

# Dating a Playmate



By Bridget

Marquardt, former star of *The Girls Next Door*

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As a television personality and former “Girl Next Door,” men often think they know me personally. But just because I’m accessible, that doesn’t mean I’m obtainable!

The truth is, while having men pay attention to you when you’re out at dinner or at a club is flattering, the constant flood of cheap lines and cheaper cologne can quickly ruin an evening.

So what’s a guy to do when he wants to land the girl of his dreams? Drop the posturing and player image, listen to what the woman has to say, and take...it...slow. In order to get things rolling in the right direction, I’ve come up with several apps currently available at [Appitalism.com](http://Appitalism.com) that are certain to take your dating skills to a new level:

50 Things Girls Wish Guys Knew(Free for the iPhone) – Are you struggling with your relationship? Let's face it, you can never know everything about a girl! But don't worry – here are 50 things that all guys should really know about girls.

Seduction Discussion (\$0.99 for Android) – A mobile discussion app for discussing all things related to the art of seduction. Discuss meeting girls, picking up women, closing the deal, advanced PUA techniques, love and relationships and more!

Dating Tips (\$0.99 for the Android) – No one is a dating expert; even the most beautiful and wealthy people all struggle with matters of the heart. Everyone can learn something about how to date more, how to attract the types of people we want to attract and how to make sure initial chemistry blooms into an enduring relationship.

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## **'How About' Giving Online Dating One Last Try?**





By Jenna Barbieri

Some people spend [Valentine's Day](#) doing extravagant things with their loved ones, while others spend it alone in front of their computers. Does the latter sound like you? Well, what would you do if I told you that this year, sitting in front of the computer might actually be the start to your ideal Valentine's Day? Would you think I was lying? Yeah, so would I. Which is why I did some research after hearing all the hype about [HowAboutWe.com](#).

Before I say anything else, let me point out that HowAboutWe is a dating site ... but it's not actually a dating site. Most people are hesitant to attempt online dating, but the only part of the actual dating that takes place on this site is the proposal. According to their homepage, "It's a site all about dates – inventing dates, scrolling through dates, asking people out and going on the dates you really want to go on."

It's no secret that connecting online has become an ideal dating option, which is why there are thousands of dating sites already out there. What separates HowAboutWe from the rest is the wait time (or lack thereof). HAW is straight to the point: What's your ideal date? Have you always wanted to go sky diving over beautiful scenery while holding hands with a significant other? Type it in and instantly connect with

those who share your interest – it doesn't get easier than that. In the meantime, look through your own date proposals until you find one right for you.

Once someone accepts your dating proposal or vice versa, the rest is natural. The type of date itself already tells you a lot about the person, and you're immediately thrown into an activity you both enjoy. If the date lacks that special spark, take comfort that you've found a friend who shares similar interests as you, all while continuing to date other people who also share your hobbies until you find the person that's right for you. Who *wouldn't* want to be asked out on a regular basis?

So instead of spending Valentine's Day alone, How About YOU take a chance on HowAboutWe? It's more than just a great way to meet people; it's a great way to meet the right people.

*Interested in giving it a try? [HowAboutWe.com](http://HowAboutWe.com) is offering our readers a **SPECIAL DISCOUNT of 33% OFF** their service, just in time for Valentine's Day! Use promo code VDAYFUN. For more information, visit their Facebook page and follow them on Twitter: @howaboutwe.*

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## Have a 'Delicioso Night In' With Aarón Sánchez This Valentine's Day





By Aarón Sánchez,  
celebrity chef and TV personality

*This Valentine's Day, forgo waiting hours on end for a table at a busy restaurant when you can have a fabulous night in right at home. Not only is it a great opportunity to intensify connections with family, friends and significant others, but it's much easier on the wallet! Celebrity chef and TV personality Aarón Sánchez agrees, and has some easy tips to creating your own "Delicioso Night In." You can join the Delicioso movement [here](#). Not only does this give you the opportunity to take part in great conversations, but by joining the movement, you're automatically entered for a chance to win the ultimate Delicioso Night In, prepared by Chef Aarón himself in New York City. After flying to New York for this special evening, one lucky winner and three other people of his or her choosing will be whisked away to Veracruz, Mexico, the home of Kahlua. In the meantime, enjoy the following tips from Chef Aarón to start your Valentine's Day off right:*



## **The Nose Knows**

You don't have to be a chemist to create memorable aromatics for your next evening of entertaining at home. In my home of Veracruz, there is a huge influence of African spices that were brought over when Cortez sailed across the Caribbean. Let such robust spices (think cloves, canela – the *real* cinnamon, cardamom, and black pepper) help set the mood with the help of a standard frying pan. Toast the spices just to their smoking point, and the room will fill with an inviting – and delicious – bouquet.

## **Team Chef**

It's like that old saying goes: those who sauté together, stay together. Collaborate on a menu and invite your guest(s) to help you bring the menu to life. Start the party early and enjoy cocktails as you cook; I like to keep it simple with a glass of Kahlua on the rocks with a splash of ginger ale. Cooking your creations together as you enjoy cocktails will allow for plenty of lean-in moments over the stove top, and eating those creations will be the reward for your labors over delicious conversation.

## **Pairing is Caring**

When prepping for a perfect evening, pairings are a fun way to turn any meal into a special occasion and spice up the fun. Plan three courses and pair each with a small cocktail; use one base spirit in three different ways. Keep in mind when choosing your menu to pick a spirit that embodies the flavors

you are working with; for example Kahlua – from the heart of Veracruz, Mexico – will bring out beautiful notes of vanilla, another Veracruz staple that pairs lovely with complex and robust dishes that involve such flavors as molé.

### **Forget the Utensils**

Feeding someone can be a loving, playful proposition (especially sans fork). In Mexico, we love to entertain with botanas – small bites – that incorporate foods indigenous to the region like seafood and black beans. Reconnect with your partner over a selection of botanas like plantains, garnachas (a small fried masa topped with pork or chicken), mushrooms, or fresh cut fruit. Watch those teeth.

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## **Three Valentine's Resolutions That Last!**





By Melissa Orlov,  
marriage consultant and author of *The ADHD Effect on Marriage*

How often have you found that the requisite roses (slightly wilted at the edges) don't do that much for you? This year, for a truly meaningful [Valentine's Day](#), don't focus on a single romantic gesture. Instead, consider making Valentine's Day the 'New Years' of romance – a time for making resolutions that will create lasting change for your relationship.

The good news? There is science behind how to do this. Here are three resolutions that can make Valentine's Day *matter* for a change:

**We will teach ourselves to argue.** Significant marital research suggests that couples who argue using the right words, who are conscious of how to start and end a conversation, and who avoid accusatory or critical rhetoric in the middle can use disagreement to strengthen their marriage, rather than weaken it. So forget about what you are fighting about and focus instead about how you disagree. Healthy conflict puts you on a path to resolve your differences. Unproductive conflict, or avoiding conflict all together, means that your problems don't get solved, only aggravated.

**We will address ADHD in our relationship.** If you have a child



with ADHD, patterns of significant inconsistency in at least one spouse, chronic nagging and anger, or very uneven distribution of responsibilities in your relationship, then ADHD may be creating serious problems for you. Learning how ADHD impacts adult relationships will help you overcome the many challenges you currently face.

**We will change the proportion of positive interactions to negative ones.** University of Washington researchers, including John Gottman, have determined that healthy relationships include at least five times more positive interactions than negative ones. So every time you create a negative reaction in your relationship, you need to self-consciously make up for it by creating five positive ones! Saying 'I'm sorry' is a good start, but it's only one-fifth of the work you need to do – so get to it!

*Melissa Orlov is the author of The ADHD Effect on Marriage, and has been featured in the NY Times, on CNN, Today and more. Her website is [www.adhdmarrriage.com](http://www.adhdmarrriage.com). For more, Orlov suggests For Better: The Science of a Good Marriage by Tara Parker-Pope and The Relationship Cure by John Gottman, Ph.D. You can also follow Orlov on Twitter: @msorlov.*

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## Must-Dos for a Memorable Valentine's Day





By Babe Scott,

author of *Delicious Dating*

Heidi Klum is going to say it with a surprise box of confetti hearts, cute underwear and chocolates. Katy Perry is said to be buying Russell Brand a lilac-colored Bentley. So how are *you* going to make your guy feel like the only man in the universe on [Valentine's Day](#)?

