

5 Tips for Single Moms to Survive Valentine's Day



By Kerri Zane

As a single mom, there are holidays we love like Halloween and 4th of July. Then there are holidays that we don't love so much, like Valentine's Day. The bountiful red hearts, bundles of red roses, inane jewelry commercials and mushy holiday cards are consistent reminders of our painfully evident single status. But we can be above it all. As the Single Mom Advisor, I have five surefire tips, to handle our hearts and mind with tender loving care. We can all get through this Hallmark Holiday with our healthy egos in tact.

1. Grieve with Gusto

In the movie *Moonlighting*, Cher's character said, "Snap out of it." It is the old school way of recovering from life's traumas. The reality is we all need time to grieve. So if this Valentine's season finds you fresh out of a relationship, give yourself space to mourn your loss. Turn up the tune that was "your" song or play something that make you want to cry. When I was just separated I loved getting in my car and turning up my Evanescence CD. I'd drive and cry and think and sing along with Amy Lee's sultry voice until I felt better.

Related: [Surviving Valentine's Day](#)

Appreciate the You in You

As a woman, it's crucial to your well being to appreciate and love yourself. After all, if you don't respect yourself how can you expect that of anyone else? You have to know what you are bringing to the party. I suggest you write yourself a love note including all the things you appreciate most about you.

Be Weary of Red

In the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* researchers found that men interpreted red as a signal that a woman was more open to sexual advances. They went on to say; "It's well known that males tend to inflate a woman's sexual appeal if they believe she'll be more open to a pickup line." And it didn't matter if it was a low cut sexy dress or a simple t-shirt. So if you're looking to lay low this Valentine's Day, then avoid the color red. If you want a little mindless hmm hmm, primp your pretty pout with rouge.

Related: [7 Behaviors That Are Keeping You Single](#)

Fun With Friends

You know the saying, "Men will come and go, but girlfriends are forever"? Have a Valentines Vision Board Party. Invite your BFF's over, open a bottle of champagne, pull out the

scissors, poster board, glue and old magazines and spend the evening creating “new romance” vision boards.

Engaged With Your Young Ones

You may find a new guy to share your life with down the line, but he will never take precedence over your children. So go ahead and create a new Valentine’s tradition celebrating the love you share with those divine little creatures you cherish most.

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Second (and Third) Marriages: Destined For Divorce?





By Jim Duzak for Galttime.com

Statistically speaking, the more times you've been married in the past, the more likely you'll get divorced again if you remarry.

The divorce rate for first marriages (meaning a marriage in which neither person has been married before) is reportedly between 40 and 50%. But for second marriages (at least one of the spouses has been married once before), the rate jumps to between 60 and 67%. And for third marriages (at least one of the spouses has been married twice before), it's a whopping 70-73%.

Are second marriages really doomed for divorce? How so? Why would this be? Don't people learn from their mistakes? Well, unfortunately, many people don't, or they rush into another marriage for the wrong reasons or before they've figured out what went wrong last time.

HERE ARE SOME COMMON POST-DIVORCE SCENARIOS:

– You may be blind to the role you played in the breakup. The

problem was always something your “ex” did or didn’t do.

- **You may be stuck in your comfort zone**, even when that comfort zone is harmful to you (like if you’re someone who always seems to be attracted to partners who abuse you or cheat on you).
- **You’re an incurable optimist when it comes to relationships**, always falling in love too fast and always seeing your latest partner as the answer to your prayers.
- **You fear living alone**, and will get married just to have someone to come home to.
- **You may be looking for a quick fix to the psychological wounds that divorce inflicts**, rather than taking the time to heal.
- **If your ex was unfaithful during your marriage**, you may immediately try to get revenge by taking up with someone else.
- **You may lack basic skills**, such as household, financial or job skills, and will get remarried just to avoid having to learn them.
- **If your ex filed for divorce first, left you or neglected you sexually or romantically**, you may feel rejected and unattractive, and you may marry the first person who makes you feel the spark or lavishes you with compliments.

In addition, second and third marriages often involve the challenges of dealing with stepchildren and/or difficult ex-es. If those challenges aren’t anticipated and addressed, a remarriage can be shaky from Day One.

The good news is that divorce statistics—sobering as they may be—are only evidence of what has happened in *other people’s* marriages.

They don’t predict how *your* marriage will turn out. If you or

your future spouse are getting married for the second, third, or even the fourth time, you can “beat the odds” if you’re well-matched, emotionally mature, and truly understand what went wrong in the past—including accepting responsibility for your own mistakes or wrongdoing.

But if you recognize yourself or your partner in at least one of the scenarios I listed, you should temporarily hold off on getting remarried. You may need to do more soul-searching. You may need to have frank discussions with your partner, and ask him or her some tough questions. You may even need to seek outside help from a therapist or other professional. But all of this will be worth it if you can enter into your new marriage knowing that you’ve done everything in your power to ensure that you’re not setting yourself up for another divorce.

Exclusive Interview: Sarah Darling Talks ‘The Bachelor’, Country Music and Her Top Pick for Sean Lowe!





By Whitney Baker

Having been a longtime fan of [The Bachelor](#), rising star Sarah Darling loves when her fellow country music artists make special appearances on the show. As many of you saw last night, Darling was that lucky singer on Monday's episode, performing a surprise concert in Whitefish, Montana, on Sean Lowe's one-on-one date with Lindsay Yenter.

"It was an awesome experience to be a part of such a big show, especially with me being a new artist," Darling said. "Sean is just like he comes across on television: super down-to-earth and sweet, like a Southern boy."

Related Link: [The Bachelor Season 17, Episode 4: Deception of Love](#)

And what about the bachelor's date with Yenter? "It was so romantic and gorgeous. They were slow dancing in a crowd of people and looked like they were having the time of their lives," she shared. "It was definitely a magical moment."



As for her song choice, 'Home to Me,' Darling's most recent single, is a great fit for *The Bachelor*, a show that takes the search for love to the most unexpected place: reality television. Describing the song, Darling says home "isn't necessarily a place but a feeling. A person can be home to you, no matter where you are – and even if the two of you are apart."

That notion rings particularly true for Darling, who is currently in a long-distance relationship. With her boyfriend living in London, it's important for them to spend time together even when they're apart. "We like to have Skype cooking dates, which is really fun. And we make sure we always have something to look forward to."

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

Of course, being on *The Bachelor* wasn't this country music star's first experience with reality television. In 2003, shortly after moving to Nashville to pursue her music career, she traveled to Las Vegas to compete on *The Entertainer*, a show on E! hosted by Wayne Newton.

After landing in the top three, she returned to Nashville with a better idea of what was next for her. "It really taught me what I wanted to do and what I didn't want to do," Darling said. "For me, I decided that I needed to focus on

songwriting, so that's what I did."

Of her songwriting process, Darling explains that she tries to focus on what's going on in her life at that particular time. "I never know when I'm going to get inspired, but when I do, it's usually a really fast process. I feel like the best songs are written very quickly and very true to the moment."

Country music fans are already looking forward to hearing more of Darling's songwriting on her upcoming album, which will be released this summer. "This album represents how I've always wanted my music to be portrayed," she shared. "My producer, Dan Huff, listened to me, and we worked together on making an album that was really 'me.'"

"It really lets me be an artist and be different, which is really, really good," she adds.

As Darling puts the finishing touches on her album and prepares for the Valentine's Day opening of her Weekend Road Trip Tour with Scotty McCreery, she stills finds time to keep up *The Bachelor* and Lowe's search for love. So who is her favorite contestant this season? "I'm a big fan of Lesley M.!"

You can check out Darling's 'Home to Me' EP on iTunes and catch her on tour with Scotty McCreery. For more information, follow her on [Twitter](#) or visit www.sarahdarling.com.

**Nicholas Sparks' 'Safe Haven'
Soon to Be In Theaters!**



By Meghan Fitzgerald

Once you hear the name Nicholas Sparks, you're automatically in, right? *Dear John*, *The Last Song*, *Nights in Rodanthe*, *The Notebook*; who wouldn't be thrilled for yet again another phenomenal love story on screen? In Sparks' new movie *Safe Haven*, the hunky Josh Duhamel stars alongside the beautiful Julianne Hough in a love story. Katie (Hough), moves into a small town in North Carolina, Southport, looking to run away from her past and start over. Katie's mysterious and sudden arrival is noticed by many, especially widowed store owner, Alex (Duhamel). As much as Hough tries to distance herself from people, she begins to set roots down in the town, particularly with Alex and his two children. As Katie begins to fall in love with Alex, her past begins spiraling into her life, leaving her terrified and struggling to feel safe. She knows she must make a decision: a life full of safety and minimum troubles, or a life slightly more dangerous, but full

of love? Fellas, include this in your perfect Valentines Day plans, as the movie comes out on February 14th.

