

Cold Feet Before The Wedding? Reasons to Use Your Head



By Marie Chan

Marriage is more than just a dreamy, fairy tale event in every woman's life. Understandably that it is exciting when planning for one especially if you are the bride-to-be. But, this is also the stage where a couple's relationship is tested. Arguments often come along during the planning stage. After you have prepared and paid for everything, you feel restless, hyped-up and experience "wedding jitters" the night before your big day. What should you do?

Here are some things to consider if you feel anxious before your wedding.

1. Think deeply about your doubts.

According to a research done by the Psychology graduate students of UCLA, 19 percent of women who reported that they are having doubts before the wedding end up in divorce after four years of married life. It would be best to simply call off the wedding if you are less than one hundred percent sure. It is not wrong at all to back out now than regretting a major decision in your life. So, consider all the factors why you have doubts before your wedding.

2. Talk things out with your partner.

Nothing beats the old fashioned way of talking things out. Couples who last long in marriage often say that communication is the key to a successful relationship. So, if you are feeling the pre-wedding jitters, be open with your partner about it. It would make you feel better having someone to share the mixed emotions before your wedding. Take this opportunity to remind each other of the good things that await you as a couple.

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3. Seek advice from elders.

If you cannot contain the doubts before your wedding, you can seek advice from your parents or close relatives who have been married for many years. The wisdom they have gained through the years can cast a light to the doubts and questions bothering you. It would also help if you choose to confide in someone who you know is not biased.

4. Don't pressure yourself too much.

It is a good thing that everybody else shares your excitement about getting married. However, it can also add pressure on your part as the bride. Of course, you want your wedding to be perfect. But because of this, you tend to over think things.

You worry about even the smallest and insignificant things. Remember, your wedding is a celebration of your union as man and wife. You should enjoy this day.

Although some brides (and even grooms) feel the cold feet before their wedding, the challenge is how you manage these feelings while keeping yourself composed before, during and after the wedding. Surround yourself with trusted people who knows you well and whom you can really share your feelings honestly. Doubts before the wedding can be easily erased if you think about your real goal as a couple.

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It helps to know that you are not alone, but you have someone to share all your thoughts, doubts and fears. Cold feet before the wedding can be minimized by having a pre-wedding counseling and coordination. Remember when you get married, your life takes on another path wherein it is different than the life you are used to with your parents or yourself. You have to be ready – mentally and emotionally.

However even with all these – you are still experiencing this heavy and negative feeling that you cannot go through with this wedding, then by all means, use your head and call it off. What you feel is not just a simple case of wedding jitters or cold feet. You have to follow your instinct. Clear all doubts before pushing through with it. This way, you will avoid making costly mistakes in life.

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Beware of Sweetheart Scammers This Valentine's Day



By Becky Frost

Rumor has it that many celebrities have dabbled in online dating. And they're not alone. A recent study has determined that one in ten Americans has used online dating or a mobile dating app in their quest for love. It has steadily gained popularity as many find it an ideal way to meet people and discover a good match for themselves versus more traditional means of dating.

Most online daters have the best intentions to simply find their soul mate but beware there are unscrupulous suitors who are out to do more than steal your heart. If online dating

is on your agenda this Valentine's Day season it's important to be aware of these individuals, labeled by the FBI and others as "sweetheart scammers."

Their goal is to swindle money or bank account information from unsuspecting online daters by creating a fake profile designed to match a certain type of person: employed, affluent and trusting. As time goes on the sweetheart scammer will scheme to seem perfect in every way, even down to the same likes and dislikes as the target. Once trust has been established, the scam usually escalates to the thief's unveiling of a problem involving money. Typical scenarios include the request for funds to be able to travel to meet the target or to help the thief's sick relative. Love can often blind the victim to only think and act with their heart rather than their head in what otherwise may appear as an obvious scam.

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So what can you do to avoid sweetheart scammers? ProtectMyID, a leading provider of identity theft detection, protection and resolution offers up these valuable tips to help protect your online identity and steer clear of fraudulent schemes in the online dating world:

Don't give away too much: Don't disclose personally identifiable information with a prospective dating match until there is an established level of familiarity and trust. This also includes your hometown, home addresses, work specifics, phone numbers, educational background and information about children via profiles and through photo identification.

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Play detective: Don't assume that a prospective dating match always will be truthful. Ask a person to tell you about him or herself; you then can conduct a little background work on

websites and see if conflicting information exists. Also, be wary of any requests for financial loans or assistance of any kind.

Create the perfect password: For online dating profiles, do not use passwords that incorporate publicly known information.

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While sweetheart scammers definitely operate all year long, they are particularly noticeable this time of year when everyone wants to celebrate romance. These scams are a double whammy for the victim because they are affected both fiscally and emotionally. Online dating can open up your world to true love but approaching it with your eyes wide open is critical to avoid not only heartache, but also becoming a victim of fraud.

Becky Frost is senior manager of consumer education for Experian's ProtectMyID. Check him out at www.protectmyid.com/.

Looking for Love Is Like a Job Search





By Lisa Becker

We all know that finding love can be a lot of work. No disrespect to the Peace Corp, but it truly may be the toughest job you'll ever have. So if you're serious about wanting to find a great relationship, you should start treating it like a job search. Consider these seven tips below:

1. Network, Network, Network: Just as people find jobs through networking, a great way to find a good personal match is through friends and friends of friends. After all, who is better to help promote your great qualities, positively position your odd quirks, and play down your annoying habits?

Because they know you and your desires, your loved ones will likely beat out most online dating algorithms in making good matches. If you do turn to online dating, consider a service like Clique, an invitation-only site that links you up with people through common connections.

2. Create a Digital Resume: If online dating is for you, treat your profile like a digital resume. Use this opportunity to

tell people who you really are and what makes you special. Don't talk about your ex. That's tantamount to saying you got fired from your last job. Just let your personality, accomplishments, and assets shine through.

Include specifics that people can connect with – interests, hobbies, likes, and dislikes – but be honest. If all goes well and you make a connection, you'll need to provide proof of all of your claims. Be sure to proofread! Not only do you likely want to come across as literate and educated but as someone who takes pride in themselves.

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3. Be Selective: You wouldn't apply for every job advertised on Monster.com, would you? And you wouldn't hire someone you know is wrong for the job. Then why would you do that in dating? Don't ask out every prospective person or online match, and don't accept an invitation from all either.

Let's face it: Dating isn't cheap. It takes time, money, and, likely your most valuable and scarce resource, energy. So take advantage of the "try before you buy" environment of online dating. You don't have to meet for a drink, grab a coffee, or sit through a long dinner only to discover there's no physical attraction or you have nothing in common, conversation is lacking.

4. Do Your Research: Online dating will allow you to narrow your focus if you do your homework. You can join a general dating service and design your dating search to make matches based on criteria important to you from interests and values to age and previous history. You can also select an online dating service that focuses exclusively on a niche market based on religion or education. Find the one that's right for you.

Once online, really read profiles and send messages that are

tailored to them. The generic “I like your profile and feel like we have a lot in common” email will likely find its way into the trash. Find one or two things in the person’s profile that you connect with and comment on them.

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5. Job Interview: Treat your first date like a job interview. While you likely won’t be asked what your biggest strengths and weaknesses are or where you see yourself in five years, you will need to put your best foot forward. Good interviews are about seeing if the job and the candidate are a good match.

The job candidate who comes to the interview only asking about vacation days and salary isn’t going to get the job. Ask questions to learn about your date and determine if you have mutual interests. Even if you know this isn’t going to be a love match, use it as an opportunity to practice your dating skills. You’ll improve for the next time around. You also never know who this person might introduce you to (see **Network, Network, Network** above).

6. Dress for Success: I’m not suggesting you wear a suit and tie or skirt and blazer on a first date. What I am saying is dress appropriately for the occasion. Pick something that puts you in the best light, is reflective of your personality, and fits the date. You’ll feel better and more confident, which will shine through.

Related Link: [4 Best Practices for Talking to Your Date](#)

7. Decline with Grace: In *Click: An Online Love Story*, the main character Renee gets an email from someone halfway across the world looking to meet someone willing to move for him. After sending a polite and diplomatic “thanks but no thanks” email message, she proclaims to her friend, “It’s so much easier to reject someone over that Internet than in real life. Score one for online dating!” While rejection is easier for

both parties when done online, it's important to remember that people still have feelings.

Lisa Becker had endured her share of hilarious and heinous cyber dates, many of which inspired Click: An Online Love Story and Double Click. The books, about a young woman's search for love online in Los Angeles, have been called "a fast read that will keep you entertained," "a fun, quick read for fans of Sex and the City," and "hard to put down." Her third novel, Right Click, is due out Spring 2014.

Top 3 Non-Negotiable Questions You Need to Think About Before Filing for Divorce





By Mark Baer

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Some married couples live together with their children. When those children grow up and move out of their parents' home, does that mean that they are no longer a family? Some married couples with children don't live together because of their work commitments and for other such reasons. Does that make them any less of a family? Religious beliefs aside, some couples such as Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell have children together, but were never married. Aren't they still a family? Married couples with children sometimes divorce. Does that mean that they are no longer a family? If you think about it, the nature of their relationship changed from being married with children to being unmarried with children. I'm afraid that when a couple has children together, their marital status does not control their status as a family.