It's a given that your beau will romance you with a candle-lit dinner, but what will you do to ensure this night of love will be forever brulée-torched in your memories? Here are a few tips:

### **Dress to Impress**

Ditch your Bridget Jones-style orthopedic underpants and usual denims. Your man is booking a delicious meal in an attempt to ignite your sensual appetite, so the least you can do is make an effort.

Men are very Pavlovian when it comes to clothes, and what turns them on is a fitted dress and soft, figure-hugging fabrics. The Little Black Dress is always a good standby – a little cleavage, a spritz of perfume and high heels should have him salivating. Take a cue from Heidi, and make sure that what's underneath is equally enticing. Forget the Spanx,

and put on those sexy knickers and a push-up bra.

### **Give Him a Gift**

You might not be buying him a Bentley, but that doesn't mean the effort is all his. Give him a token of your appreciation and affection – maybe a guy necklace, a compilation CD of both of your favorite songs, or even a framed photograph of you together. You want this gift to remind him of you every time he sees or wears it, so avoid the generic.

### **Create Some Ambiance**

Chances are, you'll be at your place later, so make sure you have all the ingredients to whip up his favorite cocktail and snacks. Remember to tidy up, and set the stage with dim lighting and soft pillows. Have candles and mood music at the ready, put some flowers in a vase, and get your best and softest clean sheets on the bed. It's the little details that count. Maybe have some strawberries and sparkling wine, if not Champagne, in the fridge for the morning.

The night doesn't stop once he pays the check. You want to continue the romance when you get home, and nothing says, "I don't care" more than a messy apartment and an unmade bed.

If you plan out every detail, you'll be in for a delicious night!

*Babe Scott, a self-declared "manthropologist," is the author of Delicious Dating: The Single Girl's Guide to Decoding Men by Their Wining and Dining Styles. A magazine publisher in her native Australia, Babe broke bread with more than 100 men, and interviewed more than 200 men and women to reveal how to judge a man's potential as a lover and husband by what and where he eats. Learn more at [www.BabeScott.com](http://www.BabeScott.com), and follow her on Twitter: @DeliciousDating.*

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# 4 Great Valentine's Day Gift Ideas for Her



By Gunter Jameson

Men, for 364 days of the year, get to do things like fix cars, hook up electronics, and be a general handyman for the women in our lives. One day a year, we are asked to do something else to show our love – something a little more romantic. On [Valentine's Day](#), it's our job to shave off our manly exterior and be the cute and cuddly teddy bears that our women want us to be. The time has come once again to buy gifts for our wives or girlfriends that tell them how much we love and appreciate them. This is not a time for utilitarian gifts, like a mixer or a car stereo, so if you're stumped as to what you should buy for your special someone, here are a few ideas that should point you in the right direction:

**1. Chocolates and flowers:** It may be cliché, but flowers and chocolates are a really great gift on Valentine's Day. Even though they're not practical, that's the point! They don't serve any other purpose except to look pretty, smell good and taste delicious. If you bring a little beauty and a piece of chocolate goodness into the life of your woman, she will love you right back.

**2. Hand-dipped strawberries:** Chocolate-dipped strawberries are one of those rare treats that are so simple to make, but are very special and unique. The sweet chocolate and juicy strawberry combined make a flavorful and slightly sensual treat that will delight your woman's palette and tell her that you love her, both at the same time. And she won't want to eat them alone; get ready to snuggle up and share. Want to score bonus points? Suggest making chocolate-dipped strawberries together.

**3. Heart-shaped jewelry:** Yes, it might seem a little cheesy, but heart-shaped jewelry is a great way to get into your woman's heart. Pendants, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings and more; it almost doesn't matter, as long as it looks beautiful. Your mate will know that you love her and that you had to embarrass yourself by walking into a jewelry store – and of course, that's part of the present.

**4. A weekend away:** Clearly, if you have the money, a weekend away is one of the best gifts you can give to your special lady this Valentine's Day. All she wants to do is feel special by spending time with you without distractions, and doing things you both enjoy. Stay at a cozy bed and breakfast or at an upscale hotel. Get couples massages or spa treatments. As long as the two of you are together and relaxing, she'll love it.

The most important thing about Valentine's Day is that you make your wife or girlfriend feel special – like she's the only woman in the world. If you can help her feel that, then

she'll know you love her. Plus, you can then go back to doing manly things the other 364 days of the year.

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# SELF: Reasons to Like February 14 Regardless of Your Relationship Status



From *SELF* Magazine

***Love being single because...***

**1. You stay slimmer.** Women who live alone gained less weight (about 9 pounds over a five-year period) than newly married women, a study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel

Hill notes. “Men have a higher calorie allowance, so if you have whatever he’s having, you’re going to gain weight,” says Tara Brass, M.D., medical director of Columbus Park Collaborative.

**Advice for all from SELF:** Shared meals and social obligations can wreck any woman’s diet. Make sure you don’t match every forkful with your man – just because he finishes his entire plate doesn’t mean you have to. When dining out with friends, suggest that you both order something healthy, then split a dessert. Everybody wins!

**2. You snooze more soundly.** Sleeping solo has its perks: Two thirds of people who share a bed say their partner snores, costing some of them an average of 49 minutes of sleep per night, a National Sleep Foundation survey shows. “The noise created by snoring can be as loud as a kitchen blender,” says Carol Ash, D.O., a sleep specialist in Jamesburg, New Jersey.

**Advice for all from SELF:** Use a white noise machine for more peaceful slumber, Ash suggests, and avoid alcohol or caffeine for four hours before bedtime.

**3. You have steamier sex.** Single gals report fewer bedroom issues such as lack of interest, low arousal and anxiety about sex than married women, a study from University College London reveals. “Excitement over a new crush creates a surge in neurotransmitters that crank up your sex drive,” Dr. Brass says.

**Advice for all from SELF:** As you grow more committed, novelty can keep your love life hot. “Try new positions and locations, role-playing and, yes, even toys, which have been linked to increasing your chance for orgasm,” suggests Debby Herbenick, Ph.D., a research scientist at Indiana University.

**4. You enjoy more me-time.** Single women luxuriate in seven extra hours a week that married women spend doing chores, finds research from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. “Women increase their housework after marriage; men reduce theirs,” says study author Frank Stafford, Ph.D. (Thanks,

guys.)

**Advice for all from SELF:** Leave the dishes in the sink, and reduce stress by taking a Zumba class or diving into a book.

***Love being coupled because...***

**1. You're probably not hung-over today.** Married women are 20 percent less likely to binge-drink than back when they were single, a study from Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois, indicates. Putting a ring on it may prompt women to put their wilder days behind them. And knowing your partner is watching may help you keep each other's vices in check.

**Advice for all from SELF:** Drinking a moderate amount of alcohol can be good for you. But indulging too heavily may increase your risk for breast cancer. Stick to no more than one drink per day.

**2. You catch the happiness bug.** Women who live with a mate tend to brighten up when their partner is in a good mood, according to a study from the University of York. "Emotions are highly contagious, and so is happiness," explains study author Nick Powdthavee, Ph.D.

**Advice for all from SELF:** The trickle-down glee can come from anyone we know and like, Dr. Powdthavee says, so take a friend out after her promotion or send a note of congrats for a relative's new baby and bask in her joy, too.

**3. You have better health care access.** Single women are 60 percent more likely to lack health insurance than married women, a Centers for Disease Control survey suggests. "Having a spouse increases your odds that you will have employer-sponsored coverage," says Mark Rukavina, executive director of the Access Project, a health research and advocacy organization.

**Advice for all from SELF:** Visit [HealthCare.gov](http://HealthCare.gov) to search for the most affordable plans in your state and to find out how reform will improve your access.



