

Dating after Divorce: Lessons We Can Learn from Taylor Swift, Queen of Heartbreak



By Marni Battista

Taylor Swift has been splashed across almost every magazine in the past few weeks, telling story after story about yet another failed relationship and her tendency to get over someone by getting “under” someone new. The twenty-something country crooner is beautiful and successful, but it seems she can’t break the three-month relationship cycle.

Perhaps it’s because she has a “broken picker,” or maybe it’s just that she’s 22 years old and has no idea what she really wants. Whatever the case, Swift is repeating the same mistakes in each and every relationship. Her romantic trysts are unable to move past the infant stage. With actors and boy-banders alike (even a Kennedy!), the songstress dives in head-first each time – and comes out like a drowned rat within a few

months.

When you begin dating after divorce, you're actually in a similar position to Swift. You might not know what you want; you might be jumping in too fast; or you might believe that someone new can take away the heartache of a failed relationship. And, unlike Swift, you are most certainly very out of practice. So what lessons might we be able to learn from the Queen of Heartbreak herself?

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1. Don't jump into a relationship too quickly. After a relationship's gone wrong, take time to assess what you learned and how it can inform future choices. We call this the "Dating Fast" at Dating with Dignity because a "cleanse" from a relationship can help you reconnect to who you are outside of that relationship, help you refine your relationship goals, and aide you in making adjustments to your "picker."

Once you're in a space where you want a partner rather than need or crave companionship, you're most likely ready to return to the dating pool. When you're dating, take time to get to know someone fairly well before either of you decides you want to take it to the next level. This phase of "data dating" (collecting data about him/her while simultaneously having fun and creating new shared experiences) can last somewhere between one and three months, which is generally a good time frame for figuring out if this new person meets your needs.

Deciding after one coffee date that you're madly in love, that you should spend every minute together for the next five days, and that you're in a serious, committed relationship is almost always a recipe for disaster. Be conscious of the pacing of the relationship and strive to really get to know the other person, based not on who you want him/her to be but rather on how he/she shows up consistently over time!

2. Have clarity about what you want. If you find yourself confused about what you really want to create in your next relationship after a recent divorce or breakup, take comfort in the knowledge you're not alone. A great idea is to take an hour or two and create a list of what it is you're looking for based on what you were *not* getting from your marriage or last relationship. Also include a list of your values and the traits you admire in other relationships. Combine the lists and choose five characteristics to be your ultimate non-negotiables. By choosing just five, you can ensure you're selective but not too picky.

Check in with yourself periodically and confirm that what you were looking for two weeks ago is the same thing you're looking for today. If you're not looking to get into a serious relationship right at the moment, date casually to your heart's content and practice the art of setting boundaries, flirting, courting, and having fun. If a long-term relationship is your end goal, then date with that intention. Just be sure you know what you truly want.

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3. Give relationships time to evolve. When you get comfortable in a relationship too soon, you often find out things about your partner that you didn't know before you started seriously dating. What happens, then, is that you begin to ignore or rationalize the importance of these possible red flags.

Ignoring the "quiet voice within" is not a smart move. Instead, communicate your concerns while remembering that your perfect match will want to work through speed bumps to come to a real win-win. If it's not something that's appropriate to share with your partner, make sure you have a coach or therapist (not your best friend) who can help guide you in making informed relationship choices.

When you don't let relationships progress at an organic, natural speed, you may skip over important characteristics of your guy, or he may miss something important about you that's a deal breaker. So be yourself and let the getting-to-know-you part last, and then make that decision for a full commitment in a conscious way. Choosing someone just because he/she chose you is a Mr. Right Now move rather than a move toward finding Mr. Right.

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