Many may define a "perfect" family as one in which the parents are married and in love with each other. I opted to use the word "perfect" because that was the term and definition used by a minor child of divorce, who was interviewed in a

documentary film by Ellen Bruno titled "SPLIT." While his family may not be "perfect," as defined by him, I promise you he still considers it a family.

What do you want your family to look like in the future?

Like it or not, if there are children of the relationship (regardless of their age), the family still exists after the relationship ends. The manner in which you end a relationship determines whether your family will be functional or dysfunctional from that day forward. Life is like physics – for every action there is a reaction – cause and effect. As I like to say, outcomes are determined by the way in which the "game" is designed.

Parents are correct in the notion that causing the children to take sides can be extremely useful in their divorce game of chess. However, unlike chess, divorce is not a game and children are not pawns. Parents need to understand that what they do, say and how they act toward the other parent has long-term consequences. The things people do with or without the assistance of their attorneys have consequences that will last for generations to come. "When you start a court case, you are starting a war," says Justice Harvey Brownstone. Parents should always remember that the casualties in such a war are the members of the family itself, including the children, who become collateral damage.

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What type of attorney, if any, do you want?

While it may be expressed in many different ways, the selection of an attorney is the most significant factor in determining how a case will proceed. While an attorney's competency is extremely important, the selection process should not be limited to that aspect. After all, the attorney's personality and overall philosophy with regard to

family law are of great importance.

It is not prudent merely to consult with an “experienced family law attorney.” I have been trying desperately to educate the public that they need to consult with “competent and caring” family law attorneys. By the way, assertiveness is part of their competency. However, they should not be seeking out lawyers described as “sharks,” “pit bulls” or “aggressive.” The involvement of such attorneys typically leads to suboptimal results, destroys families and costs a great deal of money in the process. People must never confuse aggression and assertion. Words have meaning.

Remember, while you might win the battle, you can still lose the war. When families are involved, destructive behavior has consequences that can be felt long after the “case” is over. Is it the attorneys or the clients, their children and their families that get to live with those consequences? The personality and philosophy of the attorneys involved in a case have far more impact than people realize. Please keep this in mind when selecting your “teammates.”

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Which divorce process is right for you?

When people think of divorce, they typically think of litigation, which is the “default process.” What that means is that their case will be litigated, unless they “opt out” of that process. Other available processes are DIY (do it yourself), mediation, collaborative divorce, lawyer-to-lawyer negotiation, arbitration (keep in mind that certain types of matters may not be arbitrated in family law), private judging (if permitted in any particular jurisdiction). Unfortunately, family law is not spandex and there is no “one-size-fits-all.” However, people should consider certain things before making a decision regarding process.

First, litigation is an adversarial process in which both

parties play to “win.” When a family is involved and both spouses are playing to “win,” the family dynamic is destroyed. An unfortunate byproduct of litigation is that it exacerbates the level of conflict, increases distrust and breeds paranoia. Doesn’t it make more sense to resolve family matters in a process that is designed to reduce the level of conflict and rebuild trust?

Second, a significant problem with mediation is the fact that the term itself is vague. Mediation could be evaluative, facilitative or transformative. Which of those approaches does one mean when they refer to mediation? It should also be noted that mediation is unregulated in most places, including California. Thus, a person can practice as a ‘mediator’ without ever having received any formal training. It is therefore strongly advised that you do your homework before selecting a mediator.

Third, collaborative divorce is an interdisciplinary team approach to family law. It is based upon specialization of labor, not duplication. In addition to the parties themselves, the team consists of attorneys, mental health and financial professionals. Collaborative teams are no different from any other team in that they are only as strong as their weakest member. Collaboration only works when the professionals involved are like-minded individuals who actually trust one another.

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Fourth, lawyers do serve a necessary and useful purpose in family law matters and for society as a whole. For one thing, they warn of unforeseen “what- ifs.” Furthermore, words have meaning and the difference between “may” and “shall” could substantially change the meaning of a provision. Lawyers are wordsmiths in that regard. Moreover, divorce is a legal process.

Fifth, unless a matter is decided by a judge or arbitrator, the couple involved makes the ultimate decisions. According to a new study conducted at UC Davis, people had a clear preference for mediation and other forms of consensual dispute resolution over those forms of dispute resolution in which they relinquished their decision making authority.

Mark Baer assists people in becoming independent of their spouses or significant others with integrity, by evaluating and facilitating solutions that are respectful to each other and their families. He accomplishes this by providing a thoughtful, creative, and caring environment. His vision and experience equip people with a new set of skills that strengthen and empower them to better cope with future challenges.

4 Best Practices for Talking to Your Date





By Carl Alasko, PhD

Dating is a complicated, difficult and anxious process – we can't all be contestants on *The Bachelor* with glamorous, network-funded dates and fairy tale endings. And real life just doesn't work that way anyway. It's every bit as stressful for guys as it is for girls. Sure, a guy might just wear a cotton plaid shirt that flaps around and hasn't shaved in a week and the girl might fuss over her wardrobe and makeup for hours—but underneath it all, both are probably equally nervous. Because there's a lot at stake.

Regardless of how your "date" is arranged (friends, internet, work, church, ABC Network...), there are a few basic guidelines that can make the process a little less anxious and more rewarding, and definitely less scary.

Before we even get to the guidelines, here is my absolute most important rule: **Decide in advance what you want to accomplish.**

Clearly Juan Pablo (*The Bachelor*) is looking for a wife and mother for his daughter and the women are hopefully there to find a husband. But if we recall this season's second

episode, Victoria seemed to lose sight of that goal and had a bit too much to drink. So many times we react to something, or we're triggered, and before we know it, out comes a comment (or in this case a slurred mess) that instantly freezes the air—or boils it.

To simplify the overall dating process, and reduce some of the most common errors, I've compiled **Four Guidelines for Talking to Your Date**.

1. Maintain positive or neutral nonverbal gestures and expressions: This requires a certain amount of self-control, and sometimes practice. You may recall the first rose that Juan Pablo gave in episode 1 to Sharleen, the opera singer – and her very aloof response that came off as cold and closed. She smoothed it over next episode apologizing and explaining the reaction was one of shock, not dislike – good recovery. Some of us are naturals, and the rest of us have to put some effort in keeping our facial expressions and movements within the definition of neutral. Leaning too forward is not good. Leaning too far back is not good. Stay in the middle.

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2. Don't ask invasive, demanding or judgmental questions: When you meet Martin, don't ask, "So, do you like your job, or are you looking for something more fulfilling?" Ouch. What you intended to ask Martin was if he liked his job, right? What you wanted to accomplish was a dialogue. Not an insult. For all initial conversation, **try to keep things neutral and open-ended** like, "So what do you enjoy most about your job?" or "What's the most exciting aspect of working there?"

If your date mentions off-hand that her relationship with her mother has been on the rocks, don't pry it open just then. Return to it slowly, test the waters to see if it's something she wants to explore with you.

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3. Don't be vague about your intentions; explicitly and strategically state your needs: This means that if you're really looking for someone solid and long-term, sometime after a few dates you need to say that's your goal. Why waste weeks, months, years with Bradley if all he really cares about are sports and beer? If you're a single mother looking for not just a husband but a father for your daughter, don't hide it.

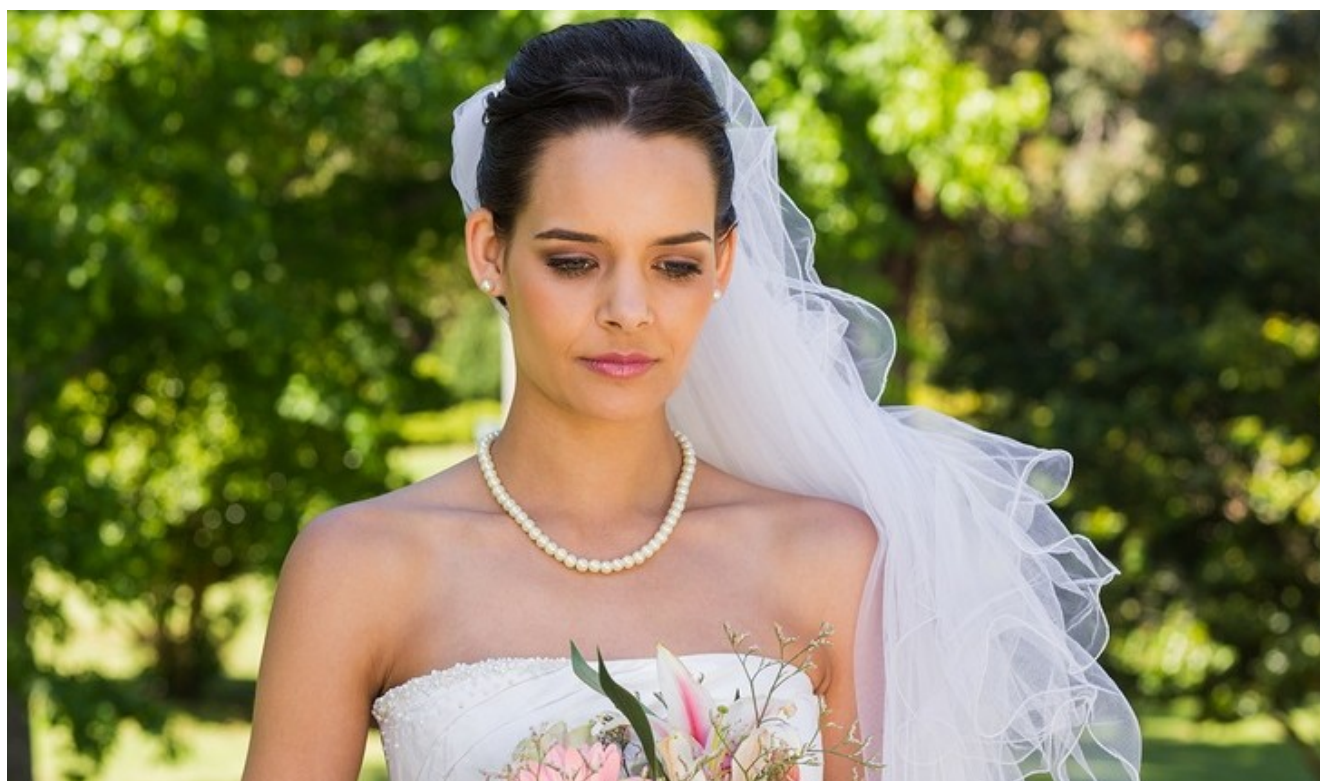
4. Follow your instincts and be ready to leave if things get uncomfortable: While you don't have to bolt for the door at the first sign of anxiety, if the anxiousness goes on for more than a couple dates, listen to your intuition. If Victoria's heavy drinking scares you, don't try to be her therapist. You're not qualified, and it's a lousy job. Just move on. If Mike's constant leering and sexual comments scare you, tell him you're not a good fit, and don't meet again.

