

Recovering Neuroscientist Don Vaughn Talks About Finding Love and Changing the World With Music



By Jennifer Ross

Winner of Cosmopolitan's 2012 Bachelor of Texas, Don Vaughn is more than just a hot body with gorgeous dimples. He's also a neuroscientist, a musician, a model and, more importantly, a man with a big heart. Originally from San Diego, California, Vaughn was a "huge nerd" growing up and found his first love in high school: science. With little attention from girls, he spent much of his spare time learning music and figuring himself out. Fast forward to today, his hobbies have stayed the same, but some things have definitely changed.

After winning the title of Bachelor of Texas, Vaughn was automatically nominated into the Bachelor of the Year competition, going up against some of the hottest men in America, one from each of state. Ultimately, the winner was Mr. Louisiana. Even so, Vaughn is very grateful to have been

considered at all and wouldn't change anything about his experience. "The world has ways of working things out; you don't always get what you want. I'm happy with everything that happened."

When it comes to finding that special woman, this 25-year-old bachelor is keeping his heart and mind open. Coming from a science background, he understands how experiments – even in love – usually don't turn out exactly how you plan them, no matter how strict you are with the parameters. So for him, having an idea of his "perfect girl" is out. "What ends up happening is somebody comes along who's totally different and better than you expected," he says. "So, while there are a couple of things I want in a girlfriend, I'm open."

Even though he doesn't have an official checklist, he still has two important traits that he looks for in women: "I need someone who's incredibly supportive, given all the demand on my time, and someone who's definitely fun."

As for starting a relationship with someone new, Vaughn skips out on the traditional "drinks or dinner" for a first date. Instead, he prefers to learn about a potential partner's personality through her passions and by spending time with her in her natural elements. "Who cares about what kind of pink lipstick you wear for three hours at dinner? I want to know what you normally do, where you normally drive, what you normally eat," he shares. "That's the real person I'm going to be with at the end of the day."

Related Link: [How to Tell If He's 'The One' After One Date](#)

Until Vaughn finds his perfect woman, he is focusing his time and energy on making this world a better place through music. In his first attempt to revolutionize this industry, Vaughn and fellow neuroscientist David Eagleman have created a mobile iPhone application called eyeFi, which allows you to "see the world through auditory feedback." Essentially, you can view

your surroundings by listening to musical notes rather than using your eyes. By combining these two passions, Vaughn and Dr. Eagleman have created a way to help visually impaired people “see” through their ears.

However, this neuroscientist won't stop there. Inspired by his undying love for music, Vaughn routinely disc jockeys or plays the drums while teaming up with local DJs at various clubs and events. His next experiment is to create an app that will forever change his music gigs. Think in terms of a major jam session where every audience member can participate as Vaughn performs on stage. The concept is to allow concert goers to share what they want to hear through their phones; the information will transfer to Vaughn, who can integrate the ideas into his music set. “Everyone's a part of it,” he explains with excitement. “Now, we have the technology to make it happen. We didn't have that 20 years ago.”

Even with so many projects in the works, Vaughn still finds time to share his love of music through teaching. Currently a member of the Rotary Club of Houston Skyline, he was introduced to Darren Hightower of the Children's Music Foundation. From there, he began volunteering his time with sick children at the Ronald McDonald House, teaching them to play a song on the guitar. As simple as it is, a song brings a moment of comfort to the children and a world of joy to Vaughn. “Some of the kids have so many IVs in them, living with cancer, lung transplants and all sorts of serious stuff.”

Related Link: [Date Idea: Volunteer Together this Holiday Season](#)

By the end of the visit, the children's lives are brighter, even if only for a moment, and they have learned a new skill to help them cope with heartache and pain. When Vaughn leaves the Ronald McDonald House, he always lets the kids keep the guitars. He shares, “We always say something like, ‘You know what? This guitar is your's forever. We just ask that you play

it forward and teach someone else that song.'”

Given what Vaughn has already done to combine neuroscience with music, there’s no telling what ventures will come next. Of the future, he says, “What I want is to connect and inspire the world through music in a personalized concert for everyone with generalized empathy, which is the focus of my neuroscience research. How do we access and let people show empathy for more than just friends and family? How do we generalize this feeling to the entire planet?”

“Imagine what a world that would be,” Vaughn adds. “A lot of people may say, ‘That’s just ridiculous. That could never happen.’ But I don’t buy that.”

For more information about Don Vaughn, you can visit his site at DonVaughn.com. You can also follow him on Facebook and Twitter.

The Perfect Holiday Gift: 5 Celebrities That Need To Go Away Forever





By Joshua Pompey

Some people want a new I-Pad for the holidays. Others want nothing more than a relaxing spa retreat. Me, I'm a little easier than your average receiver of gifts. This holiday season, I just want one present; for the following five celebrities to disappear forever! So please Santa, if you are out there, make this five people go away forever...

1. Justin Bieber.

I know you are a just a kid. I know you have grown up under the spotlight. But I can't for the life of me understand your popularity, nor do I want to. Please fade into the light forever with your fake picture scams and your on again, off again Disney girlfriend like all the other childhood heartthrobs, so that I never have to see a whiny teenage girl screaming your name again. It's been nice to know you, but see ya later kid.

Related Link: [How to Get Over a Broken Heart During the Holidays](#)

2. Kim Kardashian.

Is America finally coming to its senses, or are the Kardashians just between seasons. It seems the world has finally reached a point where the Kardashians are no longer an inexplicable obsession. We've watched you strut how much

talent you don't have on television for years, enjoyed your self-released sex tape, and those of us that managed not to blink for a few days, even witnessed your "fairy tale wedding." Even being with Kanye West is no longer making you relevant. Your time is done, so please, fade away as ungracefully as you came in. However, feel free to give Scott Stap his own reality show in Vegas. Now that is television I'd watch (pending he dumps the world's most awful girlfriend).

Related Link: [How to Communicate with Your Ex Over the Holidays](#)

3. Lindsey Lohan.

Lindsey, I know you need help, and I hope you find it. But one thing is for sure, you could ride an ambulance backwards on a highway, while sniffing cocaine off the dashboard, and nobody will be surprised, or care. Your antics are tired, and more importantly, frustrating to a public that actually has to follow laws with consequences. You had your last shot with a Lifetime movie (has it really come to that?), and it debuted with a lackluster 3 million views. Its time to retire into a permanent rehab home with your mother of the year.

4. Madonna.

It amazes me that I can still turn on a news channel and see her irrelevant antics. Your self-righteousness is delusional at best, and you are too old to act the way you act. It's time to check into that nursing home, but on your way, please take Lady Gaga with you.

5. The cast of The Jersey Shore.

Ok, I know this is technically more than one person, but I'm going to cheat a little bit. Now that your show is officially ending, please, no more shows, spin offs, or fake and scripted television. You were all cute and funny when you were

unaware of how ridiculous you all looked in season one. Now it's just annoying. Please spend the remainder of your days performing public services to Italian groups, attempting to undo the decades of damage you have done to their reputation, not to mention, the entire state of New Jersey.

Joshua Pompey provides online dating advice for men around the world. Check out [GetREALDates Online Dating Advice](#) for plenty of free information. Or check out [GetREALDates Online Dating Profiles](#), for the best online dating profiles.

What to Do On New Year's Eve If You're Single



By Eleanore Wells

By now, every person on earth (or in the U.S) has most likely participated in at least one conversation where New Year's Eve plans were the topic. Some people look forward to it, others dread it. Those who look forward to it usually have something

pretty special planned. Those who dread it usually don't. Lots of people harbor anxiety over New Year's Eve, primarily, because of what seems to be the intense pressure to do something – something festive, something big. I think single women feel this even more than most.

But, really, it's not necessary. While I like the idea of celebrating the passing of one year into another and all the hope and optimism that can bring, I do reject the notion that one has to mark this occasion in a big way. It's possible to have an enjoyable New Year's Eve without the forced exultations that seem to mark the holiday... and without a date.

Related Link: [Readying Your Single Self for the Holidays](#)

A few things to think about:

Get Out of Town. Not running away, but taking an opportunity to totally mix it up for a moment: new surroundings, new activities, new people... new you, for a short while. Of course, the New Year's Eve week is one of the most expensive periods to travel, so make sure you really want to do it.

Go Party. If you're invited to a big party and you're up to it, go and have a blast – even if you don't have a date. A few years ago, I went to a friend's big New Year's Eve shindig with mixed emotions. I didn't have a date and knew the party would primarily be made up of couples. But a few of them were people I knew and wanted to see so I got dolled up – making sure I looked extra good...which made me feel extra good – went to the party and had a good time. I deliberately got there late so I wouldn't have to spend so much time there in case I felt a little self-conscious. I ate, drank, and mingled, and then I left. You only have to stay as long (or as short) as you want to. At midnight, I was wishing the cab driver a Happy New Year. But I had a nice time for the 1-1/2 hours I was there.

Have Your Own Party. It doesn't have to be a big deal. In fact, I usually prefer something small. Invite over a few people you like, order take-out (or cook, if you're so inclined), pop some bubbly and enjoy yourself. This is actually one of my favorite ways to spend New Year's Eve. I only want to bring in the New Year with people I know and really like.

Give Your Time. Lots of volunteer organizations can use an extra pair of hands, helping out with parties they throw for their customers or providing other services. Helping others is great way to bring in the New Year.