**4. You keep your brain going.** Couples who marry or live together are half as likely to develop dementia later in life than those who live solo, a study in BMJ notes. Constant social interaction between partners (even bickering) may strengthen the connection between brain cells and prevent cognitive decline.

**Advice for all from SELF:** Paired up or not, everyone can benefit from healthy social connectivity. With stronger mental health, you'll fare better with any health hurdles that come your way, suggesting all women build connections by prioritizing church or charity as well as friendships. How about throwing a February 15 party just for fun?

*Keep on top of all fitness, healthy eating and wellness news with SELF Magazine. For more tips, follow SELF on Twitter: @SELMagazine.*

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## **This Is That Love**





By Celeste Friedman,  
author of *Single 101: 101 Reasons to Celebrate Being Single*

As a singer-songwriter, I can be guided by my muse at anytime of the day or night. Several years ago, it whispered into my ear while I was on my way to join my friends for services at their church. It was a two-hour drive on a brilliant, sunny Sunday morning in northwest Ohio. Passing the cornfields, farms and grazing horses, I was simply enjoying the beauty of the day. I thought of how sweet it was that my friends had invited me to share that wonderful summer day, and began to think about their amazing love story. Suddenly, it hit me. They had won the lottery in love and happiness. Before I reached my destination, I had written the lyrics to the chorus and finished the song after returning home.

Tammy and Scott have that love that we all dream of or read about in fairy tales. Whenever you see them together, they have contentment in their smiles and joy in their eyes. On April Fool's Day of this year, they will celebrate 14 years of marriage, and with three talented, growing boys, they still have "that love." Life's challenges along the way have made them even stronger, and the light in their faces glows brighter. However, their dream didn't come true as they started out in life.

After high school, they went their separate ways, off to different parts of the country and marriages that were destined to end. Scott returned home many years later to discover that Tammy was single. She claims that her face literally hurt from smiling so much after they were reunited, and they've been inseparable ever since. Falling instantly and deeper in love than ever before, fate had opened a new door for both of them.

You can find their song on my CD, "Every Tear I Know" on CDBaby and iTunes. For Valentine's Day, I'm sharing the lyrics exclusively on Cupid's Pulse. I hope you have or find what everyone dreams of!

"This Is That Love"

I could think of many reasons  
Why this is sweet and oh, so pleasin', this love  
And every time I look into your eyes  
It seems I've been there countless times  
And each time feels like new

Chorus:

This is that love I've heard about  
This is that love I've read about  
This is that romance, fairytale, sure to last without fail  
What everyone dreams of, this is that love

I could count on every star in the sky  
Make a wish and it's sure to fly, this love  
And whenever hard times come along  
Love makes a right out of every wrong  
You reach out and touch my hand

Repeat Chorus

Bridge:

Every time you hold me close at night, I can feel you smiling  
Ooh, this love, it's a wondrous thing

Repeat Chorus

c. 1998, Celeste Friedman, Songs For Charlie Music, BMI

*Celeste Friedman is a Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter who recently released her first book, [Single 101: 101 Reasons to Celebrate Being Single](#). Check out [our interview](#) with her and visit her at [www.single-101.webs.com](http://www.single-101.webs.com) for more information. You can follow her on Twitter: @Single101Nation and @Songchirps.*

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# 10 Tips To Keeping Your Valentine



By Brenda Novak, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author

With [Valentine's Day](#) approaching, it's easy to start pondering your love life. The "what if's" begin to run rampant, and the

*future is undoubtedly a big focus. If you can't imagine your life without your current partner, you need to start thinking about how you plan to keep him or her. Brenda Novak, bestselling author of more than 30 Harlequin romance novels, has some tips on how to do just that, which she's garnished from her own experience and research:*

**1. Avoid negative thought patterns:** Allowing yourself to mentally or verbally tear down your significant other is like gnawing at the bond that holds you together.

**2. Remember that this person means more to you than anyone else:** This includes your parents and your kids. People who live their entire lives for their children are often disappointed to find that they have no relationship left once the kids head out on their own.

**3. Be more flexible and forgiving with your spouse than mere friends and neighbors:** We expect our spouses to "understand" our stress or limitations – in other words, put up with our crap. Instead, reserve your patience and kindness for the person who means the most to you.

**4. Understand that relationships work on a spiral:** The more thoughtful you are with your loved one, the more fulfilled and happy he or she will be, and the more he or she will be interested in giving back to you.

**5. Don't get too practical:** Some couples forgo the flowers, the cards, the dinner dates and the chocolates in favor of saving money. But what's worth more to you? A few bucks (or even a house or a car), or a relationship that will likely affect your whole life and the lives of your children?

**6. Try to do something nice for your spouse every day:** Even if it's just a chore he or she typically does, these thoughtful touches will act like a hedge against the tough times.

**7. Be physical and touch a lot:** These little reminders that a spouse cares are nurturing to the soul and send wonderful signals to your children. Your kids will feel secure and happy because *you're* secure and happy, and they'll be more loving because of the example you've set.

**8. Remain loyal:** Have the grit it takes to stick together through thick and thin.

**9. Be unselfish:** It might seem otherwise, but life isn't all about you, how you're feeling and what you want. Worry more about whether you're being a good spouse than whether your spouse is being a good mate to you, and you'll be glad you did.

**10. Take care of yourself:** You don't have to be model-thin or in the first blush of youth, but be the best you can be – mentally and physically. In other words, be someone you'd like to be with.

*Brenda Novak and her husband, Ted, live in Sacramento and are proud parents of five children – three girls and two boys. When she's not spending time with her family or writing, Brenda is usually working on her annual fund-raiser for diabetes research – an online auction held on her at [www.BrendaNovak.com](http://www.BrendaNovak.com) every May. Follow her on Twitter: @Brenda\_Novak. Still want more? Check out her special Valentine's Day giveaway [here!](#)*

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## **Valentine's Day Special: Find**

# Your Five-Star Celebrity Relationship



Wouldn't you like somebody to love? It seems most of Hollywood thinks they do. So many celebrities jump in and out of relationships that we need a scorecard to keep track. Just when we they've got it right, Cupid's pulse hits a flat line. If celebrities can't keep their relationships together, we wonder: can we? Take beloved Sandra Bullock, left standing at the altar of her professional accomplishments, Oscar in hand, gushingly thanking her beloved Jesse James – only to find he has been screwing around behind her back. Naturally, she instantly dumps him. We also keep hoping that Jennifer Aniston will find her special love. Her ex, Brad Pitt, appears to have a great thing going with Angelina Jolie – at least for now. Then, there's David Arquette, who was dumped by Courteney Cox. One celebrity couple who appears to have it all is Sarah and Matthew Broderick (if we disregard the pre-marital tabloid fodder). And at least we've got Jeff Bridges,

Helen Mirren, Meryl Streep, Kyra Sedgwick and Kevin Bacon as beacons of hope.

## **How do we avoid the heartbreak of loss and pain to go after long-term love?**

First, you need to learn to follow your own Cupid's pulse. Here are 10 tips to your own five-star celebrity relationship this [Valentine's Day](#):

**1. There are plenty of fish in the sea:** Stop depending on celebrities to teach you how to have a successful love life, and start swimming in your own pond. Sitting home expecting prince or princess charming to magically appear at your door means living in fantasy land.

**2. Get out there:** Dating takes courage, research, smart thinking, a cautiously open heart and the willingness to learn more about yourself en route to your future. Like Nike says, "Just do it."

**3. Be pragmatic:** Dating is like job hunting. You might get lucky the first time, or you may have to invest some significant time and effort into sorting through the possibilities.

**4. Think of dating as an education:** Learn, go after what you want, and don't settle. Just because someone wants you, doesn't mean you need to want them back. Take charge of your own life.

**5. Move on from the past:** Whatever your dating history, be it a long-term relationship that ended or a series of short-lived affairs that didn't last, every dater remembers enough prior heartbreaks to make a grown elephant cry. So what? You never know what's around the corner. Surprises come wrapped in the most unexpected packages.

**6. Don't ever utter the words "I'm too busy to date":** No one



is too busy to date! Making time for yourself and your future sweetheart is important. Start looking for ways to free up some time so you can get out there and find the love of your life.

