

# Relationship Advice: Supporting the Caregiver



By Dr. Jane Greer

Dealing with an illness or injury is stressful and overwhelming, and that is even more true during a global pandemic. When it happens, family members and friends rally around the person who is sick, and the focus is on them as they deal with doctors, getting a diagnosis, managing symptoms, and so much more. While that is happening, their partner often becomes a hands-on caregiver, arranging appointments, transportation, in-home care, and dealing with all sorts of other logistics. Their strength and stamina can be instrumental in helping their loved one get through the difficult time. Katharine Heigl, the star of *Firefly Lane*, recently revealed her husband Josh Kelley helped her get

through a health crisis. “First trip since the start of the pandemic is back to L.A. to deal with a herniated disk in my neck,” Heigl captioned with an Instagram video of Kelley singing along with the coffee maker in their hotel room. “Thank God for @joshbkelley for not only coming with me to hold my hand but for providing me with some very much needed comedic relief!” And while caring for the person who is unwell is so important, the thing that can fall through the cracks is the impact all of this has on the partner who has stepped into that helping role. Illness can hit hard, not just for the one who is sick but also for the one who is going through it with them. Since they don’t want to be a burden and possibly add more stress to their loved one who is healing, they may be reluctant to voice their worry and unhappiness, as well as the strain they are experiencing, and may even think they shouldn’t.

**If you find yourself in this position, what can you do to make sure you are getting what you need so you don’t burn out and can continue to be there for the person who relies on you?**

When you are dealing with illness and recovery in your family, the uncertainty and anxiety you feel can totally drain you, as can the intense demands that are being put on you. Your ailing partner is likely not themselves, so your own support system is no longer in place and you probably miss them. You’re likely to be very concerned about when and if they will return to what they once were. When this happens, it is normal to feel unsupported, angry, overwhelmed, frightened, overloaded, and even alone, all of which can make you experience guilt for

having these feelings since the person you love is suffering. They can get even worse if your partner becomes demanding, takes you for granted, or are unpleasant to be around because of the pain or discomfort they are dealing with. Also, their fear about the future can put even more of a damper on the household. You may begin to resent having to carry the lion's share of the daily household work in addition to everything else you are handling, and then think you are not being a good enough partner because if you are the healthy one, you may feel you have no right to complain.

With all of this in mind, it is important to take stock of how depleted you are. While you are serving as the emotional and physical pillar in your home at the moment, you, too, need someone to lean on. Consider finding someone who can give you the emotional support you require without feeling it is taking away from your partner's needs. In other words, your partner's family members may not be the best people to look toward. Instead, think about a friend, a neighbor, a colleague at work who is removed enough from the situation that you won't feel terrible if you share with them the occasional thought that your loved one is driving you crazy, or a therapist. Being able to say it out loud can be very helpful, because otherwise you will bottle it up and it can just get worse. Having an individual in your corner who can listen and understand how hard this is for you, too, will allow you to recharge your battery so you can be there for your partner. Along those lines, if you are aware of a friend or family member who is in the role of caring for an ill loved one, consider reaching out and offering your empathy and a shoulder to lean on – it will go a long way.

It sounds like Katharine and Josh are getting through their crisis together. Humor seems to be one of the ingredients Josh is using to support Katharine, and hopefully he, too, is getting the assistance he needs so he can continue to be there for his wife.

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## Relationship Advice: How Do You Deal With A Badmouthing Ex?





By Dr. Jane Greer

Breaking up is hard in itself. You have to find a way to move from the “we” back to the “me,” disentangle your lives and heal enough to look to the future. But what happens when the end of a relationship is charged with unrelenting and unresolved anger, and rather than bowing out gracefully and moving on your ex instead allows that anger to fuel bad behavior which can damage your reputation? This includes saying terrible things about you and can happen in different ways, including revealing personal information, distorting the truth, gossiping about a private mistake that was made when you were together or even by spreading rumors. Sometimes the information begins with the ex, and sometimes the ex simply serves to fuel the negative information. For example, [celebrity exes](#) Matthew Morrison and Lea Michele were in this situation when Morrison recently addressed reports of Michele’s diva actions while working on the show *Glee*. He said, “Yeah, going back to what I was saying, you know, you want to be a good, pleasant person to be around.” He did not appear to have her back.

**So, how do you deal with a vindictive ex who is out for revenge? How can you handle a negative campaign against you, especially from someone you used to care about? Check out Dr. Greer's relationship advice.**

When your relationship dissolves and you find yourself with a spiteful ex, there is no telling how far their anger will go or whom it will reach. Now that they are no longer trying to please you or make things work between you, they might feel they have free license to say anything they want. That can be scary, and in many ways it is its own form of cyberbullying, since so much information can be spread online so quickly. It can do harm to your integrity as well as your self-esteem. But once you figure out the focus of the verbal assault there are ways to live with it and to deal with it. Depending on whom your ex is talking to and what they are saying, you can pick your course of action accordingly.

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If, for example, they are disparaging you to loved ones – family and friends – consider putting your own boundaries in place. If your sister-in-law or friend tells you that your ex is saying bad things about you, let them know first and foremost that you don't want to hear about it. Ask them to stop reporting back to you because it is too hurtful. Once you do that, you can take it one step further and ask if your loved one would consider telling your ex that they would prefer they didn't talk about you to them. They might explain

that they are in touch with both of you, or that they truly care about you, and don't want to get in the middle or hear these negative claims. If the people your ex is badmouthing you to are your children, if they are old enough you can explain that just because people are saying things, doesn't make them true. In fact, you can tell them that you separated because you didn't agree about certain things, and because of the ongoing disagreement there is still a lot of residual anger between you. As a result, people can say and do terrible things when they are that upset. It is also okay to guide your children toward telling the other parent that they don't want to be told these things about mommy or daddy. In other words, you can encourage your children to put their own boundaries in place by either talking to the parent who is saying the disturbing things or by choosing to not listen or to ignore what is being said.

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Finally, as was the case with Lea Michele, sometimes an ex has an even wider reach and says bad things to the public. This can sometimes be the most disturbing since it can contaminate your reputation and it can be harder to know how to reach so many people with your own message. In this situation, there are two options. The first is to ignore whatever was said and not give it credibility by trying to explain it away or justify it. If you do that, it can sometimes validate whatever information was being put out there. However, if your ex revealed personal material that was supposed to be kept private but is truly offensive and can be verified, the better choice may be to take ownership of it immediately. You can do that by acknowledging what happened and sharing your remorse and regret about it, as well as how you have grown from it. You can let people know it is something you will never do again, and that this can be a lesson learned which may serve as an example and be an inspiration to others.

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No matter who is the recipient of the information, having an ex – someone you once loved and trusted – attack your personality is an awful place to be. If you follow these basic suggestions, though, you will be able to keep some control so you can maintain your own relationships and hold onto their respect and your own integrity. In the case of Lea Michele, her ex didn't defend her when others questioned how she handled herself on the set of *Glee*, and, in fact, perpetuated the negative things that were being said about her. Hopefully she, and you, will be able to be your own champion and take back the narrative of your life.

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## Relationship Advice: Losing a Pet During the Pandemic Like Hope Solo and Jerramy Stevens





By Dr. Jane Greer

In this traumatic and unprecedented time of the global pandemic, we are surrounded by so much loss of life. In the United States alone many more than 90,000 people have died, and that number grows every day. With that in mind, it may seem that the loss of a pet pales in comparison to the death of a human loved one, and therefore people think they don't have a right to experience or express their heartbreak. But for many, pets are among their most loved ones, and saying goodbye can be devastating, even, or more so, during this time of isolation and widespread sadness. Sports couple Hope Solo and her husband Jerramy Stevens recently talked about the [loss of their dog](#), Conan, after he was tragically shot. Solo posted about it on social media, saying, "We're broken-hearted to share that Conan passed away from blood loss last night. He fought up until the very end. We're crushed. Just a dog running through the woods, trying to make his way home."

**In the same way people wonder if**

**it's alright to find things funny during these incredibly difficult times, many wonder if they can truly mourn the death of their beloved pet without feeling guilty. In this relationship advice, is it okay to grieve for an animal when so many people are suffering?**

The short answer is a loud yes, and there are a number of reasons why. For many people, especially those who live alone, a dog or cat can be a lifeline and can sometimes be the only interaction they have with another living thing, particularly in this time of social distancing. Your animal gives you companionship and unconditional love, which can be so important and fortifying that when they pass it can feel like a huge hole has opened up in your home and heart. The pain you experience can be overwhelming. With that in mind, in the same way it is important to continue to laugh, it is also important to make room for and acknowledge the sadness that comes with losing a treasured pet.

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Try not to compare your loss to those that other people are going through. While they may be different, they are nonetheless the same in terms of the emptiness they create. Keep in mind that nobody really knows how prominently your pet factored into your days – whether it was your feeding routine and the boost you got to your self-esteem through taking care of them, or the comfort you found when they jumped into your lap each afternoon or when they slept next to you every night.

These many moments are now gone, and the magnitude of that is great. Furthermore, they have shared a substantial piece of your life history with you. Maybe as a kitten he was your first roommate in your new apartment. Or maybe you got her as a puppy the year you were married. Perhaps it was your faithful dog that saw you through your first breakup and helped you survive. They were present and a touchstone for facets of your life that proved immeasurable.

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For some, the anguish can be so excruciating that they decide they never want to go through it again and choose not to get another animal. Others, though, feel that a way they can heal and honor the pet who came before is by replacing them and keeping their spirit alive.

Some get the same breed again, or even use the same name as a tribute of love. If you aren't ready to tackle the commitment of a new pet, during the pandemic it could be an opportune time to consider fostering an animal on a temporary basis. Sadly, dogs and cats are also losing their owners to the virus and are being abandoned, so it is a way to provide a home to animals in need while forging a new bond that can be healing for you as well.

The bottom line is that mourning the passing of a pet should not be minimized. Hope and Jerramy shared their loss publicly, and hopefully got much-needed support in doing so. It takes a long time to move beyond the sorrow after the death of a beloved animal. Appreciating what you are going through is the first step.