Go to Church/Temple/Mosque. Bringing in the New Year with fellow worshipers can be fulfilling.

Work Off Holiday Pounds. Lot of gyms and sports organizations are open for a workout or group run. You may as well get started chipping away at the pounds you put on during the holiday season.

Related Link: [Celebrity Nutritionist and Trainer Jackie Keller Says, "Those Who Workout With Support From Their Partners Do Better Overall"](#)

Do Nothing. You don't have to do anything... but only do nothing if that's what you really want to do, not because you are feeling pouty about your options or lack of.

Really, we should all relax. Ringing in the New Year can be pretty fun, but it's only fun if you're doing it in a way that works for you. So that's what you should do on New Year's Eve: whatever you want to do!

Happy New Year, everybody!

A First Date on New Year's Eve: Should You?



By Rachel Seliger, JDate for GalTime.com

The arrival of a New Year is an exciting time, but New Year's Eve has also morphed into one of the most pressure-filled holidays for singles. Don't stress yourself out – there are lots of great ways to have a fun and festive New Year's Eve, with or without a date.

Who says you need to be attached to have a great NYE? For starters, focus on the things you do have – friends, family, health – and then follow my tried and true tips to have your best single New Year's Eve yet.

– **Gather your single girlfriends for a glammed-up girls-only night, and ring in the New Year together in style.** Who needs a guy when you have great friends, champagne and cute new pumps!

– **Everyone appreciates a little “me time.”** Save yourself the stress of dealing with crowds, long lines and a bunch of weird

people you don't know – treat yourself to your favorite movie, Chinese takeout and a great night's sleep. Wake up on Jan. 1 feeling refreshed and ready to greet the New Year with vigor (and no hangover)!

– **New Year's Eve is the perfect opportunity to spend time fostering life's most important relationships: those with family.** Being with loved ones will take your mind off any qualms you may have about being single on New Year's Eve.

– **Get out of town!** Find a cute B&B or boutique hotel in a nearby city, or book a flight to visit an old friend. A quick trip is a great way to dodge the dreaded question of "What are your New Year's plans?", and you definitely won't run into anyone you know!

– **Why not break the mold and set up a first date?** This might seem hard to believe, but you are NOT the only person spending New Year's Eve single. By looking online you'll find plenty of single guys who also don't have New Year's plans, and would love to spend the night getting to know someone. If you're lucky, it might even end with a New Year's kiss.

Aside from these tips, my best advice about being single on New Year's is to not worry about having the perfect night – don't do something that's supposed to be fun just because you feel pressure. Instead, reflect on all of the positive experiences you had in 2012, start planning for 2013 and look forward to a year full of opportunity!

First date, girls' night out or a quiet evening solo? What's your dream New Year's Eve on your own?

Holiday Break-Ups Are Awesome!



By Dudeologist Marcus Osborne for GalTime.com

Okay, so maybe that headline is hyperbolic. Unless you're one of those sickos who gets off on hurting people, no one is really thrilled about those soul crushing break ups. You know the kind where you feel the nausea gauge rising the moment one of you begins a statement with, "So I think you and I should..."

Yeah, you know.

And that's just the beginning, right? Your family and friends, whether they're being supportive or just nosy, all want the scoop. Scoop you're not entirely certain you're ready to share. And what's worse, social media has become the Paul Revere of the twenty-first century. The second you change that status update to "single", Facebook jumps on its little horse and starts riding across the internet screaming, "Marcus is single! Marcus is single! Marcus is single!" to your two

thousand Facebook friends....fifteen of which I actually *know*.

Not at all awkward.

Whether you were the instigator of the break up or not, someone was mature enough to take a broad look at that situation and realized that it wasn't optimal for either of you.

By euthanizing that relationship you've not only saved yourself from potential long-term emotional disaster, you've created an opportunity for yourself. This is a fresh start. As awful as it is to look into that mirror at the puffy remnants of an hour of crying, there's a dark cloud that's been lifted. Because let's face it, you knew things weren't right before that break up didn't you? Well guess what? Problem solved!

Now you've got the chance to turn your attention to family and friends. Here's your opportunity to inhale life from a whole new perspective. From that of the single, happy, independent, grounded woman. And THAT women, to us guys, is ridiculously hot.

Crazy hot.

So when you show up at parties and events you own that room. You own the all the potential in that room. Because whether it's a new job, new place to live, or a brand new love interest, the fact that you've only got to answer to yourself in each new situation makes those choices completely your own. How sweet is that? And from a completely hedonistic point of view, if you're so inclined, you're free to indulge your inner *Samantha Jones*. Don't lie...you've thought about it.

I won't pretend like each break up is like winning the lottery, just merely pointing out that especially during the holiday season, millions of people are going through or are contemplating whether now is the right time to end their current relationship. Just do it. As a guy I'd rather just

have the band aid ripped off...particularly before I buy you gifts.

Just sayin'.

There's no "right" time to do it. So you may as well get it over with. And as adults, we've all been through this. It's not easy, but you know you always bounce back. So let's get this thing over with so you can really enjoy this break up and embrace it like the awesome thing it'll turn out to be!

5 Resolutions That Can Help You Find "The One"



By Ashley DelBello

The year is coming to a close and you still haven't found that special someone. So if you're truly ready for love, why not make it your 2013 resolution? While love does seem to happen when you're not exactly looking for it, there are things that

you can do to work toward that goal. Cupid spoke to a few relationship experts and came up with five resolutions to help you get closer to finding “The One.” Keep reading to find out what they are:

1. Show yourself some love. “Start dating yourself and do for yourself what you want someone to do with you – stop waiting around and treat yourself well. Once you get an appetite for that, not only will you be better able to find someone because your best self will be out there, you also won’t stick around for what doesn’t feel right,” said clinical psychologist Ramani Durvasula, M.D.

It might sound cliché, but it wouldn’t be said if it wasn’t true – you need to love yourself before you can have a healthy relationship with someone else. So go ahead, take yourself on a trip to somewhere you’ve always wanted to go or simply order in dinner and have a glass of wine or two. As long as it’s all about you.

2. Get out of your comfort zone. “Commit to putting yourself out there at every opportunity. It doesn’t matter where you go or what you do, as long as you can meet other people there. Even going to a movie with a friend can lead to something more – you can start a conversation with a cute guy in line. You simply never know,” advised author and marriage/family therapist, Jane Greer, Ph.D.

Go even further and make a resolution to do one thing a day outside of your comfort level – a concept that is explained in Durvasula’s “You Are WHY You Eat,” a book on making better choices in health, love and life. “Go out for coffee alone, join that online site, tell your friends that you are ready to meet people – one thing a day. Then once a week, do something unique – visit the planetarium, take a cooking class or join the yoga class in the park. Try and make it something where there will be other people. I acknowledge that it can be the

loneliest in a crowd, but they are not going to come to your front door,” added Durvasula.

3. Resolve to be in the best shape of your life – this doesn't just mean your physical health. “It means that if there is an area of your life that is not working, then you need to make a resolution to restore balance in that area. If you have been ignoring health issues, then you should make a resolution to go to the doctor. If your finances are a mess, then you should make a resolution to get help from an accountant,” said life coach and dating expert, Jason Weberman of North Star Coaching.

Whatever it is (and it may be more than one thing – that's OK!), figure it out and focus on improving that area of your life so there won't be any obstacles in your way of finding “The One” – and more importantly, having a long and healthy relationship with that person.

4. Break unsexy habits. “This should be the year that you vow not to think negative thoughts every time you step out of the shower. Set the expectation to have at least one positive thought about your body when you look in the mirror,” says founder of Pure Romance and relationship expert Patty Brisben. “As the year progresses, keep adding positive self-talk until you are completely in love with the person staring back at you.”

It's true – confidence is hot and attracts others to you. So stop talking about how gross you feel or how you wish you were better at your job and do something about it. And then believe it.

5. Have fun. Love happens when you least expect it so don't put too much pressure on yourself to find that special someone...and don't forget to enjoy the journey as well! Overall, it's about knowing (and loving) yourself and then putting yourself out there so you can find someone that is not

only worthy of you, but someone who is right for you and who you can have a great life with.

Tell us: What will your New Year's resolution be?

Celebrity Nutritionist and Trainer Jackie Keller Says, “Those Who Exercise With Support From Their Partners Do Better Overall”



By Whitney Baker

You may have heard the saying, “The couple that exercises together, stays together.” But is it really true? We turned to celebrity trainer, nutritionist and NutriFit co-founder Jackie Keller to find out how to exercise with your honey, what’s

it's *really* like to work with the stars and how to avoid that dreaded holiday weight gain.

When it comes to working out with your sweetheart, Keller believes that success varies from couple to couple. There are numerous ways to approach your joint workout routine. "Some strength training requires that couples work together: one lifts, while the other spots," she says. "Additionally, many runners prefer to run with company to make the time pass more easily. There are also a lot of stretches that are better done with assistance."

She adds, "One thing we know for sure is that those who exercise with support and encouragement from significant others – friends, family or lovers – do better overall in achieving their goals."

Of course, if you exercise with your boyfriend or girlfriend, it's important to remember that men and women should train differently. Even if you have the same objectives, your bodies will respond to cardio work and toning moves in unique ways. Of this dissimilarity, Keller shares, "With women, I will usually work on the process as much as the result. With men, it's usually the result that overrides any concerns about the process."

