearning for. And he pretty much looks his age. But Daniel is comfortably entrenched in his vision of the past, and is committed to waiting for "true love" in the form of a youthful-looking super model, just a few years out of college. There are plenty of attractive and personable women within ten years of his age who would almost definitely make him happy, if he gave himself a chance. But no, he's waiting for true love, the true love of his past, and he won't "settle" for anything less.

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2. Getting hung up on age: Lisa was a hot ticket in her 20s and most of her 30s. Now she's in her 40s and still looking good. She always dated guys within a couple of years of her, on either side. Now things are a little more challenging. Most guys in their early-to-mid-40s want to date women in their 30s (That's a fact, so accept it). Lisa is still living in her 30s, searching for that successful 30-something hunk to swoop down from his hedge fund trading desk and whisk her away to a romantic getaway at his Hamptons house (fully owned, no shares). Things aren't going so well for her, and her future

is not so slowly being erased by past.

3. Clinging to the memory of an old flame: Carla recently broke 40 and is hotter and more accomplished than ever. She had a major love affair in her late 20s to early 30s that didn't pan out. Since then, she's been comparing every guy she dates to her old flame, and has passed on lots of good ones because they just didn't match up to her vision of manhood (she calls it true love). So, instead of being in a relationship (maybe even a mommy several times over), she is alone, by choice, waiting for true love to revisit after so many years of absence. Unfortunately, 40s true love is going to look much different than it did in her age of innocence.

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What happens to people who continue living in the past? Many of them hold on to their fantasies until they reach the stage (drop the "st") where they just decide to give up. Then they have two choices. Either they make peace with their eternal single status and "enjoy" life on their own, or they marry someone they should have married 20 years before. It's then that that these folks can finally find the happiness that they now understand comes from a loving, caring relationship.

But why wait until the point of surrender? Why not close that door to the past for good and join the world of the present where people age and grow and mature and enter relationships and love and care and share and live meaningful lives?

How have you moved on from a past love?