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# Relationship Advice: The Case of Elon Musk: Connecting Instead of Clashing



By Dr. Jane Greer

Maintaining happiness and peace with your romantic partner is

an age-old quest. And with the pandemic keeping everyone at home together literally all the time, that goal is now both more important than ever, and, because of the intense proximity couples are sharing, more difficult than ever, too. The frustration people are feeling may come out in unexpected and snarky ways, which can lead to hurt feelings and fights. Take celebrity couple Elon Musk and Grimes who welcomed their son, X Æ A-12 Musk, earlier this month. When Grimes tried to explain the baby's name to fans, she mistakenly transposed two numbers and Elon corrected her publicly. She came back on the defensive, saying, "I am recovering from surgery and barely alive so may my typos b forgiven but, da-it. That was meant to be profound." She handled it with grace, basically asking Elon and everyone else to consider her situation and cut her some slack. The bottom line is that nobody likes to be corrected or told they were wrong or could have done something in a better way, and it inevitably leads to arguments.

**So, what can you do when your partner appears to be hot-headed and calls you out? And what can you do to avoid it in the first place? Check out Dr. Greer's relationship advice.**

Because of the tight quarters, things that were once charming to you may now be totally annoying, and behaviors that were already irritating but tolerable may now be driving you crazy. Maybe the way your partner used to interrupt you because they were so excited to tell you something is now hard to take. Or their not shaving for a day, which you used to find sexy, is now a complete turnoff. Possibly you've told your partner a thousand times not to leave dishes in the sink, but they are

still doing it, or you have a system down for cleaning items that you bring into the house, but your partner keeps messing it up no matter how many times you explain it. All of these instances can feel like a personal affront. The knee jerk reaction is typically to be critical and to tell them how they should be behaving. However, that is a sure path to a clash. When you tell them what they've done wrong, they are likely to get defensive and counter with everything you do that upsets them. As a result, not only will the initial problem not be dealt with, but now you are both angry and resentful.

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The most important thing to keep in mind to help you navigate these instances is that your partner is probably not doing it intentionally to ignore your request and upset you. While some behaviors at times may be retaliatory, more often than not they are just a by-product of your partner's being oblivious, forgetful, and by force of habit just doing things their way. This awareness will help you to not take things personally so that you can look to problem-solve ways to help your partner remember the things that are important to you, rather than just being angry at them. Additionally, it can help you take stock of what's going on with them. Are they having a tough day, or are they overwhelmed with balancing their work with around-the-clock home life? By reflecting on where they are, it will help you be empathic so that you can respond in a caring way. Furthermore, this can contribute to their becoming more self-aware and appreciating the impact that their behavior is having on you since you are not attacking them in anger.

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There is no question that the chores at home, always a source of conflict over who is doing more, are magnified now, not only because you are both there all the time and there is more

to do, but also because you have to live with the results. He didn't make the bed again? She left the old coffee grounds in the coffee maker last night? How could they not see that the garbage has been overflowing all morning? You are both in each other's face and there is no place to hide. Often the question becomes, whose preferences take priority? One way to deal with that is to choose areas where you are each in charge, agreeing to name yourselves the sheriff of that particular purview, whatever it is, thereby minimizing the micromanaging from the other partner. Maybe one of you is in charge of ordering groceries. Of course, you can consider your partner while doing that, but the actual task might be left up to you. Or maybe one of you is in charge of getting the kids up each morning, thereby eliminating any possible disagreements about timing and breakfast. Not only will that help you spread out the responsibilities, it will also allow you to be more flexible and open-minded, and therefore able to let go of some of the details that would bother you. It will give each of you the freedom to equally run the show in different areas of your lives. Now, more than ever, is a good time to delegate and respect differences. If, though, you go this route and can't stand the way your partner did something – the way he folded a towel or the way she put the glasses back on the bar – fix it quietly to make yourself comfortable when you can instead of making a big deal about it. Giving your opinion on the right way to do something is usually unwelcome. A good rule of thumb is to offer your opinion only when asked.

Another way to have things run smoothly is to nip negative emotions in the bud. You can do this by giving your partner a heads up if you know you are in a bad mood, saying this is bothering me, or, I'm annoyed right now, so don't take me personally. This way, if your partner is short or nasty or takes a tone with you, you can be relieved knowing you're not to blame, but it is just the space they are in.

Everything has changed, at least for the time being, and

finding your own personal space and time is harder now. But if you are able to embrace that and can work at considering each other's needs, it will be a lot easier. Just as Grimes and Elon moved beyond their tussle, hopefully, keeping these tools in mind, you can, too. Or even better, maybe you can avoid it altogether.

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## Relationship Advice: How Important Are Similarities For A Happy Marriage?





By [Dr. Jane Greer](#)

There is no question that people believe having things in common can lead to a strong marriage. But what if those shared interests fade for one or both partners, or you don't really like that many of the same things in the first place? Can you still build a strong foundation and share a lasting relationship?

According to actor Bill Pullman, the secret to a happy marriage is "putting our hands in the dirt; it's a parallel play of digging and planting." In other words, he and his wife can do their own activity while being together. "It's helped to keep in tune with each other," he said.

**Relationship Advice: For Bill Pullman and his wife, a successful marriage seems to be about**

# embracing common ground. The question is, if you don't have that, how can you maintain a supportive connection?

Clearly it can be easier if you agree on movie genres, favorite cuisines, types of books, travel destinations, and even how often you are intimate with each other. All of that allows you to smoothly spend quality time together. But what happens if suddenly your husband doesn't like to ski anymore but you still do? Or your wife has developed an aversion to Thai food which is always your go-to Friday night dinner out and you still love it? Or what if you have always had sex twice a week, which worked well for you both, and suddenly your husband wants to only do it twice a month? What if none of this was the case, to begin with, and you were swept away by intense chemistry but once the dust settled you realized you didn't like doing that much together? Can you still make your marriage work? Cupid has some [relationship advice](#) on how to maintain a happy and healthy connection with your spouse.

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There is no question that discord in any of these areas, especially if things change over time, can create problems. For example, being affectionate or not can eventually take a toll if one person is feeling deprived of it. Appearance is another place where people can get caught in the downward spiral. Very often couples get so comfortable with each other that they no longer feel they have to dress to impress and scale down to their basic look. If suddenly you are no longer dressing up and going out, or your partner stays stuck in the same shirt day in and day out or stops shaving, it can make you angry enough as well as turn you off to the point where

you might even want to avoid intimacy with them. All of this, as well as the usual wear and tear of everyday life and its responsibilities, can contribute to feeling disappointed and resentful to the degree where it can feel intolerable. So, what can you do to generate harmony and happiness rather than discontent?

The first and most important thing is to keep your desire to please your partner on a full flame. It is not unusual to realize that when you met your partner all you wanted to do was please them, which might have led to your not realizing or even withholding some of how you really felt about certain things. Now that you are married, though, you can be honest, which means you are no longer concealing who you really are. When that happens, it can eclipse your desire to please your partner because you are now focusing on yourself. Hopefully, you are being authentic, but still balancing that with your intent to satisfy them and meet their needs. This can get challenging because if one person asks the other to change their shirt, instead of hearing it as a request that brings them joy, it can sound like a demand that you are telling them what to do. As a result, it can make them feel controlled, which then turns into a power struggle with one person saying *if you loved me you would* and the other person saying *don't tell me what to do*

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The second important step is to learn to include your partner in the decisions you make before you settle on them. Very often people assume that because they want to see their family, their spouse will be just fine with that. Or since they are social and want to hang out with their friends every weekend, their partner will be on board. The truth is, when you go ahead and make choices based on what you want to do without getting your partner's input, they can't help but feel unimportant and not cared about. By learning to come to joint

decisions and discussing your needs as well as theirs before organizing a plan, even though you may not always agree, at least you let your partner know that they are important to you and you value them and want them to feel loved. Finding some middle ground and learning to compromise is what can facilitate your making choices that leave room for both of your pleasures and preferences.

Finally, if you are coming from a place of few shared interests, it is never too late to be open to participating in your partner's hobby or activity. While you might not always enjoy it yourself, you can derive pleasure from seeing how much they enjoy it. It is a way to extend yourself and show your love, as well as enjoy watching them have fun with what they are doing. Also, use it as an opportunity to grow together and see if you can discover activities you both might like. Think about learning to play cards or dancing or cooking together, whatever it is, consider changing lanes and trying something new.

Learning to tolerate the differences and make room for them can help you stay connected, rather than allowing them to divide you. It seems Bill and Tamara have celebrated their similarities which, according to Bill, has been a recipe for a happy marriage for them. However, if that's not the case for you, try to view the things you don't agree on in a positive light that can lead you both to happiness.

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# Relationship Advice: Does Marriage Change Your Feelings?



By Dr. Jane Greer

So much planning goes into a wedding, from the venue, to the guest list, to the flowers and food, and that's after you go through what can be the long process of setting the date! It might seem, as you move closer to the big day, that becoming a married couple is the end goal, and that is where all the work stops. But in reality, that is where it all begins as you start your life together as spouses. So much goes into making

the decision to take that next step from either serious dating or living together, and the big question is – does anything change on the other side as far as your own feelings go, or your feelings toward your new husband or wife? Celebrity couple Erin Foster and Simon Tikhman recently got married, and [according to](#) Foster, “It feels really nice and it feels safe and cozy that I have a husband. Like I have a person keeping me safe from the world, you know?” Many people live together and never get married, and others live together for a long time before even thinking about tying the knot.

## **So what, if anything, changes with marriage? How important is being married? Check out Dr. Greer’s relationship advice.**

The first things that immediately change are the legalities—the rights you have to each other, in times of illness and other situations, as well as to each other’s property, become law and you are no longer operating by your own system. Marriage endows you with more protection, power, and control in almost every aspect of life together. It indicates that you have committed to sharing financially with this person. Even if you were already doing that before, it was on your own terms, and now it is spelled out and nonnegotiable. Taking this big step can solidify your sense of partnership. All of this often does change the way people feel toward each other since you are clearly in it together for the long haul, and you have made a declaration to the world that you are committed to each other for a lifetime.

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That statement also ushers in public accountability and all

the expectations that go with that, from your own to those of your family and friends. This changes the status of your relationship in other people's eyes, and, depending on your new family, might either bring you both more acceptance and respect from those around you, or on occasion may garnish more hostility than you did before taking the jump. Either way, it may lead you to being more invested in making things work between you, and to mustering the patience and tolerance it takes to solve the problems you face which you might otherwise be tempted to bail on. Marriage brings with it a sense of permanence. Whether you are married or not, ending a relationship is heartbreaking, but dealing with divorce brings in a whole new level of pain and anguish which makes ending your connection much more complex. Realizing how complicated it can be to break all of your official ties might compel you to continue to try to make it work and stay together.