Related Link: [QuickieChick's Video Dating Tips: Why Hating Your Body is Destroying Your Love Life](#)

Keller, a licensed and certified wellness coach, nutrition educator and Le Cordon-Bleu-trained culinary expert, has worked with celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Charlize Theron and Penelope Cruz. She has also trained celebrity couples including Zach Braff and Taylor Bagley, Eric Winter and Roselyn Sanchez, and Jake Gyllenhaal and Reese Witherspoon (before they split). Speaking about her experiences working with these famous twosomes, she says, "I have no complaints about our couples. They have been uniformly delightful. I

think that having the support and participation from their significant other helps both of them with the process.”

Given that celebrities need to look good for their job, they can tap into a deep level of determination that everyday people have a harder time grasping. “The public does not cut celebrities any slack, and they knew it when they chose that professional path,” Keller explains. ‘They don’t fight the need to look good – they accept it and embrace it as part of the package.’”

Lately, we’ve all taken note of Matthew McConaughey’s extreme weight loss for the upcoming film ‘The Dallas Buyer’s Club.’ According to a recent news spot on ‘Good Morning America,’ he has lost nearly 25 percent of his total body weight. Despite the medical risks that come with this drastic weight loss, Keller believes that there is a healthy way to make these changes. She cites Anne Hathaway, who trimmed up for ‘The Dark Knight Rises’ by eating NutriFit meals three times a day for nearly a year, as an example. “She looked fantastic!,” Keller says. “It can be done without compromising health or delicious meals.”

Perhaps we can avoid any unwanted holiday weight gain by taking a cue from the stars. Keller recommends that you look to exercise as one of your must-do daily tasks, like brushing your teeth and showering. As far as diet is concerned, she says to eat a good breakfast, no matter what your dinner plans entail. “There is no such thing as ‘saving’ calories to enjoy later,” she says.

Related Link: [How to Find Love Amidst Holiday Crazy](#)

Keller also suggests that you wear snug-fitting clothes, especially at events with a buffet meal, because you’ll eat less if your waistband is tight. And, of course, Keller says you should be aware of how much alcohol you consume, as “drinking uses up calories in a non-nutritive way and loosens

up your inhibitions so that you're far more likely to eat badly."

When asked what food she *does* enjoy during the holidays, Keller says that she is a fan of "seasonal favorites," like persimmons, tangerines, oranges, spinach, swiss chard, collard greens and grapefruit. For specific ideas, you can check out the recipe section of Keller's blog at www.Nutrifit.wordpress.com/recipes/.

For more information on Jackie, go to www.JackieKeller.com. You can also keep up with her on Facebook and Twitter.

Hugh Jackman On Wife's Miscarriages, The Joys Of Adoption



By Jenny Schafer for Celebrity

Baby Scoop

The road to parenthood wasn't easy for *Wolverine* star Hugh Jackman and wife **Deborra-Lee Furness**.

During a Tuesday appearance on [Katie](#), the *Les Misérables* star opened up about adopting their two children – son **Oscar**, 12, and daughter **Ava**, 7.

“To be clear, Deb and I always wanted to adopt. So that was always in our plan,” the Australian actor, 44, said.

“We didn't know where in the process that would happen but biologically obviously we tried and it was not happening for us and it is a difficult time,” he added. *“We did IVF and Deb had a couple of miscarriages. I'll never forget it the miscarriage thing – it happens to one in three pregnancies, but it's very very rarely talked about.”*

“It's almost secretive, so I hope Deb doesn't mind me bringing it up now,” he continued. “It's a good thing to talk about it. It's more common, and it is tough. There's a grieving that you have to go through.”

But as soon as Oscar was born, “all the heartache just melted away,” the proud papa said.

“Many of you are parents, you guys know you can't prepare for that moment. Nothing can prepare you,” he shared. *“You can't even explain how incredible it is and that avalanche of emotion that comes and how it opens up your heart, how it frustrates you, how it angers you, how everything is just all the sudden how alive you are as a parent.”*

Date Idea: Christmas Movie Marathon



By Samantha Mucha

Getting cozy with your mate by the fire while watching ABC Family's '25 Days of Christmas' should be number one on your to-do date list this holiday season. Leave the freezing winter weather outside and kick back for an indoor weekend with your sweetheart.

Watching Christmas movies will not only put you and your lover in the holiday spirit, but the price is right – free. Throughout the month of December, there are a variety of holiday themed broadcasts on all of the national networks. The choice is yours, really. Of course, if you're lucky enough to own a DVR, you won't have to choose. You can load up "Miracle on 34th Street," "8 Crazy Nights," and "A Christmas Story" and watch them whenever you please.

To make this into a romantic evening, pour some wine or brew up some hot cocoa. You can even go above and beyond by renting your man's favorite childhood Christmas films. If you are in

the mood to get nostalgic, ask your partner's parents to share old home movies of your boyfriend on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Watching videos of him as a child can help spark good feelings and could be a Christmas tradition that you decide to continue in your relationship.

It's only getting colder. So, get the popcorn popping and throw on your best flannel pajamas. Cozy up with your holiday honey for the most relaxing moments you'll have for the entire holiday season.

What's your favorite Christmas movie? Share your top pick with our readers by commenting below.

A Present is Worth a Thousand Words: What a Gift Says About Your Relationship



By Rachel Seliger

The holiday season has finally arrived, and with it comes festive parties (hello, candy cane cocktails!), delicious fare (potato latkes, anyone?) and glee-filled gift-giving (who doesn't love a white elephant party?). Yet, while giving gifts can fill your heart with warmth and joy as you watch your loved ones tear open those carefully-wrapped presents, it can also bring anxiety as you try to decipher what to give everyone on your list. And it only gets harder when it comes to giving a gift to a new love interest!

Rachel Seliger, Community Manager for JDate.com, the leading online community for Jewish singles, is here to help with advice on what gifts *really* mean when they're coming from a significant other. Check out the gifting-pedia below for definitions of what certain gift choices may say about your relationship:

Related Link: [What Gifts Say About Your Relationship](#)

A Jacket = "You'd look much better in this cut." While giving clothing is fun, it may come off as though you're saying, "You'd look much better in this cut/color." If you don't give your new mate clothing that matches their personal style, you're saying you want to see them in something different, which may signal that you're trying to change them. Whether there's any truth to it or not, it's best to stick to nondescript accessories when giving gifts. Perhaps something like...

Mittens = "You warm my heart." Mittens are a sweet and thoughtful way to say, "I like you... a lot!" Unlike jackets, sweaters or boots, mittens typically come in just a few styles (meaning you can't screw up and get your hipster boyfriend a pair that looks like it belongs on an investment banker). And if you are lucky enough to receive a pair, it means the object of your affection wants to warm your fingers like you've warmed their heart.

Related Link: [10 Holiday Gift Ideas for That Special Someone](#)

Candles = “I know nothing about you.” I once got a wrought iron candle holder from my college boyfriend. I opened it and wondered “What about me screams candles?” Unless you’re some kind of candle-maven, this gift basically screams unoriginal and may mean you don’t know each other well enough to pick out something more personal.

Concert Tickets = “You make my heart sing.” If your mate surprises you with a pair of concert tickets for a big show they knew you would love, you’ve found a keeper! Not only did they think about what you would actually like, but they’re also making fun plans with you in the future, so you can be sure they’re in this for the long-term)!

Gift Cards = “I didn’t care enough to actually go out and buy you a present.” The gift card is the relationship kiss-off. Giving this gift basically says you are either lazy or just didn’t care enough to put any thought into your present. Do not give this gift! You can do better.

A Box of Chocolates = “You’re the sweetest thing I’ve ever laid eyes on.” Giving sweets to your sweet signals your relationship is so yummy that your mate’s love is about to give you a sugar rush! If your partner is associating you with the deliciousness that can only be found in a box of chocolates, then you have certainly found a satisfying relationship. But just as eating the entire box of candies in one weekend will make you crash, moving too fast in your relationship may leave you with a similar result!

Basketball Season Tickets = “I’ll pretend to like anything you like.” As a huge University of Kansas basketball fan, I would personally love it if someone bought me season tickets. However, if the person you’re dating suddenly becomes obsessed with your hobbies, going as far as to buy you tickets to a sporting event they previously didn’t even know existed, then

you may be dating a people-pleaser with no hobbies of their own. Take it as a compliment, but suggest your partner join a book club, karate class or writing program to get a handle on who they really are!

A Homemade Gift Certificate = “I’m broke, but you mean the world to me.” Let’s be real, homemade gifts have become a lot more popular since the recession hit. Drafting a “Free Home-cooked Meal” certificate is a sweet and inexpensive way to show you care. If you’re going to give this gift, make sure you follow through with your promise or your partner may think you are unreliable.

Expensive Jewelry = “I want to impress you.” Ah, every girl’s dream! While we usually love anything that sparkles, this gift can also say, “I want to impress you,” or worse, “I messed up – please forgive me!” Give this gift with caution – once you’ve given something expensive, you can’t go back! After receiving a Tiffany’s bracelet, no one wants to follow up with an 80s-throwback snap bracelet.

An Engagement Ring = “I’m madly in love with you.” So you wake up on a magnificent Saturday morning to find Mr. Right has made you breakfast in bed, and at the bottom of your mimosa is the most brilliant diamond ring you’ve ever seen! If you’re madly in love and have been waiting for this moment, then a mazel tov is in order! Congratulations – you’ve just discovered the gift of true love.