**7. Images are illusions:** If you feel insecure about something, odds are that the other person does as well. In fact, most people you date are far more worried about how they look to you than how you look to them. Remember, most glamour photos are airbrushed.

**8. Remember that you are a catch:** Focus on your positive qualities. Shifting your attention to your best features, both physical and otherwise, will make you more confident and attractive. Sure, you may have some low self-esteem issues. So does everyone else.

**9. Keep a wish list:** Jot down general values you want in a mate. What are your deal breakers? Is smoking unacceptable? Is religion an issue? Knowing where you draw the line can save you tons of time and heartache later.

**10. Keep a dating journal:** It will help you learn about your likes and dislikes, as well as your own patterns.

Celebrities are just like you. Follow these tips and you just might be able to teach *them* a thing or two. Dating can lead to your own-five star romance ... and a love that lasts!

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**Valentine's Day Special:  
Speed Shrinking for Love**

# Event



By Lavanya Sunkara

The best way to attain what you seek is to make the effort and take that first step. At last night's Speed Shrinking for Love party at Housing Works Bookstore Cafe, organized by bestselling author and journalism professor Susan Shapiro, New Yorkers of all ages and walks of life flocked to find what they were in search of, whether it was love, a book deal, or psychoanalysis.

Enthusiastic participants lined up for their speed meeting – think speed dating, but with literary agents and relationship experts. The jam packed space buzzed with curious newcomers, mingling friends, therapists doling out advice three minutes at a time, and literary gurus advising writers on pitches. Free wine and [Valentine's Day](#) chocolate cupcakes were plentiful.

But Speed Shrinking isn't just a witty name for a networking event. It is also the title of Shapiro's debut novel about a

self-help author who sees eight therapists in eight days to deal with her cupcake addiction after her best friend, as well as her shrink, suddenly move away. What started out as a one-time party idea to promote her book, *Speed Shrinking* has become a social phenomenon, entertaining a series of television appearances and parties on both coasts. Last night's event was Shapiro's 10th party, and she said a producer is interested in turning it into a reality show.

When asked how therapy changed her life, Shapiro said, "It's my secret weapon. I have everything I want in life because of it – a husband I've been happily married to for 15 years and two careers I love. Therapy really pays for itself. I tripled my income, thanks to my last shrink." The participating psychoanalysts agreed, and said they want to expose people to therapy and show that it is indeed a smart life choice.



Susan Shapiro (center) with psychiatrist Sheri Spirt and Jungian astrologist Bob Cook. Photo courtesy of Susan Shapiro.

Among the participants are devoted Shapiro-ites – students, literati friends and work contacts. Kiri Blakeley, author of *Can't Think Straight: A Memoir of Mixed-Up Love*, said it was her first time at a *Speed Shrinking* event. "I'm thrilled

people recognize me from my online interviews,” said Blakeley, who added that she came to spend time with friends and talk to editors about possible projects. Her experience is the norm for a Shapiro networking event. Everyone is connected to one another, either through an acquaintance, an agent, or Facebook. But the mutual link between all is Shapiro.

One participant, Daniel Berman said, “Shapiro is like a full-time operator – always available and willing to connect you to an editor, agent or romantic match. She is very supportive and I got published because of her.”

Former student Alyssa Pinsker shared her thoughts. “Like most of New York, I consider Sue Shapiro my mentor. I believe in her message and good karma. What better way to spend Valentine’s Day than to help others and find help?” Like many others, Pinsker wooed the editors to whom she pitched her ideas. “I always find what I need here.”

Shapiro’s next book, this time in collaboration with her former addiction therapist Frederick Woolverton, is titled *Unhooked* and is about how to get off addictions. For upcoming free events, please visit [www.susanshapiro.net](http://www.susanshapiro.net).

*Lavanya Sunkara is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Time Out, NY Resident and online magazines. For more information, visit [www.lavanyasunkara.com](http://www.lavanyasunkara.com).*

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## **Valentine’s Day Special: Love the One You’re With**



By Sherry Richert

Belul, founder of Simply Celebrate

Whether you're madly in love, still looking for love, or are in a snit with the one you love, these 14 tips below are surefire ways to jump start more luvin' feelings in your life, just in time for [Valentine's Day](#). Just choose one of these suggestions and try it out – on your spouse, your beau, yourself, or a friend. Or for those who crave a larger dose of feelin' good, try one a day for the next 14 days!

– Make a Love List full of silly, sweet, funny, poignant reasons why you love someone. When you're mad or disappointed, read this list! When you're happy and in love, add to this list. If you're sad or lonely, make a Love List for yourself, a relative, or a friend.

– Share the things on your Love List with the person for whom you wrote 'em. Mail 'em in a card. Send one text message every hour. Write them on notes and hide them in their shoes or coat pockets. Make a poster. Leave voice messages on their phone.

- Pretend you are meeting your spouse or beau for the first time. Choose someplace new, where neither of you have ever been. Arrive separately. Catch eyes across the restaurant or café. Introduce yourselves using names you just made up that suit your mood. See them (and yourself) anew.
- Surprise them on an any-ole-day. It's not his birthday. It's not your anniversary. It isn't Valentine's Day. It is Tuesday the nothingth. Make a candlelight dinner, buy him that gizmo he's been drooling over, or offer an hour-long massage and kissfest.
- Be the dashing, witty, sexy, romantic, fun person you have always longed to be in relationship with! Dress up in sexy clothes, tell funny jokes, focus on the positive, talk to strangers, be dynamic and magnetic.
- Listen. Focus all of your attention on them. Try reflective listening, in which you actually repeat back verbatim each sentence they say. It's amazing how good it feels to the recipient to know someone hears every word!
- Try something new together that you've always wanted to do. Now.
- Find a way to transform your anger or snits into something fun. Buy and wear big puffy coats so you can smash into one another. Put on your favorite music and dance. Have a sword fight with foam swords. Speak in feigned accents. (When my beau says, "Hey Boo Boo" like Yogi Bear, it is impossible not to laugh!)
- Collect and print out your 10 favorite photos of the two of you in which you're both truly happy. Hang them someplace you'll see them often. Let yourself feel the joy again and again and again.
- Be vulnerable. Tell him or her something you wouldn't tell anyone else, or something you've been afraid to say.

- Choose connection over being right or proving a point. (Ooh, that is hard. But wow, does it pay off in spades!)
- Get those unmet needs met – someplace else. Don't expect anyone in your life to be everything to you.
- Be present. This is the number one best way to connect – and the very best gift you can give.
- If you don't have a partner – or even if you do – do all of these things for yourself. Loving the one you're with starts with YOU. If you love and enjoy yourself, you're well on your way to loving whatever wonderful and imperfect Valentine is in your life or about to show up in your life.

To help you get started on creating more love in your life, download the free Love List template at [simplycreate.net](http://simplycreate.net) and make one for yourself, your spouse, a friend, or relative.

*Sherry Richert Belul is mom to a witty and wonderful 10-year-old boy. She is also founder of Simply Celebrate and author of Present Perfect: It Really is the Thought That Counts – an ebook that includes dozens of creative-not-crafty gifts that are fun to make and are full of love. Find her books or sign up for her free newsletter at [www.SimplyCelebrate.net](http://www.SimplyCelebrate.net). Email Sherry to tell her your Love List experiences, ask questions, or learn about the one-of-a-kind tribute books she makes at [celebrate@Madmoon.com](mailto:celebrate@Madmoon.com). For more, follow her on Twitter: @simplycelebrate.*

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## **Valentine's Day Special: How**

# to Have an Irresistible Online Dating Profile



By Julie Spira, online dating expert and the bestselling author of *The Perils of Cyber-Dating*

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February may be the shortest month of the year, but for those anticipating [Valentine's Day](#), it's critical to ramp up your online dating search. There's no quicker way to find a date on the Internet than by starting with a cyber face-lift of your existing dating profile.