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With all of this in mind, there are a few things to think about as you decide whether or not you are ready for this next step. The first is how will becoming a spouse change your role in the way you deal with each other, as well as in your financial situation? Will it make you feel more protected or will it cause things to be messier than they are now. If one or both of you were previously married and there are children involved, how will it affect them? Sometimes they can be the determining factor for getting married as was the case for Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt who ultimately got married because it was what their children wanted them to do. Getting married can solidify the family unit. Finally, if you have been divorced, you might still be feeling the aftershocks of the marriage failing, and be afraid to try again for fear of either making a mistake or once again having things not work out. Consequently, your past may be holding you back from a better future. Evaluating what you stand to gain can help you sort of if marriage is right for you.

While being married might feel similar to living together, it can bring with it a feeling of security and comfort that you didn't have before. It becomes more about the two of you in your respective worlds fully dedicated to being together. Erin Foster talked about feeling that there was now someone keeping her safe in the world. If you get to the point of taking wedding vows, hopefully that will be your experience as well.

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## **Relationship Advice: Communicate Dislikes like John Legend & Chrissy Teigen**





By Dr. Jane Greer

When you are first falling in love it seems that your partner can do no wrong. He always wants to try new things? Exciting! She wants to stay in her pajamas over the weekend and not go out? Cozy! He wants to read by himself every night? Focused! But over time these quirks or specific behaviors can become, well, annoying. What if you don't want to constantly try new things? Or what if you want to get dressed and leave the house on Saturday and Sunday? Or what if you occasionally want to watch TV with him? And this doesn't even begin to cover the other behaviors and habits that might creep in over time, such as personal habits, skills or lack thereof, and the varied willingness to take on household responsibilities. What do you do when all those things you once liked so much start to grate at you? How open can and should you be? Celebrity couple John Legend and Chrissy Teigen recently had to face this situation when they brought it to the extreme and took a lie detector test. John ended up telling the truth about a meal Chrissy made that "wasn't great." Whether it's a dinner your partner cooked that you didn't like, or the fact that he or she never puts away any clothes, it's important to think about how to

communicate these dislikes to your partner before they really become a problem.

## **How can you communicate your dislikes without offending them and hurting their feelings, and creating another problem altogether?**

This whole scenario begins with the assumption that you are supposed to tell your partner everything you don't like about them – isn't honesty always the best policy? Generally the answer is yes, but there are certain ways to approach these situations that will enhance your connection instead of undermining it. In a relationship, there will always be some things that turn you on and others that turn you off. The big question is determining what you can live with, and what you can't and therefore need to talk about and work toward a change. Whether it has to do with appearance and what you perceive as bad taste, or just a general personality flaw that has become more apparent, decide first if it is important enough to bring up. In other words, how much is it going to drive you crazy and get under your skin, possibly eventually driving a wedge between you? If you decide it falls into that serious box, it's important to think before you express your dislike. Attempt to frame your words so it is clear you are on your partner's side. If it is a bad haircut or an unflattering dress, you might be doing them a favor by letting them know since they can either choose to go to a different salon for their next haircut or wear a different dress. You want to be careful and mindful in the way you present it because otherwise it could come across as criticism or blame. When that happens your partner might feel anxious, insecure, and afraid to try to make the meal again, or to take the cooking

lessons, or reluctant to take risks for fear of failure and disappointing you and opening the door to more criticism, which is all the opposite of what you want to achieve.

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Along these lines, instead of talking about what you don't like, talk about what you would like next time. You might think the chicken is too creamy and rich, in which case you could say, "that was good, but it might taste even better if you used a little less cream next time." In this way both of you can feel encouraged about the next effort instead of discouraged. If, for example, your partner constantly throws clothes on the floor and you find the bedroom unrelaxing because of that, you might say that if he or she could put away some of the garments you would want to spend more time in the bedroom. This will definitely work better than being judgmental and saying they are messy or a slob. Look to voice your concern in terms of what you would like them to be doing in the future rather than what they just did wrong in your eyes.

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The golden rule of thumb is to try to avoid letting things go until you become really resentful, because that can lead to what I refer to in my book *What About Me? Stop Selfishness From Ruining Your Relationship as Love You, Mean It, Hate You, Mean It* moments. We always start out with an abundance of Love You, Mean It moments. However, over time the Hate You, Mean It moments inevitably build up and can eclipse the positive ones. By talking to your partner it enables you to preserve the good feelings so that you can strike a balance and always find your way back to the love that you feel for them. It is a matter of knowing what to accept about who they are versus what you are looking to work toward changing with them.

While John and Chrissy may have jumped right to the lie detector test, most people take a slower road to their confessions. It is important to think of the right approach when sharing your dislikes. Keeping balance, caring, and encouragement at the forefront rather than criticism and blame is always a better way to go. Hopefully whatever truth you tell will be offered with grace so the good can continue to outweigh the bad.

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## Relationship Advice: Romance After Baby





By Dr. Jane Greer

Bringing a baby into your lives can change everything. The days move in a different way, the demands on you can be like nothing you have ever experienced before, both physically and emotionally, and you might be getting little to no sleep.

It's no wonder, then, that your romantic relationship, which may have always come naturally to the two of you, might now change as well. The very fact that the press paid so much attention to Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's small gestures toward each other on their most recent trip – holding hands while walking, a nice kiss goodbye as they went their separate ways one day – points to how important such moves can be after having a child.

The royal couple has always been demonstrative with affection. But since the arrival of Baby Archie, their hand-holding and kissing seems a continued declaration of romance.

# Keeping the romance alive and remaining passionate partners even after expanding your family can be a challenge. So how do you go about accepting and navigating the new circumstances without losing that important connection that brought you to this point in the first place?

The first step is acknowledging that things are no longer the same, and adjusting your expectations accordingly, so that you won't feel disappointed if you look back at the way things used to be. Perhaps you were intimate in the house whenever and wherever you wanted, spontaneously. But that was before being up all night with a crying infant or changing diapers, or worrying constantly made new demands on your energy. It was before you were breastfeeding or washing bottles and before all you could think about was this tiny new being.

As a result, the time and fuel you have for being romantic has probably diminished dramatically. With this in mind, work to establish a new normal based on what your life is like now and the resources you have and don't have as new parents. Things are likely to be starkly different from the way they were before.

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One helpful change might be to plan for time alone together, as opposed to simply waiting for it to unfold. You might not find the time nearly as often as you used to, so try to shift

the emphasis from quantity to quality. Focus on making the times that you can be together meaningful so that the feel-good connection lingers.

Also, shift from the free-fall expression of love that previously accompanied your relationship and instead pay attention to the smaller gestures of connection, as Meghan and Harry seem to be doing. You might have to exchange an exciting romp in the hay or staying in bed together all day for a passing kiss, a warm hug, or a gentle back or foot rub. Look for opportunities to pepper each other with consideration, maybe offering your partner a few hours alone without the baby, or being empathic and acknowledging that you appreciate how exhausted they must be.

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The truth is that little acts of thoughtfulness and understanding in the face of having a baby ARE sweeping gestures of romance. They will allow you and your significant other to feel cared about, which then leads to wanting to please each other. It creates an atmosphere of gratitude, appreciation, and love, all of which are the kindling of romantic love.

The bottom line is that it's important to accept that things have evolved. It is unwise to judge your love by your old standards; your new situation will likely not hold up and might lead to feelings that something is wrong or missing.

Instead, think of the new phase as a revamp. Know that if your partner is too tired for sex or even a make-out session, it is not personal, it is because they are wiped out. Putting it all in the context of nurturing your home and baby and creating a new landscape of love can sustain you through the period of infancy and toddlerhood.

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## Relationship Advice: An Unconventional Marriage





By [Dr. Jane Greer](#)

Once upon a time, there was a very clear, natural progression of how a couple moved from one phase of their relationship to another: they dated, became engaged, got married, and, finally, moved in together. Any other choice, years ago, would have been frowned upon and maybe even whispered about. Of course, that has all changed and now we see and generally accept any choice people make, in the order in which they make it, and the way in which they commit to each other – as long as both members of the couple are on board.

## **Relationship Expert Advice: Have a Relationship Your Way**

Whether they want to live together first, have a family first, or, possibly even, commit their lives to each other and never share a home, it is all happening out there. For example, actress [Kaley Cuoco](#) and her husband Karl Cook choose to be in a committed, monogamous relationship but also choose to [live apart](#). They tied the knot over a year ago but still maintain

separate residences. Rather than worry about what family, friends, fans, and tabloids think of their arrangement, the busy pair say they value their independence, relish the time they spend together, and don't worry about what other people might be thinking. In other words, it works for them. There are pros and cons to every choice a couple makes as they build their life together and it is a matter of knowing what suits the individual people the best. So, how do you know if this possibility might be right for you? Will a situation like this enhance or hurt your relationship?

One question to ask yourself is how much do you need your privacy? Can you tolerate the company of another person without your own time over a 24-hour day? Consider also the accountability that can come with sharing a home with your partner, because sometimes even if you get up to simply go to the bathroom or kitchen your, partner might be curious about your whereabouts and ask you where you are going.

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In addition, the practicality and logistics of your lives might make it difficult to uproot yourselves, especially if you live in different places. Deciding to have a long-distance marriage can give you the opportunity to share a life while maintaining priorities of work, family, and friends. This can be especially true if you find each other a little later in life. In that case, you may have fully established an autonomous lifestyle, which includes routines and habits that are hard to break, and in some ways might not be suitable for sharing a home with another person.

That can be the case even if you live just a few blocks away from each other. If you both find yourselves sharing these concerns – and you each already love the home you created and don't want to give it up – this might be a way to have it all. Similarly, if you each keep early, late, or unusual hours at

work, and coming home could be disruptive to your partner, maybe even totally conflicting with their routine, or if you travel a lot anyway and, with that in mind, it doesn't make sense to combine households, this might be something to consider. Finally, if you have a beloved pet and your spouse is allergic, it could be a way to avoid a deal breaker and still make it all work.