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Because so much can be riding on that first meeting, having a few basic guidelines in mind can save you a lot of distress. Repeat these guidelines to yourself, and ask a trusted friend to do some rehearsing, or to be available to de-brief if things get tricky. And they can save you from wasting time.

*Author of Emotional Bullshit, Beyond Blame, and his newest release SAY THIS, NOT THAT: A Foolproof Guide to Effective Interpersonal Communication, **Dr. Carl Alasko** writes a weekly blog for the Experts' online section of Psychology Today, which attracts thousands of readers, and his weekly newspaper column "On Relationships" has run in the Monterey County Herald for fifteen consecutive years.*

How to Get Through a Breakup and Heal Your Heart



We're excited to welcome [Ellen Smoak](#) as a guest post contributor to CupidsPulse.com! In her first video, the author of *Breakups Are a Bitch But Getting Through It Doesn't Have to Be!* shares the five stages of getting over a breakup and coaches you through each one. First comes shock, followed by denial. Next, we experience anger and begin to step into our own power again. The fourth stage is sadness and depression – “the hardest stage of all.” Finally, we come to acceptance, a stage we can only reach by going through the previous four stages first.

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“We can get stuck in stages for years and not even know it,” she reveals. “It can block our ability to love again, to attract love again, to be happy in love again.”

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How did you move on after a devastating breakup? Share your story in the comments below!

What Is the Money Talk? Understanding Why You Should Have It With Your Partner





By Rick Osborn

Being in a relationship is often extremely rewarding, as finding that special someone to share life experiences can make for a more enriched life. However, making a relationship last is hard work and one of the best ways to get off on the right foot is to have the “money talk” with the person you love. It can be difficult to discuss, but it is wholly necessary.

In short, the money talk generally means jointly discussing and agreeing on financial goals to make your life together easier and more fruitful. Start by identifying some areas where you and your partner may not be in agreement or have differing habits – for instance, regarding your respective spending and saving mindsets – and then look at areas where your joint finances need work. Perhaps you can set up a budget, or work together on paying down credit card debt.

If you start your life together without discussing finances, you will do neither yourself nor your partner any favors. But having the discussion early on in your relationship – in an open and frank manner, without judging and without raising

voices – can benefit you two-fold: It helps you to become accustomed to talking about money together, and it allows you to set – and reach – your goals sooner.

Here are three additional benefits of having the money talk:

1. It Helps You Set a Long-Term Plan

The money talk involves a lot more than deciding who will pay the bills, or who will clip coupons to save money on groceries. Among other things, you need to tackle long-term topics, such as retirement savings, creating and stocking an emergency fund, and saving for your children's college expenses.

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2. It Reduces Conflict

Although you may be starry-eyed in love, it's an unfortunate fact that arguments will ultimately arise. However, reducing what those arguments are about and how often they occur can also make for a stronger and more trustworthy relationship. Arguing about leaving the toilet seat up is not nearly as unpleasant as the confrontation that might occur after one of you drops hundreds of dollars on a purchase or a night on the town without the other knowing.

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3. It Helps Your Relationship Blossom

How many couples are able to freely speak about money, you ask? According to the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, not many. In a poll released earlier this year, 68 percent of the surveyed couples had negative attitudes about discussing money with each other. However, getting over this discomfort can allow your relationship to blossom and grow.

Once you get it out of the way, you can enjoy each another's company more fully, and experience more mutual trust.

If you hit a snag during your money talk, it never hurts to bring in a professional. Do your research before choosing a certified financial advisor – having assistance can take a lot of the guesswork out of your planning. And if you still experience troubles, never hesitate to partake in professional counseling.

Have you discussed finances with your partner yet?

Rick Osborn lives in Chicago and writes about relationships, lifestyle, and personal finance – including tips for making a budget, finding the best entertainment options, and coming up with great first date ideas. Check out www.moneycrashers.com/inexpensive-things-to-do-on-first-date/.

Your First Date: What It Will Cost





By Stephanie Lynch

When it comes to a first date, there are so many things to think about. What are you going to wear? Where the heck are we going? What will they think of me? With so many things rumbling through the mind, there is one thing many people often forget – the costs.

Now, while you don't want to be too cheap, you don't want to spend too much money either. Since most guys are expected to pay for most, if not all of the date, this simple guide should give you an idea on how much money you should plan on spending so that you don't look like the cheapest date on the block.

Who invited who?

First off, if the girl invites the guy, there's a good chance she won't expect him to pay for 100 percent of the meal. However, if the tables are turned and the guy invites the girl, then the girl will more than likely expect the date to foot the entire bill. Keep this tip in mind.

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The atmosphere

When choosing a place to eat, make sure you pick out a place that is quiet and enables you to talk with your date. This way, you don't have to yell over loud music or people screaming next to you. Even if you don't want to head to a restaurant on your first date, that's okay. Most of the time, a coffee house will suffice.

The dinner

No date isn't going to be complete without a dinner. While 99 percent of the first dates out there often head to a restaurant, there may be a select few that want to have a meal cooked inside of a home. If you plan on eating out, try to stick to a higher-end restaurant that isn't too fancy. Try to avoid your name brand chain restaurants and obviously stay away from the fast food joints.

On average, be prepared to spend at least \$50 to \$75 at a minimum for a nice dinner. This should include two nice entrees, a few glasses of wine and maybe even a dessert and appetizer. Of course, this is going to depend on the restaurant, geographical location and the meals you're choosing.

Now, don't head to a \$100 a plate restaurant off the bat. If you do, your date may expect the same kind of treatment every time you head out. Instead, try to stick with something that you're comfortable with. Don't forget to ask your date what they are interested in when it comes to food. It would be silly to take them to a seafood place when they have an allergy to fish.

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Tip: Don't know where to go for dinner? Try popular review websites such as UrbanSpoon.com, TripAdvisor.com or Yelp. This is a great way to find the hot spots in your local area.

If you're going to take the tips mentioned above and choose a coffee place instead, consider purchasing a drink and a light snack. Most of the time, this shouldn't be more than \$20. In the end, plan on budgeting according to where you plan on going. Most of the time, your date should be deemed successful if you spend around \$50 to \$75 on the entire meal. Just remember: Don't go overboard and keep your date in mind!

Stephanie works for howmuchisit.org – a large collection of cost helping resources. If you ever want to know what something costs, be sure to keep her resource in mind.

How to Date Outside the Box in NYC





By Daniel Brown from Date Valet

Dating in NYC can be a minefield. Getting a date is hard enough these days, but then you have to come up with something fun and romantic to do. The most common New York Date ideas typically involve the movies and a drink or a meal. Going out for a nice meal at one of the most romantic restaurants NYC has to offer is a good date idea. However, it should be tied in with something a little more unique if you want to make the best first impression.

Consider unusual date times

Thinking outside the box doesn't have to just be about the date activity; it can also be relevant in terms of date times too. Friday and Saturday nights tend to be the most popular option when it comes to date night. This is because you and your date are both typically working a 9-5 job and the weekends are the only time you have available. Changing the time of the date can drastically alter the experience. This is easier to do if you're self-employed. However you could also take a day off if you're due a holiday at work. Make it an

all-day date if you can.

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Take a mini vacation

As NY dates go, you can't get more unique than a mini vacation. Surprise your date by whisking them away for a weekend. Now obviously if you've only just met them this may seem a little forward. However, providing you book separate rooms and you are respectful of their personal space; this date idea can really help you to make a fantastic first impression. It will be a date that you'll both never forget.