Should you see it: Guys, it's Nicholas Sparks! Of course you should see it, there should be no hesitation on whether or not you will be seeing this movie. Josh Duhamel! Just his name makes womens' insides melt, let alone his face and body in its entirety on screen! *Safe Haven* even has a guest appearance from the one and only, Cobie Smulders! With this cast, the movie will be incredible!

Who to take: This movie comes out on Valentines Day, it will definitely be a tear-jerker. Since *Safe Haven* comes out on Valentines Day, your options on who to take are vast. No Valentine this year? Don't worry about it, gather together a group of other single ladies and go out with each other. Have a Valentine this year? Buy two tickets, one popcorn, snuggle up together in the comfy movie chairs, shed a few tears, and laugh together.

In the trailer, we see how incredible both Duhamel and Hough are as actors, and also how compatible they are together. It is pretty clear of the chemistry amongst the two costars. You can star into their eyes and know that they are destined to play alongside each other. Nicholas Sparks has a way of connecting his characters through his text and director, Lasse Hallstrom has carried this through. The trailer shows the intensity of their love in the movie, the way Katie looks at Alex when he's around his kids. You can see their love, the chaos of Katie's life, how frightened she is, all in the rapid scenes of fire, running, kissing, and passion. This movie is a must see for all ages and all genders!

When should you risk your life for love?

Cupid's Advice:

Love is an aspect of life most people strive for. Determining what you should sacrifice or drop for love is a hard line to discover. Of course with every relationship, you have to put yourself out there. You need to open up, accept the fact that your partner wants to fully love you, you simply need to open up. Having a haunted past can affect how you react with risking your life with love. Similar to Katie (Hough) in *Safe Haven*, risking your life for love is sometimes necessary. Cupid has some advice:

1. You need to move on: Having a rough breakup, or a past relationship where you were frightened and not comfortable, can make going into a new relationship challenging. Fortunately for these people, there are better men out there! If you are scared to start dating another person because of your ex, you need to move on darling. There are other people out there who are going to treat you better than the last did, you just have to let them break down your walls.

2. You have found 'the one': So many people discuss about 'the one,' and when you've found 'the one,' nothing else in life matters. This may be true, if you do nothing but think about the love of your life, if all you want to do is be around them, and know they're 'the one'; risk it. Why would you want to lose your other life because you may be scared to open up, or let go of your past. If he is 'the one,' don't think about it twice, go for it.

3. You want danger: Some women tend to stick themselves in a safety net, putting their life tucked safely away. This is only good for a person for so long, it is not healthy to always know what is going to happen because you won't allow anything else. If you're in a rut, spending all your time with your Netflix account, be dangerous. Risk yourself for love, we promise it's worth it.

Have you ever risked your life for love? Explain below!

Why Being Too Picky is Ruining Your Relationship



By Whitney Baker

When it comes to finding the love of your life, it's important to know what you want. Even so, having a checklist that you refuse to deviate from means you could miss out on meeting Mr. Right. And if you're already in a relationship, you may be looking past the good stuff about your man because you're too hung up on the not-so-right things that you wish you could change. Below are a few reasons why being too picky is ruining your relationship. Pay attention and think about what you need to do before you sabotage your chance for love.

1. Demanding too much of your loved ones may drive them away. Smothering your sweetheart may lead to feelings of resentment and irritation, while constantly talking down to your cute coworker may make him see you as a nuisance instead of a potential partner. Whether you're developing a new friendship or trying to improve your romantic relationship, be understanding and open about other people's differences. See their unique personalities as a positive thing and help to foster their individuality.

Related Link: [Love Lessons from Holiday Movies](#)

2. Nagging can be as harmful to your relationship as infidelity. If your significant other isn't living up to your idea of an ideal mate, you may be tempted to ask him to make some changes. If he resists, this cycle could turn into nagging, the interaction in which one person makes a request over and over again, while the other person continually ignores it. According to an article in 'The Wall Street Journal,' every couple will face this issue at some point – and depending on how they deal with it, this form of toxic communication can be the end of a partnership.

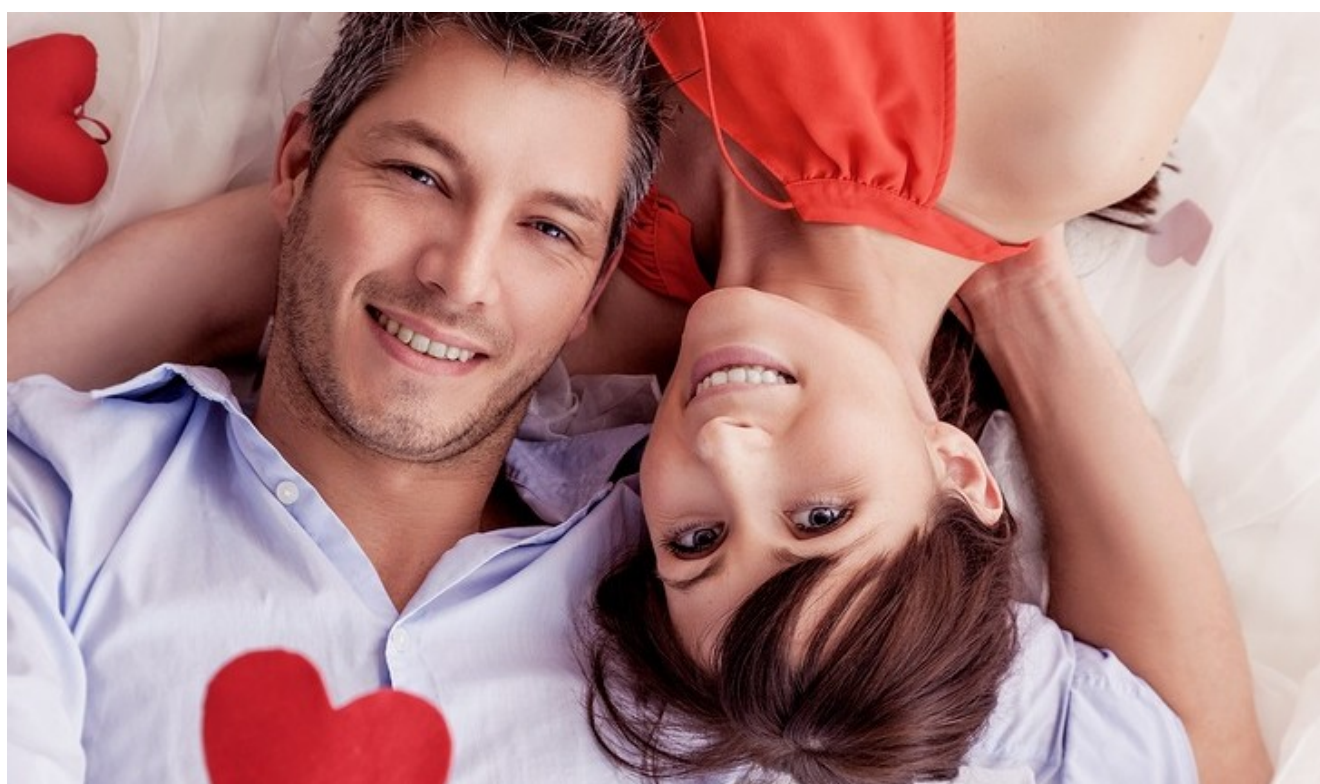
3. Pointless arguments mean you spend a lot of wasted time being unhappy. By constantly wanting something different, something more, from your sweetheart, you're bound to cause a lot of unnecessary disagreements. One fight leads to another fight, and before you know it, you forgot why you were arguing in the first place. Rather than constantly quarreling, look past your pickiness and remember why he makes you laugh or how he surprised you on your birthday last year. If you can't think of anything good about your partner, you may be fussing over silly things to cover up a deeper issue.

4. You miss out on the great aspects of your relationship – or a great person who could be your perfect match. When you're too picky about the way your man folds his clothes or how your girlfriend chews her food, your mind becomes too crowded with

negative thoughts to appreciate the happiness that your partner brings you. When it comes to meeting someone new, you should be open-minded towards everyone. Who knows, you may even find the person of your dreams in the most unexpected place! And even if the fling is short-lived, you can use the experience to improve your next relationship.

How has being too picky affected your relationships? Share your answers in the comments below.