Ultimately, there can be many upsides to this, even beyond holding on to your daily life as you know it. There is less of a chance to get on each other's nerves, since you always have a place to go to get away and you won't be forced to be together if you don't want to be. It can keep your love fresh and more romantic because you can exercise more control over your appearance and how you present yourself to your partner. And if you have different methods of keeping house, one of you is messy and the other a neat freak, this will allow you to just be yourselves in your own homes without bugging the other person.

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On the other hand, living apart can have a real downside. You are more likely to miss out on little moments – inside jokes and shared bedtime and morning rituals – and you're putting off the inevitable step of showing each other your authentic selves while you navigate the tricky waters of splitting up household responsibilities and chores. Because of this there, may be much less chance to learn to cooperate and work together as a team, which allows you to develop an up-and-running sense of partnership. You might not be there when you need each other, if one of you doesn't feel well, or if you want a spontaneous snuggle. It is also possible that you will feel judged by family or friends, and even strangers, for doing something that might be construed as different.

This is not a dish for everyone, but it might be for those

with a particular taste. It offers the opportunity to marry the person you love despite obstacles you might not be willing to change, which would otherwise make getting married impossible for one or both of you. Being married but living apart might be an option to give life to your commitment instead of making it untenable. For now, Kaley and Karl are taking advantage of the upsides of living apart. They are building a life together and don't seem to be concerned that their relationship has been labeled "unconventional." Whatever decision you make for your relationship, know it is right for you, and try to tune out the noise, focus on each other, and continue planning for your future.

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## Relationship Advice: What We Can Learn From The Trials And

# Triumphs Of Celebrity Relationships



By Dr. Jane Greer

Coming out of a toxic relationship can be difficult in and of itself, and often requires an emotional detox. Even though the relationship is clearly over, you may find that you still have issues to work through. You might be experiencing not only the sadness and loss, but also pain and anxiety. If you got to this point after a tremendous betrayal or a chronic problem the magnitude of which you were not able to surmount, you probably have many questions and concerns about how you got into that situation in the first place, and how someone you loved could treat you so poorly. Sandra Bullock had a public breakup with her ex-husband Jesse James who [admittedly](#) cheated on her multiple times. Despite that, Sandra has finally [found](#)

[love again](#) with a person whom she calls “the one,” Bryan Randall, and the couple reportedly couldn’t be happier. How, then, when you finally do find yourself on the other side and are ready to think about dating again, can you trust another person as well as your own judgement as you, like Sandra, move past the bad and attempt to find the good? How can you make sure you don’t allow yourself to fall into a toxic relationship again?

## **Dr. Greer’s Relationship Advice Teaches Us How to Date Again After a Toxic Relationship**

One thing to keep in mind is that it is natural to be more guarded and question everything when you begin something new after what you have been through. And that is a good thing. Take your time as you get to know someone who has caught your eye. Even if the connection feels comfortable right away, and you experience the temptation to slip into an immediate closeness of constant texting, talking, and even spending the night together, try to resist that at first. Remain your “me” for as long as you can before you jump into being a “we,” so you don’t shoot past any warning signals. Take inventory: do they call when they say they will? Do they keep the plans you have made? Do they generally seem to be telling you the truth about things, or have you caught them in any lies? Do they have friends, or do they appear to have many past relationships – friendly and romantic – that have ended with all ties cut? Take the time you need to read all the road signs, so to speak, and to stop at all the caution lights so you can get a sense of what’s coming down the road. Give yourself a chance to learn who this person really is, instead of making excuses when necessary and allowing them to form in your mind as who you hope they will be. Along these lines, be more selective about who you might let in, let them show you

they are worthy of your love. Sit back a little, possibly more than you usually have, and instead of being an open book and freely sharing your past and your hopes for the future, let them take the lead and reveal those things first. That way, you will have a better sense of what you are getting into before you open yourself up to them.

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By doing this and taking any red flags that might come up seriously, you can work to head off future betrayals and strengthen your own self-confidence as you evaluate your new potential love interest and decide how much you want to share with them. It will also give you more control. The goal here is to find someone who you can believe in, who has your best interest in mind, and who, ultimately, will not stamp on your heart. Proceed with this expectation, that this is what you deserve and what you will get, and this will help give you more clarity and insight as you begin to date. If you feel secure in yourself, you are much more likely to find someone who will support you rather than undermine you.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: Working Through Your Heartbreak](#)

Moving on after a toxic relationship isn't easy, but it is possible, as we saw with Sandra and Bryan. The experience, however terrible it might have been, can be a lesson for you to learn from. Once you can stop thinking of it as a recovery process, and more of a moving beyond process, taking with you all that you now know, you can be stronger and better placed to have a healthier relationship than ever before.

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## Relationship Advice: How to Deal With Estranged Family Members





By Dr. Jane Greer

When we think of family, we often have an image of togetherness, but for almost one-fifth of the population that is not the case. Studies have shown that family estrangement affects up to nineteen percent of people. And while it may be fairly common, it is often painful and can interfere with everyday happiness. That can be the case whether it is a child who no longer talks to a parent, a sister who no longer talks to a brother, an aunt who no longer talks to a nephew or any other variation. It can become even more relevant and harder to ignore when a family event takes place such as a big holiday, a wedding, or the birth of a baby because there is the natural desire to share those things with someone who, at least at one time, played a prominent role in your life. This may be what Meghan Markle and Prince Harry are experiencing since they welcomed their first child. She has been publicly estranged from her father, and the arrival of her son might raise questions and emotions about that situation, especially since her father told *The Sun* that he worries he will never meet his new grandson.

# In this relationship advice, learn how to approach estrangement from your family members.

There are so many twists and turns that can lead people to a place where there is no contact at all. Once that is established, it is often difficult to undo it. Perhaps a long past grievance led you to this place, but it has since been forgotten about or doesn't seem at all as important as it once did. So how do you know if it is the right move for you to use this life event, whatever it might be, as a catalyst to reconnect with family members you are no longer in touch with? And when, on the other hand, should you accept that no matter how much you wish you could reconnect that it is essential to your own health and wellbeing to recognize their limitations and continue to protect yourself emotionally by leaving things as is and not trying to bridge that distance between you? In other words, when is it okay to reach out, and when is it time to let go?

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If, in fact, there was a misunderstanding, or a family member cut you off with no real explanation and it is a complete mystery to you, these big life events can be a chance to try to clear the air. You can simply say that you know you have not communicated in a long time, but you would like to take this opportunity to attempt to reconcile any disagreements between you. At that point, you can ask if there was something you did to anger the other person, and possibly even move past it. Another scenario in which you might be able to find a meeting place is if you have had repeated grievances – about anything from politics to personal choices to a value clash – and you have not been able to find a middle ground. Might now be a time you can agree to disagree? Is the introduction of a

new family member – either through a birth or a wedding – or the celebration of a holiday enough to make you both realize whatever it is you are fighting about isn't so important that you can't put it to the side, respectfully acknowledge each other's differences, and go forward? In those situations, seriously consider if you have more to gain by being able to do this than you would lose by insisting on being right or refusing to acknowledge that your relative might have their own preference or opinion. You might even be able to learn how to co-exist as a family in spite of your opposing convictions.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: The Afterlife Connection](#)

The times when you really have to ask if it is healthy and a good idea to try to reconnect with an estranged family member are when there has been a clear betrayal. In my book *How Could You Do This To Me? Learning To Trust After Betrayal* I talk about the different types of betrayals. One type is the unaware betrayal in which the person who does it is completely unaware they are doing it. Another type that I call the deliberate betrayal is much more complicated to get beyond. In this case, the person knew they were doing something that could hurt you, but they did it anyway. When this occurs, it is much harder to trust them again. How do you know they won't continue to behave that way and violate your trust another time? If you aren't sure, sometimes the only thing to do is to keep your distance so that despite whatever good news you might have to share, you aren't at risk of opening yourself up and being vulnerable to getting hurt and disappointed again.

Most people don't get to the point of estrangement without serious consideration. In all likelihood, there has probably been more than one issue in the relationship, and you have likely given your relative many opportunities to do better. Even so, it is common to have that continued desire to find your way back to them. Who knows what Meghan will decide to do in the future in terms of involving her father in baby Archie's life. If the reports are correct, he violated her

trust more than once, and it might be hard to bridge that gap since that can corrupt the whole foundation of a relationship. Hopefully one way or another she, and you, will be able to find peace and know when it is more important to take care of yourself than to look for a reunion.

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## Relationship Advice: How to Approach Social Media Post-Breakup





By Dr. Jane Greer

It is nearly impossible to do anything privately these days because almost everything is caught on camera and then shared on social media. With that in mind, breaking up and moving on can carry an even heavier and more transparent burden since most steps are documented on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or another social media site. For example, John Cena was spotted holding hands with a mystery woman only days after his ex, Nikki Bella, confirmed she's in a relationship with Artem Chigvintsev. All of this played out on the internet. Sometimes the one left behind doesn't feel ready to move on, but when they see their ex out there with a new love they might feel motivated to either try to put themselves out there too or, at the very least, look like they are. This raises the question, is using social media a good choice when trying to get over an old flame?

**In this relationship advice, we**

# explore how to approach social media after a break-up.

Seeing your former lover's posts with a new partner often stings, and might push you to actively seek social interaction with other people in an effort to offset the rejection and loneliness you are feeling, or to spark jealousy. Either way, it can be tempting to document your journey and share it for everyone to see, especially your ex. Whatever picture you present will offer a silent confirmation to him or her about how you are doing after the break. For those who are still mourning the loss of a relationship, putting a happy face out there on Instagram and Facebook can be a way to aspire to feel better than you do, a way to paint a picture in which you appear to be over it, no longer sad, and looking ahead to your future beyond your connection to your ex. Whether you are at a rooftop cocktail party, on an actual date, or lounging by a pool, the message you are sending is that you are carrying on and your life is moving along fine without the other person. The truth, though, might be that you would rather be home in your pajamas or are still pining for your lost love. If that is the case these photos can be a way of faking it until you make it. In the same way you might try to put a smile on your face even if you don't feel like it, there is the hope that doing this can help pull you out of your rut and get you back on a better road since it is forcing you to leave the house and be around other people.

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Additionally, some may truly be over the breakup, having survived the tornado of it, and are in fact happy now, meeting and dating new individuals. As a result, they may be eager to show off that they are happy and doing all right. But is it okay to present your life publicly in order to let your ex

know he or she is in the past and you are now living in your present? Will this be a positive move for you? To what extent do you want to use social media? For some, it can certainly be helpful, but can it also be hurtful?