With more than 116 million members worldwide viewing online dating sites, the odds are in your favor that you'll be able to snag a date by Valentine's Day with these tips:

**1. The Lady in Red:** Everyone knows that red is synonymous with love and passion. We're reminded about Valentine's Day as



soon as New Year's is over. I always say the color red will attract a man. Grab a friend and your digital camera and start snapping some photos wearing your favorite red dress or sweater to grab his attention. Post three to five photos: one full-length shot, one close up and an activity or vacation shot. Not sure what to use? Check out your own Facebook profile and scan through your photos. There might be one on your favorite social networking site to post on your online dating profile.

**2. Create a Catchy Screen Name:** When I create irresistible online dating profiles for singles, I'm always amazed at how many singles just use the screen name assigned by Match.com, eHarmony, or on the free online dating site. There's nothing catchy about it at all. Think about a newspaper with a great headline and an interesting photo. If it captures your attention, you're more than likely to skim or read through the article. The same theory holds true for online dating. It's a competitive digital landscape out there – Suzy115279 isn't going to impress him, but ArtLover4U or HikingGal will show him what your interests are. This will make it easier for him to approach you.

**3. Change your Settings:** Typically, women like it when a man does the pursuing, but February is already here. You need to let him know you're available and ready to meet. How do you do this? Change your privacy settings to show you're online and open up your live chat or instant messaging service. Online dating is a numbers game and men are rejected all too often. Make it easy for him to find you. It's a crowded digital landscape and the squeaky wheel *does* get the deal.

**4. Shorten your Profile:** There's so much to say and so little time, but time is your friend. Don't tell your entire life story in your profile, or there's no reason for him to contact you. Shorten your profile to a simple paragraph with enough information to pique his curiosity.

**5. Cast a Wide Net:** So what if he doesn't look like your dream guy? If you have enough common interests, take a chance and accept a date. You never know if a great friendship will develop or if he'll have a friend to introduce you to, even if it's not a love connection. Women *do* fall in love with their best friends, so don't be too quick to judge the book by its digital cover.

*Julie Spira is known worldwide as The Cyber-Dating Expert. She's the author of the bestseller, The Perils of Cyber-Dating: Confessions of a Hopeful Romantic Looking for Love Online. Julie creates irresistible online dating profiles for singles on the dating scene. Follow her on Twitter: @JulieSpira. Like her at Facebook.com/CyberDatingExpert.*

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## **When Friends Have Babies and You Have Your Career**





Statistics show that many people are getting married later in life, and many are questioning whether they want to get married at all.

If you're a twenty or thirty-something who has put your climb up the corporate ladder (in Louboutin heels, of course) or achieving your personal dreams, ahead of the traditional 3-step plan—get married, get pregnant, and live happily ever after (or get divorced), you will see married couples with kids or newlyweds with babies on the way, everywhere you look.

And, if you're anything like me—an unmarried thirty-something who loves her career, lives with her boyfriend, and whose biological clock only ticks to adopt a dog right now, then you understand the questions it raises when surrounded by those who have made starting and raising a family their business of choice.

I've worked through this biological paradox and have helped hundreds of my clients do the same. Here are my top four suggestions:

### **Embrace Your Freedom**

After every first, second, or third birthday party for our friends' children, my boyfriend and I do something spontaneous to remind ourselves how great it is that it's just the two of

us—for now. Enjoy every moment of your life. There's no need to rush. Plan a safari to Africa, go back to school to get a degree, write a book, buy an expensive and impractical handbag, and live on your own. Get excited about your life, and live with no regrets! Too many new mothers say, "I wish I would have done that before I was married and pregnant."

### **Get Healthy**

No matter how feminine we are on the outside, we all have masculine energy. Masculine energy is the force behind our goal-setting process, the direction we take in life, and the one-track thought process that gets us to where we want to go.

Many women have a challenging time getting pregnant because they do nothing to nurture their feminine energy after they start dating. The more you can create a space in your life for your feminine side to shine through, the more you will attract men who could be the father of your children. This energy can also make it easier for you to conceive. Begin preparing your body for pregnancy or start building the 5-star accommodations your unborn child will be living in. Cleansing your body can take months. Become more self-aware and learn as much about yourself as possible.

### **Prepare with Positivity**

A positive response can make all the difference. If you feel fine with your decision to wait to get married and have kids, then this will translate in your face, voice and expression.

But, just because YOU are happy with your choice, you will still be asked why you are waiting to start a family. For me, it comes up in every conversation with the grandparents, the parents, the parents' friends, and now even our friends.

People can't help themselves—so I chose to forgive them! It's better to answer their questions with a positive response and with a commitment to your decision.

### **Women's Wisdom**

I love the fact that my friends all have had kids before me. I respect them as women and as mothers. I feel so confident knowing that I can reach out to them when it's my turn. The lesson here is to learn from your friends' experiences. Try on their choices and see what works for you and what doesn't. Their experience can be your greatest teacher.

Remember, you can have everything you want: the accomplished professional life and the fulfilling personal life. Consider how you would be able to enjoy both if they didn't happen at the same time. Try these suggestions and let me know how they work for you.

*Stephanie Florman is a Relationship Coach and Advice Expert for Master Matchmakers, the company behind VH1's Tough Love Series. Stephanie is most passionate about teaching people how to have a healthy and happy relationship with themselves because she knows it is the starting point for developing a meaningful and rewarding relationship with another. Visit her online at [www.StephanieFlorman.com](http://www.StephanieFlorman.com) or at [www.mastermatchmakers.com](http://www.mastermatchmakers.com).*

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## Even Jesse James Deserves a Second Chance





Right now, it seems

the internet is a buzz with the news of Jesse James and Kat Von D's engagement. I was fairly surprised at the intense debate their announcement fueled, but then I got to thinking about second chances and leaving the past in the past. We all know what transpired between Jesse James and Sandra Bullock.

America's sweetheart was left betrayed and left to adopt a son alone, so who wouldn't be on her side? Now there's Jesse, the resident bad boy now starting a new life with Kat Von D, who is about as opposite from a Sandra Bullock type as you can get. Same story, different couple.

The thing is, nobody really knows what goes on in a relationship, but the two people who are in it. Jesse James and Sandra Bullock are no more, but does that mean that Jesse doesn't deserve happiness with someone else? I'm not saying Jesse and Kat will last forever, but who can you really say that about, as nothing in life is guaranteed, anyway?

People can change, although to what extent, nobody knows. People also do really terrible things in relationships and hearts get broken ... but life goes on and hearts continue to beat. I don't believe someone should be punished for the rest of their life after one mistake. It's so easy for us to write someone off as a horrible person; in fact, it's too easy. It's more difficult to give someone the chance to

redeem him or herself, and second chances can be so worth it.

Should Kat be aware of what she's getting into? Heck yes! I am not suggesting one should disregard the past actions of another. I'm fairly certain there are tons of people just waiting to tell her, "I told you so!" But if it feels right in her heart, then really, who are we to judge?

Speaking of judgment, what do you guys think of this announcement? Comment below.

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## And The 2011 Oscar Nominees Are...



By Krissy Dolor

With today's crack-of-dawn announcement of the 83rd Academy Awards nominees, the Oscar race has officially begun! This

year's big contender is *The King's Speech*, leading the pack with 12 nominations. *True Grit* comes in second, with 10. *Black Swan*, *The Social Network*, *The Fighter* and *Inception* all received multiple Oscar nods as well, and like last year, there are 10 nominees for Best Picture. But all I can think about are the celebrity couples that will dazzle us in their designer gowns and dapper suits.

While we have to wait until **Sunday, Feb. 27** for the big day, here are the five celebrity couples that should strut their stuff on the red carpet:

**1. Natalie Portman and her soon-to-be-hubby, Benjamin Millepied:** He was the choreographer of *Black Swan* and they shocked the world last month with their engagement and baby news! Need I say more?

**2. Leonardo DiCaprio and Bar Refaeli:** While Leo has been spotted with the likes of Blake Lively, there hasn't been any mention of a breakup between him and his longtime supermodel girlfriend. Also, the actor is famous for staying away from red carpet events like the Oscars, so it would be nice to see him there – with anyone – at his side!