Opt for a cultural experience

If you're both interested in art and culture, why not arrange a museum or art gallery date? You can do this during the day and many museums are actually free to enter. This is great news if you're on a budget. You can impress your date without having to spend a fortune. New York is a fantastic cultural hub with plenty to see and do.

Treat them to a Broadway show

New York is the birthplace of Broadway. It may not be the most 'out there' date idea, but it's certainly one of the best. It's entertaining and more cultural than heading to the movies. It's also something you can both talk about afterwards. Wrap the evening up by taking her to one of the most romantic restaurants in NYC.

Take them on a romantic picnic

It's hard to escape the hustle and bustle of New York life. It may be one of the best cities in the world, but sometimes it's nice to take a little time out. Pack a romantic picnic and head out to one of the many amazing parks in and around the city. A picnic is definitely one of the best New York date ideas. It allows you to enjoy delicious food as you really get

to know your date. You don't have to compete with the noise of the city. It's just you, your date and nature; nothing could be more romantic.

Book an experience day

If you really want to treat your date to an unforgettable experience then an experience day could be the ideal option. These are usually adrenaline based activities such as hot air balloon rides, flying and track days. However, there are also spa experiences and wildlife encounters you can book. These unique activities will help you to have a great time on your date, provide you with a great topic of conversation and it's also something they'll never forget.

Try to get a feel for what type of activities they will likely enjoy before you book. If you book a tandem skydive and they're scared of heights it could prove to be memorable for all of the wrong reasons!

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Cook together

Going out to a fancy restaurant can be romantic, but so can cooking together! Pick your date up and head to the supermarket. Shopping for groceries may not sound like the great start to a date but you'd be surprised. It provides you with a casual location where you will both feel at ease. You can then go back to the comfort of your home and cook a nice meal together. As you prepare the ingredients, you'll get to bond and get to really know each other. It's even recommended that long term couples cook together in order to bring the romance back into their relationship.

Overall there are so many things you can do on a date. Try to be as imaginative as possible. Think about what your date likes and what type of activities they prefer. Making it personal will ensure you have the best NY date.

The Date Valet is a collective of artists, musicians, financiers, and entrepreneurs all infected with a serious case of nightlife and dating. You can get dating advice, tips and planning ideas for your date. It also plans you date less than the price of a cocktail.

Fantasy Dating: How to Play the Game Right



By Suzanne Casamento

How many times have you heard your single friends say, “I’m never going to meet anyone”? or “There are no good singles in

this city”?

Care to put a wager on that? Now you can challenge your friends to bust those myths by Fantasy Dating. Like in other Fantasy Sports, people join leagues, set stakes and compete to earn points. But when they Fantasy Date, singles earn points by dating. You score when you exchange numbers, receive texts, calls and go on dates.

Fantasy Dating takes the dread out of dating and replaces it with fun. Instead of worrying about things like, “Will he like me?” you focus on the points you need to catch up to your leaguemates.

If you’re ready to shift your dating mindset from “misery” to “awesome,” here’s how to get in the game.

Start by looking around.

There are quality singles everywhere. At the drugstore, farmer’s market, dog park, beach, local sporting events, coffee shop – wherever – there are good singles there. They may not look like underwear models or whatever version of perfect you’ve envisioned, but good, smart, considerate, funny single people do exist.

You just have to look up from your phone long enough to notice them.

You laugh, but think about it. Do you chat with your BFF as you select granola at the market? Do you tweet as you wait for your morning coffee? Do you update your Facebook status as you walk your dog?

If so, chances are, you’re walking by potential partners everywhere you go. So, rule number one is put the phone away and look around.

Related: [Twitter Dating 101: Actions Speak Louder Than Tweets!](#)

Get caught looking.

As you look around, when you see someone you find attractive, get caught looking. Brazen, we know, but if he or she doesn't know you're interested, how will they get the idea to approach you?

Be brave and smile.

Did you just think, "What if he or she doesn't smile back?" Good question. First, the chances of that are slim. Nine out of 10 times, if you smile at someone or say, "Hi," they will mirror you. It's a natural reflex. But, back to the question – what if he or she doesn't smile back? Then you know that's not the person for you and you move on. After all, do you want to date someone who's not friendly?

Ask a question.

Once you get the smile, you have a great opportunity to say, "Hi," and ask a question. If you're at the farmer's market, ask, "Do you know if these carrots are organic?" If you're at the coffee shop, say, "I don't speak Starbucks. What do they call the biggest cup?" If you're at the dog park, say, "Your dog is so cute! Is he a mix?"

Related: [The New Dating Game](#)

Give a compliment.

If you have trouble coming up with a quick question, give a compliment. Everyone loves to be complimented. Say, "That shirt is a gorgeous color," "I love your watch," or "Nice shoes!" A compliment will make the object of your eye feel good and give them an opening to continue talking with you.

But stay away from compliments on someone's looks such as, "You're gorgeous," or "I love your eyes." Even though those statements may be true, they may come off sounding cheesy. So, compliment something he or she *chose* not something he or she

is.

When you follow these simple steps, you'll get in the habit of being friendly and outgoing. Plus, as you meet people and date, you score Fantasy Dating points and get to kick Fantasy League butt!

The best part is, as you continue to engage with people, you'll gain confidence. And confidence is sexy.

Suzanne Casamento is the creator of FantasyDatingGame.com. She launched Fantasy Dating after getting tired of hearing her single girlfriends complain about their boring love-lives. Since then, they have all dared to date. Suzanne is a dating expert, writer and speaker. Her mission is to empower singles to take chances, build confidence and find love.

5 Simple Ways to Turn Your Relationship Around





By Elliot Connie

No one likes to talk about problems with their love partner. That's not surprising, because problem-focused talk starts with a negative statement and assumption: *We have a problem.*

For many years, I've been working with couples and training couples' therapists using a different approach. It's called solution-focused communication. When we turn problem-focused talk on its head and look to find a solution instead, the results are dramatic, positive and surprisingly quick.

The next time your partner says, "Honey, we need to talk," see if you can steer the conversation in an upbeat, solution-focused direction. Here are five ways to do it:

1. Discuss it as a goal, not a challenge: When your partner says, "I'm not happy when you do XYZ," gently suggest to him or her that you could talk about ways to make things better. Discuss the issue in terms of a goal—what you both like, what makes you happy. When you begin the conversation with goals, it gets both partners thinking about solutions, possibilities

and opportunities for change.

Related: [Five Secrets Truly Happy Couples Know](#)

2. Notice “did wells” and “did rights”: Sometimes when we get into a negative pattern with our partners, it’s too easy to notice all the things we don’t like—pet peeves, annoying habits, even his or her tone of voice. See if you can think back over the last few days and name some things your partner did well and got right. Maybe he reminded you about your doctor’s appointment, or she took the time to fix you breakfast. Share these observations with each other. Doing so helps each partner feel noticed, valued and appreciated.

3. Establish a true partnership: In business, people are assigned to the specific jobs for which they are best qualified. Couples who divide their roles in terms of who is equipped to do the job better have fewer problems in their relationships. Talk to your partner about what you’re each good at (your strengths) and what you’re not so good at (your weaknesses). Then match the household jobs with your respective strengths. This will create an effective and high-functioning relationship dynamic that brings out the best in both people—and minimizes conflict.

4. Recall your honeymoon phase: Couples spend a lot more time talking about conflicts and problems than they do about all the qualities that made them fall in love with each other in the first place. Sit down with each other and retell the story of how you first met. Try to remember details from those first few months—everything that surprised and delighted you. Having this conversation will stimulate many good ideas and feelings.

Related: [7 Ways to Know If It’s Really Love](#)

5. Continue to date: Remember what it was like to date your partner? Maybe he brought you your favorite take-out. Or she wore that dress you loved. When you were dating, both of you said and did things to make each other happy. It’s simple to

get out of a relationship rut by reintroducing some of those early behaviors, from kissing each other when you leave for work in the morning, to sending the occasional love text, to surprising your partner with a night out. The key is to do these romantic things daily and regularly.

*Elliott Connie is a best-selling author, well-known relationship therapist, and an internationally known speaker and teacher who trains clinicians in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy around the world. His newest book is **The Solution-Focused Marriage** (2013). Learn more at www.elliottspeaks.com.*

Planning the Perfect Proposal



By Rachel Seliger, JDate Community Manager

Over the past few years, we have seen hundreds of couples share videos of their engagements for the world to see. We laugh, we cry, and we love to share that special moment with the happy couple.

If you are planning the big moment and need a little inspiration, here are my top five suggestions for seamlessly executing your proposal:

1. Get family and friends involved: This is a milestone moment and it's always fun when everyone knows what's about to take place except the one who is about to get proposed to (plus, your guests can help you plan!).

Related: [Creating a Celebrity-Style Wedding](#)

2. Research rings: By now you should have some idea of your significant other's style – for example, traditional or contemporary? Or, perhaps an heirloom would be a home run? The ring tells a lot about the recipient, so if you are struggling, pay close attention to how your future fiancée dresses, accessorizes and decorates and if all else fails, call the best friend.

3. Capture it on film: Hire someone or get a friend you trust to video the proposal. Most likely you and your partner (similar to the wedding) won't remember all the amazing details and what was said, so it makes sense to capture the happiness you felt when you both said yes to this new chapter.