There are a number of factors to consider when you determine if using social media at this point is the right choice for you. If you have always had a strong online presence, you might not want that to change just because you are suffering through a heartbreak. After all, you have lost a partner, but you don't have to lose your usual connection to the world and feel you have been flung off the map entirely, too. In that case, keeping up with all of that might seem very natural and even help keep some normalcy in your life while you heal. But what if you feel pressure from having to "put on a happy face" and maintain your accounts, and that adds to your feeling more overwhelmed? In that instance, it might not be good for you right now. Along the same lines, putting a fictional story out there of what can look like a fairy tale life might also make achieving it feel even more elusive, and therefore might have the opposite effect of what you are hoping to accomplish, sending you further into despair rather than pulling you out of it.

Keep in mind, also, that when you post publicly you become exposed and open yourself up to all sorts of judgments and comments – anything from someone suggesting you are moving on too soon to making a statement about the way you look. Consider if you will be able to handle this, or if you are already so sensitive and vulnerable that you are at risk of feeling even more bruised by their criticisms and opinions, many of which may be sparked by envy on the part of your followers. It's possible then that opening that door will make you feel worse rather than better. Also, try to determine why you are choosing to put yourself out there in this way, and understanding that might help you decide if you want to follow through with it. Are you doing it to get back at someone who

wronged you? Are you hoping to one day reconcile with your ex, and this is a means of showing him or her that you are valuable and strong, and not pathetic without them? Or are you truly recovered and happy to be back out in the world?

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Finally, as you move through the murky journey of getting back on your feet, remember that in the same way, your own posts might make you and your life appear better than you may feel or that it actually seems to you, the same could be true for your ex. Much of what you see in their online photos may simply be their own social media front. Keeping this in mind can help offset feeling upset that they seem so happy without you.

The bottom line is that there is no correct answer, it is a matter of what is going to be right for you. Posting may be one of the ways to highlight that you are managing rather than sulking and feeling wounded. Furthermore, if you are no longer in personal contact, social media might be the only way to get the message out there. Ultimately, if it helps you feel better about yourself, gives you true support instead of demeaning statements, and the desire to get good photos mobilizes you off the couch and back out into the world, then this choice might serve you well.

Even if John had no intention of spreading any news, it is sometimes hard to keep it quiet. It seems like he is traveling down a new path without Nikki, whether we hear about it on social media or not.

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## Relationship Advice: Talking Through the Tough Times



By Dr. Jane Greer

Sustaining a marriage or an ongoing relationship can be hard,

and everybody hits different rough patches along the way where they think they made a mistake choosing their partner and they can't see a lasting future together. Even in what seems like a great connection, there are times when people think they want out. Fortunately, in most cases, they don't act on these heat-of-the-minute thoughts, but rather look to find ways to move past them. Neil Patrick Harris and his husband David Burtka recently talked about how they keep their 15-year relationship happy and healthy. The couple, who share 8-year-old twins and got married in September 2014, said that for them it is all about communication. They said they try not to let emotions and disappointments get bottled up, but instead talk through the issues before they become too big to overcome. That's a good strategy for everyone.

**How can you navigate the potholes you hit in your relationship and get out of them so you don't get stuck, and can instead continue to go the distance and stay on track? Check out this relationship advice from Dr. Jane Greer.**

Often, in the surge of anger, one person may tell the other that it's over and they want out. While they might mean it when they say it, they don't actually intend to follow through and leave or make the other person leave. I call this the Deal Breaker Card, and it gets played when somebody has reached their last nerve and feels a sense of hopelessness that their relationship is ever going to change and get better. While it offers a sense of relief as well as control so they don't feel trapped, and sometimes is meant to intimidate their partner into shaping up and let them know they aren't kidding about

how upset they are, it does in fact work against you. In order to get through the tough times, you need to feel like you are a team and have a we're in this together bond. Once you play the Deal Breaker Card, it is going to shake the foundation of your union and create anxiety and insecurity for your significant other. Your partner is now going to focus on – wow, we can be broken – which can deplete the trust you share and might make your partner no longer feel safe with you, which can get in the way of being able to focus on the issues to make the changes necessary to improving the relationship. It takes away from the sense of being a team, the idea that you can get through anything. Instead of strengthening your sense of resilience, it divides you and can make it harder to get through the conflict. So while you may feel like telling your partner that's it, I'm out, we're through, avoid playing the Deal Breaker Card. Think it, but don't say it. What you might say is that sometimes you feel hopeless about your relationship going forward and you wish it can get better, which makes room for your partner to feel encouraged and work with you to make that happen. Take Neil and David's lead and acknowledge that you are at a fragile place and talk about how you will be able to get beyond it and endure over time. Discuss what you are facing, knowing that the problems in front of you are real and in order to stay together you should try to do your best to talk through them. Instead of playing the Deal Breaker Card, use that anger to consider seeking the help of a counselor, or make a clear effort to work harder to listen to each other. See it as a chance to pay more attention to your mutual needs so whatever argument you are having doesn't bring you to the end of the road.

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Another thing to be aware of is what I call Love You, Mean It, Hate You, Mean It moments. I talk about these in my book What About Me? Stop Selfishness From Ruining Your Relationship, and

most couples deal with these at one time or another. No matter how much you love your partner, at some point he or she is going to do something that angers, frustrates, or disappoints you and, when that happens, you might feel like you actually hate them. This is totally normal, it's the natural ambivalence that is a part of every relationship. It often surprises people because when they fall in love they typically imagine that is how they will always feel for each other and they can't imagine ever having feelings of hate for the other person. However, as I explain in my book, most loving feelings in an adult relationship are conditional and subject to how you treat each other. Loving gestures beget loving feelings, and the same goes for negative behavior. With that in mind, accept it and use it as a tool to acknowledge your anger and disappointment. You might even consider developing a shorthand in which you say, Hate You, Mean It, just to let each other know when one of you has done something upsetting. Neil and David joked about using tasers to get through to each other, which is a variation on this theme. Keep in mind that you always want to balance out the Hate You, Mean It moments with the Love You, Mean It moments so you can focus on the positive.

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There is no question that maintaining a solid relationship is challenging and requires prioritizing each other along with truly listening and sharing your time and attention. This is what Neil and David say has gotten them through and continues to keep them on solid ground. That, and a little humor such as their kidding about the tasers always helps. Hopefully, if you find yourself wanting to play the Deal Breaker Card or being flooded in a Hate You, Mean It moment you will be able to take a step back and remember why you fell in love with this person in the first place, so that you can sprinkle some Love You, Mean It moments and therefore make it worth the trouble to try to find your way to those feelings again.

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## Relationship Advice: Can You Handle Sex Without Love?





By Dr. Jane Greer

As women strive for equality, they are exercising their freedom of sexual expression more and more, which for many might mean a choice to have casual sex. However, with that freedom and choice comes great responsibility, and the important task of taking care of your emotional self and well-being. That is possible only once you know what you want and can tolerate, and, when it comes right down to it, if you can handle sex without love. Diane Von Furstenberg spoke about her fling with Richard Gere, saying it was just a “f\*\*k,” which is how she wanted it to be. While it is more common for men to have sex and keep it just about the physical connection, with few or no feelings of intimacy involved, women regularly struggle with separating the two. Often emotions come into play despite their best intentions, since so often women feel most vulnerable when they are in intimate situations and often literally are and symbolically feel naked. So how can you know if you can handle a fling with no strings attached?

# With this relationship advice, learn if you can handle a fling without love.

By challenging the stereotypes that have confined and limited women for so long, you can consider your sexual identity and what it means to you in terms of your happiness and your sexual esteem, and what might give you the most pleasure and fulfillment. Sometimes that might mean indulging in a purely physical romp with someone. That can happen if, for example, you want to sleep with someone you just met, because you are on vacation and want a brief romantic escapade, or you are at a wedding and want a one night stand. Furthermore, you may have just gotten out of a long relationship and aren't ready to jump back in to a serious commitment, so casual sex might seem appealing. If you find yourself facing any of these scenarios, ask yourself if you will be okay if you never hear from this person again. Or if you begin to feel connected but they aren't interested in anything more than the sex, will you be able to disengage without experiencing a great loss? The most important thing to consider is how you will feel when it's over. The key is to be able to enjoy the experience, and have it enhance your self-esteem.

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Sometimes the only way to know if it is going to work for you is to take a chance, jump in and see where you land. You know best what your Achilles' heel might be, and if there is a chance you could come out of it with a big emotional ouch because you may find it hard to let go, this might not be the right move for you. With that in mind, if you are in the driver's seat you can give yourself the permission to say yes to your desires and feel empowered by them when it comes to

your sex life decisions. The essential thing to be aware of is that whatever your action may be you are doing it by choice, one that you are making for yourself with full awareness of the consequences, and thereby can feel confident about. In this way, you will be a woman who takes charge, is in control, knows what you want as well as what you don't want, and will be better able to build your inner security which will reflect in your general wellbeing.

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For Diane, it was simply about getting physical. It requires clarity, like she had, to know from the start that you'll be fine if nothing more develops from your sexual encounter. If you are able to take an inventory and determine where your tender spots are, thereby avoiding heartbreak, hopefully you will be able to keep it light and fun. In the end, knowing what you can handle is the best indication of whether or not a sexual rendezvous without a commitment will be a positive or negative in your life. If you tend to get attached quickly and are very sensitive to rejection, just sex might not be for you. You want to be your best protector. When it comes to casually getting between the sheets and thinking about how you'll feel after, trust your gut.

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# Relationship Advice: Should You Elope?



By Dr. Jane Greer

Planning a wedding can be exciting, but it can also be an enormous undertaking once you become immersed in all the details. From choosing a maid of honor and whatever number of bridesmaids you have agreed upon (and trying not to offend anyone with your choices), to the flowers and the cake, not to mention the seating arrangements, it can be a lot to deal with. That's why, in the midst of it all, people often begin to wonder if they should elope. For some, it is just a joke, something to say when all they really want to do is get a

break from thinking about the dress and the photographer and where Aunt Fran is going to sit. For others it can be the right choice. Actress Gina Rodriguez said she almost married her fiancé Joe LoCicero after this year's Golden Globes, gushing about getting caught up in the excitement and the beauty of the dress she had on, and saying it could have happened that night if she hadn't had to work the next day.