The Only Four Options for Dating with Hair Loss



By Adam Kutner

So you thought that by the time you started losing your hair you'd be off the market and ready to let yourself go, walk around in your underwear, and generally not have to impress potential dating partners anymore. Well, surprise! Life doesn't always go exactly as planned. For starters, hair loss can start in your early twenties, and let's not forget that we're getting married later and divorced more often. This means that dating with hair loss is not only a possibility—it's almost the norm.

But don't worry about it. You have options. Four options, to be exact. Let's take a look.

1. Hide it: This is the first step for many experiencing hair loss. Wearing a hat works for a little while, but how many dates can you think of where a hat is appropriate? Combing it over is the same story. Is this really a secret you want to carry with you for years? A toupee is also an option in this category, and not a bad one. Just make sure you get a good one, and one that is age appropriate. Think Billy Bob Thornton. Yes, he wears one.

2. Shave it: An old standby for hair loss, the shaved head can be really liberating, and some people find it to be the perfect hair loss solution. Unfortunately, it doesn't work for everyone. Some of us simply aren't blessed with a good head shape or otherwise just can't pull it off. Some people find it makes them appear too intimidating. But still, it's a viable option. Many women and men are crazy about it. Think Bruce Willis or David Cross.

3. Own it: Think you can pull off the young Woody Allen or Prince Charles? Why not? There's more to attractiveness than hair. If you can muster it, try just owning what your genes gave you. Thinning hair doesn't have to be a sentence to ugliness to undesirability. Plus, maybe it will give you

reason to better yourself in other, non-superficial ways.

4. Fix it: When all else fails, you can always take the leap and fix it. There are some medications that can actually make a dent in hair loss, and many other pills, lotions, shampoos and creams that won't put a dent in much except for your wallet. Your best option is probably hair transplant surgery, which has come a long way in the passed couple of decades. It's more affordable and successful than ever. Too many celebrity examples to count. Mel Gibson, Kevin Costner and Brendan Fraser, to name a few.

Adam works with Great Hair OKC a trusted leader in Great Hair OKC repair. Adam enjoys writing about hair restoration and dating.

The Pros and Cons of a Long Engagement





By Marni Battista

The latest news in Hollywood is Britney Spears and Jason Trawick's somewhat long-anticipated breakup. The couple met when Trawick was Brit-Brit's talent agent, and he gradually transitioned to her beau post-Keven Federline divorce. The two had been engaged for just over a year, and we presume one of their resolutions must have been to start off 2013 single.

They parted amicably, according to their reps, but could the lengthy engagement have caused the split? Or did it just make it clearer that they should call off the whole thing?

If you've already been divorced and are engaged to be married a second time – like Spears was – it's a good idea to discuss if you're setting a wedding date immediately or planning to take it slow.

Related Link: [Dating After Divorce: Lessons We Can Learn from Taylor Swift, Queen of Heartbreak](#)

A year-long engagement in the '50s and '60s would have seemed endless to a blushing future bride, but these days it seems to

be more common. In fact, modern couples are holding their “I do’s” for two, three, even five years before actually tying the knot. There are plenty of reasons: costs of a wedding, the pressure of daily life (it’s hard to schedule a manicure, let alone pick a wedding date) and commitment anxiety. While it makes sense for some couples that are on a second or third marriage, is it really better to wait it out?

PRO: You get ample time to figure out if you’re truly a match.

Although the core idea of being engaged is that you’ve both already decided you want to be together long-term, having a lengthy engagement can help ensure you’re making the right choice. In Spears’s case, it seems that this is exactly what happened: they weren’t a great match.

When you’re in a healthy, serious relationship, you’re openly communicating about your values and goals...and by the time you get to an engagement, you hopefully have decided you’re a good fit in multiple ways.

However, time will certainly tell. Being committed to each other on a higher level than being boyfriend and girlfriend should bring more conversations and actions that will help prove to you whether or not you’re on the right path. Ideally, you’ll be sure that you’re both on the same page, and you’ll be able to make the right decision *before* getting married.

In addition, a lengthy engagement can ensure that children from previous marriages have time to adjust to a new person in the parent role, which can ultimately create a better transition from mom’s boyfriend to stepdad.

CON: Lack of marriage can indicate to the other person a lack of commitment.

Related Link: [5 Signs He’s Not Ready to Commit](#)

A lengthy engagement can certainly be interpreted by one

person that the other person isn't fully invested in the relationship. If you choose to have a long engagement period, make sure you're clear as to why you're choosing to wait and that the items on the "when this happens, we'll be ready" list are specific and measurable. Communicate consistently regarding how those benchmarks are going to be hit and be open to shifting them if the results take longer than anticipated.

When you're fighting with your fiancé, you can simply decide to leave...whereas when you're in a marriage, people seem more likely to want to work out the issues to save their relationship. Additionally, there is data that supports the fact that modern society may be growing indifferent about the institution of marriage. It's an important issue to discuss with your fiancé. Together, you should decide a realistic time period for your engagement; being open about it will help give clarity to your individual feelings and can also bring you closer.

There are both pros and cons to a lengthy engagement; you will just have to decide for yourself what time frame is best for you.

Marni Battista, founder of Dating with Dignity, is an expert dating and life coach with a 10-step system to manifesting love for your self and others. You can contact Marni at marni@datingwithdignity.com.

No More Mr. Nice Guys





By Terri Trespicio for Galttime.com

Nice? Is it REALLY What You're Looking For?

One of my coaching clients said to me recently, "I just want to find a nice guy." I had to call bullshit on her. Especially since she had just finished telling me that the most significant relationship of her adult life was this sexy but slippery beast of a man whom she couldn't say no to. And he knew it. This was a man whom she had dated, then not dated, then sorta dated. Just when she was thinking it had subsided, she'd get the text that would make her heart jump.

The point is, this dude is not a nice guy. He's not a great communicator, he's not even honest. She's moving on and it's probably for the best. But when she tells me she just wants someone nice, as we all have said at one time or another that we do, well, I don't believe her.

The Problem with Nice

Here's how I know: She has met several nice guys. And has zero interest in any of them. If I had a penny for all the women

who say, “But he’s so niiiice, why can’t I like him?” (Complete with the long, whiny emphasis on the word “nice,” and paired with the crinkling of the brows, and caricatured heart wrenching that girls tend to do when they have complete and total access to someone they don’t want, but feel they should.)

That’s like saying, “But broccoli has so many vitamins and minerals and powerful phytochemicals that will make me healthy and strong. Why can’t I like it?” Because you don’t. Period. Amen.

We think we have control, or should have, over the kinds of people we desire. We don’t! We don’t even have control over the things that make us hot and bothered. And it comes much to our chagrin, and sometimes our shame. But one thing won’t change it: Wanting and trying to like someone.

I realize I’m dealing with two different issues here. Some people really do want nice guys. But I’m not alone when I say that most of us are bored by them.

I will add here that the opposite of “nice” isn’t “mean.” Not in my book. It’s exciting, thrilling, a little scary. It’s decisive and masculine. Though it’s not unkind. Kind is important.

In her book *Mating in Captivity* (a must read), Esther Perel talks about the importance of distance and uncertainty, and that you can only have as much passion in your relationship as you can tolerate uncertainty (an idea she borrows from Tony Robbins).

Nice is a chair by the pool. The opposite of nice is a long path that curls out of view, somewhere cast in sunlight and shadow—and entices you to follow it. Even though you’re a little scared. No relationship just stays put—and if it does, it’s dead in the water. So you have to move—and my idea of thrilling is someone who invites you to find your edge, and

then push past it.

The Nice Guy	The Guy You Want
Says: <i>Where would you like to go?</i>	Says: <i>Show up at this address at 8pm. Wear heels.</i>
Calls before you have a chance to wonder if he will.	Calls only after I'm dying him to and hoping he does.
Wears his heart on his sleeve.	Makes you want to explore him.
When you're with him, you're content.	When you're with him, you're ravenous.
Is always available	May be available
Makes you smile	Makes you hot
Sex is comfy and cozy	Sex is thrilling and a little scary
He sees you as his strength	He sees you as his weakness

(Not sure who you are? Here's a tip: If you bitch and moan that girls don't like you when you try so hard to be...nice—well, there's your answer.)

My point is this: Women want a man who is direct and not afraid to be assertive. Too “nice” can often mean overly accommodating, can't make a decision without your input, and, well, a little bit feminine. He also likely does things wanting points for “being nice”—and that's just annoying. Don't be nice; be yourself.

By the way, I don't want guys to think I'm “nice,” either (and I'm fairly certain they don't). And that's fine by me. I aspire to far more, and so should you.