4. Don't be a copy-cat: Yes, there are a lot of good proposal examples out there, but do something unique and authentic to you as a couple. If you hate musicals, then don't incorporate a flash mob!

Related: [Weddings Show Single Men What They're Missing](#)

5. Keep calm and marry on: If your significant other senses you are acting strange, they will either catch-on or think you are breaking-up with them. Neither is a good start to the perfect day, so have fun and be yourself—it's why they fell in love with you in the first place.

JDate, the leading online Jewish singles community, is calling all couples who met on JDate to submit a video of their proposal for the chance to be crowned JDate's Next Top Proposal. If you are a JDate Success Story and have a video of your engagement or are willing to reenact it, head over to JDate's Facebook page and enter your video.

Rachel Seliger is a dating guru and Community Manager of JDate.com, the premier online community for Jewish singles. She's here to break down the rules of dating, share first date tips and offer words of encouragement when dating gets tough, visit her Tumblr page for more insightful advice.

Twitter Dating 101: Actions Speak Louder Than Tweets!





By Mandy Hale

In honor of National Singles Week this week, I'd like to address a new phenomenon that seems to be sweeping the globe faster than planking and twerking combined. (Okay, maybe not THAT fast.) What am I talking about? Twitter dating!

Not to be confused with online dating, "Twitter dating" is when you stumble across a profile of someone on Twitter who intrigues you, begin following them, they begin following you and a flirtation starts to build in the form of tweets and direct messages, aka "DM's." The more Twitter popularity climbs, and the more we increasingly turn to our social media circle as a trusted community of friends, the more rampant these "Twitter crushes" seem to become. Which would be all fine and good if they turned out well. Or even okay. But I've had two experiences with "Twitter dating" and both have been what we like to call on Twitter (don't forget the hashtag): a #MajorFail.

Related: [Technology, Social Media and Dating – The Good, the Bad the and Oops!](#)

Because of this, I thought it was half past time to establish some rules or guidelines to help the single ladies of the world know when to follow and know when to block – a few red flags to look for that might save you from a giant stop sign up ahead. I mean, none of us want to end up on “Catfish,” right? So here are some early warning signs that your Twitter crush’s “character” might not go any deeper than that infamous 140 or less limit...

1. A lack of photos other than his profile pic. Big red flag. If he portrays himself to be a functioning, successful adult, there should be SOME other photos of himself other than his avatar. And I don’t mean photos of inanimate objects or his dog or the ocean. I mean ACTUAL photos of him, clear photos, where you can see his face. In the day and age of camera phones, if a man is hiding his face from his profile – there’s a reason.

2. A lack of any sort of online presence other than Twitter. Okay, so Facebook isn’t everyone’s cup of tea, so we’ll let it slide if he doesn’t have a FB page, but if a man doesn’t have SOMETHING out there besides his Twitter profile that can vouch that he’s a real person (an Instagram account, a LinkedIn profile, a Google+ page...SOMETHING), chances are – he’s not. I mean, God gave us Google for a reason, ladies; so we can let our fingers do the walking and learn a little more about our Twitter crush before we welcome him offline and into our lives! If you Google him and absolutely nothing comes up, I’d definitely be a little wary. And for that matter, if you Google him and an article about how he was arrested for cyber-stalking pops up, obviously – RUN, don’t walk, to your nearest block button.

3. Finally – maybe neither of the above apply to your situation. Maybe you’ve seen his FB page, you’re following him on Instagram, and everything seems to be on the up and up. But THIS is where you have to watch out for another phenomenon – the infamous “Twitter player.” Just because he is physically

who he portrays himself to be doesn't mean his character matches up with his 140 characters. I encountered the not-so-rare species "The Twitter Player" back in March, and found myself in a drive-by relationship: One where he faked a future with me for a few weeks before moving on at break-neck pace to another unsuspecting Twitter victim.

So how do you identify a "Twitter player"? This one's a little trickier, so here are a few signs to look for: If he's regularly flirting with other girls on his timeline. If you've taken the relationship offline and are talking and Skype-ing and texting, yet he NEVER talks about you openly on his Twitter timeline. Or if he comes to town to see you and STILL doesn't post about you, take a picture with you and actually CHECKS IN SOMEWHERE ON FOURSQUARE but doesn't bother to tag you (Not that this EXACT scenario happened to me or anything. Okay. It did.) Online and in life – if a man hides you, it's because he's still out there seeking something besides you. It's better to render the player powerless by exiting the game than wind up losing your dignity and your self-respect to play a losing hand.

Related: [Tips for Making a Long Distance Relationship Work](#)

Based on my experiences, I have to say I'm retiring "Twitter dating," at least for the foreseeable future; but if you choose to roll the dice, I'd just encourage you to be careful. Set boundaries. Don't ignore the signs. And online and in life – always date smart by guarding your heart. (It's the most precious commodity you have).

*Follow Mandy Hale on Twitter @TheSingleWoman. Get more fabulous tips on love by checking out her website, <http://thesinglewoman.net/> or grabbing your copy of her new book *The Single Woman: Life, Love, & a Dash of Sass*, available on Amazon and anywhere books are sold.*

Top 5 Don'ts We've Seen From Miley Cyrus That Should Never Enter the Dating World



By Laura Bensen

After the performance at the VMA's and her newest music video, it is safe to say that Miley Cyrus is on everyone's minds whether we like it or not. She has taken the media by storm and consequently our consciousness but don't fret. This is not a complete lost cause. There are lessons to be learned from this. So here are five don'ts that should never enter the dating world as seen by Miley Cyrus:

1. At the VMA's we saw Miley twerking on Robin Thicke. This is wrong for so many reasons. Don't twerk on a married man. With a child. On TV. When you have a boyfriend. Or in general. Just don't twerk. While Thicke might be in trouble with the Mrs. (I know I would be mad!), we do know that Miley certainly is with her on again off again fiancé Liam Hemsworth. So the lesson here? Don't get up on another man when you have one of your own.

Related: [5 Lessons to Learn from Celebrity Divorce](#)

2. Don't orally pleasure garden tools, construction tools or foam fingers. She just needs to stop putting things in her mouth or she's going to get sick. Also, while some people might think it's sexy to put objects in their mouths, a guy might find this as an indicator for the Herp.

3. In her new song Wrecking Ball, she cries, gets naked, and rides a dirty wrecking ball to show how 'emotionally exposed' she is. Don't cry and don't get naked to show you have emotions. Please do not ride a wrecking ball, clean or dirty. It will not lead anywhere good. While there is nothing wrong with crying-everyone cries sometimes- it's not good for a relationship to do it too early on. It can scare off potential prospects very easily. Getting naked too early on will lead you down a very short road where respect is scarce.

4. While this one is a bit of a throwback, we can see signs of Miley's retaliation, joining the slew of ex Disney actresses (Britney, Christina, Hilary and Lindsey. Sweet Jesus, Lindsey was the worst) against modesty back in 2010 with her video Can't Be Tamed. First of all, channeling your inner Britney past Baby One More Time is never good. Men might not want a meek girl but they probably don't want a trashy, weird and violent bird either. There is a pretty wide median to walk and Miley vaulted right over it. So it's okay to be a fiery female, remember your checks and balances.

Related: [Is Being Center Stage Ruining Your Relationship?](#)

5. Please keep your tongue rolled up and in your mouth. Ladies use it for speaking. Not for obscene gestures. As my mama would say “you keep making that face it’s going to get stuck that way”.

So on the whole, while we all want attention and a partner to love us and to love back, please remember to love and respect yourself.

Laura Bensen is a freelance writer for Magazines.com from Tacoma, Washington. She enjoys gorging herself on celebrity gossip and chocolate.

CMT’s ‘Sweet Home Alabama’ Star Bubba Thompson Says to “Cowboy Up” in Love





By Bubba Thompson

Before she could say a word, I knew it was all over.

I was walking up to see the woman of my dreams. She was standing in the middle of a tree-lined street. It was a starry night and the moonlight was peering through those trees and I was very much in love with her.

I had a ring in my pocket and was about to commit to her forever.

But I could see in her eyes from a ways away, that I was walking into one of the most embarrassing and painful moments in my life. She was in love with another man. I was going home alone. And, of course, the whole thing was going to be on national TV.

Related: [7 Ways to Know If It's Really Love](#)

How do you recover from this situation? I get asked about it a lot. For those of you who might not listen to a lot of country music there is a great saying from Garth Brooks that "some of

God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers". I had that song playing in my mind for weeks.

My name is Bubba Thompson and I am a cowboy. I have a small ranch where we break in horses and raise cattle in the small town of Geneva, Alabama.

What's a simple cowboy know about falling in and out of love? I learned a lot from that massive rejection, and from all the letters and emails I received afterwards, so I decided to write about it.

Mainly, I believe the "rules" we all get told do not work. They are rules like how many days to wait before returning a phone call or how long to ignore someone who texted you something nice. These shouldn't be called rules, they should be called tricks or – even worse – games. And really, how many people have really found happiness by playing these games?

Instead of "rules", I believe in living life by a code. A code of honesty, respect, dignity and treating other people as you would want to be treated in return.

When I text someone something nice to tell her I am interested, I sure as heck don't want to wait 7 hours to hear back from her – so why would I do that to someone else in return?