## **In this relationship advice, find out if eloping is the right choice for you.**

Of course, that is a perfect example of how eloping can happen if you get swept away by a moment of love and romance. To those who just met or consider getting married after a drunken night in Las Vegas, caught up in the passion and spontaneity, waiting a bit to get to know each other may be a better idea. But many people who are deep into a relationship and are sure they want to spend the rest of their lives together also consider eloping for a variety of reasons. There is a certain practicality to avoiding a big wedding, especially if people don't have the money to spend on a lavish reception. Or, they might not want to burden their family with a huge bill. Along the same lines, a couple might decide they would rather spend the money on something else, such as a honeymoon or to use as the down payment for a house. Finally, since so much family history and baggage can come along with the elements of a big wedding, the future bride and groom may simply want to avoid possible criticism, judgement, or blame for the particular choices they might make, and thereby not have to feel guilty because of the disapproval. While the two options have their merits and cons, it's important that both partners are on the same page about when and how to tie the knot. So how can you know if eloping is the right choice for you?

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The most important question to ask yourself as you make this decision is will you or your partner be disappointed in any way if you forgo the traditional route? Some people fantasize about a big white wedding for their entire lives – a time when they might feel like a princess or a prince – and imagine having pictures documenting it to look at for decades to come. Others have been leafing through bridal magazines for years and have already chosen the style of dress they want to wear down the aisle. And still others may have imagined it as a time to gather all their fraternity brothers for a reunion. If this is the case for either one of you, eloping might not be the best choice. Talk about it and try to make sure there won't be one single regret looming out there, but only happiness for what lies ahead.

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The bride and groom are not the only ones who have emotions wrapped up in the monumental event. With that in mind, consider also if there are family members who might be let down if you decide to have a small, private ceremony at City Hall. Did your mother always dream of this moment? Did your uncle for whom you are named always imagine what he would say during the speech he hoped to give one day? Think about what is most important to you as far as keeping the peace or having your life start together on your own terms, and how much you are willing to deal with to achieve that. If you do choose to elope, keep those family members in mind and see what you can do to appease them and make them understand that for you this is a gain and not a loss of any kind. Even if you elope and choose to make the ceremony your own, you can still throw a celebratory party and invite everyone at any time.

If in the end it feels like there would be no regrets, nothing that you imagine you might wish you had done down the road, and you are eager to begin your life together and not spend a

lot of time or money getting to that point, then eloping might be the perfect choice for you. Who knows how Gina and Joe will end up tying the knot in the end, but they certainly aren't alone if at times they think they could just elope.

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## Relationship Advice: The Afterlife Connection





By Dr. Jane Greer

There is nothing more shattering than dealing with the death of a loved one. It turns you inside out, and it can feel like you might never recover. The magnitude of the loss can be overwhelming. However, one of the most inexplicable, profound, and powerful avenues for not just coping with the death itself, but also moving forward with your life is experiencing signs from your loved one that they are still with you and sending you love. I call these signs transcommunication. Television personality and entrepreneur Bethenny Frankel had an experience with this when she accidentally texted her late boyfriend Dennis Shields, and at another point received a text that nobody claimed to write. She acknowledged after that she thought it was, "weird."

I talk about this exact situation in my book *The Afterlife Connection: A Therapist Reveals How to Communicate with Departed Loved Ones*. I actually wrote the book because of my own experiences after I lost my mother. She gave me, and continues to give me twenty years later, such clear signs that she is still with me that I felt compelled to learn more and explore what was happening.

**Opening myself up to the possibility of transcommunication transformed my life, and continues to today. It can do the same for you once you begin to know what to look for.**

Many people have a hard time understanding or accepting this possibility, or might even be frightened by it. But numerous scientists are now devoted to research and a better understanding of this phenomenon, including the work being done at The Afterlife Research and Education Institute. The big question is, how can you bring this to a personal level? To begin with, in the same way Bethenny said her experiences were “weird,” one indication that you are receiving a sign is that you say, “I know this sounds crazy but,” when you talk about it. That’s because you know something important happened, but you don’t have the means to explain it rationally. Another clue is when you get goosebumps or chills. How, then, can you begin to learn to read the signs that are sent your way? In my book I refer to another book written by Louis E. LaGrand, Ph.D. called After Death Communication. In his preface, he describes the various ways people might become aware of communications from deceased loved ones.

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ADCs (after-death communications) include sensing the presence of the deceased, feeling a touch, smelling a fragrance, hearing the voice or seeing the deceased, and meeting the loved one in a vision or dream. Messages are also received in symbolic ways, such as finding an object associated with the deceased, unusual appearances or behavior of birds and

animals, or other unexplainable happenings which occur at or shortly after the moment of death. Several combinations of the above phenomena may occur within weeks of death or over a period of years.

Along the same lines, Bill and Judy Guggenheim, in their seminal book *Hello from Heaven*, have categorized and provided anecdotal evidence for the innumerable methods – from visual to olfactory to auditory to symbolic – those in spirit have used to communicate with the living. Those they categorize as symbolic include the appearance of birds, butterflies, rainbows, animals of all kinds and a variety of inanimate objects such as seashells, coins, and pictures.

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When coincidence comes calling, consider instead that you are really dealing with a message of love from the other side. Here are three important things to keep in mind as you search for your own answers. The first is, be open to its occurring. If you accept it can happen to you, it will. The second is to debunk the notion that something huge has to happen, which is not the case. The signs can be subtle and small. They do not have to be big, sweeping gestures. For example, you might think about your mother and her favorite song comes on the radio, or you think about your father and a picture falls over. And the third is to be aware that some of the signs might come through energetically and might affect your computer, your car, your television, or any other machine or device by interfering with their function and disrupting what you are doing. Instead of being annoyed when these things break or malfunction, shift your way of thinking to see it as a sign and embrace that.

In my book I also talk about dream visits, in which the deceased is present in your dreams but not dead. The feeling is so powerful that I call these dreams, “the your still

alive, you're not dead dreams." There might be a particular interactive quality to the dream – different from others – where you feel you are right there with the person. It is defined by an intense reality that other dreams don't possess, and after you experience one you wake up with a profound sense of well-being.

The most important takeaway here with all of this is that seeing is believing. It seems Bethenny had this experience, and if you, too, are able to open your heart and mind to this, you make room for your loved one to stay connected with you in a way that is remarkable.

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## **Relationship Advice: Will Your Perfect Partner Vision Become Reality?**



By Dr. Jane Greer

Some people refer to it as the Soulmate List, others as the Love List. Whatever you call it, there is a popular trend being used by many hopeful romantics in which people write down the traits they hope to find in a mate – anything from handsome to well-read to empathetic – with the belief that putting it out there will allow the universe, or whatever entity might grant true love, to conjure it up. In fact, Tiffany Haddish dished about her “dream guy” having everything from cooking skills to excellent credit to beautiful hands. While it’s nice to fantasize about the ideal companion, the reality is we all have flaws and imperfections. And the later in life you meet, the more likely each person has baggage from former relationships and life experiences, which can sometimes include previous marriages or even children.

# So, the question becomes, is the practice of creating a perfect partner on paper leading you closer to or further from your goal?

Can this idea of putting a vision out there make it become a reality and energetically bring him or her into your life? Or does creating a dream person end up actually stifling your dreams because there can't possibly be anyone out there who fits every aspect of what you are looking for?

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We all know there is no perfect person, and waiting for one will mean you might continue to be alone until you feel ready to compromise. If you keep searching for your dream person, you might be dreaming for a long time while remaining single. It's important to leave room for the reality of who a person is, since nobody can live up to a fantasy. If you are not willing to consider someone beyond your list – for example, you want your future partner to be six feet tall and you rule out anyone who isn't – then you are limiting yourself in your search for love. How, then, can you have a dream list that can work for you and not against you? First of all, it is important to have a sense of what you are looking for in a partner so you can place a premium on and appreciate what you like – creativity, hardworking, smart – whatever it might be. But so often someone simply looks to what the other person brings to the equation, are they tall? Beautiful? Wealthy? Do they have an exciting job? Do they have a great social life? And while these details can certainly enhance your life and your relationship, there is something else even more important to consider. That is – how they make you feel when you are with them. Do they make you believe you are special? Can you

be real, be yourself, and not worry that you are being constantly judged? Do you laugh a lot when you are together? Do they have a sense of humor, and do they understand and appreciate yours? Are they interested in meeting your family? Do they take care of you when you are sick? These are the details that trump someone's height, or someone's job title, or how much someone's annual salary is.

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It is so easy to get hung up on the external details, but very often it is these other ingredients, the personal ones, that can be on the back burner and eventually lead to a high flame if you are open to it, as was the case in the movie *When Harry Met Sally*. If you can keep your eyes and heart open, and not rule someone out because they don't match one of the items on your dream list, you are more likely to find love. Those items – such as being a good cook in Tiffany's case – should be considered to be the bonus prizes, the perks, but not the essentials. So when you sit down to write that dream list of yours, include yourself, what you hope your partner will be able to give to you emotionally, and what they might bring out in you. After all, the search for true love is a journey for two.

Hopefully Tiffany will find everything she thinks she wants in her dream guy, and so much more.

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# Parenting Advice: How to Manage Being a Working Parent



By Dr. Jane Greer

The push and pull between holding down a job and taking care of a home is an ongoing struggle. It can be hard to balance taking care of the kids, pursuing a career, and getting all of the daily housework and chores done. If a mom is going back to work after taking time off to start a family, it can be even harder to transition into the workforce again. Eva Mendes has

opened up about her struggles as a working mother of two. She talked about how difficult some of the simple things can become when you are juggling so much, even just getting dressed.

## **So what, if anything, is the answer to managing the tug of war and the potential chaos that comes with working and being a parent?**

There are two things going on when a mom decides to go back to work after spending time at home with children. The first is something Eva touched on, getting the logistics into place. The second, and this one can often be even more difficult to deal with, is the guilt and longing that can go along with the decision to return to a job, and the transition of actually doing it. Not only might you want to be with your kids, but you also might feel you are not doing the right thing by leaving them with a nanny or at daycare. The hope is that you will be able to find a middle ground so you are not consumed by these feelings, and you are able to enjoy your work and be present there.