So unless you want to commit sexual suicide, you'll drop the nice act—because nice doesn't make you noteworthy; it makes you, well, nice. Average. Fine. And I don't know anyone who's

happy with being that. In fact, I think people who say they want that believe that's all they need or can handle. And to that I say you're dead wrong.

Get Dating Advice From Classic Literature With the Help of 'Much Ado About Loving'



By Michelle Danzig

What does your love life have in common with the love lives of the characters in classic, century-old literary novels? Some of you may be thinking back to your high school and college reading lists when you dreaded those 500-plus page novels assigned to you by an outdated teacher or professor. There couldn't possibly be any similarities between you and those fictional characters, right? Two book lovers and advice columnists challenge that notion. In their new collaborative book, *Much Ado About Loving: What Our Favorite Novels Can Teach You About Date Expectations, Not So-Great Gatsbys, and Love in the Time of Internet Personals*, authors Jack Murnighan and Maura Kelly address today's relationship issues, apply them to the plots and character traits of classic novels and suggest ways that their readers can learn from these stories. In an exclusive interview with CupidsPulse.com, Murnighan and Kelly discuss what sparked the idea for the book, what you can learn from these novels and what they personally discovered while writing.

Jack, Maura's introduction states that you instantly recommended *War and Peace* to help her with her dating troubles. Where did you come up with the idea to learn about relationships from fictional characters in classic literature?

JACK: If you spend a lot of time reading great books, you can't help but learn, feel and grow right alongside the characters; that's much of the joy (and point) of turning those pages. What really separates great literature from merely good is how much it can teach and inspire you. Alain de Botton wrote that Proust can change your life, but that's true of most great writers – and that's why we wrote this book.

In the book, you compare modern-day problems to the plots and characters of fictional literary novels. Which modern-day problem was the hardest one to match?

MAURA: Well, we didn't really say, "Okay, let's take some modern-day problems and look for their analogs in classic

novels.” We did it the other way around – a more natural approach. As we read novels, we thought, “Hmm! There’s a lot in here that sounds familiar. There’s a lot here that we can apply to our own dating lives.” And then, when I was talking to a friend about how Jack and I were looking for romantic wisdom in novels, she said, “Pass some of that insight over to me!” That’s when I began to think that we should write a book.

JACK: I take it as an open dare to find a current life situation that I can’t find some analogous set-up in great literature. Even some theoretically contemporary-only situations, like online dating, can be illuminated by quality literature, as in Maura’s chapter about *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

Related Link: [Five Steps to Turn a Date into a Relationship](#)

Do you feel that today’s generation is facing the same scenarios in love (with the exception of new technology) as what we read in classic novels?

MAURA: Absolutely. One of my favorite proofs that we moderns, living in the age of the iPhone, are facing the same kinds of romantic conundrums that people faced in the time of hunting and gathering – or, at least, in the time of stagecoaches and petticoats – comes from Jane Austen. In *Sense and Sensibility*, there’s a great little set piece during which Marianne Dashwood, one of the main characters, sends a note to her crush, Willoughby, through a footman, and then begins waiting, immediately, for his letter back. She waits and waits and waits – and checks at the window and looks at the door and listens for the sounds of a horse’s hooves and makes herself sick wondering when she will receive the response she wants. The same kind of thing happens all the time today, even if what we’re doing is staring at our computer screens and endlessly refreshing our inboxes.

In your opinion, what are the modern-day catalysts that cause

relationships to fail?

JACK: Assuming that you have real chemistry together, in some ways, I think it's all about timing: both parties have to want the relationship to work, and that requires a good time sync. Each party also has to be mature enough to have a sense of what they need and be able to communicate that (and the disappointment of not getting it). That's a fair amount of personal development. I fear most of us, most of the time, brush things under the rug, and eventually, that deteriorates everything.

If you could each chose one fictional character in the novels you studied and give them jobs as relationship experts, who would you pick and why?

MAURA: I don't know if there's a character I would pick. We like characters and relate to them, in large part because they *don't* know everything about relationships and love – and we often read novels to see what they learn about romance. I'll point to Austen again because she's an author so many people know and love. Her characters learn, for instance, that the charming guy whom you just feel so connected to and so passionate about isn't always a good bet for the long haul; sometimes the less dashing – and more cantankerous or even less sexy – guy is the one who's going to make you feel adored and respected.

But if I had to pick an author to be a relationship expert, I'd vote for Tolstoy. That guy really seems to know the human heart inside and out. A "Dear Leo" syndicated advice column? Awesome. Of course, we'd need to do as we say and not as we do – Tolstoy's wife was deeply miserable in their marriage, and I'm sure any of us would've been too. It sounds like Tolstoy was cruel and emotionally abusive.

JACK: Yes, sadly, the wisdom of his books wasn't exactly put into play in his personal life. Not that either Maura or I

have that problem...

Related Link: [7 Ways to Build a Love That Lasts](#)

What are some of the biggest lessons that you learned from studying these novels? How do you apply them to your own love lives?

JACK: My favorite lesson comes from Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, where there's an old married couple, the Bagnets, that provide excellent examples of how to keep love alive. Mr. Bagnet is utterly full of appreciation for his wife, and the palpable love he feels for her, the pains he takes to try to show it and the degree to which he trusts and leans on her all add up to a portrait of an incredible husband. (And all of this occurs in only a few short scenes!) I'd like to marry a woman whom I love as much as he loved Mrs. Bagnet, and then I'd try to be an equally good partner to her.

You can purchase a copy of 'Much Ado About Loving: What Our Favorite Novels Can Teach You About Date Expectations, Not So-Great Gatsbys, and Love in the Time of Internet Personals' in bookstores and online from Amazon. For more information about Maura Kelly, visit MauraKellyWriter.com. For more information about Jack Murnighan, check out his biography [here](#). You can also follow both authors on Twitter: [@jackmurnighan](#) and [@Maura_Kelly](#).

5 Celebrities Who Don't Know How to Date



By Courtney Allen

Some of the hottest celebrities in today's world find their soul mates on the Hollywood forefront. Couples from the likes of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez are deemed "the lucky ones" in just a handful of celebs who have hit the jackpot on love. But for others, dating is nothing more than a love taboo. After endless relationships, dates, splits, and shots at love, these five just can't seem to settle down with the right one:

1. Taylor Swift: If there's one thing Taylor Swift is known for, it's her willingness to share her heart-wrenching and disastrous relationships with the entire world. This seems to be one of the many reasons why this flawless Cinderella can't find a Prince Charming to last forever. Swift has dated a series of celebrities ranging from from John Mayer to Jake Gyllenhaal and she has the songs to prove it. The musical

genius even confessed her dating troubles, telling *British Cosmopolitan*, "I don't know how to make relationships last." Swift may not be able to make them last just yet, but practice makes perfect. The gorgeous musician recently split from One Direction's Harry Styles.

Related: [Celebrities With Too Much PDA](#)

2. John Mayer: Heartthrob John Mayer has a way with musical lyrics, but certainly not with the ladies. The smooth singer and his unfavorable habits were exposed with release of Taylor Swift's "Dear John," in which she calls Mr. Mayer out for a number of wrong-doings during their rocky relationship. The song called fans to speculate the 35-year old brown-eyed boy's past relationships, which includes celebs like Jennifer Anniston, to see if he was a repeat offender of breaking hearts. It's clear Mayer was nothing less than a heartbreaker for Swift. Let's just hope Mayer takes better care of alleged new girlfriend, Katy Perry.

3. Emily Maynard: Both *The Bachelorette's* and *The Bachelor's* Emily Maynard has been in the center of love's battlefield for the past two years. This sweetheart momma has been engaged twice since both shows have ended and still remains single. Her relationship status leaves us wondering exactly how this tan, blonde bombshell's fairy-tale like relationships take a turn for the worst so quickly. Not only are her engagements called off, but they end rather messy with ex-fiancée Brad Womack's insults and Jef Holms' digs on Twitter. Seems like the last thing Miss Maynard needs is for her next few dating experiences to be televised for millions to see.

Related: [Celebrities Who Are Better Off Alone](#)

4. Joe Jonas: One-third of the Jonas' Brothers, Joe Jonas, has had his fair share of dating experiences amongst some of the youngest and hottest Hollywood starlets. His flings include powerhouse singer and actress Demi Lovato, *Twilight* star

Ashley Greene, and even girl next door, Taylor Swift. It is said that Miss Swift's "Forever and Always" is all about the boy band's lead singer, but Swift wasn't as forward in revealing who ripped her heart to shreds in this tune. Not much is said about the musician when it comes to dating, but it seems like he has some trouble keeping a girl around for good.