My advice is to keep putting your honest feelings out there no matter what. A cowboy code is when you get bucked off, you get right back on (for more go to www.cowboycodeusa.com).

There have been times I was bucked off laying in the pasture with the wind knocked out of me. One of my partners will ride by and say "cowboy up!" and in our world that means face the pain, and get yourself right back in that saddle.

There are things you can do to get yourself ready for that person to enter your life. Staying honest with your feelings,

and staying faithful that there is a special angel out there and a higher plan to bring him or her to you, are ways to keep your mind positive.

And there are ways to keep the communication between yourself and your partner better and more open. Out here, in a cowboy's world, a handshake still matters. It means you have given your word. In love, your word and your actions are everything.

Related: [The New Dating Game](#)

Living faithfully, honestly and being willing to share yourself are the keys to a longer, richer, happiness.

"Cowboy up!" and you will find that meaningful love.

I believe that with all my heart.

Bubba Thompson's new book "The Cowboy Code: How a lady should be treated and how to get your man to treat you The Cowboy Way" is on sale at Amazon.com or at www.cowboycodeusa.com

8 Kissing Techniques That Will Make You an Unforgettable Kisser





By Anna Karimo

Kissing is an excellent way of connecting with someone you care about. Although some people take kissing very casually, kissing has more meaning when it's between couples or people with strong romantic feelings for each other. According to relationship experts, kissing is an excellent way to express love and affection. However, it's important for individuals to recognize that kissing requires conscious tact and technique. You can't give magical kisses if you don't know how to kiss. Below are some effective kissing tips that will teach you how to kiss the right way:

1. Keep your lips soft: This is by far one of the best kissing tips for giving magical kisses. Nobody wants to kiss tense, rough lips. Use chapstick or lip gloss frequently if your lips are usually dry and cracked. This always does the trick for both men and women.

Related: [Five Secrets Truly Happy Couples Know](#)

2. Start off with a few soft, slow kisses: This kissing

technique is perfect for avoiding common kissing mistakes like lip-smacking or being too loose with your tongue. Soft and slow kissing at the start helps set the right mood. It also allows you to gauge your smooching partner's kissing interest and style. Once you gauge the other person, you are in better position to know when to change up the intensity of your make-out session.

3. Manage saliva levels: If you can't keep your spit under control, you run a very high risk of ruining a good kiss. Although there are people who don't mind sloppy kisses, you should make a point of managing your saliva levels just to be on the safe side, especially at first.

4. Lock lips: This tip is effective when the first few kisses have gone well and you want to initiate a closer connection and body contact with your partner. The best way to lock lips is putting the other person's lower lip between yours. More advanced pro-tip: lightly suck and nibble on their bottom lip to be a playful, sexy kisser.

5. Remember to breathe: For some reason while you're kissing, it's easy to forget to breathe. But it's impossible to commit to a good kiss if you're uncomfortably oxygen-deprived. Regardless of how intense the kiss is, take time to breathe softly or break away for a few seconds to catch your breath (which can be sexy—don't you like feeling the soft breath of your kissing partner grazing your neck?). Don't be afraid to breathe. Breathiness and excitement are crucial ingredients to giving magical kisses because they flatter your partner.

6. Use your hands: Don't be skittish with the rest of your body. Let your hands roam and feel. Restricting hand movement is unnatural and will most likely prevent you and your partner from getting lost in the moment. A hand on the back of the neck, a slight tug of the hair or a scratch down your partner's back can amp up the sexiness factor while you make

out. Sometimes it helps to make your movements sequential, moving from the head downwards to create anticipation.

7. Try using your tongue: You're probably going to have to use your tongue, at least a little, if you want to give mind-blowing kisses. You must exercise tact for this technique to be effective. Start slowly and see how your partner responds. If your partner returns the gesture, you are clear to use your tongue to increase the kissing intensity. If your partner pulls away, stick to the lips only.

Related: [6 Tips for Texting Your New Crush](#)

8. Mix it up: You should also remember to mix everything up if you want to give exciting kisses. Don't just stick to one kissing style. Alternate light, fast kisses with slow, deep ones. You should break away for a few moments to give other areas of your partner's body a little attention. Kiss their neck, chest, eyes or cheek. Always remember that variety kills monotony and boredom. Mixing up everything will keep things spicy.

Follow these tips and you'll be an excellent kisser in no time. Being a good kisser isn't hard—and practicing is the best part.

Love and dating expert Anna Karimo can see solutions to your relationship problems where others see only blind spots. She is the founder of Nouveau Dating, where experts strive to answer all of your dating questions and help you through your journey to finding love. Sign up for our newsletters to get the newest dating tips and advice right away!

Five Secrets Truly Happy Couples Know



By Lesli Doares

Reality shows focus on hooking up, finding a spouse and the wedding. Movies and books end at the beginning of a couples' life together or as the relationship is ending in divorce. There is very little focus on the time married. Ben Affleck got in trouble at the Oscars when he publicly thanked his wife, Jennifer Garner, and the work their marriage has been for the last ten years. Wow, who wants to sign up for that? So, how does any couple keep their marriage healthy and happy over the years?

Five simple rules to keep you in love through the years:

1. Give at least one genuine compliment each day to your partner about something that matters to them. It will make them feel noticed, appreciated and loved. Having it be important to them really lets them know you are paying attention.

Related: [Top 3 Things a Couple Can Do to Combat the Top Risk Factors and Save a Marriage](#)

2. Spend at least 30 minutes of quality, one on one, time together each day. This allows you to get past the relationship killing exchange of information and tune in to what is happening in each other's lives at a more intimate level.

3. Continue to date. The two of you fell in love by spending time together and having fun. Once the routine of day-to-day life with work, kids and chores goes on for a few years, it's easy to lose track of that. Having regular dates, where the purpose is to have fun and reconnect, not analyze the relationship or discuss issues, keeps the spark alive.

4. Go to bed at the same time. Shut down the technology, turn off the television, forget about the never finished housework and spend some quiet time together. Keeping different schedules makes connecting physically much more difficult and that is not good for long term happiness.

5. Change up your sex life. Get out of the "it's Tuesday, you know what that means" routine. Spice things up by trying different times, places and activities. Have fun figuring out how to outsmart the kids in finding private time. Don't make it so hard that you just give up.

Related: [The New Dating Game](#)

Each of these rules builds from the one above and each one deals with an aspect of intimacy. Truly successful couples follow them diligently and that's how they stay out of the

headlines.

Lesli Doares is a marriage consultant/coach and the author of "Blueprint for a Lasting Marriage: How to Create Your Happily Ever After with More Intention, Less Work". Find her real and practical relationship advice at www.afearlessmarriage.com. She tweets @LesliDoares.

7 Ways to Know If It's Really Love



By LaKesha Womack, Author of *"Is She The ONE?"*

Love... What is it? How do you know when you have found it?

For some it is easy to determine but for most of us, we need a sign, a couple of clues...

Love is a choice. When you love someone, you have to remind yourself, sometimes daily, that this is the person that you choose to be with. No one is perfect so they will make you mad, make you feel like breaking down but if it is really love, you would rather be with them than without them. The temptation to escape your situation, even temporarily, will come at every turn. You will have a choice to stay or to go, if it's really love you will choose to stay.

Related: [7 Signs You Might Be in Love](#)

Love requires time. Always remember quality over quantity. Sometimes people get confused and think that you have to spend every free moment with another person; however, you want to be sure that you are giving the best of yourself to that person instead of the most. You need to be present and living in the moment when you are with them. Focus on creating meaningful conversations and moments that build a solid foundation for your relationship.

Love is a priority. You make time for what's important to you. Just as you should choose to spend time with the person you love, that person should be priority in your life and not an afterthought. This does not mean that you must center your life around another person but if you find that you are not considering how your decisions will affect him or her, you probably aren't in love.

Love is unconditional. When you really love someone, you don't try to change them. You love them "because of" who they are and not "in spite of" what you see. You don't look at their flaws and think of ways to change them rather you realize that their assets and flaws combined create the person you love. Love should be inspiring and uplifting.

Love makes you vulnerable. When you love someone, you let down your guard and let them in. You make yourself emotionally available to share with the other person. You talk about feelings, your past, your present and your future. Most importantly, you are honest. Effective communication requires trust because once you let your guard down and begin sharing, you trust this person to take care of the information you are sharing and to accept you as you are.