Rachel is JDate’s Community Manager. She’s here to break down the rules of dating, share first date tips and offer words of encouragement when dating gets tough. Hit up her Tumblr page at www.Jdating.tumblr.com for more insightful advice. Or, learn what makes Rachel tick by visiting her JDate profile!

10 Rules for Couples Gifts



By Johanna Lyman for GalTime.com

Do you love the season but not the shopping?

I love the holidays, but I'm not a fan of buying gifts. I'm one of those rare women who don't like to shop. I agonize over buying the perfect gift, but I'm not great with paying attention to details, so I never know what the perfect gift might be. This year, I decided to think outside the gift-giving box and come up with my best tips for making it all easier.

1. Be blunt when you talk to your Santa. If there's something special you want from your man, ask for it directly. I know, I know, it's uncomfortable to ask for what you want. But don't you think you deserve it? Your man is not a mind reader, even if he loves you beyond all reason. He won't think you're being pushy if you give him a few ideas, in fact he'll love you for it. Trust me on this one.

2. Splurge on yourself. Give yourself the gift of a makeover or splurge on an outfit that makes you feel like a million

bucks. The holidays can be a difficult time for people with self-esteem issues (in other words, most of us). One way to keep from getting the holiday blues is to do something that tell you "I'm worth it." Because it's true: you are worth it.

3. Your time and talents and donations count as gifts. Another great way to get happy during the holidays is to give the gift of your time, talents and treasures to those in need. Donate toys to the Marines, pick a couple of tags off a Christmas tree at the bank and buy the requested item for a needy child, and/or volunteer with your sweetie at the local soup kitchen. Maybe Christmas, as the Grinch discovered, isn't about "things, after all." Short on time? Make a donation to the local food bank so families in need can have a happy holiday meal.

4. Give him something he loves even if you don't love it. Now onto some actual gift ideas. If your man is into video games, go to a gaming store and ask the sales associate what the most popular new games are then buy one of those for him. I know you probably hate his Xbox, but that's not the point. The gift is for him, not you. He'll love you even more for getting him a game when he knows you're not a fan of gaming.

5. Help him cheer on his team. If he's into watching professional sports, get him tickets to the next home game. If those are too pricey, opt for an officially sanctioned jersey. The non-sanctioned jerseys and t-shirts are usually pretty cheesy and he'll love you for knowing the difference, especially if you don't care about his team.

6. Turn TV into a great gift. Does he have a favorite television series, or is he a history buff? There are plenty of boxed DVD sets that make great gifts. The History of World War II in an 8-DVD set will keep him entertained for hours. The side benefit of this gift is that while he's watching the DVDs, you can have a guilt-free girls' night out.

7. Spice it up with a gift you'll both enjoy. If you want to get him something you'll both enjoy, opt for a weekend getaway. Inside the gift box, include some lingerie for yourself, with details of the trip folded on top. Remember, this is a gift for him. If you're going to enjoy it as well, it's nice to make it special for him.

8. Turn up the volume. For music lovers, there are plenty of options. Satellite radio for his car, a boxed CD/DVD set of his favorite band complete with never before seen live concert footage, or even an iTunes gift card. Concert tickets are a great idea too; get him two and tell him to take his buddy. Then you can have another guilt-free girls' night out.

9. Skip the chore-related gifts. Whatever you do, do not buy him something that you want. Also, do not buy him a tool that he needs to complete a project you want him to work on. That's selfish and transparent; it's like him buying you a vacuum cleaner.

10. Stay focused on the two of you. You may have noticed that only one of my gift suggestions was something that you would enjoy together. There are two reasons for that. First of all, gifts are supposed to be for the receiver, not the giver. Second, as important as it is to spend quality time together, it's equally important to spend time apart. That's why getting him a gift that gives you time to yourself or time with your girlfriends is a double win. Healthy relationships develop between healthy individuals, and knowing how to spend time alone is one way to cultivate being a healthy individual.

Happy shopping!

Andy Puddicombe, Author of 'Get Some Headspace,' Shares the Ingredients for a Perfect Relationship



By Whitney Baker

As a former Buddhist monk, Andy Puddicombe knows a thing or two about meditation. Considered to be the United Kingdom's foremost expert on mindfulness, he founded the Headspace organization in an attempt to demystify the practice of meditation. To further this goal, Puddicombe wrote *Get Some Headspace: How Mindfulness Can Change Your Life in 10 Minutes a Day*; he was inspired by his "desire to make meditation accessible, practical and relevant to modern-day living." CupidsPulse.com had a chance to interview Puddicombe about the importance of meditation and how finding balance can lead to greater happiness and improved relationships.

Can you define "headspace" or "mindfulness" for our readers?

Mindfulness is the ability to be present and in the moment. Most of us have experienced this at some time, perhaps whilst watching a sunset or listening to music. The problem is that it seems to pass quite quickly, and before long, we are caught up in lots of thinking or struggling with difficult emotions.

So we need some way of training the mind to be more familiar with the state of being present and engaged with what is happening now. This is where meditation comes in. It is simply a technique that allows us to become more familiar with this quality.

And headspace is the result of both. When we are present in life, there is a sense of being grounded; we are not easily put off balance by challenging emotions, and at the same time, we are fully aware that our thoughts do not control us. When we have a sense of headspace, we are at ease with our thoughts, our emotions and our body; perhaps just as importantly, we are at ease with those around us as well.

For people interested in finding more balance, what is the number one technique you recommend using to clear the clutter in their heads?

I always recommend starting with something simple. Go to www.getsomeheadspace.com or download the Headspace App, and you can learn a classic mindfulness technique for free. It takes just 10 minutes a day, and it provides all the essential elements for learning how to step back from thought and to experience a greater sense of calm, clarity and balance in the mind.

What areas of our lives will be enriched by daily meditation?

When we meditate, we are fine-tuning the mind. It doesn't just change our relationship to one or two particular things; it changes our relationship to everything in life. It fundamentally changes our perception of everyone and everything. It allows us to stop projecting what we think and

instead see the world for what it really is.

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

When it comes to love, how can mindfulness help us be our best selves and thus attract our best matches?

Mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress, worry and anger, whilst increasing the qualities of happiness, openness and empathy. Needless to say, when we are looking for love, we want the very best of us to shine. We want to be able to let go of our impatience, nervousness and maybe even our desperation. At the same time, we want to be able to connect with our partner, to meet them where they are in life, to see them for who they are and not what we want them to be. That is the starting place for any healthy relationship.

For someone who is still nervous and unsure about a new relationship, can mindfulness help calm their fears and give them confidence? How so?

Absolutely. In fact, a study at University of California-Los Angeles showed that, by learning to be more aware of our emotions through the practice of mindfulness, we can reduce the intensity of anxiety by up to 50 percent.

But perhaps more importantly still, as we get to know ourselves better through the practice of mindfulness, we're able to recognize the tendency to run away from difficult situations or to get very defensive when we feel unsure or insecure. This is replaced by the ability and willingness to just stay with that uncertainty, to embrace it and allow it to be part of the journey. There is a certain feeling of freedom that comes from the certainty that nothing is certain. This, in turns, tends to have a very positive effect on the relationship.

Related Link: [Three Steps to Stress Free Holiday Dating](#)

And finally, how can mindfulness help us get the most of our current relationships?

Mindfulness helps us to be present. This means that, when we are with others, we are actually with them rather than simply being there in person but elsewhere in our mind. It allows us the space of mind to listen to others, to understand others, to be less critical and judgmental of others. At the same time, it encourages the qualities of openness, flexibility and empathy. Most of all, it allows us to give others the opportunity to be themselves, which is the only way either person is ever going to be truly happy. If you were putting a mix together to make the perfect relationship, it is difficult to imagine a better list of ingredients.

To purchase Andy Puddicombe's 'Get Some Headspace,' visit Amazon. You can also follow him on Twitter, Facebook and his site at www.GetSomeHeadSpace.com.

Is Being Center Stage Ruining Your Relationship?





By Michelle Rebecca

When you and your partner have a fight, do you blog, Tweet, change your status on Facebook and call all of your friends to let them know about it? If so, you might be endangering your relationship by sharing too much information with others.

As many celebrities (e.g., Kim Kardashian, Tom Cruise, Madonna) have discovered, it's hard to nurture the tender bud of a healthy romance in the harsh glare of the public eye.

Related Link: [Kim Kardashian 'Doesn't Want Battle' with Kris Humphries](#)

The Anatomy of a Fight

All couples argue, and everyone who has ever been in a relationship would probably admit to saying or doing something he or she later regretted. Normally, couples work through these less than ideal moments. Only the two of them, give or take a couple of very close friends, ever know that the unpleasantness took place at all.

Contrast that with the experience of an A-List celebrity who gets into it with her partner and exchanges some angry words with him in public. Those words won't be forgotten as tempers cool. Instead, they will be repeated on every entertainment show and analyzed between the covers of every magazine.

If the fight was shocking enough, marriage counselors may even

come out of the woodwork to speculate on the future of the relationship.

Related Link: [Sherry Amatenstein Dishes on 'The Complete Counselor'](#)

Long after the celebrity herself has made up with her partner and is ready to move on, her fans will still be talking about those few ill-advised words hurled in what should have been a private moment.