5. Flavor Flav: It's hard to forget Flavor Flav as he was once the face of VH1 for his popular reality television show *Flavor of Love*. The ex-rapper searched for three long seasons for a woman to call his own, with at least twenty five girls to hand-pick for himself, and still ended up with nothing. Flavor Flav did eventually find what he was looking for, but none of the girls from his show proved worthy. Even so, we can't help but think the long chain-wearing goofball has trouble dating after several failed opportunities placed directly in front of him.

Which celebrities do you think have the most trouble dating? Share your thoughts with us!

Why Are You Hanging On to Old Photos and Letters From Your Exes?





By Jane Greer, Ph.D for Galttime.com

Even though star Bradley Cooper stood conspicuously solo in pictures taken at the Golden Globes, there are still plenty of images floating around of him with his now- ex girlfriend Zoe Saldana.

Celebrities have to deal with this all the time – published pictures of them with former loves. The images are out there, on magazine covers and blogs, impossible to erase completely, even after they have moved on. But what happens if you aren't in the public eye?

Say, for example, that you've been dating for a few months now. Everything is great and your new relationship is growing at a comfortable rate. But last night he found that big box behind the couch, the one with all the pictures and letters from your old boyfriend. It was the first time you saw him get really angry, jealous even. He accused you of holding onto the stuff because you are still attached to your ex. So what do you do? Do you have to get rid of it all? What if you don't want to?

The most important thing that can come into play here is communication. Explain that you are not holding onto these things because you still have feelings for your former partner, but rather because you are holding onto the part of yourself you discovered then. In truth, it has less to do with the person you left behind and more to do with the shared history that was a marker on your past. Instead of thinking of it as a barrier between you and your new partner, think of it as a breadcrumb trail to who you were, and that way you can share how you've grown.

If, on the other hand, the mementos have no real meaning, then it is fine to just throw them out. But before you do that, accept that they can often be less about the person you were involved with, and more about who you were when you were with that person. Knowing that gives clarity to the meaning of those pictures and letters.

How to Make Your Lady Feel Special This Valentine's Day





By John Powers

There is a very serious holiday fast-approaching, and you need to be prepared. This holiday does not require you to fast, dress in green or be good all year. It's Valentine's Day, the one day each year designed to help people celebrate love. Even those of us who say we are not celebrating secretly want to be kissed and spoiled. Here are a few ways to make you lady feel special this year:

1. Ditch the Ordinary

Try something other than chocolate and flowers. Think of something your sweetie really likes and surprise her. Get that rare collectible figurine she pointed out a few months ago. Leave it on her dresser. Give her a silver necklace. Put it in an empty chocolate box and wait for her to open it. The look on her face will be priceless.

Related Link: [Guys Edition: How to Behave Like a Gentleman](#)

2. Get Romantic

Plan a special date that doesn't focus on going out to the bar. This is Valentine's Day, not Santa Con. You can still partake in intoxicating refreshments, but make reservations at a classy restaurant. Make your partner feel like she's the only girl in the world. Nothing says love better than a candlelit dinner and some sweet somethings.

3. Look the Part

Dress up for this special day. Take off the Pearl Jam T-shirt and put on a sweater vest. Your lady will appreciate the effort and feel proud to be out with you. The worst thing you could do is show your significant other a half-hearted Valentine's Day. Keep in mind she's going to tell her friends and family all about it. Give her something to brag about and take plenty of pictures.

4. Make Every Day V-Day

This magical holiday comes once a year, but it's important to make your woman feel special every day you spend together. My girlfriend likes hand sanitizer but using it leaves her hands dry and chapped. I decided to grab her some scented sanitizing lotions. The thoughtfulness of my random act of consideration made her exclaim, "You make every day feel like Valentine's Day!"

Related Link: [5 Things Women Wish Men Knew](#)

It may not mean a lot to us men. Everyone likes chocolate, but we don't much care for flowers. Think of what it means to your lady. It should feel good to make her feel special. Trust me that you will be handsomely rewarded. Go the extra mile this year and make it one she'll remember for years to come.

John Powers is a dating and relationship adviser who performs standup comedy and writes the male perspective for Beauty and the Beast, a weekly comedic dating and relationships advice blog. He recently released a music video for his latest single

– a parody of *Hey There Delilah*.

5 Ways to Avoid a Bad Date Before It Happens



By [Michelle Danzig](#)

Bad dates are inevitable. Many magazines even feature an entire page devoted to embarrassing and awful [date](#) stories submitted by avid readers. Prepare yourself, because everyone will experience an awkward, boring or just plain awful date at least once in their lives. The talkative; the obnoxious; the rude; the stand up—we've all been there. With the New Year here and [Valentine's Day](#) approaching, you may find yourself

scrambling to find dates. Don't just settle because you may end up discouraged. Here are some excellent tips from the [experts](#) on how to avoid a bad date before it happens:

1. Get to know each other first. With today's technology, there is no reason to not get to know the person you are planning on spending a potentially romantic evening with. If you met on an [online dating](#) site, this may have already happened. Online relationships have become extremely successful because you must read a person's profile before meeting them. [Dateologist Tracey Steinberg](#) says, "Always speak on the phone for at least 10 minutes to see if you have anything to talk about and if he can hold up his end of the conversation. It requires a lot less energy to end a bad phone call than a bad date." Similarly, dating relationship advisor and comedian [John Powers](#) recommends "When you're exchanging emails, texts, or phone calls you should listen carefully for awkwardness, hesitation or anything unusual. If this person is social and friendly then they should come across as natural and relaxed through any type of [communication](#) exchange. Pay attention to how they express themselves. If you sense anything out of the ordinary you should cancel the date."

Related: [Date From Hell: 10 Ways to Get Out of It, Tactfully](#)

2. Make a mutual decision on the venue. If you don't like sports at all, don't agree to go to a sporting event. If you hate jazz music, don't offer to take your [date](#) to a jazz club. Powers says, "Being in an uncomfortable situation always makes for a bad date. Arrange to meet in a public place where you feel safe and secure. Go someplace you have been before and allow the date to be whatever it will be."

3. Keep it short and sweet. Dating Coach and the author of the book *Gratitude, Giggles & Grace*, [Tracy Fagan](#), recommends starting with a small investment. She says, "For first dates, only [commit](#) to coffee or a drink. You can make it through

30-45 minutes, no problem. If you commit to a full meal, you may sign up for more than you really want to invest.”

Related: [Getting Back in the Dating Game This New Year](#)

4. Don't go on a date immediately after a breakup. No matter how you feel after a breakup, going on a date right away is not a great idea. Take some time to reflect on and heal from your [breakup](#) before you end up chewing off your date's ear talking about your [ex](#). Powers also recommends not rushing into dates. He says, “Being in a hurry leads to desperation and lack of interest. To avoid a bad date it is important that you do not accept every date that is offered to you. Be selective and feel free to turn down a date if it doesn't fit your schedule [or needs].”

5. Trust your instincts. According to Fagan, If something doesn't feel right, it most likely isn't right. She says, “Even if you have agreed to meeting, and over the course of continued conversation, if the other person starts making you feel uncomfortable—politely—cancel the date. One of my dating mantras that share in my book says, ‘You can't make Mr. Wrong right and you can't make [Mr. Right](#) wrong.” Similarly, Powers suggests, “Bail on a date if you're just not feeling it. There is probably a good reason you were not feeling it.”

What are some ways you avoid a bad date before you go on it?

Date Idea: Dress Up



By [Sarah Ribeiro](#)

Tired of being cooped up all winter? Refresh everything you learned in college acting class by pretending to be someone you're not. Dress up with your [honey](#) and have the time of your life revitalizing your imagination.

Search for nightclubs having costume parties and spend the night dancing in your babe's arms dressed as the king and queen of the ball. Many city nightclubs have themed nights, such as sci-fi, masquerade, 80's attire, 'Alice in Wonderland' or even 'Twilight.' Club Oberon in Boston has a weekly "Donkey Show": while their dance party rages on, a subtle re-enactment of Shakespeare's classic [romantic](#) comedy 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is performed around the club. Additionally, Marquee in Manhattan throws a European party every Friday, celebrating the party cultures of different European nations.

Go to a cosplaying (costume playing) convention and tap into

your inner nerd, dressing as your favorite comic book character and reaping the benefits of watching early film footage and trailers. Ohayohcon and Setsucon are two huge conventions that are traditionally held the last weekend in January in Columbus, Ohio, and at Penn State College respectively. Be sure to stick around once the convention ends: the after parties are usually at local nightclubs where you can party all night with your [sweetheart](#).