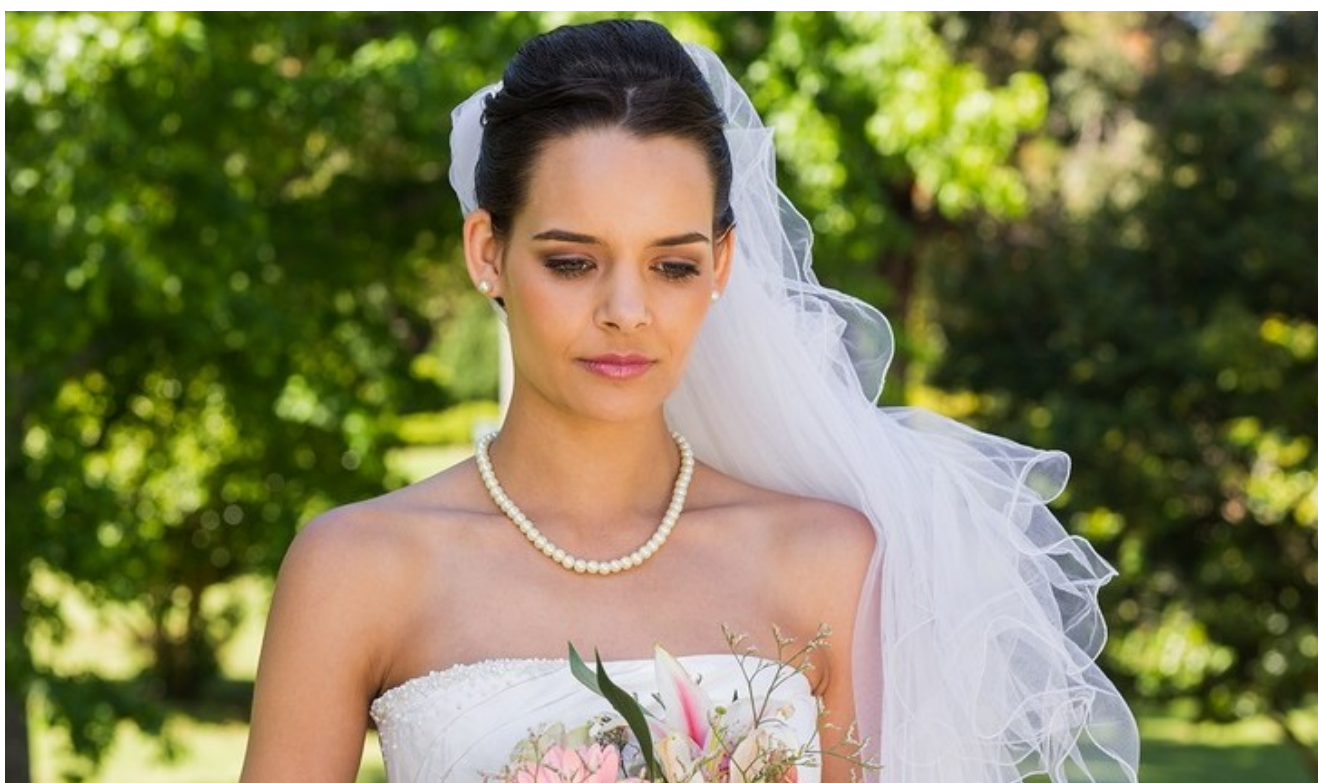
Love requires compromise. You will not always be right nor will the other person always be right but you must be willing to meet each other in the middle. You will know its love when you willingly give in to make the person happy and they do the same for you.

Related: [10 Steps to a Remarkable Relationship](#)

Love requires commitment. When you love someone, you don't want anyone else. When you love someone, you give it your all. You leave nothing on the table. You don't hold back. There is no Plan B.

LaKesha Womack is the author of "Is She The ONE?" a relationship book written for men who think they are ready to get married but want to be sure. It provides ten exercises for a couple to use and determine whether they truly know each other well enough to commit the rest of their lives to each other. Network with LaKesha on Twitter (@LaKeshaWomack), Facebook (MsLaKeshaWomack) and LinkedIn (WomackCG) after you visit her personal blog (LaKeshaWomack.com).

Do the Chicken Dance: Tips for Surviving Wedding Season Single



By Rachel Seliger, JDate Community Manager

The summer months are known for a few things: warm nights, pool parties, BBQs and of course, weddings. For singles, wedding season is exciting, but it can be overwhelming when you feel like you are always the bridesmaid and never the bride.

JDate, the leading online Jewish singles community, recently surveyed members and discovered that 31 percent of singles daydream about their future wedding before they are engaged.

Daydreaming is harmless, but in the meantime, with wedding season in full swing, you might have to put those dreams on hold and support a few others.

To help arm the single wedding goer this season, I've compiled a list of tips that will guarantee you have an amazing time and celebrate the new couple in style.

Related: [Reap the Benefits of Cutting Costs on Your Big Day](#)

Define +1: If your invitation includes a +1, it doesn't necessarily mean your guest has to be a romantic partner. Of course check with the bride and groom first, but it might be a good idea to bring a close friend or family member as your partner in crime.

Reserve your seat: If you are flying solo, don't be afraid to make sure the bride or groom knows you want to sit with the other singles! Not only is it a great way to make friends you won't be sweating through the whole ceremony about sitting with a group of couples who might ask the infamous question, "when are you getting married?"

Reconnect with old friends: However you are related to the bride or groom, there are probably other guests that you know at the wedding. Maybe it's old friends from your childhood who you lost touch with or a relative of the bride and groom. Don't be afraid to say hi and spark a conversation. Everyone loves to reminisce!

Related: [5 Conversations Every Couple Should Have Before Getting Married](#)

Do the chicken dance: You are never too old to flap your wings! Popular wedding dances like the chicken dance are perfect for singles because they don't require a partner and are an opportunity to find your next dance partner. Now get out there and shake your feathers.

Rachel Seliger is a dating guru and Community Manager of JDate.com, the premier online community for Jewish singles. When she's not shopping for her next pair of great heels, she is busy blogging on JDate's exclusive tumblr blog tumblr.jdating.tumblr.com/ featuring great first date outfit ideas, tips to make your JDate profile shine and more.

3 Things a Couple Can Do to Combat the Top Risk Factors and Save a Marriage



By Mark Baer

Marriage is a wonderful institution that affords couples significant psychological, emotional and financial benefits, in addition to being a commitment of their love to each other. Almost certainly, nobody enters into a marriage, expecting that it will end in divorce. However, over the years, certain risk factors that contribute to the likelihood of divorce have become increasingly clear. The following is a list of 5 of the top risk factors for divorce:

Quality of interaction

Researchers have been able to predict with 90 percent accuracy whether or not a couple will divorce within 5 years, based upon the quality of their interaction. Negative interaction is highly predictive of marital distress.

Related: [5 Ways to Stop Sabotaging Your Relationships](#)

Having divorced parents

Children of divorce have a higher rate of divorce, particularly when their parents' divorce was a complete surprise to them. Such surprises cause children to lose trust in their relationships.

Marrying at a very young age

Marrying before age of 26 increases the likelihood of divorce, particularly earlier on in the marriage. As might be expected, this has to do with maturity. In fact, our brains do not reach full maturity until around age 25. Is it realistic that a lifetime commitment entered into before reaching maturity will last a lifetime?

Lack of a college education

There happens to be a correlation between income and education level. Since poverty causes a tremendous strain on marital relationships, the lack of a college education is a top risk

factor.

Manner in which a person reacts to problems and disappointments

People who have strong or defensive reactions to problems and disappointments have a higher risk of divorce than those whose reactions are more reasonable and who have learned the art of non-defensive communication.

As with most things in life, some things are easier to address than others. The following is a list of the top 3 things couples can do to combat those risk factors:

Marital education programs

Studies published in the Journal of Family Psychology and in other highly respected organizations indicate that participation in marital education programs leads to more satisfying marriages and more than doubles the likelihood that couples will stay together. Those programs teach couples communication and problem solving skills, and how to maintain and intensify fun, affection and sexuality. Please note that “counseling” and “marital education programs” are not one and the same.

Therapy

If one or both spouses suffer from trust issues with regard to relationships or have a personality tendency to have strong or defensive reactions to problems and disappointment, it might behoove them to seek therapy in an effort to resolve those issues.

Related: [Five Celebrity Divorces We Really Weren't Expecting](#)

Return to school

It's never too late to return to school and complete high school or its equivalent and enroll in college. This may

require making certain sacrifices, especially when people are already experiencing financial difficulties. However, if income and level of education are related and you don't obtain additional education, how do you otherwise address the strain that poverty takes on a marriage?

Mark earned his B.A. in Economics-Business from UCLA. From there, he went on to earn his law degree from Loyola Law School. He also completed extended studies in International and Comparative Law at Cambridge University in England. Mark is a public speaker and regular contributor and legal expert to a number of outlets including: The Los Angeles Times, Forbes, The Wall Street Journal, REUTERS, TIME Magazine, The Pasadena Star News, KTLA Morning News as well as numerous ABC, CBS, NBC, CW, and FOX affiliates around the country.

Top 3 Common Dating Mistakes College Students Make





By Chau Nguyen, "America's Hottest Dating Coach"

No parents, no rules and unlimited alcohol can trigger a lot of heartbreaks for many unsuspecting college students. Look at what happened to Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez. They have great songs, but their relationship is a train wreck! Protect yourself by learning the top 3 common mistakes college students make in dating.

1. Thinking that dating doesn't exist in college anymore.

I've interviewed hundreds of college students and asked them one question, "*Does dating still exist in college?*" Some students would tell me, "*Of course! I'm in a relationship right now,*" and others would say, "*No way! Dating is taboo in college.*"

Everyone has an opinion on this topic, but the truth is that dating *does* exist in college.

Even if all of your college friends are hooking up, there are many others who are in exclusive relationships. So if you want to be in a serious relationship, remember there are guys who

are looking for the exact same thing right now.