Limiting Public Access

Whether you're a movie star or a contractor estimating software sales agent, there's a lot to be said for keeping your personal relationships...well, personal.

Take a moment to think about celebrity couples who have flung open the doors on their private lives. How many of them are still together?

Now, think about celebrities who have consistently declined to turn their personal lives into public fodder. I'm thinking of names like Rowan Atkinson (married since 1990), Julia Roberts, who learned the hard way about the cost of conducting relationships under media scrutiny (now happily married since 2002), and Meryl Streep (married since 1978).

Are you beginning to see a trend?

How Does All This Apply to Me?

Okay, so maybe you're not a celebrity, but you can still make choices about whether you invite others to take an intimate look at your relationship. You can decide whether to make your latest dust-up with your partner the most talked about event of the week among your social circle or whether to resolve matters quietly between the two of you.

Most people find that the rift between you and your loved one

heals far more quickly when your spat stays private.

Maybe the next time somebody says, "Talk to me, girlfriend," your response should be, "No, thanks!"

Michelle is an aspiring writer and blogger with a passion for the Internet, specifically social media and blogging. She loves how social media connects people across the globe, and appreciates that blogging gives her the opportunity to voice her thoughts and share advice with an unlimited audience.

6 Great First-Date Questions (and 4 to Skip)



by Rachel Seliger for GalTime.com

There's a lot that goes into making a first date great – picking the perfect spot, wearing the right clothing, having a positive attitude and, of course, maintaining good conversation.

So you have a first date coming up – good for you! You’ve already accomplished the hardest part, which is landing that romantic meeting. I always try to look at a first date as an opportunity – even if you don’t meet the man or woman of your dreams, you can chat with a new, interesting person.

Below are some of my go-to topics and questions for first dates. I like to pick subjects that can lead to multiple conversation paths and, at the same time, help reveal more about my date.

1. Ask, “What attracted you to your job?” instead of the overused, “What do you do for a living?” which sounds like you’re at a networking event. Get to the root of your date’s 9-to-5 by asking more about his or her ambitions and character than his or her job title.

2. Take note of his or her interests and then dig a little deeper. If you’re having the first in-person meeting with someone you met online, use bits and pieces of information from his or her online dating profile to keep the conversations flowing. The profile is there for a reason – study it, but don’t look like a crazy stalker. Instead of gushing, “I love the Arctic Monkeys, too!” say something like, “I love checking out new music, and I’m really into indie rock. How about you?”

3. Ask, “Are you close with your family?” This question works great because it subtly reveals a number of things about your date, and can lead to several other conversation topics. You could end up discussing siblings, extended family, funny childhood memories or the place your date grew up. Just remember to ask follow-up questions. For example, if your date answers, “Yeah, I’m close with my sister,” ask, “Where does she live? How often do you see her? How far apart are you in age?”

4. “Want to try the [weird menu item]?” What are first dates

for if not adventure? This question can reveal how daring your date is. But it isn't reserved for just the bold – maybe you're looking for someone more grounded, who will reply, "No, thanks. I'll stick to the chicken." In addition, this question can lead to other stories, such as that time your date tried a really strange food when traveling in South America.

5. Tap into current events. If there's a big holiday coming up, ask what his or her plans are for the day – working, spending time with family or friends, traveling, etc. However, one newsy topic you should avoid is politics. Especially in the current national climate, this can be a contentious subject; you don't want to get into a debate at the dinner table!

6. If you run out of things to say or your mind goes blank, don't panic! Honesty goes a long way in overcoming awkwardness. Just laugh and fess up, with something like, "I've been really looking forward to this date, and now that it's here, I'm a little nervous!"

As an added bonus, here are some of the most cringe-worthy first date conversation attempts I've heard from friends, colleagues and fellow online daters. Whatever you do, avoid the following – trust me, even silence would be better.

1. Never comment or make suggestions regarding your date's body parts or physical appearance. Unfortunate real-life examples include: "You have such a great body, it would be a shame if you gained weight from eating [food currently on the table]" or "Would you ever consider plastic surgery?"

2. Don't bring up money – this includes salary, the cost of your meal, spending habits or even the national debt. Money is a sensitive topic, and while finances are an important topic for long-term partners to discuss, it's not first date fodder.

3. Never bring up an ex. Dating histories should be shared in a relationship, but not on the first date! In particular,

don't tell your date he or she reminds you of your previous partner – like showing your date pictures of an ex that you still have on your phone.

4. In general, avoid anything too heavy (e.g. my parents just got divorced, I just got divorced, I just got out of rehab). Heavy topics are best left for later. But that's not to say one should be dishonest, ever; it's just too soon to share such personal information on the first date.

Remember, your date is just as excited and nervous as you are, and is also pondering how to make conversation with you. So during your pre-date prep, keep in mind that you'll want to have answers ready for him or her! If all else fails, there's always the weather.

5 Ways that You and Your Honey Can Give Back During the Holiday





By Courtney Allen

'Tis the season to be jolly, especially with the one you love. Take advantage of this year's exciting end with your significant other by spreading holiday cheer the best way possible: by giving back. Show thanks for everything in your life, including your sweetie, by bringing fortune into the lives of others. Here are five great ways for you and your honey to wrap up the year right:

1. Organize dinner at a soup kitchen: Go above and beyond this year by offering to plan, prepare and serve dinner to the less fortunate at your local soup kitchen. Get creative with your love as you plan a delicious three-course meal and put together a spirit-filled set-up.

2. Deliver Christmas presents: Join a church or work group to deliver Christmas presents to deserving families who cannot afford to buy gifts. Surprise them at their door with lots of love and holiday wishes. Let the spirit of giving fill up your heart with your sweetie by your side.

Related Link: [How to Ring in the New Year like a Celeb](#)

3. Help build a house: Pull out the nails and the hammers and go to work with Habitat for Humanity to build a new home for a family in your community. Provide a family the best Christmas gift you could ever give. Create a fulfilling experience with your darling that you will never forget.

4. Adopt a family: Commit to providing an unfortunate family with necessities, cooked meals and unconditional love for an entire weekend. Get to know the family by visiting with your man. Make the holidays worth more than any gift you could receive by bringing joy into someone else's life.

Related Link: [Create a New Years Resolution with your Partner](#)

5. Spend time at a nursing home: Spend a day visiting the elderly at a nursing home in your city. Help put a smile on the some of the sweetest faces in the world. Sing Christmas duets with your favorite guy as the residents enjoy your prepared egg nog and gingerbread cookies to bring just enough holiday cheer to their day.

How will you and your man give back during the holiday season? Share your stories with us.

Relationship Expert Kaileen Rosenberg Shares Dating Advice for Finding the Love We Deserve





By Whitney Baker

You may recognize relationship expert Kailen Rosenberg as “the love guru,” “the love whisperer” or, as Oprah Winfrey recently named her, the official “ambassador of love.” With her starring role on *Lovetown, USA* from the Oprah Winfrey Network/BBC Worldwide, she put her education and experience to the test: Oprah asked Rosenberg and Paul Carrick Brunson to transform Kingsland, Georgia, into a town filled with grace, kindness and open hearts. Of how she helped the community with her dating advice, she says, “What I look for isn’t necessarily what *is* working, but what is not. I seek out what is broken, the areas that sabotage relationships and love, and help each person to work through their pain and heal, so that they can experience the love and the partner they truly deserve.”

Relationship Expert Shares Personal Beliefs on Love and Dating Advice

While fans await news of season two of the hit show, Rosenberg is hopeful, recognizing that viewers and critics alike enjoyed the first season. “Oprah’s heart and intentions are completely pure. *Lovetown, USA* was meant to be a social experiment on love,” she shares. “And it worked! It proved that, when one focuses on nothing but love, healing in the most broken places can take place.”

Related Link: [How to Find Love Amidst Holiday Crazy](#)

Of course, some heartaches are easier to mend than others. As viewers saw on *Lovetown, USA*, the relationship expert was tasked with helping two single dads find love. She approached it much like any other match. "What matters most is this: Is the person kind? Is he emotionally healthy and ready for love?"

Drawing from her own marriage, Rosenberg understands how tricky it is to find a partner that is a good fit for both you and your children. "My husband (who had never been married and had no children) is an amazing stepfather. We have a blessed family because of his genuine care for himself, me and my sons," she says. "It all depends on the values of the two people coming together."

As for how to know when you've found a relationship to last a lifetime, Rosenberg believes that it's just a feeling. She elaborates on this love advice and shares, "When you meet your soul mate, there's something inside of you that's different; you can't explain it. There's a piece of your new partner that challenges you to become a better human being. You grow and love more deeply because of that experience with each other."

Rosenberg, a master's-level certified life and love coach, is a successful matchmaker both on and off the show. She's helped over 400 couples find each other and credits this accomplishment to "teaching people to love and know themselves authentically and to heal what needs to be healed *before* getting into a relationship." Expanding on this idea further, she explains, "When people are able to listen to their inner voices and are fully aware, they make for better partners and create better relationships and better marriages."

