

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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