Related: [The Good, Bad and Ugly of Dating of Dating Advice Guides](#)

2. Believing that you have to put out.

One college woman at the University of California, Irvine told me, *“All the girls are putting out, so if I don’t do it, I can’t compete with them.”*

All her friends immediately nodded in agreement. That’s a huge misconception among smart and beautiful college women. If they just want to explore their sexuality, then by all means, be safe and have fun! But many of the guys I interviewed told me that they would never consider getting serious with a woman after having a one-night stand with her.

Is that a double-standard? Completely. It’s not fair for women, and I can sympathize with that. That’s why the best cure for this is to control the pace of the interaction.

Women *do* have the power to veto. If you think he’s moving too fast, stop him. He will respect you for standing your ground, and more importantly, you will respect yourself more.

Related: [Returning to the Dating World](#)

3. Waiting too long to bring up the “relationship status” talk.

Most women understandably hesitate to bring this topic up because they worry that it might scare the guy away. So they just play along until they find out that he’s been hooking up with other girls on the side.

You don’t have to force him to be your boyfriend the first day you meet him. But you need to make one thing very clear early on—is this going to be an exclusive relationship, or are you both free to date other people too? Just be sure to approach

him from a place of confidence.

Tell him, *"Hey, I'm curious. We obviously like each other. So where is this going?"*

If he wants to be exclusive with you, you've hit the jackpot! If he doesn't, you've saved yourself a lot of time, energy, and heartache. Either way, it's a win-win situation for you.

Chau Nguyen, "America's #1 Dating Coach for Tech Guys," helps men and women skyrocket their confidence and succeed in dating. He is the founder of The One Who Gets It. For more information, please visit www.TheOneWhoGetsIt.com or follow him on twitter @datingcoachchau.

The New Dating Game





By M. Hill

Have I been out of the dating field so long that they've completely altered the whole arena without me even knowing? I'm talking about *STYLE* dates. Are you familiar with these things, you know, dates with a theme?

Here's one type: **Prankster Date**. Example: Pretend to be a couple looking to buy a new car, maybe. Doesn't that sound like fun – totally yanking the chain of someone trying to earn a living? Or why stop there? Why not pretend to be a married couple looking to put an aging parent in a home? Together you can tour assisted living facilities and giggle behind the backs of those showing you around. Oh, what fun! They say prankster dates *do* bring out your playful side.

Related: [3 Dating Types for Single Ladies](#)

Another is the '**Best Of**' Date. Examples may include trying to find the best ice cream parlor in town or, say, the best microbrewery. In these instances, while getting to know each other, couples can eat themselves into oblivion or drink

themselves into oblivion – the *best of both worlds* – either way, chances are good each will end up vomiting – and, really, what better way to get to know someone than when they're at their worst?

Or how about this: **Scavenger Hunt Date**. This is apparently the adult version of that childhood classic *I Spy with my Little Eye*. Example: "Would you like to go to the boardwalk and see how many people we can spot wearing hats?" I don't think I need to add any additional commentary on this one, do you? Seriously, could you imagine being asked out on a date like this? I mean if you're already in a relationship and happen to be out taking a walk and decide to throw in something like... like... nope, not even then, forget it. Unless you're looking to date a seven-year-old, I'd say this indicates your search for Mr. Right (or Mrs.) is far from over.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the **Errand Date**. Pretty much self-explanatory, and again, picture you're not in a relationship with this person, you're being asked out on a date. "Say, if you're not doing anything this weekend, the hull of my boat needs refinishing..." It's not a euphemism. The theory behind this one is that tedious chores become fun dates. Could you imagine? Think about it, yard work, grocery shopping, house cleaning, ooh, laundry – you know, with this line of thinking the fun is nearly limitless – and why not get to know someone by sorting through their dirty laundry? This is what seems to interest people nowadays, anyway.

Related: [Five Ways to Cut Down on Dating Costs](#)

I don't know. It's probably just me (it usually is), but does anyone ever just do dinner and a movie anymore? Maybe this sort of date could regain its popularity if it had a trendy name? What do you think about **The Retro Date**? Call me old-fashioned, but I kind of like the sound of that.

M. Hill is a 40-something year old Northeast transplant living

in Scottsdale, AZ who authored the book The Ones That Got Away – A Dating Memoir which is really just an elaborate answer to the question, “Why are you still single?”

Top 7 Tips to Win the Love of Someone Rich or Famous – When You Are Not!



By Aimee Elizabeth, author of “Relationships & Dating Sucks!”

Everyone wants the Cinderella (or Cinderfella) story to happen to them – but how do you keep the interest of your new fancy

romance and get your happily ever after? Here are the secrets you need to know.

1. Treat them like anyone else. Celebrities are used to being catered to, as if they are “better than” everyone. Show that you consider yourself an equal, and you will not only surprise them, you will intrigue them.

Related: [The Most Powerful Tool to Help You Find Your Soul Mate: Intuition](#)

2. Don't rearrange your life to suit them. By keeping your own schedule and “having a life,” you will sometimes be unavailable – unlike everyone else they have dated before you. They will wonder what could possibly be more interesting than themselves, making you much more attractive to them.

3. Don't act like a crazed fan. Blubbering about how you've seen every movie they ever made will only make you look like a lunatic and turn them off. No one wants a stalker.

4. Be who you are. Don't be intimidated by fame or fortune. People are turned off when you show insecurity. Don't brag, but be proud of whatever path you have chosen in life.

5. Never ask them to buy you anything. Nothing is a bigger turnoff than a gold digger who is too lazy to even hide it. If they offer to buy you an expensive gift, tell them that their company is the best gift they can give you. How often do you think they hear that?

6. Reciprocate. Be sure to plan and pay for dates you can afford, and treat your celebrity. Cook dinner, bake brownies, think of something fun that you know they will like. Your thoughtfulness, and willingness not to treat them like an ATM machine, will be noticed.

7. Do not post about your dates on any social media. Celebrities are constantly avoiding the paparazzi and crave

privacy. If you turn your relationship into a media frenzy, they will drop you like a hot rock.

Related: [3 Ways to Use the Psychic Edge to Find Mr. Right](#)

Everyone wants someone who loves them for them – not for what they have. Follow these tips and you can end up like Matt Damon, who married a former bartender, Luciana Barros, in 2005 – and they just renewed their vows. Or like Julia Roberts, who married cameraman Danny Moder, in 2002 and they have 3 kids together. Always remember, the best way to stand out from the crowd is by behaving normally.

Aimee Elizabeth is the author of 3 best selling books, including Relationships & Dating Sucks! Internet Dating Horror Stories, Dieting Sucks! Eat Anything & Lose Weight and Poverty Sucks! How to Become a Self-Made Millionaire. Aimee is also a multi-millionaire, successful real estate investor, guest speaker and consultant. You can find her books on <http://www.AimeeElizabeth.net> or on Amazon.com.

Reap the Benefits of Cutting Costs on Your Big Day





By Rev. Randy Williams

For many couples, planning a wedding can be financially exhausting. If not planned carefully enough, the most important day of your life can leave a hole in your pocket shortly after you tie the knot. Although every woman yearns for a dream wedding, they also want a dream house, dream car and a family to go along with it. With the average wedding costing over \$20,000 nowadays, many newly engaged couples are becoming wiser and planning their weddings on a budget. If you and your significant other find yourself walking a financial tightrope just to get married, then you might want to consider setting a strict budget for a wedding ceremony that is more easily affordable.

Regardless of the size or planning, every wedding can cost a substantial amount money. You are going to have to pay for a venue, food, marriage licenses and invitations. One way to begin planning for an affordable wedding is to cut down on costs and avoid unnecessary expenses. Below is a list of ways you can cut down on some of your wedding costs:

Rent your tuxedo and wedding dress: There is no sense in paying a small fortune on something that you and your partner will only be wearing once. There are many places where you can rent classy tuxedos and beautiful bridal gowns.

Related: [5 Conversations Every Couple Should Have Before Getting Married](#)

Get creative and make your own invitations, decorations and centerpieces: By taking a trip to the local arts and crafts stores, you can save money on pricey invitations and buy materials to make your own.

Look for family and friends that can donate their talents: If you have a family member or friend that's a photographer, DJ or pastor, ask if they can provide a discount or possibly lend their services for the occasion.

Utilize the same venue: For most couples, renting two separate venues for the wedding ceremony and reception can be costly. Consider reserving one location and using the same furniture and decorations for both events to save some bucks.

Eliminating wedding costs and setting a budget will save you money for things that come after the wedding is over. The money saved on a wedding and the accompanying reception can be used for a down payment on a house, your honeymoon or to pay off debt from credit card balances and school loans.

Related: [Four Dates and a Wedding](#)

By cutting down unnecessary expenses and planning a wedding on a budget, you can enjoy the biggest day of your life without worrying too much about the financial woes that follow.

Rev. Randy Williams is licensed, ordained, and is an active local pastor in Cave Creek, AZ. He has a Bible college degree and a seminary degree. He has been a minister since 1986. He has experience working with brides and officiating hundreds of

wedding ceremonies since 1988.

His approach and style to weddings and marriage preparation is casual and relaxed. He is very committed to preparing the couple for a life-long marriage, not just the perfect wedding day. For more information, visit Rev. Randy Williams official website: <http://phoenixweddingpastors.com>