If you enjoy more ancient stories, visit a renaissance fair or even try out LARPing (live action role playing). You and your honey can dress as medieval royalty and play pretend in another century. Live out a fairy tale adventure together as your knight in shining armor saves you, a damsel in distress, from the hands of an evil dragon. You can act as your favorite 'Lord of the Rings' character or get into a more recent groove and dress up as someone from HBO's 'Game of Thrones.'

If you don't have the money to be hitting up the city (or don't live near one), stay in for the night. During the day, head to your closest Goodwill store and get 20 dollars worth of old, strange clothing and accessories. Once you get back home, come up with the most ridiculous outfits that you and your [partner](#) can create. If you want, you can even put outfits together for each other. Make up scorecards and judge each other on creativity and hilarity.

At the end of the [date](#), the two of you can take a photo in your get-ups and frame it as a memento of the silly and imaginative time you had together.

What are your favorite dress up dates? Tell us below.

Five Relationship Game-Changing Plays from 'Silver Linings Playbook'



By Kimberly James

In the blockbuster film, *Silver Linings Playbook*, Pat Solatano, played by Bradley Cooper, seeks the counsel of a psychiatrist. After disclosing details about his dysfunctional relationship with his ex-wife, Dr. Patel offers Pat sage advice: "True love is about letting her go and seeing if she returns."

When you still have strong emotions for an ex, it is very easy to romanticize about the past. Good memories become great and bad memories become better. The problems that you had suddenly

minimize and every argument, fight or issue can be rationalized away. If you are looking at a previous relationship with rose colored glasses, you may not have unplugged your heart strings. When you are still holding on to love gone wrong, you can begin to think an unhealthy relationship was the best thing that has ever happened to you.

If you are pining over your ex, take a few notes from *Silver Linings Playbook* to determine if there's something there or if it's time to move on:

1. Turn to your family. Your family can be the eyes when you cannot see. Discussing your intentions of reconciliation can often be met with resistance or embraced with acceptance. If your family was privy to the inner workings of your relationship, let them know how you are feeling about your ex.

Related: [How to Kick That Bad Relationship to the Curb](#)

2. Find a diversion. Finding an outside hobby will not only keep your mind occupied but it will also put you in close vicinity of people who share your same interests. You may meet someone new to befriend or possibly date.

3. Spend time with your friends. Be around people who knew you before and after the break-up. They can let you know if you are handling the break-up ok or if you are spiraling. Your friends are the lifeguards who can save you if you start drowning in a pool of sorrow.

Related: [Cameron Diaz Discusses Her Break-Up Style: Break Up and Move On](#)

4. Be open to new experiences. The old way didn't work. If it did, you would still be together. This is a time to invest in self-help books or seek professional help. Breakups are difficult and can break a heart wide open. It may take time and self work to heal properly.

5. Accept your role in the relationship. By taking responsibility for any wrong doing, you are accepting that it takes two to tango. If you know the steps you took that may have led to the end, you can consciously work to avoid these mistakes again. Rather than waltzing through life as if everything was someone else's fault, you know take ownership for your own two step.

Learn to win at the game of love by looking for your personal silver linings. A break up can be an opportunity to make yourself up to be healthier, happier and more emotionally mature.

Kimberly James is the Founder and a MatchMaster for FindYourPlusOne.com, an online dating and matchmaking service for members in the United States and Canada. Visit www.findyourplusone.com/advice for more dating advice and tips. Follow twitter.com/findyourplusone for daily updates.

5 Things Women Wish Men Knew





by [Johanna Lyman](#) for [GalTime.com](#)

The biggest challenge with romantic relationships is having excellent communication. It's also the single most powerful thing you can do to maintain a great long term relationship. Sadly, men and women tend to have very different styles of expressing themselves.

We all know men and women are different when it comes to expressing their feelings. But we've come up with the top five things women just wish men would know! Is that too much to ask?

Unfortunately, men get the short end of the stick. Women aren't usually as straightforward as men when it comes to communicating. Many of us grew up believing that if a man really loved us, they would "just know" how to please us. I know that not only is that untrue, it's also really unfair to men. But the fact remains that it's one of the unrealistic expectations little girls are fed in their formative years. If you want to read more about unrealistic expectations, click [here](#) to get a preview of the first chapter of my new

book, *The Soulmate Myth*.

Related: [6 Things to NEVER Say to Your Man](#)

I thought I'd give the men out there a little cheat sheet to help them understand us better.

5 Things Women Wish Men Knew

1. **We're suckers for romance.** You probably know that, right? Never ask, "Do you want flowers?" Just do it. If we have to ask for it, it doesn't count. If you really want to impress your girlfriend, you'll get major brownie points for sitting through a chick flick with her. On the other hand, the little things count just as much as the major gestures. Sending a card for no reason is one way to make her melt.

2. **PLEASE listen to us.** I know it can be hard because we talk so much. But when you don't listen, we take it as a sign of disrespect and it really pisses us off. When you listen, it's great if you check in by verbally agreeing occasionally or even questioning to get clarity about what we mean. When you get that glazed look in your eyes, we know we've lost you.

Related: [4 Things Men Worry About](#)

3. **If you ask, we'll tell you exactly what sexually makes us melt.** The trick is to ask in the moment. If you ask over dinner, most women will be too uncomfortable to give you a straight answer. But if you're doing it almost perfectly and ask what else you should do, she'll beg you for it. And here's a big hint: real women don't respond to sex the way porn stars do. It takes a little time for our motors to warm up.

4. **When you give a compliment, be specific.** I know I have nice legs, but if you tell me you love how my thigh curves "like that," it's a real turn on. Also, you should know that you can never give too many compliments, as long as they're sincere. Really. Even the most confident women I know don't get sick of

being complimented.

5. **NEVER, ever forget a birthday or anniversary.** See #1 for reference. In fact, see #2 as well. Write it down, or double check for the birthday on Facebook. Don't even joke about forgetting either one; we won't think it's funny. There's just no excuse.

What do you wish your man knew about you? Let us know in the comments.

Top Most Romantic Celebrities



By [Nic Baird](#)

When Hollywood [sex](#) symbol Marilyn Monroe died she had only been married to Joe Dimaggio for nine months. Despite a tragically short romance, the baseball legend put in a standing order for long-stemmed roses to be delivered to Monroe's grave three times a week for the next 20 years. The flame of [romance](#) continues to burn among the celebrity twosomes nowadays. On-screen or off, many stars continue to enthrall us with gestures of love. Over 24 million of us tuned in to watch Will and Kate's first kiss as prince and princess. There's still passion in the hearts of the rich and famous. Sometimes it makes our eyes water, and sometimes it's so cheesy we want to throw up, but we're definitely interested:

Related: [Get Back In the Dating Game This New Year](#)

1. Harry Styles: Styles sings about his "Last First Kiss" as a member of the boy-band One Direction. But is he as passionate out of the studio? "My mum tells me I'm a romantic because if she has a bad day at work, I run a bath for her when she gets home and cook dinner, " he said. Besides his mom's testimony, Styles gets credit for dating hopeless romantic and songstress Taylor Swift. This year, for Swift's 23rd birthday, Styles bought 23 custom cupcakes including ones filled with candy floss and a mint liqueur center. A source told [Radar Online](#): "Once he likes a girl, he's all in. He's very romantic, long emails, surprise gifts, meticulously planned [dates](#)." Styles and his (now former) country music starlet will both be touring this year.

2. Katy Perry:The singer's romantic side came out during her past [marriage](#) to Russell Brand. The two were known for casual strolls and bike rides together. Katy Perry even bought her comedian husband a lilac-colored Bentley for Valentine's Day. Perry started introducing singer John Mayer as her "boyfriend" recently, and the courtship has been an exciting [romance](#). Cute moments like when they coordinate outfits and Halloween

costumes show a playful side to Perry's affections. She puts herself into the dates, like when she took Mayer to visit her hometown of Santa Barbara last month for a romantic tour of The Old Mission. Perry's a fool for love, or maybe just a sucker for romance.

3. Nicolas Cage: Before he was known to "kick-ass" portraying various superheroes, this veteran actor was all about the romance in classics like *Moonstruck*, *City of Angels*, and *It Could Happen To You*. He unsuccessfully [proposed](#) to actress Patricia Arquette shortly after meeting her. He was turned down, but was given a chance to prove his [love](#) with a list of impossible tasks, like finding a non-existent black orchid. But when Cage returned with reclusive author J. D. Salinger's autograph, Arquette gave him a second look. Since 2004, Cage has been married to Alice Kim. He did the impossible again when he convinced the tribal council of the Havasupai Indian reservation in the Grand Canyon to allow the actor to shoot scenes for *Next* on the canyon floor, which is the same place where Cage and Kim had their first [date](#). Nostalgia and romance are two things Cage can't resist.