**3. Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel/Olivia Munn:** Rumors from as recently as this month are flying that the actor/singer is still texting Munn, telling her that his relationship with Biel, his girlfriend of four years, "is basically over." Will he – and a new woman – show up next month to support David Fincher and Aaron Sorkin's nominations for *The Social Network*?

**4. Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds:** Despite Bullock's denial of any relationship with close friend and former castmate Reynolds, it's hard not to secretly wish for the two of them to date, regardless of his recent split from actress Scarlett Johansson. But if Jesse James can find love with Kat Von D, Bullock should get out there and snag a new romance for herself, too! Or at the very least, some really hot eye



candy.

**5. Tom Hanks and wife Rita Wilson:** Hanks' second wife is the constant pillar of support that the actor and voice of *Toy Story 3*'s Woody has chosen to lean on for the past 20 years. Check out this picture of them at the 1989 Academy Awards. Why stop now?

Check back next month as we recap the top celebrity couples of the 2011 Oscars, which will be hosted by James Franco and Anne Hathaway and will air on ABC! And in case you missed this morning's live stream, here are the nominations:

### **Leading Actor**

- \* Javier Bardem, *Biutiful*
- \* Jeff Bridges, *True Grit*
- \* Jesse Eisenberg, *The Social Network*
- \* Colin Firth, *The King's Speech*
- \* James Franco, *127 Hours*

### **Leading Actress**

- \* Annette Bening, *The Kids Are All Right*
- \* Nicole Kidman, *Rabbit Hole*
- \* Jennifer Lawrence, *Winter's Bone*
- \* Natalie Portman, *Black Swan*
- \* Michelle Williams, *Blue Valentine*

### **Supporting Actor**

- \* Christian Bale, *The Fighter*
- \* John Hawkes, *Winter's Bone*
- \* Jeremy Renner, *The Town*
- \* Mark Ruffalo, *The Kids Are All Right*
- \* Geoffrey Rush, *The King's Speech*

### **Supporting Actress**

- \* Amy Adams, *The Fighter*
- \* Helena Bonham Carter, *The King's Speech*
- \* Melissa Leo, *The Fighter*
- \* Hailee Steinfeld, *True Grit*

\* Jacki Weaver, *Animal Kingdom*

### **Animated Feature Film**

\* *How to Train Your Dragon*

\* *The Illusionist*

\* *Toy Story 3*

### **Directing**

\* Darren Aronofsky, *Black Swan*

\* David O. Russell, *The Fighter*

\* Tom Hooper, *The King's Speech*

\* David Fincher, *The Social Network*

\* Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, *True Grit*

### **Foreign Language Film**

\* *Biutiful* (Mexico)

\* *Dogtooth* (Greece)

\* *In a Better World* (Denmark)

\* *Incendies* (Canada)

\* *Outside the Law* (Hors-la-loi, Algeria)

### **Adapted Screenplay**

\* *127 Hours*, Screenplay by Danny Boyle & Simon Beaufoy

\* *The Social Network*, Screenplay by Aaron Sorkin

\* *Toy Story 3*, Screenplay by Michael Arndt. Story by John Lasseter, Andrew Stanton and Lee Unkrich

\* *True Grit*, Written for the screen by Joel Coen and Ethan Coen

\* *Winter's Bone*, Adapted for the screen by Debra Granik and Anne Rosellini

### **Original Screenplay**

\* *Another Year*, Written by Mike Leigh

\* *The Fighter*, Screenplay by Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy and Eric Johnson. Story by Keith Dorrington, Paul Tamasy and Eric Johnson

\* *Inception*, Written by Christopher Nolan

\* *The Kids Are All Right*, Written by Lisa Cholodenko and

Stuart Blumberg

\* *The King's Speech*, Screenplay by David Seidler

### **Best Picture**

\* *Black Swan*

\* *The Fighter*

\* *Inception*

\* *The Kids Are All Right*

\* *The King's Speech*

\* *127 Hours*

\* *The Social Network*

\* *Toy Story 3*

\* *True Grit*

\* *Winter's Bone*

For the complete list of nominations, visit [E! Online](#).

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## **Is Sandra Bullock Heading for Heartache Again?**





By Dawn Maslar,  
author of *From Heartbreak to Heart's Desire: Developing a Healthy GPS (Guy Picking System)*

Just about everyone loves America's sweetheart Sandra Bullock. She showed such grace and charm winning the Golden Globe Award just months after filing for divorce following the devastating cheating scandal with ex-hubby Jesse James. Bullock maintained her dignity while her husband's tawdry affairs were displayed on just about every magazine cover. Most of us couldn't image the pain she was going through.

Now the grocery store checkout lane is displaying Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds in a rebound romance. Bullock divorced Jesse James in June 2010, while Reynolds' marriage with Scarlett Johansson just ended a few weeks ago.

Besides the fact that rebound relationships usually lead to heartbreak, neither of the stars have very good partner picking skills. Bullock's past attraction to a bad boy biker (who just announced his impending fourth marriage to Kat Von D) shows an attraction to men with questionable loyalty. And Reynolds' past relationship choices aren't much better. His marriage to Johansson only lasted two years, which is actually record breaking for the young actress, since her previous relationships usually lasted less than a year.

If we take a look at who Johansson dated prior to Reynolds, we see many red flags. She dated Justin Timberlake, who has a string of affairs with women who are attracted to the wrong men, including Britney Spears and Cameron Diaz. Diaz's is currently dating Alex Rodriguez, whose dating history is one of a classic player (and I'm not talking about baseball). Diaz also dated Chris Angel, and the relationship seemed to evaporate into thin air. The point is, by looking through this cycle of relationships, it's easy to see why both Bullock and Reynolds should probably keep their distance ... at least for now.

Spokespeople for both of the actors claim the pair are just friends, and we hope they keep it that way. Their relationship histories and current rebound states indicate that a potential relationship could end in heartbreak.

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## How to Have a Relationship with Yourself





Maybe you've never been to rehab and maybe you've never been accused of assault while in aforementioned rehab, but you must know what it's like to be in over your head. You know what it's like to nearly have a panic attack when things are going wrong. We've all made mistakes, and we've all grimaced at the fact that life is not turning out the way we wanted. Once you reach that point of regret and self-awareness, you'll hopefully come to one solid conclusion: before you can move on to your next relationship, you must work on yourself.

But how do you do it? There's no internal switch that makes you focus on personal development. You have to find the motivation within yourself! Perhaps your inspiration comes from the desire to be with someone special, but many of us aren't in the right place to meet that person, yet. If you don't have your most basic issues analyzed and set on the road to recovery, then how do you expect any relationship (romantic, friendly, or familial) to work out? Self-improvement—a relationship with yourself—must come before all others.

Since leaving rehab, 24-year-old actress, Lindsay Lohan, has been busy. In fact, she can teach us a few lessons. Several sources for celebrity news refer to her as “newly sober.”

**1: Once personal development begins, you get a clean slate:** In this context, every day can be the first day of your journey to self-improvement. The best part about unlimited fresh starts is that you have numerous chances to succeed.

**2: You need an overarching goal:** Figure out what you're working towards, and never forget it. In Lohan's case, staying sober might be her main objective along with sub-goals, possibly including a shoe line or a successful movie in the future. Maybe she's even keeping her eye out for a new and healthy relationship.

The paparazzi have been keeping a close eye on Lohan. Their pictures allow us and the rest of the world to speculate about whether she's on the right path.

**3: Only value the advice of people who truly know and care for you:** Those who don't have your best interest at heart should be ignored. Lindsay Lohan should stay focused on herself and those close to her.

You might have minor issues to work on, or you may need to completely restructure your life. That said, you no longer have to worry about your answer to the question, "Are you seeing anyone?" Now, you can hold your head up high and say, "No. I'm just working on a relationship with myself."