Related Link: [E!'s Newly-Engaged Ashlan Gorse May Head Back to France for Wedding to Philippe Cousteau Jr.](#)

Kailen Rosenberg Talks Relationships and Love and Her Next Project

While Rosenberg's impressive success rate may suggest otherwise, many people are choosing to remain single rather than look for love. In fact, the Census Bureau statistics show that more than 44 percent of adults 18 and over are unattached. Even so, she isn't deterred; she even views this number as a positive thing. "Younger people want to take their time and are more sincere about love and marriage, wanting something different than generations before," she says. "As much as people want to believe in marriage, I think they are more afraid."

She then adds, "The good news is that they rarely give up on love, wanting to believe that it can still be real and wonderful."

As for what's next, Rosenberg doesn't plan to slow down anytime soon. She is currently working on a book, which will be released by Simon & Schuster in fall 2013, and tells us, "It will focus on teaching both singles and couples how to find and experience real love." Additionally, she has received offers to do her own television show to further teach people about love.

Even with her credentials, the dating expert knows just how difficult it can be to find love. For single women and men looking for a relationship, she offers this advice: "Know what is absolutely amazing about yourself, but don't be afraid to look at what isn't so lovely and great. Work on healing it and getting to a great place from within, so that when you find love, you can give and receive it at its fullest."

For more information about Kailen, please visit TheLoveArchitects.com. You can also follow her on Twitter

at @KailenRosenberg.

Date Idea: Wrap Gifts Together



By Samantha Mucha

The holiday season can be a stressful time with your partner, even though it should be full of joy and holiday cheer. To lessen your to-do list this December, and still have time for a date night, try something different with your sweetheart. Break out the wrapping paper, ribbons, and tape. It's time to channel your inner Christmas Elf.

There's no doubt that wrapping gifts is a difficult task. It's an endeavor that should be left for the most skilled and nimble-fingered family members. Yet, nothing says "I support you, babe!" quite like helping out. Have your lover join you.

It may sound like you are just recruiting your man to do your

chores while you sit back and relax, but that is not the case at all. It becomes less a of a task and more of a constructive activity when you two do it together. Have your significant other bring over their unwrapped gifts (but not yours, you don't want to ruin a good surprise) and the two of you can work together.

To make your Friday night even more entertaining turn gift-wrapping into a game. Maybe your relationship could use a little competitive edge. Try timing yourselves to see who can make the best looking package in the quickest amount of time. The winner has to bake cookies for the not-so-perfect wrapper.

Putting on some holiday music while sitting by a warm fire is a romantic conclusion to this date. After your gifts are piled neatly under the tree, sit back and relax with your beau. As the night of gift-wrapping fun comes to a close, catch a Christmas movie on TV and drift off to sleep cuddled up in each others arms.

What unique date ideas do you have during the holidays? Share your ideas below.

Readying Your Single Self for the Holidays





By Eleanore Wells

Every year this time we have to think about what to do for the big holiday season. Holidays can be challenging to just about everybody. There are decisions to be made, plans put in place, and money to be spent. And while this is true for everyone, many single people feel an extra layer of stress.

In fact, I heard from a single friend who is feeling particularly lonely and is dreading the coming holiday season. She isn't close to her family and the holidays are a time that kinda puts a spotlight on it. I, teasingly, reminded her of Cameron Diaz and Kerry Washington, two sexy ladies who have described themselves as "happily single." I said, "Do you think Cameron and Kerry are worried about the holidays? I'll bet they're looking forward to the festivities...and you should be, too."

I reminded her that she should put her friends to good use. Having a variety of friends can help a lot this time of year. Even though she has kids, I know Gayle King will be taking in some of the festivities with Oprah and Steadman. It helps to have people you like to hang out with. And isn't that what the holiday season should be about: spending time with special people? I know that's not what it's always about, but that's what it *should* be about. I'm a proponent of avoiding people who don't make me happy. If I can't avoid them completely, Plan B is to spend as little time with them as

possible.

Related Link: [How to Communicate with Your Ex Over the Holidays](#)

I'm fortunate to have a loving network of people around me. I make it work. I host Thanksgiving for what I call my "straggler" friends: it includes single people, those who can't or don't want to get with their family, people whose plans changed at the last minute, and couples without children. (I have to draw the line somewhere).

Christmas I spend it with my family and I'm not really expected to do much except show up. But there's always what to do about New Year's Eve. I never want to spend it alone, but I don't always want a big party either. When I have a beau, I spend it with him. When I don't, it's with cool friends whose company I really enjoy. I won't spend New Year's Eve with people who aren't special to me. That's not how I want to bring in the New Year.

Related Link: [Miranda Lambert Says Blake Shelton Loves to Decorate for Christmas](#)

The holidays get a bad rap, though, because they're often quite good: there's the feeling of festivity in the air, the parties, the gifts, the music, and catching up with people you like but haven't seen in awhile. And some things about being single are actually better during the holidays because we have more flexibility and fewer rules about what one is supposed to do. Here are a few:

– You don't *have* to get a tree. Trees are festive, but the needles, the watering, and the space it takes up –especially in a small apartment—...well, they're a lot of work. If you have kids and/or a husband, you might not be able to get away with not having a tree. It would be way too bah humbug. But when you're single, you can be more creative. Put up a wreath, buy a few poinsettias...and done!

– You don't have to spend a whole lot of time in one place. As a single person, it's very believable that you have additional plans, and that's why you can't spend the entire day at Aunt Mary's. Take advantage of that. Stop by for a while, hug everyone, have a glass of something...and then be on your way.

– No baking or cooking. And if you do, people make a very big deal about it. "Wow, look at what the single lady pulled off?"

– And just as good, no one really expects you to send holiday cards. These days, holiday photos of well-dressed children and/or children placed in really cool, interesting spots (at the family beach house, Macchu Picchu, etc.) are the norm. If you don't have children, no need to send a card. No postage, no paper waste, and no idea-generation on cute outfits or cool spots for the pictures. If you're married and don't send cards, you could be stricken from every card list, no matter how old or dear the friendship. But as a single person, no one seems to mind.

– You don't have to accompany the husband or kids to parties you don't really want to go to.

– No in-laws to fight with or about. This is always an issue with my married friends and they tell me this fight can get old really quickly...and yet it must be had every year.

The holidays should be fun. I think it's important to *manage* situations that you don't enjoy.

As a single person, I think it's particularly important to nurture your relationships because I really don't think we're necessarily supposed to go through life completely alone and that's where good friends come in...during the holidays, and all the other days.

Don't lose your mojo by dreading the holidays. Celebrate in a

way that works for you! Happy Holidays!

Read more about the joys and realities of being single in Eleanore's book "The Spinsterlicious Life: 20 Life Lessons for Living Happily Single and Childfree", her very popular blog, The Spinsterlicious Life at www.EleanoreWells.com/blog, and her Spinsterlicious Facebook Fan Page.

8 Great Winter Dates



By GalTime Writer, Kelly Rouba,
for GalTime.com

Date ideas that will melt your heart

As the weather gets colder and the nights get longer, it's tempting to just stay inside and cuddle up with your partner under a warm blanket while watching a good movie. And while alone time is always nice (and necessary), don't let the winter weather stop you from getting out with your special someone and creating memories that will last a lifetime.

“[Women] should make time for winter dates because it gives their partner a chance to show off his or her romantic side, more so than just walking down the beach on a summer day or having a picnic in the park during the spring. Winter dates scream romance!” says Tierra Fields of New Jersey.

As far as romantic winter dates go, Fields says nothing beats a good old -fashioned carriage ride. Some towns also offer festive trolley rides during the holidays, which is a nice way to see the sights while enjoying each other’s company.

Dating expert and founder of the match site Sitting In A Tree, Stacie Ikka says that there are many wintertime activities that can make for memorable dates and that couples should take full advantage of those opportunities.

“Any opportunity to date is a good opportunity to date, weather conditions notwithstanding,” she says. “If you’re using cold temperatures as a reason not to get out there, what other excuses are you making and what other self-imposed obstacles are you creating for reaching the love you so richly deserve?”

So if you and your partner are ready to get out of the house but still aren’t sure what to do, try one (or more...or all!) of Ikka’s 8 best suggestions for heart-warming winter dates.

Go ice skating

Even if you can’t make it to the famed Rockefeller Center to ice skate, hitting a local rink can be just as fun. Holding hands as you skate around the ice and then sharing a cup of hot chocolate to warm up afterwards makes for a nice afternoon or evening out.

Visit a gourmet coffee shop and order a personalized concoction for each other

“My boyfriend used to do this all the time and while it drove

the baristas a little crazy, it was a simple adventure and indulgence for us,” Ikka said, recalling, “He would go up and order while I waited at a table or in the car, come back proudly holding a coffee cup, and I’d—on cue—ask, ‘So, what’d we get this time?’ I can only imagine it would be that much more fun with someone you don’t know as well.” As an added bonus, some coffee shops have nice fireplaces to snuggle up by while sipping your special drink. (Be sure to be mindful of personal preferences and allergies when ordering!)

Hit the hills on a tobogan or sled

If weather conditions permit, going sledding or tobogganing is the perfect way to establish physical contact without crossing too many personal boundaries. It is also great exercise, and it may take the damper out of an otherwise bleak winter afternoon. Plus, it is way more exciting than the typical “coffee date!”

Build a snowman

Sound silly? Consider that there’s something about reliving childhood activities that tends to conjure up feelings of nostalgia, comfort, playfulness, and warmth—all of which go a long way in alleviating dating fatigue or dread. If you find yourself having too much fun and don’t want the date to end, consider grabbing some soup afterwards to warm up and carry on some good conversation.