What romantic gestures have blown you away? Post your favorites below.

Is Priscilla Presley Waving The Flag For Older Women With An Age Defying Relationship?



By Eve Pearce

Priscilla Presley's recent stint treading the boards during the UK Pantomime season seems to have proved to be a special time in more ways than one.

The glamorous 67-year old former wife of the late King of Pop Elvis Presley was undertaking a stint as the Wicked Witch in a production of Snow White at the Wimbledon Theatre, South London, when she met British radio DJ and former children's TV star Toby Anstis. At age 40, Anstis is 27 years Priscilla's junior, but it hasn't stopped the two of them getting on like a house on fire, as they were seen sharing a kiss or two when they left a local restaurant close to where Ms. Presley was performing in pantomime.

Mutual Friends

It's been said that the pair share a number of mutual friends over in America and that one of them suggested they might like to meet up occasionally. Priscilla sent along some tickets so that Toby could go and see her in the show and they met up afterwards, getting on very well and have continued to see each other since.

Related: [Sean Penn and Scarlett Johansson: Is the Age Difference an Issue?](#)

According to reports, Toby likes the more mature woman and has always been a big fan of Elvis, so although it's a seemingly unlikely pairing, they're obviously off to a good start!

However, whilst some sources claim the pair are dating, Anstis has taken to his Twitter account to play things down. He's suggested that the pair of them are "just friends", though he is planning on meeting up with her again and thinks she is "wonderful". Some press reports are also saying that the snapped photo of them kissing was just a fond farewell between two good pals.

Presley is rumored to be worth a cool \$70 million at the current time. She married the King in 1967 when she was just 21-years old and they had a daughter, Lisa Marie together before going on to divorce in 1973. Despite the split, the two remained close until Elvis' untimely death in 1977.

Mature dating

Whether Priscilla and Toby are dating or not, it's proof indeed that romance needn't be dead once you hit middle age and the ever glamorous Presley is flying the flag for women of a certain age everywhere, who may be looking for love. If you're an older woman looking to date a younger man, here are a few things to consider.

Related: [Amber Tamblyn and David Cross Get Married](#)

Age vs Maturity: Just because there's a distinct age gap, it doesn't mean that there will be a disparity in levels of maturity too. There are many young men who have mature and responsible heads on their shoulders and conversely many older women who act and appear much younger than they are. If you have the same levels of stamina and the same outlook on life, the age shouldn't matter.

That certain spark: If you're someone who has been part of a long term partnership which has broken up, or you've maybe been widowed, starting to date again and the process of finding love can perhaps feel like a scary prospect. However, it can sometimes come to pass that after the initial nerves, embarking on an age gap relationship will be something that provides both parties with a new lease of life and a sense of excitement and happiness, for many different reasons. A younger man may want to explore new places and ideas before he settles down. This can provide the single, older woman with a vital spark that she finds contagious, which in turn gives her a new sense of purpose and love of life. Similarly, the life experience and maturity that someone who is older has, can be very appealing and sexy to a younger man or woman.

Expectations: If you're starting out in such a relationship don't be afraid to state what you want and make clear what your needs are. If casual without too much commitment is your bag, say so. Likewise if you want companionship and someone to spend lots of time with, be honest and open. Many young men simply don't want to play the field at all and would like to settle down, whilst others do not want the long term hassle. Be frank from the start so you both know where you stand.

Don't compete: This is a really important point. Don't ever try to compete with younger women, just because you have a younger man. If your man is with you, he's with you for who you are, not because you're some clone! It's no good pretending to like propping up bars or saying that you like clubbing the night away when you don't really. If that's who

you are then that's cool, but don't start to do it just to prove you're youthful. Have fun and show your relaxed side in other ways.

Should You Ask Him Out?



by Terri Trespicio for GalTime.com

I'm no stranger to asking out dudes. I've done it – slipped my number into someone's hand, slid a napkin-scribbled note onto a table, approached a man eating alone at a sushi bar, even walked straight up to a very hot guy in some kind of grounds crew and invited him to call me. But I'll be honest, while it can be sexy and fun and a great experiment to honing and

exploring your confidence, most of those dates never transpired.

Is it a good idea for a woman to ask a man out? Are men's egos so big that they just CAN'T say yes to a woman asking them out? Find out what our expert has to say:

Women like to be chosen, plain and simple. Even the big loud-mouthed ones like me. And if you do the asking, you aren't letting the guy take that step. You undermine his ability and urge to initiate action. Another thing that could happen is that you set a precedent, that you will be the one to ask for everything you want, thus removing some initiative on his part.

Now, every time I say this, I hear from men who say they would love it if a woman asked them out. And some men may like this, sure. We ALL want to be chosen in some way. It's how you make that choice known that matters.

In my experience, when a man takes the role of asking, he is deciding, not just agreeing to what YOU want or (god forbid) giving in. Maybe you've asked someone out and it worked and you're together and happy. Good for you! It works in some cases, sure. But in my own life, I was finding that when I was too aggressive or felt the need to "produce" the relationship this way, I was getting in my own way and actually hindering him.

Understand this does NOT mean a woman is just a passive piece of produce waiting to be picked up, palpated, and taken home. In fact, you as a woman have a very powerful role to play here because in order to have a man walk through the doorway, you kinda have to open it.

So, rather than wonder if you should come out of nowhere and ask him out like some kind of surprise romantic attack, or sit and wait like a stone, do the opposite – lay the groundwork

for attraction. You can't start a fire out of nothing. Think of your efforts at flirting, connecting, etc, as laying the kindling and creating the conditions for fire to spark.

How?

1. BE interested, *show* interest, give him lots of opportunity to talk to you, be around you, and pick up on all your positive, attractive energies.

2. Make it clear that if he WERE to ask you out, you'd say yes (without of course saying that). No one likes being rejected, and so you want to be sure he gets the sense that he won't be.

3. Look, dudes don't always pick up on subtleties. So don't be too subtle. He can't read your mind. If he mentions a sushi restaurant bar just opened near him, you say, "I live for sushi. I could eat it every damn day." (Only say this if it's true, which, in my case, it is.) Or maybe you just tell him what you think: That he's almost too damn appealing to pass up. That'll send a message.

4. When you allow and encourage that attraction to take root and get his attention, you don't have to worry about whether you should ask him out. Because you won't have to.

And if he doesn't? Maybe he's not into it. Or not ballsy enough. Two good reasons to move on.

5 Ways Your Friends Can Help Save Your Relationship



By Ashley DelBello

Bringing your friends in to help with your relationship woes can be tricky, but there are several times when it's essential to have them by your side. Whether it's during a fight with your significant other or when you just need someone to talk to, your friends know you best and can prove helpful.

Before pulling them into whatever situation it may be though, you need to be prepared to hear things that you may not want to hear as your friends will also provide you with the truth – which may or may not be pleasant.

Read on to find out why [your friends are a necessity in your love life](#):

1. Friends give you an excuse for much needed alone time. If you spend too much time with someone, he or she is bound to

annoy you at some point – which is normal, but may mean you could use some time apart even if it's only for a few hours. Your friends provide you with a reason to get out of each other's faces and enjoy some time to yourself. Healthy relationships stem from couples who can have fun with and without their significant other.

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

2. Provide a change of pace. You love spending time with each other, but sometimes it may get a little boring with just the two of you. Consider hanging out together with one of your mutual friends to help liven up the dynamic. Just make sure to choose a fun person that you both enjoy hanging out with!

3. Proof your texts. Or email or whatever conversation you're about to have with your beau. Sometimes we can be so upset with the person we're dating that we want to immediately call them out on it. However, if you're hesitant to push that send button or have that nagging feeling that you may be overreacting, call a friend first. A friend of mine even has a designated person who she calls or sends her text to first when she's feeling it could be a bit overboard. Talking it out with a friend or even just sending them the text may just be all you need before potentially causing unnecessary havoc in your relationship.

Related: [How to Master Being in a Relationship](#)

4. Someone you can candidly vent to. Sometimes you just need to vent about whatever is annoying you about your partner and a friend can be that healthy outlet. However, for bigger issues your friend shouldn't be the only one that you're communicating with. You can save the small ones or the minor venting for friends, but don't forget that you should also be able to talk openly with your lover.