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There is no one answer for all women, each one has to find her own way and her own balance. Here are a few things to keep in mind, though, as you navigate your way. The first is that while you may not be able to spend all day with your child anymore the way you are used to doing, know that research has shown that what is most important is the quality of the time you spend together, not the quantity. In other words, it is better to have one or two meaningful hours together a day, which you may be able to find before or after work, when you are completely focused on what your child needs, than it is to

have all day every day when you are frazzled, possibly unfulfilled, and not paying full attention to your son or daughter. People often falsely equate the idea that being the “good enough mother “ means being with your child all the time. However, the term, used by Winnicott and other developmental theorists, in fact means setting aside your needs in order to be available and responsive to those of your kids, and in this way you are completely attuned to them, which ensures promoting their emotional well-being. This can be achieved in many different ways, and, in reality, it is how you spend the time you do have together, no matter how much it is in a given day, that really counts. With this knowledge, you may be able to set a few realistic goals which will help ease the transition back to work. For example, you might be able to carve out a chunk of time in the day or night when you can really tune in to your child, whether it be reading together, singing, or even having fun choosing an outfit for the next day.

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Some women, though, become so consumed with being a stay-at-home mom that it can really color the enjoyment of the job. Of course, sometimes there is a hard and fast financial element to deciding to go back, and if that is the case know you are doing exactly what your family needs, and keep in mind that the research is on your side. If you are more flexible, though, and it won't interfere with your sense of self, see if you can delay the return to work so you can continue to be physically and emotionally present for your children for a while longer. Some people choose to never go back to work. Making that choice really comes down to determining how crucial the work is to your well-being. If you know you will regret it and resent not being at work more, explore the possibility of finding a compromise, and try to come up with a plan where you are not away from home all day, maybe you can

work part time or a few days a week.

It sounds like Eva is finding her way with that and doing what every mom has to do – confronting that fork in the road and looking at what will be the most meaningful and viable way to move forward for her and her children. Ultimately, that is all you can ask of yourself.

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## Relationship Advice: Get the Birthday Gift Right





By Dr. Jane Greer

Birthdays are generally synonymous with hopes, cakes, and, of course, presents, but they can also be tinged with disappointment since there are so many expectations wrapped into this one special day, and emotions can run high. Sometimes the gift is perfect. For example, Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas celebrated his 26th birthday together this past week at a baseball game which, according to social media, seemed to be exactly what he wanted. A misstep with the all-important gift, however, can sometimes be the very thing that sinks the ship, and can not only ruin the day, but can also breed resentment for a long time afterward.

**Whether you're dating someone, or you've been married for years, getting the birthday present right can be a challenge. Your partner**

**has wishes you may not be aware of, and you might not be sure what to get. How can you live up to meeting their desires, and where do you start?**

There are a few things that can lead you down the wrong path while you are contemplating that purchase. To begin with, if you have not paid attention to what they have appeared to be interested in over the past few weeks or months, like the scarf she stopped to look at in the store window, or if you have missed their hints, like the massage he always says he would like to get, then you may have no idea where to begin. If that's the case, when they tear away the tissue paper, hoping to find something specific looking back at them but find something out of left field, your gift might be met with disappointment. Along the same lines, it is never a great idea to simply buy what you like or want with no consideration to whether or not your partner might feel the same way. Just because it is your taste does not mean it is theirs. If they say they want a sweater, before choosing the one you would buy for yourself, instead think about their preferences and previous choices. Similarly, you might see this as a good time to get something practical, why not? You really need that better coffee maker or expensive knife. Here is another way you can go awry, though, since your partner might not appreciate that, and may be hoping for something more personal and indulgent. Finally, while some do like a joint activity to be the gift, as was the case with Nick Jonas, not everyone falls into that camp. Make sure that is okay before you take the plunge, since some might see it as encroaching on their birthday, which they don't want to share, since they want it to be only about them.

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For any and all of these reasons, browsing online or in a store can feel like a minefield that could blow up in your face at any moment. So, what can you do to avoid that? Begin by asking what they want in advance, even going as far as requesting that they make up a birthday list. Think about suggesting that the list have three or four items that fall into different price ranges. That way you can have options, and you will know that whatever you choose will be well received. Another possibility might be to take them to a favorite store and have them try on a few things. You can go back later and choose one or more of those items, and it will still be a surprise, but you know it is something they will enjoy. Finally, you can simply get a gift card to a store or spa you know they like so they can select what they want, going back at a later date either by themselves or together to make an outing out of it.

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Sometimes people are reluctant to make a present list because they think it spoils the surprise of the gift, which can be nice but not necessary. They also may think they are making it too easy for their partner by telling them what they want. But the truth is it is more about the pleasure and the good feelings a great gift will generate over time. By helping your partner out so they know precisely how to please you, you guarantee a happy outcome, which is what matters most. The goal is to get what you want, it isn't a contest to see if your partner can figure it out.

It is likely that the way you give gifts comes from the way the family you grew up with gave gifts – in other words, that is what you know, and naturally you continue that pattern. The trick is to be open and aware of your partner's ways and

preferences, so you can develop your own gift-giving protocol together. It sounds like Priyanka and Nick have been able to do just that.

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## Relationship Advice: How to Cope with a Loved One Who Is an Addict





By Dr. Jane Greer

When someone you once loved dies, it can be devastating, even if you haven't been in a relationship with them for a long time. If that person had problems, such as a drug or alcohol addiction, learning about their death can also be confusing and can conjure up all sorts of feelings including guilt. Ariana Grande is heartbroken over her ex Mac Miller's death, according to an inside source. The rapper was found dead last week after what is thought to be an overdose. Some people have lashed out at her, saying she should have done more for him. Others have strongly supported her, saying she did everything she could.

**Either way, it is a hard place to be and it raises the question, when someone is in a difficult relationship with an addict, how**

**much is too much, and when is getting out the right thing to do, even if that person might be in danger? Here is some relationship advice.**

It is never easy to end any relationship with someone you love, and if they are struggling with personal demons it can be even harder. Anyone who has ever been involved with someone who is alcohol or drug dependent knows how hard it is to separate even if it has reached a point in which staying seems just as impossible, and sometimes even harmful to your own well-being. There is a natural amount of guilt that goes along with any breakup, but when there are these added complications the guilt can be overwhelming. When a tragedy occurs after you are no longer together and there is a death or overdose, those feelings can take over, leading you to wonder if you “abandoned” them and could have or should have done more.

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The most important place to begin to reconcile these feelings is to recognize that you did everything you could possibly do when you were in the relationship to help them, and if you had remained it would have been to your own detriment. Acknowledge that leaving it was not easy for you. If you were able to remain friends, there might have been the opportunity to further illuminate that in order to have a better understanding of what happened. So in that case, it might be clearer to you that there was nothing more you could have done, and that you simply couldn't continue to handle the struggle. If you didn't remain friends or stay in touch and an overdose or death comes as a complete surprise, remind

yourself that you chose to end the relationship because it took a heavy toll on you, and recognize that you had no choice in the face of their continuing destructive behavior. Understand that there are limits to what you were able to do to help the other person. Ultimately each person is responsible for him or herself. Accept and respect that you made the decision out of necessity to invest in your own safety and happiness, that it was either sink or swim for you. Being able to see and do that is vital to your healthy self-esteem.

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Keep in mind that what you want to do is remember who the person was to you, what they meant and what you shared together. Ariana paid tribute to her relationship with Mac by posting a picture of her memory of him. Hopefully she has been able to find peace.

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# Relationship Advice: Is It Too Soon to Get Engaged?



By Dr. Jane Greer

When is it too soon to get engaged? There are so many considerations that go into making this decision, from practical issues such as having enough money to finishing a degree to living in the same place, to more philosophical ones like is there a proper timeline for true love? Sometimes people have to first deal with other commitments and responsibilities before taking the plunge. But what if you meet someone and know instantly that person is your soulmate, do you still have to wait? Some think the answer to that is no. Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra announced their engagement after dating for only two months.

**Quick engagements can be a sign that one or both parties are ready to settle down and feel the security and stability that comes with marriage. However, there are a number of pieces of [relationship advice](#) to consider before taking this next all-important step.**

One of the biggest questions that comes up is, does it make sense to wait even if all the pieces are in place so that you can have more time to bring each other into the other's respective world? In other words, does having the inside track on your partner's life before you're all in add to the success of a marriage? Some might worry that the intensity of the high one feels when they first fall in love won't last, and therefore won't be enough to sustain you through life's ups and downs. If you do feel, however, it is enough to get you through, and you are seriously considering a quick engagement, it can be helpful to ask yourself why. Is it because you simply want to get married and crave the security that comes with that? Or were you disappointed by a previous relationship and now eager to move forward with someone who's ready to truly commit and get married? Or is it all about the person, that you have fallen so hard for one another, that you have become a part of each other's lives so completely, and there is enough compatibility, that you feel you want to and will be able to continue to make things work between you?

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Whatever the case, most people do find that the all-consuming, instant attraction eventually, and really inevitably, wanes.

That's why a certain amount of time and effort is generally important to allow the relationship to solidify so you have the chance to really learn how to work things out together, and to see how each of you reacts to different situations. With time, you'll move from that googly-eyed stage where your partner can do no wrong, to eventually "sobering up," so to speak, and deal with life – sickness, cars that don't work, endless bills, having to work late – as opposed to the euphoria you might be feeling when you first come together. In fact, the "honeymoon phase" can often last longer than most people think, in some cases even up to a year, but by the time you move away from that and into everyday reality where you need to be able to work together as a couple to deal with the nuts and bolts of each day, it takes more than rose-colored glasses to navigate the raging rapids. If you don't manage to build that strong foundation, it will only be a matter of time before your individual needs, as well as all the daily hits of living that create friction and tension, tear you apart.

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If you are in love, and if marriage is on the table, here are a few things you can ask yourself to determine if you are ready. First, do you think you are able to deal with your differences and compromise around them so you end up at a joint decision that feels good for both of you? Are you able to communicate and listen to each other, and ultimately relate to each other's feelings, so that you both feel understood? Can you problem solve, as well as work through and clear up your anger and disappointment so those feelings don't linger and cause trouble between you? Do you have empathy for each other? If you have these skills in place, then you are starting your life together with a full toolbox of important skills.

Nick and Priyanka seem to have found in each other what they are looking for, and have faith that they can continue to keep

love alive. If you, too, have that trust in your partner then perhaps a short engagement can work for you as well.