Visit a bakery and then spread some holiday cheer

My favorite date begins with stopping at your local bakery or coffee shop to purchase some hot chocolate and donuts to give away. Before doing so, set a reasonable budget (perhaps \$20 between the two of you). Then step outside to whatever Winter Wonderland awaits you and share your goodies with strangers, the homeless, neighboring retailers, or whoever you know is in need. It’s a great way to observe your date’s social skills, and it’s a relatively selfless, pay-it-forward endeavor. This

activity also takes some of the pressure and focus off of you and your date so you're not stuck staring at each other across the table!

Cook together

Assuming it's a blustery winter day and going outside just isn't an option, try picking out some new or unusual recipes and then make them together. There's nothing like enjoying good comfort food on a cold winter's night, and then snuggling up in front of a movie to digest.

Recreate your first (or pivotal) date, if you met during the winter

If your partner planned it the first time, perhaps you can plan it the second time. Be sure to add a few touches that demonstrate how the relationship has grown or how that first date was so instrumental in allowing the relationship to evolve.

Volunteer together at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter

This activity not only allows you both to give back to your community, but you're doing a good deed while getting to spend time with each other. It's a win-win.

Keep in mind, this list just scratches the surface. There are endless possibilities when it comes to planning a winter date. Just don't let them slip by!

Small-Screen Costars Who Turned Their TV Romances into the Real Deal



By Jennifer Ross

It is not surprising that when actors have chemistry on-screen, feelings can keep rolling after the director screams “cut!” The lines between fiction and reality can get blurry with all those hormones raging. No matter how professional an actor claims to be, when it comes to love, sometimes you just can’t fight the resistance for too long. For many TV fans, the reel-to-real romance is exactly what they want. Take a peek at some of Hollywood’s romantic couples, on-and-off screen.

Related Link: [Patti Stanger Explains How to Reconnect Like Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis](#)

1. Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis: What started out as a dysfunctional high-school relationship between characters Jackie Burkhart (Mila Kunis) and Michael Kelso (Ashton Kutcher) on Fox’s *That ‘70s Show* finally came to reality

earlier this year. The cute Wisconsin couple was on-and-off again for the first 4 seasons of the show, which began airing on August 1998. However, it wasn't till about a decade later that Kutcher, 34, and Kunis, 29, decided to date off-screen. Before that time, Kutcher was married to ex Demi Moore. Now, sources report to UsMagazine.com that Kutcher has always had a thing for Kunis.

2. Lea Michele and Cory Monteith: *Glee* fans everywhere simply adore the on-screen relationship between characters Finn Hudson (Cory Monteith) and Rachel Berry (Lea Michele). Fortunately, the off-screen actors are just as happy to turn Finchel into a reality. The twosome, playing a high school couple, has been dating since last fall. Michele, 26, has gushed to *People* that she loves working with Monteith, 30. "He really, really inspires me, and he motivates me and I think he's just so talented," the *Glee* club diva professes.

Related Link: [Nina Dobrev Admits to Fighting Feelings for Costar Ian Somerhalder](#)

3. Anna Paquin and Stephen Moyer: The complicated on-screen relationship between characters Sookie Stackhouse (Anna Paquin) and Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer) on the *HBO* show *True Blood* has unfortunately ended. However, the real life union between the actors is still going strong. Married in 2010, the couple began dating back in 2008. Growing their family, Paquin, 30, recently gave birth to twins last month. No news yet as to the gender or names of the newborns. Although the twins were born a few weeks early, both babies and mom are said to be doing fine, according to Usmagazine.com. The twins are the first children for Paquin while Moyer, 43, has two additional children Lilac, 10, and Billy, 12, from a previous relationship.

4. Will Chase and Debra Messing: On the *NBC* television series *Smash*, a steamy love affair ensued between Broadway lyricist and musical's co-writer Julia Houston (Debra Messing) and musical

theater star Michael Swift (Will Chase). Although Messing's character broke off the affair and struggled to save her on-screen marriage, off-screen she and Chase, 41, have been continuing their hot yet private relationship. Just last year, Messing, 44, ended her 10 year marriage to theater guru Daniel Zelman. Prior to his relationship with Messing, Chase also left his wife of 2 years, actress Stephanie Gibson. It looks like both of them made the right decision and are happily enjoying each other's company.

What small-screen couples would you like to see dating in real life? Tell us below.

**12/12/12 is the Last
Consecutive Number Sequence
Date to Marry This Century**



By Jennifer Ross

Seeing triple? 12/12/12 is quickly approaching. This is the last of the popular consecutive date sequences, like 10/10/10 and 11/11/11, to come around for the next 1,000 years – our lifetime! Many people consider it lucky to be alive during these years, and even more people consider it lucky to fall in [love](#) and get married on one of these iconic dates.

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

According to the sixth annual survey from David's Bridal, "What's on Brides' Minds," an estimated 43% of brides have considered planning their wedding on an iconic date such as this one. Earlier this year, on 10/11/12, thousands of couples were married. David's Bridal estimates that more than 7,500 brides will marry on 12/12/12 – compared to only 485 who married on this day last year. That's a 1446% increase over the prior year!

The people at David's Bridal spoke to a lot of amazing brides getting married on 12/12/12 who have great stories. Here are five of the most popular reasons to choose this date:

1. Couples got engaged on 11/11/11 or 10/10/10.
2. The triple number sequence is good luck to people interested in numerology.
3. Because the date is iconic – the last consecutive number sequence of the century.
4. It is easy to remember; husbands will have no excuse if they forget their anniversary.
5. In the Chinese culture, even numbers are lucky.

Related Link: [Secrets to Staying Married for 50 Years \(Or More\)](#)

Another reason couples chose this date is so that they can save a little money by getting married in the middle of the

week since 12/12/12 lands on a Wednesday. Talk about being resourceful!

If you are unable to plan your wedding in time for this iconic date and are upset about missing the last consecutive number sequence of our lifetime, don't fret. Next year, there will be an order sequence date: 11/12/13. However, you might want to start planning soon; this number is officially the last sequence number for the century.

For more information, click check out the blog at www.Blogs.DavidsBridal.com.

Extravagant Hollywood Couples' Gifts Within Reach of Your Budget



By Shelly Cone

Ah, to be in love around the holidays! The peace, the goodwill ... and the gifts. Of course, any holiday gift from your loved one is special, but if you happen to be in [celebrity relationship](#), you can bet that special comes with a high price tag. As the holiday season draws near, we can only guess at what some of the most celebrated Hollywood couples are buying for each other. But based on what some celebrity couples have already given each other this year, it's likely there will be some luxury under their trees.

Hollywood Couples' Over-the-Top Gifts

There's no word yet on what gifts newlyweds Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel will exchange for their first Christmas as a married celebrity couple, but with thoughtful Timberlake, it must be something good. When they wed earlier this year, he gave his new bride four stackable wedding rings that matched her 18-karat celebrity engagement ring.

Jennifer Lopez's celebrity love Casper Smart will likely be waiting with anticipation at what lays under the tree for him this Christmas, considering Lopez gifted him with a white Dodge Ram truck for his 25th birthday this year. And when [Kim Kardashian](#) went birthday shopping for beau Kanye West (maybe she's hoping for a ring this Christmas?), she selected a \$750,000 Lamborghini as a gift. Wonder how she'll top that!

Then, of course, there's the queen of gift-giving [Angelina Jolie](#), who reportedly has bestowed on her husband a \$1.6 million helicopter with flying lessons and a \$12,000 olive tree, among other things. Last Christmas, she gave Brad Pitt his own waterfall in California so that he can build his dream home.

Related Link: [Angelina Jolie Buys Brad Pitt a Waterfall](#)

Shop Like You're In a Celebrity Relationship

So if you're not a member of the elite or in a Hollywood couple, how do you express your million dollar love without spending that much? Maybe you can't buy your loved one a waterfall or a helicopter, but you can buy a gift that can help satisfy a passion for travel. Gifts for travelers can be extravagant or fit into any budget. If you are in California, a simple hike to the Nojoqui Falls in the Santa Ynez Valley or water rafting on the Kern River can easily fit into any budget and may be a fun substitute for giving your love a waterfall this Christmas. Just remember to gear up with some gifts for hikers before your trip!

For an even more budget-friendly gift, print out photos of him in his various travels and frame them in variety of sizes in a montage to his international experiences. Make sure the photos capture him looking his most worldly and he'll be ecstatic about showing off your gift.

Related Link: [What Your Gifts Say About Your Relationship](#)

Maybe your honey isn't so much into travel, and instead, the waterfall is the thing that calms the senses of your practicing yogi sweetie. Help your gentle one find their peace without having to book a trip away from home. Some yoga DVDs can help them find their center. Add some yoga accessories, and you'll be their hero – the kind, sensitive hero with the great abs.

Who wouldn't want a luxury car? Unless you're a socialite or a member of Hollywood royalty, keep dreaming. We'd all like that spectacular sports car as a gift, but the average person will be overjoyed over any gifted vehicle. Show your love you care for them as well as the environment with an eco-friendly (and budget-friendly) Honda fit. For less than \$20,000, you can

give your better half the nimble and fun to drive car that U.S. News and World Report ranks the number one affordable small car. With 28/35 miles per galloon, the Fit will prove to be a great fit for your bank account and your environmentally responsible sensibility.