5. Make sure it's a trustworthy and rationale friend that has met your partner. If your friend knows your significant other,

it's easier for that friend to provide objective and more useful advice. Your friend will be able to see both sides and hopefully help you to a clear path of resolution.

Tell us: How have your friends helped you in the past with your relationship? Was it helpful or hurtful?

Jessica Alba's Sexy Sweet Style



By Ann Csincsak

From a hero in *The Fantastic Four* to a stay-at-home mom to her two daughters, this woman knows how to steal the spotlight

with every outfit she wears. Her chic style is the envy of every shopper at the Target checkout counter since she graces the cover of *InStyle*'s February issue.

Jessica has the perfect balance of sexy and smart in this street-savvy black ensemble and denim-on-denim outfit. She perfectly transitions from winter to spring with a vest and open-toed heels. **STYLE TIP: Keep your accessories light and dainty for the upcoming season!**

Get The Look



1. MinkPink Motorcycle Diaries Vest, \$69

2. J Brand Low Rise Leggings, \$150

3. Essie Chinchilly Nail Polish, \$8

4. Kate Spade Mini Bow Ring, \$48 *TREND ALERT!

Jessica Alba



1. Wildfox Couture Peacock Feather, \$59

2. Missoni Maki Skirt, \$450

3. Chicnova Denim Vest, \$39

4. Baublebar Arrow Ring, \$24

For more style tips and tricks, follow me on www.cashmereandcoco.com or on twitter at @anncsincsak!

Date Idea: Get Off the Grid





By Sarah Ribeiro

Stay away from a boring date night this weekend and go on a spontaneous road trip with your partner by hopping in the car and driving with no plans in place.

Start off in your town, exploring neighborhoods you've never seen and finding restaurants, cafes or other niche spots for future dates together. Then, take it one step further: skip the highway and take a back road to somewhere random on the map, maybe a nearby town or a tourist attraction that you've been meaning to see. Don't forget to bring a camera so the two of you will always remember the places that you visited.

For added adventure, go out of the state. Take the highway as far as you dare and stop at the cutest bed and breakfast that fits within your budget. Find a famous landmark in a neighboring state or follow the signs to the most intriguing spot advertised on the highway. Some great – and somewhat strange – tourist spots include Ruby Falls in Tennessee, the Oz Museum in Kansas, Lizzie Borden's Bed and Breakfast in Massachusetts or the Mob Museum in Las Vegas. Look for more

unique tourist attractions at Roadside America and pick out your favorites.

Cash in on your significant other's interests and find somewhere that fits with his hobbies. Is he a gamer? Look for a retro arcade in a small town. Is he a wine or beer connoisseur? Visit a vineyard or brewery for some local flavor and be sure to take home some free samples.

You can check things off your bucket list during the trip too. Drive down to your local airfield and take your journey on a thrill-seeking twist by going skydiving or taking flying lessons. Enjoy a hot-air balloon ride or even get completely off the grid by going off-roading.

In the car, do your best to keep your man entertained. Play some old-fashioned car games, like Twenty Questions – a great way to get to know your sweetheart better – or the traditional License Plate Game, where you compete against each other to find license plates from each state (bonus points for international plates). Be sure to bring some healthy snacks with you too, like granola, trail mix or fresh fruit.

The most important thing to remember on this date is to not to plan a thing. Let the road carry you and your partner to a memorable weekend.

What are some of your best off-the-grid locations? Share them in the comments below.

Meeting Her Friends: How to

Leave a Positive Impression



By Ty Witherspoon

So, you've started dating someone new and are starting to take things to the next level. One thing that you have to look forward to is meeting the new woman in your life's friends, but if you're not careful, your first meeting could end up being a disaster! Remember, most women put a lot of emphasis on what those they care about think of their new mate, so you'll want to do your very best to leave a positive and lasting impression. Chances are, if her friends like you, then she'll like you even more, getting things off to a great start.

Dress the Part

Consider where you will be meeting these friends and then be

sure to dress appropriately. If you're all going out to a nice dinner, for example, you won't win any points by showing up in ratty jeans and a t-shirt. In fact, this type of outfit isn't really appropriate for any first-time meeting, no matter how casual. Whether you're dressing up or dressing down, make sure you look well-groomed and well put together in general. Splash on a little cologne or aftershave (but not too much!) and remember to flash your pearly whites.

Related: [Pros & Cons: Bonding with Your Man's Friends](#)

Be Genuine

When you first meet new people, it's natural to feel the urge to impress them or to prove yourself. After all, these people don't know the first thing about you, but you want to make them like you as quickly as possible. Hold back on the bragging, however, as this can make you seem rather full of yourself, which nobody finds attractive. Instead, simply focus on being genuine, polite, and kind. Express interest in the people you are meeting and ask them questions about their own lives. You can certainly answer any questions that come your way, but remember that the night—and the conversation—shouldn't be all about you.

Don't Be a Flirt

If you want to end up in the doghouse so fast it'll make your head spin, then all you have to do is flirt with your new girl's female friends. While most guys wouldn't be so brazen as to openly flirt, do watch your interactions with her girlfriends. Don't spend an inordinate amount of time talking with any one woman in particular, and keep tight reins on your eyeballs. Getting caught ogling cleavage is never a wise move!

Related: [What to Wear to Meet His Family](#)

Be One of the Guys

When guy friends are going to be around, your first instinct is likely to try and determine the relationship these guys have with your new girl. In some cases, you may just have to accept that she's still friends with her ex or that she has guy friends who have taken on protective big brother or fatherly roles. Remember that it's okay to be a guy and to talk about "guy stuff", but make sure you're not running your mouth off about other girls or getting too personal.

This article was composed by Ty Witherspoon, a freelancer based in the greater metropolitan area of San Francisco; this piece is dedicated to the team from Kanetix.

No More Excuses: 10 Ways to Ditch Bad Dating Habits





by Suzanne Casamento for GalTime.com

How many times have you heard your girlfriends (or maybe even yourself) say, “All the good ones are taken,” or “There aren’t any nice guys in this city”?

Those excuses are ridiculous. The truth is, there are good men everywhere. And we women have opportunities to discover those men while going about our everyday lives. **But first we need to shift our attitudes and strategies. Here’s how:**

1. Stop listening to that negative inner voice. You know that voice that says, “You’re never going to meet anyone”? It’s lying. But the thing is, if you believe the awful things she says, other people will too. So when you hear that voice start, shut her down. When she realizes you no longer believe her, she’ll go away.

2. Stop making excuses. “I’ll start online dating after I lose 10 pounds.” “I’m too busy at work right now.” “After I get my raise, I’ll have more money to go out.” What’s your excuse? Whatever it is, lose it.

3. Stop doing the same things and expecting different results. Have you and your wing girls been hitting the same bar every Friday night for the last three years and wondering why you never meet anyone? You have to change your game in order to win.

4. Stop waiting. The man of your dreams isn't going to suddenly appear at your front door. You have to invite him over first. In order to do that, you need to stop waiting and start dating.

5. Stop staring at your phone. There are good men everywhere. The key is putting down your cell phone long enough to notice. Imagine all the opportunities you may be missing because you're busy scrolling through pictures of other people's kids on Facebook.

Once you break all those bad habits, you'll be ready to replace them with good habits, like:

1. Replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. Compliment yourself. When your hair looks covergirl perfect, look at yourself and say, "Damn, your hair looks good!" And when you see your pilates classes are paying off, tell yourself you love your abs! Sounds silly, but the same theory about believing the bad applies to the good things. So tell yourself how awesome you are and others will believe it too.

2. Be honest with yourself. If you were making excuses about why you weren't dating before, do some digging and work out the "why." If you discover you're afraid, that's fine. Then be kind and gentle with yourself and take things slowly.

3. Be proactive. Love is one of our most basic needs as humans, so feel free to go get it! Use your tools. Whether you choose online dating, match making, speed dating or going on that blind date your Aunt Martha has been wanting set you up on, just do something to move toward your goal of love.

4. Learn from your experiences. As you date, recognize what you like and don't like. Do you like to test the waters with a coffee date before launching into a full dinner date? Are you more comfortable giving someone your number than asking for his? Do you like to communicate via text or by phone? As you discover what works for you, maximize those things!

5. Have fun! It's flirting, not a funeral. Enjoy it! Make eye contact. Smile at strangers. Say, "Hi." Introduce yourself to the hot guy at the dog park. Ask the hottie buying cauliflower if he thinks it's worth it to go organic. Get caught looking.

Dare to date.