

Relationship Advice: Don't Give Up on True Love as a Single Parent



By Diane Sawaya Cloutier (with Mario P. Cloutier)

A well-known proverb tells us: “Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked a mile in his shoes.” I’ve walked many miles in the shoes of a single parent trying her luck at dating, and my aim is not to judge, but to encourage and advocate with some important [relationship advice](#).

I know first-hand what it’s like to be a single mom. While I was fortunate to benefit from an amazing support group, I remember that phase of my life as one that brought many fears

and questions, often in the form of self-doubts. I felt lonely, and I truly thought that few others could relate to my situation. This was some 25 years ago, in a world that was certainly different from today's for single parents. For instance, the likes of "xyzSingleMomsMingle.com" had not yet arrived. Facetime couldn't help me keep an eye on the little one when I went out. And less people were becoming single parents by choice. Still, when it comes down to the real anxieties and worries single parents face, has much really changed?

The troubling concerns that single parents say torment their lives today sound identical to the ones I wrestled with more than two decades ago: "Am I a good enough mom?" "Will we be okay financially?" "When will I be able to find some time for myself?" "Am I going to be alone for the rest of my life?" And, the BIG one: "Will I ever be able to love and truly be loved again?"

I don't pretend to have all the answers to these pressing questions, but, on the BIG question, I do have some pieces of relationship advice for you. Here's what I've learned:

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Everything starts with a decision—a choice we make. What is yours? Are you just looking to meet someone, or are you seeking to love and truly be loved? This may sound simplistic, but it is the first step of any true love journey.

Decide not to settle.

After my divorce, I found myself back on the dating scene as a

single mother. It took me several failed relationships before I made a choice that changed my life. I decided I would no longer settle or compromise for anything less than a lasting, blissful relationship. And I was resolute in my decision, even if this meant remaining alone with my son for the foreseeable future.

Make it a B.Y.O.S.

Party invitations refer to B.Y.O.B. My advice to you is don't jump into a new relationship unless you Bring. Your. Own. Self.

Early on, I was undermining what I really wanted from a relationship when I first started dating someone. I camouflaged who I really was just so I wouldn't have to be alone. To fill a void, I made the focus on what I thought the person I was dating wanted from a relationship instead of whether the person could fulfill my needs. Trust me on this: Once you make the choice to no longer settle or compromise on anything less than a lasting relationship, you are more likely to find your soul mate.

You're in charge.

Make a conscious effort to figure out the non-negotiables, or "personal laws" you require from a relationship. Once you've established your own needs and your own self-worth, you will have a clear picture of the shape your next relationship will take. Remain steadfast and unbending about your personal laws. This will help you avoid pitfalls in your quest to find your ideal relationship, and it will show others that you care enough about yourself to not compromise what you feel is important.

For me, my #1 personal law was: My son has to be embraced, not just accepted. I'd been in situations where I knew this wasn't the case, and it didn't feel right. This became a non-negotiable condition for me. Personal laws are by nature...personal! There's no one set of requirements. But, if

you fail to establish them—or worse, if you don't implement them as you embark on your next relationship, chances are this will end up as a deal breaker later on.

After experiencing it firsthand, I strongly believe a single parent can love and truly be loved again. However, if you're looking for a lasting, fulfilling relationship, keep in mind:

- When we continue repeating the same stuff, we can't expect different results;
- Everything is a process, and anything of great value is worth the wait;
- Faith without work is a waste of time.

Diane Sawaya Cloutier found her soul mate and husband, Mario Cloutier, in 1998 after they both had experienced unfulfilling relationships. Now, authors and relationship coaches, Diane and Mario Cloutier's new book, Relovenship™ – Look Within to Love Again (Xclamat!on Media, 2015) gives inspiration, hope and a step-by-step methodology to people who have had romantic disappointments and are still looking to find "the one." Mario Cloutier is founder and chief creative officer of Xclamat!on Marketing. Diane Sawaya Cloutier enjoyed a successful career in managerial roles with Fortune 500 organizations before focusing fulltime on the couple's ReLovenship™ book and seminars. Learn more at www.ReLovenship.com.