But perhaps you want to put a sparkle in her eyes. While I'm sure the new Mrs. Timberlake is thrilled with her bling, it may not be in your best interest to buy the girl in your life a ring, unless she is The One. If you want the bling but want to keep things on the lighter side or maybe you've already given her that sparkler and want to buy her something fashionable, check out DuePunti Diamond Rings. The ultra affordable rings come in a variety of fashionable colors perfect for stacking along with a .02 ct. diamond ring in the center of each one. Your lady can mix and match or wear them all. And with the price, you can afford to buy several!

Your wallet may not be loaded, but there's no doubting the love in your heart. Take a cue from those extravagant gift-giving celebs and buy something fantastically thoughtful but totally within reason. You don't have to spend Kardashian money to give someone a happy holiday!

Shelly Cone is an award-winning journalist, copywriter, humor columnist and the owner of Beach Betty Creative. She writes for the love of it, laughs because she can't help it and knows how to pick the perfect gift every time.

5 Secrets from My Date with

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler



By Karen Siff Exkorn for GalTime.com

Tina Fey shares her lip gloss and talks to Amy Poehler in crazy gibberish

I'm pretty sure it's every woman's dream to go on a date with Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. Or at least it was mine.

So there I was, at the Beacon Theater in New York City, attending an event to benefit autism called Night of Too Many Stars. Hosted by Jon Stewart, the evening featured Ben Stiller, Seth Rogen, Stephen Colbert, Harvey Keitel, Carly Rae Jepsen, Katy Perry, Sting, and many more, including, Tina Fey and Amy Poehler.

Jon Stewart announced that one of the live auction items was to "spend a date night as the new best friend of Tina Fey and Amy Poehler." The next thing I knew, the bidding began and I raised my hand high in the air. Cut to minutes later, I found myself onstage at the Beacon Theater—with another winning bidder and my new best friends Tina and Amy! After an

intimate bonding experience in front of 3,000 audience members, we were whisked outside for a photo shoot that was later shown on a jumbo screen at the theater.

By spending a date night with these two incredibly talented and amazing women, I learned a few things.

5 BFF Secrets I Learned with Tina Fey and Amy Poehler

1. They have a special language

You know how most best friends can complete each other's sentences or know how the other is feeling just by a glance? Well, Tina and Amy have that, and more! It's almost like they relate on a psychic level. When we were backstage, they decided to come up with a skit that would involve us, only they didn't want us to know what they were planning. They started communicating in what seemed like a combination of gibberish and charades. Even though we were seated right next to them, we had no idea what they were up to. Speaking very quickly, gesturing wildly, and giggling in agreement, Tina and Amy managed to create a spectacular skit in only minutes.

2. They are who you think they are

If you already guessed from their movies and interviews that Tina and Amy are fabulous, smart, funny women, then you're right. These women are the real thing. Some actors just "act" like they're nice, when they're really not. A producer friend of mine interviews celebrities and shares horror stories of how some actresses are all "smiling and nice" when the cameras are on and all "bitchy and diva-esque" once the cameras are off. Tina and Amy could not have been nicer during the time we spent together. They not only treated us with love and respect, but they also treated the cameraman, crew and all of the fans who crowded around to watch us during the photo shoot with the same love and respect.

3. They don't engage in "Tripping the Head Cheerleader" behavior

Being a woman in show business (or any business for that matter) can be a challenge. Business is competitive, and women not only have to deal with the competition from others, but also with that ever present glass ceiling. I should know. I've had my own management consulting business for over 20 years. Tina and Amy are in a business that's typically controlled by men, and yet, they've risen to the top. Why? Because, instead of trying to beat each other up or engage in undermining behaviors (as I've seen many women do), they support each other and nurture each other's careers. You've seen their work together on SNL and in the movies—these women are each other's head cheerleaders. If more women could learn to support each other and cheer each other on, we could use that collective energy to break through that glass ceiling once and for all.

4. They're both caring moms who care about more than just their own kids

Tina has her beautiful daughters Alice and Penelope, and Amy has her adorable sons Archie and Abel. You can tell they're caring parents by the way they gush about their kids. But their caring goes beyond their own kids. They both generously donated their time and talent to appear at this benefit for autism education, and were interested to learn more about children with autism. Because of my personal relationship with autism, I shared our son's story of recovery. We talked about the ongoing need for autism education as more and more children are being diagnosed. And we all wept while watching Katy Perry perform an incredibly moving duet with a young girl with autism whose dream was to meet her singing idol one day. (If you haven't seen it, it's worth watching on YouTube.)

5. They share lip gloss

In an attempt to lighten the mood (since I started getting teary-eyed writing my last entry), I've decided to share my last bit of insider information about Tina and Amy. Tina carries lip gloss. Amy does not. So Tina shared her lip gloss with Amy. And when Tina overheard me saying that I wished I'd brought my own lip gloss, she generously offered to share hers with me. Yes, it's true. *I shared Tina's lip gloss.* As I smeared the gloss on my lips with the wand that had just touched both Tina and Amy's lips, I secretly hoped that their brilliance might rub off on me. I'm still hoping...

Ryan Danz and Abbie Ginsberg Tell Us How They Bonded on 'The Amazing Race'



By Nic Baird

Viewers of 'The Amazing Race' can relax now that the suspense of the CBS show's 21st season has dissipated. The competition is over, and fans can reflect on the brave globe-trotting adventurers they cheered to take the one million dollar prize at the finish line.

While we all rooted for our favorites, it's hard not to feel at least a little disappointed that couple Ryan Danz and Abbie Ginsberg were eliminated in Amsterdam with only three episodes left. The "dating divorcees" team had the first opportunity in the game's history to score double: by winning the first leg of the competition, Danz and Ginsberg became eligible to win two million dollars should they be victorious overall. If that wasn't enough to gain favor with the audience, the trials of this type-A twosome told a riveting love story.

"Because we lasted as long as we did, it bonded us in some very unique ways that most couples didn't get to experience," says Danz, referring to the three romantic pairs previously eliminated. Despite having a better average placement than any of their competitors in their ninth and final leg, Danz and Ginsberg were hit by multiple flight delays and a U-Turn penalization that forced them to take an extra detour.

The ensuing elimination did not leave any bitterness or regret in the relationship of these fierce competitors. Instead, they revel in their triumph as a couple. Rather than dwelling on the loss of a two million dollar prize, Danz and Ginsberg focus on how they learned new ways to communicate and support each other. "We ran the race really well," Ginsberg says. "And that's something that makes both of us very proud."

While still in the throws of a young relationship, Danz and Ginsberg faced five other couple teams among the total roster of eleven. The other competitors had been together much longer than this twosome, who had each ended a first marriage when they connected roughly a year ago. Besides the thrill of adventure and the lure of treasure, both teammates were

looking for insight into their budding romance when they signed up.

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

“We took a lot from that race,” Ginsberg shares. The intensity of the competition kept them mindful of their partner’s needs. “Like any couple,” she points out, “it takes constant checks and balances.”

“The whole process has been very positive for our relationship,” Ginsberg says but admits that it could have been the opposite. “A lot of people warned us that it would probably tear us apart and make us resent each other.” Juggling the double role of teammate and girlfriend, she describes it as “a lot of managing.”

Likewise, Danz thought it was important to be supportive and encouraging as a partner outside of dating. “Going into the race, the most important thing was how I treated Abbie as a teammate.”

As viewers saw, the couple faced obstacles both on and off the race course but always did their best to overcome them. “One team can be very lucky; another can get unlucky,” Danz says. “As far as racing, we wouldn’t do anything differently.”

The pair identify specific relationship challenges they had to face during the competition. As two competitive spirits, they had a early issues sharing leadership, Ginsberg says. Danz explains this problem led to a fight at their hotel. With fresh wounds from his divorce, Danz didn’t want to engage in conflicts with Ginsberg. “She’d say, ‘Why are you pulling away?’”

The couple was able to work on their relationship by communicating during down time. “We were really mature about it,” Ginsberg says. “We got more unified and closer each race.” Ginsberg was glad to have a partner who could take the

lead when needed but also share the responsibilities. “It was successful as long as we were able to be open and honest with each other.”

Related Link: [5 Bachelor and Bachelorette Couples We Can Learn From](#)

Danz recalls the time when he was most amazed by his partner. The couple arrived at the Roadblock challenge in Bangladesh, and they spotted a balance scale demonstration. He describes how Ginsberg had to build a balance scale out of bamboo and rope and then figure out how much wood would balance four stones. “I was so blown away by how resolved she was to complete the task. She didn’t give up. She didn’t break down. I am still so impressed by that moment.”

Expanding on Danz’s recollection, Ginsberg shares, “Ryan was really encouraging and supportive during solo experiences.” When the atmosphere got tense, she says they still focused on the race instead of “little petty things.” As a member of the “dating divorcees” team, she describes how communicating with a new partner is like “learning a whole new language.”

For Danz, he describes the experience as extending much further than the “compressed” TV show.” He says the moments of reflection during their travels as a couple were really important and very empowering. “I’m really proud of her,” Danz shares, “really proud of how we ran the race together.”

For more information about Ryan, check out www.RyanDanz.com. You can also follow him on Facebook and Twitter at @RyanDanz. You can follow Abbie on Facebook and Twitter as well at @AbbieGinsberg.