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## Relationship Advice: Tales of the Other Woman





By Dr. Jane Greer

Everyone feels they were scourged in the aftermath of betrayal, and in an effort to work through that and regain their equilibrium they like to talk about what happened, often to anyone who will listen. Sometimes, though, while that can make someone feel better in the moment, it can cause greater trouble down the line and further delay the journey back to personal peace and happiness. Whether you are in the public eye or not, speaking out about the person who hurt you can be tempting. For example, Evan Felker's ex-wife Staci Nelson reacted recently to claims that he cheated on her with country superstar Miranda Lambert. Doing this can feel like your chance to set the record straight by telling your side of the story, and it can feel like a way to fight back. You've been wronged, so this is your way to make it right.

**Sometimes speaking out about the one who wronged you can be helpful,**

**while other times it can cause more negativity. So how can you balance it? This relationship advice comes down to what you say, and whom you say it to.**

The obvious place to go to vent your anger and frustration is to friends and family, since they are the people who know you and support you. They may encourage you by asking you to tell them what happened, or they may be more provoking by launching a missile and speaking badly about your ex-partner, thus throwing logs on the already flaming fire. Try to be careful, however, about what you share with them for a few reasons. While the initial reaction is to look to end the connection, sometimes cheating can actually help people reevaluate and overhaul their relationship to make it stronger and more resilient than it was before. There are enough times that people get back together. If in fact you and your ex do reconcile one day you don't want your friends and family members to have turned so completely against him or her and become so alienated that it makes it difficult for you to reconnect. Also, there is always the matter of the people you shared while you were together. What if, during your relationship, your cousin became good friends with your ex-husband, or your college best friend's wife is now best friends with your ex-wife? These are hard connections to break, and it helps to be aware of the tricky position that putting down your ex, who may still be an important factor in their lives, can put the people you love in. While oftentimes there is a strong pull to rally as many people as possible to your camp, drawing these lines can sometimes be very divisive and you risk creating more losses for you with your existing relationships if people feel they have to choose a side.

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Being able to vent and say bad things about your ex can be an important initial step, but you want to continue to take subsequent steps and have that not be where you remain. Instead of only demeaning them and looking to do a character assassination, start to shift what you are expressing to focus on the impact their betrayal had on you and how you are dealing with it. To begin the real healing, it is important to be in touch with all of your feelings, not just your anger. This way it can eventually become less about stirring the brew of your rage and more about developing your self-awareness. In my book *How Could You Do This to Me?: Learning to Trust After Betrayal*, I speak about blind trust. Was this going on for you? Were you too trusting, did you see signs and ignore them, or did you miss them completely? It is this reflection and understanding that will enable you to learn how to trust your own judgement so that you feel better equipped to protect yourself in the future and keep this from happening again. By doing this it helps you to stop perpetuating the negative by keeping yourself in the role of victim, and instead shift to moving forward and away from your ex and the fallout of the betrayal.

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Being deceived is devastating at best, at worst, if not dealt with, it delivers a blow that can keep you feeling low for a long time and can derail you from living your best life. For that reason, doing all this is your emotional health insurance as you go forward. Hopefully, Staci will be able to get back on track and become stronger as she carries on.

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## Relationship Advice: The Pitfalls of Dating While Divorcing





By Dr. Jane Greer

Dating someone new is exciting but often challenging, and adding the complications of a divorce that's not officially finalized yet, as well as kids from the fractured marriage, into the mix can create a whirlwind of possible pitfalls and new challenges. Waiting for a divorce to become official, though, can take some time, and it is often difficult to put the entire future of one's love life on hold until it is all said and done. Actor [Brad Pitt](#), for example, has been seeing MIT professor Neri Oxman in the midst of ending his marriage to [Angelina Jolie](#). Dating while being separated from your ex-spouse can often feel like a no man's land of uncharted territory with no clear rules. There may be concerns about how quickly to move things along, or a newfound fear of commitment because the most recent union failed.

**While you may be eager to move forward and find new love, it can**

**feel like a slippery slope where you can get in too deep quickly, sometimes without even meaning to. With that in mind, there are certain pieces of relationship advice to consider as you navigate this sometimes lawless territory.**

The first obvious question is how soon is too soon? It is a very personal journey in terms of how each person manages the sadness of saying good-bye to someone they loved and shared a life with. Some people have no immediate desire to meet someone new, and instead withdraw and go into emotional hibernation, unwilling to put themselves out there for a while and risk being hurt again or diving into another unsuccessful relationship. Others take the opposite approach and seek out a new romance because that is what they believe they need to survive the turmoil they are facing. Taking your personal inventory of what works for you, figuring out your own rhythm of moving faster or slower, can be helpful in gauging the best way for you to proceed. If you do decide to jump back in to the pond of love, try to consider what didn't work in your marriage and attempt to avoid those behaviors in this new partnership.

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Along those same lines, how do you balance the responsibilities and devotion you have to your children, as well as all the things that go along with taking apart your old life, with this new person? Consider how much energy you realistically have to give to your new identity as a single

person and to your new relationship. If you have met someone you really like and want to get involved, that is fine, but keep your kids in mind and pace yourself with how you introduce them, possibly saying your new love interest is simply a friend at first so as not to confuse them. On the flip side, you might find you are not ready to invest a lot of time into a new romance. He or she might want to jump right in, planning dates and weekend brunches, but you are juggling time with your kids and don't want to miss a soccer game or a dance performance which often conflicts with the proposed plans. Think about and prioritize what is most important to you, and be completely honest about what you are willing and able to put into this new situation. Be clear about your time and what you need to keep it balanced. It can be helpful to convey this upfront so that they can keep their expectations of you realistic and not bombard you with demands for getting together. By doing this it will help make the new relationship stay light and be a relief for you, instead of becoming another emotional burden and a new source of guilt.

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Finally, is it okay to talk about your ex and the details of your divorce with your new dates? There is no question that you have gone through a difficult time as you and your ex-spouse untangle the life you shared together. It has probably been the focal point of everything for you, all that you can think about. It is natural, then, that it is what you are used to talking about, and very likely what you want to talk about. That is understandable, but when it comes to the people you are just meeting and getting to know, the less you say about the nitty-gritty of your ex and your divorce, the better. Try to keep the conversation focused on fun topics such as activities you enjoy doing as well as those you would like to pursue in the future. Instead of making this new person your support system while you go through the divorce, allow your connection to be about what is ahead of you and think about it

as an opportunity to explore who you are now and who you are becoming.

While it is a lot to contend with, it appears Brad is handling these possible roadblocks and choices with aplomb. Neri seems to be taking everything in stride, and perhaps she and Brad can continue on this path to happiness together.

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## Relationship Advice: Working Through Your Heartbreak





By Dr. Jane Greer

Getting over a heartbreak is never easy, and there is no simple answer to how to recover from it. What does it mean when relationships don't work out? Is it you choosing a bad partner, or is it something out of your control? Dealing with the loss of love is often a challenge. Some people throw themselves back into the mix immediately, jumping in to a new relationship, while others take themselves out of the dating game for a while. The question is, how do you hold on to hope, and is there a way to try to ensure success on take two so that you don't continue to repeat the same wrong moves in the love game? It's rumored that The Weeknd's new EP is about his exes [Selena Gomez](#) and Bella Hadid. Perhaps his approach to dealing with his breakups is through his music.

**Here is some expert [relationship advice](#) on navigating heartbreak**

## post break-up and when entering a new, rushed relationship:

Many who dive right back into the fire may find that their new love connection isn't going as well as they had hoped and wonder why. There are several reasons this can occur, and it is helpful to understand them. For some, the pain of the split is too immense to handle because of how personally rejected they feel. As a result, their self-esteem may take a big hit, and they may go along in a relationship that they know isn't a good fit simply because having a new person in their life helps buffer the intense pain they are feeling. In that case, their thought might be that at least somebody wants to be with them. Another reason is that sometimes the loss of a significant other in their life and everything that goes along with that – doing things together, planning for two, looking toward the future, and having some security as to how they spend their weekends and evenings – is so hard to take that being with anyone might seem better than being alone. Therefore, they will quickly seek out a new partner regardless of how bad a fit that person might be. When that happens, simply having that person in their life trumps how compatible they are. If either of these reasons are in play, it can be the equivalent of taking an aspirin for a headache. It is a quick antidote to buffer the pain, but it may not deal with the contributing issues that brought about the heartbreak in the first place. Consequently, if you are looking to “lose” yourself in a new relationship, be it a rebound or an escape from the past, while it might ease the heartache in the moment it can sometimes lead to more loss in the future.

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In this whole mix one of the questions is, have you gotten over your ex at all? If not, you might find yourself comparing

your new person to your old significant other, and if you are still in love with the former, your current companion may pale in comparison. While the relationship itself might make you feel better about yourself temporarily, your new partner may not ever replace your old one. In addition, there may be unresolved problems still lingering from your old relationship that you now find squarely present in your new romance. You may even realize, surprisingly, that you have taken on the role of your old partner with your new one, and are now doing what your ex did to you, anything from calling too often to acting jealous. If you find this happening it can be a red flag that all is not well.

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If you have gone through a heartbreak and are looking to start a new relationship that is successful, it is important to take an honest look at what didn't work in your romantic past. Shine a light on what went wrong. Were you unhappy or did you do something to make your partner unhappy? Were they turned off by some of your behaviors and quirks, or you by theirs? Was it you or them who was not willing to step up to the plate in terms of making necessary compromises? This will help you develop self-awareness and give you some understanding of what might be at play with your new partner. This will also enable you to view the past as a stepping stone to the future, not wasted or lost time, but important information that you can learn from and take with you. It can also give you more realistic expectations going into the next relationship so you can hopefully make a better choice that will lead to a more positive connection. Along the same lines, if you find yourself going from one relationship to the next so you are not alone, but you keep choosing people who are not right for you or you lose interest in them quickly, then now is a good time to learn how to be on your own so you can develop inner security and grow stronger before doing a cannon ball back in

to that pool of love. Once you have given yourself a chance to do that, you might be better able to choose a new partner based not only on how they make you feel about yourself, but also on how you feel about them and what you are able to share together.

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It seems that The Weeknd is working through his heartache with music. [Taylor Swift](#) has been known to do the same. You don't have to write music to be able to do this. Instead, write a letter of the things you wish to say or wish you said, that you don't have to send. You can also listen to sad songs, but remember to balance that with a few love songs so that you are able to have faith that there will be a new beginning around the corner for you.

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