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**Miss America 2011: Harvard Graduate and Miss**

# Massachusetts Loren Galler-Rabinowitz is Much More than Just a Pretty Face



By [Lori Bizzoco](#)

The women of ABC's *The Bachelor* may be competing for a man's heart, but the only thing Loren Galler-Rabinowitz wants to win is this year's Miss America crown! But don't think that the Miss Massachusetts contestant is just another pretty face. The 2010 graduate from Harvard University has a degree in English and just finished a 10-year figure skating career as a U.S. Champion ice dancer. In addition to her dreams of becoming a published poet, the Brookline, Mass. native received an \$8,000 scholarship from the Miss America Organization as Miss Massachusetts, which she will put towards pursuing a medical degree. If all this wasn't enough, the 24-year-old won an additional \$250 for winning the talent portion of the competition (nope, not for ice dancing – she's a classically-trained pianist). And this Saturday on ABC,



Galler-Rabinowitz will show the country just why she deserves to win not only the Miss America title, but the \$50,000 academic scholarship that goes along with it.

One reason is her devotion to her philanthropic cause, fighting childhood hunger. In fact, Galler-Rabinowitz, who spent a lot of her childhood in Barbados where her mother runs the center for malnourished children, was awarded the Harvard's English department's Le Baron Briggs Traveling Prize for her humanitarian work. Her goal is to work in the area of pediatrics.

How does this non-stop woman find time to accomplish all this – and manage a happy and healthy relationship with her boyfriend of three years? Cupid was lucky enough to speak with her and find out:

**After all that you have accomplished, what encouraged you to participate in the Miss America Competition now?**

I knew that I wanted to take a year off between undergrad and medical school and I wanted to use that time to give a year of service. I figured that this was the last opportunity in my life where I don't have financial obligations to anyone other than myself. I wanted to do something that would encourage people to help others and Miss America gives me the platform to do that.

**In what ways has your title of Miss Massachusetts already started to impact people?**

One advantage of being Miss Massachusetts is that I get to go to schools and give talks. Sometimes people think kids don't listen, but they do. I've received hundreds of email responses. Whether it's someone saying, "Because of you I started a UNICEF chapter at my school," or, "This weekend I am going to be nicer to my little sister."

Miss America is a beauty contest, no doubt about that. There is an aesthetic element to it, but it's not girl who is the most beautiful girl on the outside who wins – it's the one who is most beautiful on the inside. As Miss Massachusetts, I've put in up to something like 70 hours a week of public service. I'm not paid to do this. Being Miss America is even more intensive, but I think that I have the heart to do this job.

### **What do you say to inspire people?**

I usually talk to people about what's *not* on my resume. I worked for 10 years to make an Olympic team, and unfortunately, it didn't turn out the way that I wanted it to and I was really disappointed. I started to volunteer in a hospital as a way to observe how *other* people were dealing with loss, and see if I could learn how to get through a tough time in my life. Also, my grandmother, who I was very close to, passed away around that same time. So I dedicated time each week to caring for others and it was so unbelievably rewarding. Now, I get to talk about the fact that you can take a bad situation and make the best of it by helping others who may be in an even worse situation. Doing the littlest things for someone can brighten their day.

### **How important do you think beauty is in a relationship?**

I think that I would use the word "attraction" rather than "beauty," because everyone finds something different to be beautiful. In my own life, I have always looked for someone who has the same passion for giving back and doing good. Ultimately, we all end up with wrinkles and gray hair, and saggy in places that we wish we weren't. But at the end of the day, you want to make sure that you are actually in love with the person – and not what they look like.

### **How did you and your boyfriend meet and what keeps you together?**

We met at school and we've been dating for three years. He has a similar commitment to being in public service and that's the thing that we have really bonded over. It's that feeling that your life just isn't complete unless you are doing something good for someone else every single day.

**How do you make time for a relationship when you're so busy? And what can you say to others in the same situation?**

I think that's the challenge in today's world. As women, for the first time in history, we are as busy, if not busier, than our spouses, husbands, or boyfriends. How do you make a relationship function with two working people? I am in awe of my parents and feel lucky that I grew up in a household where my parents were both incredibly busy, but were able to build this incredibly strong bond and love for one another. Even with three children, they still managed to find the time to communicate. They were engaged after only 24 hours and they just celebrated their 40th anniversary.

I think for anyone to feel fulfilled, you want to have a personal life, too. Work is wonderful, but there's nothing like having time for relationships and family. You have to schedule time, even if it's 10 minutes, just to make sure that you're in sync and on the same page.

**You are celebrating a birthday only a few days after the competition. Would winning the crown be the best birthday present ever?**

Yes (laughing). I can't really think of anything better – except for maybe a cheesecake and a fork!

Cupid thanks Ms. Massachusetts for her time! And remember to watch her this Saturday, Jan. 15 at 9 p.m. EST on ABC at the 2011 Miss America Pageant – you can even vote for her to be a finalist! Text MAMA (which stands of Massachusetts for Miss America) to 24470. Voting ends at 11:59 p.m. PST tonight, Jan. 13. And for more on the Miss Massachusetts contestant,

you can follow her on Twitter: @missmass2010.

Good luck!

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# Prince William at War with the Queen Over Wedding Plans



By Vicky Sullivan of [aspiringsocialitenyc.com](http://aspiringsocialitenyc.com)

According to E! Online, the War of the Roses has once again taken to the British Isles. After details of the much-anticipated royal wedding between Prince William and the lovely Kate Middleton were announced, Queen Elizabeth II was less than enthused. In fact, she was livid. Apparently, her royal highness learned of her grandson's wedding plans just as the rest of us did, by watching the news. The traditional

matriarch steeped in the tradition of the British crown was enraged at the couple's plans for Middleton to arrive at Westminster Abbey in a car rather than the traditional horse drawn carriage. According to witnesses of her breakdown, the Queen made it very clear that buffets have no place at Buckingham Palace. Though the royal wedding craze rightfully glamorizes Prince William and Middleton as the world's most fascinating couple, this family feud makes the impending royal wedding almost familiar. As the bride and groom stress over the guest list, an overbearing grandmother has already pulled the plug on their breakfast buffet and dance party. Royalty or not, weddings can be a royal pain. Perhaps, the couple should do away with their trendy plans or it's off with their heads. Plus, the Tower of London isn't much of a honeymoon suite!

**How do you keep your family from messing with your wedding plans?**

### **Cupid's Advice:**

Anyone who has been involved in planning a wedding knows how difficult it is to please everyone involved. People tend to forget that weddings are really about the couple getting married and less about the flower arrangements and catering plans. Cupid has some advice on how to handle the situation diplomatically:

- 1. Explain your reasoning:** Your close family and friends may lay off for a bit if you explain why the details of your wedding are important to you. Perhaps you're trying to save money or are honoring family traditions.
- 2. Remind them that it's your wedding:** Sometimes critics just need a reality check. Once you remind them that this is a celebration of you and the person you love, they should back off.

**3. Meet in the middle:** It may be necessary to compromise with family members, especially if they are contributing the festivities financially.

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## Forbes: What Do Powerful Celebrity Women Really Want From a Relationship?



By Krissy Dolor

*Forbes* may be a money magazine, but that doesn't mean that they don't love celebrities, too! Last week, the magazine reported on a recent study conducted by the University of Abertay Dundee in Scotland, which found that as women earn money and financial independence, their attraction to good-looking, older men increases. In addition, these women hold a

man's looks to a higher standard. The university has dubbed this "The George Clooney effect."

Previous studies have found that women care more about whether or not a man can provide for them, while men were more attracted to lookers. This new study showed that when a woman's income increases, her taste in men change.

"We'd assumed that as women earn more, their partner preferences would actually become more like those of men, with a tendency towards preferring younger, more attractive partners rather than those who can provide and care for children," said lead researcher Dr. Fhionna Moore, a psychology lecturer at the University of Abertay Dundee. "However, the preferred age difference did not change as we'd expected – more financially independent women actually preferred even older men. We think this suggests greater financial independence gives women more confidence in partner choices, and attracts them to powerful, attractive older men."

*Forbes* analyzed 12 celebrity couples, posing this question: What is each woman in the celebrity couple attracted to? They say that Angelina Jolie, as one of the highest-earning women in Hollywood (\$20 million), wants a hot, older man. Hubby Brad Pitt is 12 years older than the starlet. Think Demi Moore's marriage to Ashton Kutcher is part of the cougar effect? Think again. She told *Harper's Bazaar* she does not like the term – and Kutcher's Twitter presence seems to garner enough fame on its own. We can even look at Ellen DeGeneres, who earned \$55 million last year, and is married to Portia De Rossi – a woman 15 years her junior.

In addition to the UK study, lead researcher at dating site [eHarmony](#), Gian Gonzaga, said in the *Forbes* article that high-earning women are attracted to successful men who have established careers – and typically, these men are older. "In the data I've seen, women always want higher earning men,"

said Gonzaga. He also said, “the Cougar thing is likely a myth.”

Well, there you have it: money only begets more money. If only there were a slew of George Clooney and Brad Pitt look-alikes up for grabs...

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## Kevin Spacey Doesn't Need an American Beauty



By Jenna Barbieri

This weekend at The Times Center in Manhattan, famous legends of film, theater, music and dance will join together to express their shared love for the arts at the 10th Anniversary of Arts & Leisure Weekend. Kicking off the spectacular event tonight will be none other than two-time Academy Award-winning



actor-director-producer, Kevin Spacey.

Though currently starring as disgraced former lobbyist Jack Abramoff in *Casino Jack*, Spacey has a much bigger responsibility serving as creative director of The Old Vic theater in London for the last seven years. So what makes it so easy for Spacey to drop what he's doing and hop an eight-hour flight to New York? Perhaps it's because he has no "ball and chain" to hold him back.

That's right, the 51-year-old film legend's ring finger bares no band. In fact, it never has! Yet Spacey continues to squeeze out every ounce of creative energy he has in him year after year. Which begs me to question, can being married to the arts act as a healthy alternative to being married to a significant other?

Spacey has never been known to go out of his way to get serious with another person, but he moved to another country to take the job at the Old Vic theater. When first questioned about his feeling on the big commitment Kevin would say, "I'm living my dream." Not being married gives him the opportunity to give full attention and devotion to his number one love – the arts. In a way, the theater plays the role (pun intended) as his wife: a wife whom he is completely passionate, happy and more than content with.

And Kevin Spacey isn't alone in this category! Among other passionate art lovers who have never walked down the aisle are Diane Keaton, Oprah Winfrey, Al Pacino, Sheryl Crow, Bill Maher and the legendary Coco Chanel. These stars are living proof that something that while some people get married when they're in love to have someone who will be there to hang out, listen to music and laugh with them for the rest of their lives, others can depend on their stage, their guitar, or their audience to fulfill the same feeling.

Want to read more about Kevin Spacey's hosting gig? Follow

Cupid to The Times Center's 10th Anniversary of Arts & Leisure Weekend event page.

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# Is Your Dating Profile A Movie Trailer or a Cereal Box?



I've read a metric bazillion dating profiles in my time as an online dating coach and about 90% are yawn-worthy. Do you think you're part of the other 10%? Think again.

Most people write a dating profile that reads a bit like a cereal box. Have you seen the following claims on a dating profile (maybe yours)?

## The Cereal Box Dating Profile

**Healthy:** “I like to take care of my body and you should, too.”

**Balanced:** “I love to get dressed for a night out or wear PJs for a movie at home.”

**Wholesome:** “Family is really important to me. I don’t know what I’d do without the support and love of my parents and siblings.”

**Mom-approved:** “Best of all, your parents will love me.”

Sure, these are all things that you might value in a date, but we eat cereal every day. It’s not exciting. It’s not unique. It’s not interesting. It’s just... okay. Pair a cereal box profile with photos of a regular Joe (or Jane), and what do you get? Not a whole lot of emails from potential dates, that’s what!

## **Learn A Lesson From The Movies**

The film industry knows what they’re doing. How many times have you seen a trailer and been totally psyched to see the movie? It has your favorite actor, it’s based on your favorite novel or it has lots of explosions. You know in a minute or three whether or not it’s a movie you’d be interested in seeing.

Previews work by showing you snippets of the best parts of the movie. You meet the protagonist, and you get a preview of their story. If it’s going to be a funny movie, there are some quick quips. If it’s going to be a summer blockbuster, there are cars exploding and people leaping away just in the nick of time.

## **What’s Your Trailer?**

Your life may not seem as exciting as a summer blockbuster (and I certainly hope there are fewer explosions!), but it’s interesting and unique. Think about the little things that make you who you are, and write those into your dating profile.

Even little things give a glimpse of your character. When I was dating, my profile described me riding my shopping cart across the parking lot at Publix supermarket (you're never too old!). Many of the emails I got from men referenced that part of my profile as a reason why they emailed me.

Take your Cereal Box Claims and beef them up with specifics:

**Old:** "I like to take care of my body and you should, too."

**New:** "I'm not sure what I like most about my morning run – the heart-pumping exercise or the heart-stoppingly beautiful sunrises."

**Old:** "I love to get dressed for a night out or wear PJs for a movie at home."

**New:** "My best friend knows me better than anyone else. For my birthday last month, she got me tickets to the opera and a new pair of fuzzy bunny slippers."

**Old:** "Family is really important to me. I don't know what I'd do without the support and love of my parents and siblings."

**New:** "Now that we're adults, my sister and I are best friends. It might also help that our closets are 300 miles apart – she always stole my favorite clothes!"

## **A Movie Trailer Profile Always Does Its Job**

Not every movie trailer is going to thrill you and make you mark opening day on your calendar. If you re-write your dating profile ([or have my staff do it for you](#)), it's not going to magically attract every single on your dating site.

And it shouldn't.

If your dating profile is written like a good trailer, it will intrigue the kind of person who will find you interesting, attractive, and worth getting to know better.

## **Steps for Success**

1. Read your current dating profile and mark the boring cereal box phrases. Make notes on how you can beef them up by being more specific.

2. Find little snippets of your life that show off your character. Write about those.

3. Don't be afraid to show yourself off. Self-confidence is sexy and will draw in exactly the kind of people that are good matches for you.

Need help? Check out the [Geek's Guide to Online Dating Success](#) on my site for more tips & tricks or [hire us](#) to write or re-write your dating profile.

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## Why I'm Rooting For Jennifer Aniston in 2011





By The Single Filez

2010 is drawing to a close, and the new year will soon be upon us. While this is usually exciting for me, I must admit that I'm not looking forward to watching the clock strike midnight this year. Let me explain. I turn 35 next year. If I'm being honest, I'm scared shitless. Luckily, I still feel and (thanks to great genes), look 25. But no matter how young I look, the fact remains the same: next year I will be 35 and still single. I'll be single with not even a whiff of any potentials and without ever having experienced a long term relationship. The older I get, the more worried I feel about my singledom.

Just like Jennifer Aniston (and many other single women out there), I'm notoriously unlucky in love. Although Jen has the distinct advantage of having been married to Brad Pitt, whereas I have the advantage of still being in my mid-30's (Aniston is in her 40's). Either way, I'm rooting for Jen because I'm sick and tired of the reaction in the media to her lack-of-a-man situation. Everything they say about Aniston are the same things my friends, family and co-workers say about me: "but, she's gorgeous," "but she's successful" and "why on earth can't she keep a man?." It's frustrating, it's tiring and it's just not fair.

At first, I was going to write about why Jennifer Aniston and Halle Berry (another successful hottie who seems to be a serial douche bag dater) scare the hell out of me. I was going to say how nervous I am about still being single when I'm 40, but then I thought, "NO." Actually, what I want to do is root for Jennifer Aniston in 2011. I want to do for her what I want my folks to do for me. Despite my bad luck with men, I feel confident that I will find the right man eventually. So, HAPPY NEW YEAR Jen! I hope you find a good love in 2011. Enough of the 'Mr Right Nows,' like John Mayer, Bradley Cooper, Vince Vaughn and Gerard Butler. Give us singletons the opportunity to look at you and say, "Hey, there's hope after all. It is possible to find true love after a long bout of bad luck." But most importantly, do it for yourself. Wouldn't it be nice to stick your middle finger up and prove to the world that you're gorgeous, successful and can keep a man?

Go Jen!