

# Relationship Advice: Telltale Signs Your Relationship Is One of Convenience



By Toni Coleman, LCSW, CMC for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Relationships and marriages differ in many ways. What works for one couple would not be right for another. Therefore, there isn't one specific set of attributes or descriptors that could be used in a premarital checklist designed to ensure any marriage will be a successful one. However, there are certain traits that are commonly found in relationships that couples describe as happy and satisfying. These often have to do with specific dynamics and qualities that impact how they relate and communicate from day to day. When these are absent or lacking in some way, it can point to a union that continues

due to convenience rather than emotional, spiritual, and physical attachment. Here's some [relationship advice](#) that will help you classify your relationship as convenient or sent from Cupid.

## **Expert Relationship Advice On How To Tell If You're In A Relationship Out Of Convenience**

**1. You decided to marry because of your age, a desire for children, and/or social pressure to do so.** People get married for many different reasons that can include peer or family pressure, age, a desire for children, practical concerns involving money and lifestyle, and/or a fear of being alone or never finding someone as good as one's partner. All of these are more about convenience than emotional attachment and love—even though both can be and are present in many relationships. If relationship problems, such as missing emotional attachment exist, couples often find that over time they feel restless, unfulfilled, and bored. These are major contributors to increasing alienation and emotional and physical infidelity because they may seek to meet their emotional needs outside of the relationship.

**2. Your daily lives are more parallel than intertwined.** This is when two people live essentially as roommates—sharing household responsibilities and interacting when needs or issues arise that require them to do so. As a relationship expert, I see that these couples may share coffee or the occasional meal, attend social and other events together, but they function as individuals rather than as a unit, lacking the cohesiveness and intimacy that is enjoyed by those with an intimate connection.

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**3. Your conversations consist of topics related to scheduling, household coordination and or issues with finances, future planning and the children.** When all of your conversations are pragmatic and skin deep, there is something missing. It's that tone in your partner's voice, the sharing of feelings and desires, those discussions about nothing or everything during which you feel close and connected.

**4. You value the material and social benefits of your marriage over the relationship itself.** If someone were to ask you why you like being married, what would you say? Would your thoughts immediately go to your home, material possessions, nice vacations, social status, friend group, household help, financial security, and/or the ability to choose work over staying home? If so, the glue that holds you together may be one of practicality and security, rather than emotional and physical affection and attachment.

**5. You seek out others to meet your needs for friendship and companionship.** Do you feel lonely at home? Do you actively seek out friendship with others because you and your spouse don't share this? Do you hate date nights? Are double or group dates the only ones you go on? Marriage to the wrong person can be very lonely, even lonelier than being single, as many singles have strong social networks that sustain them and help meet their needs. However, if your marriage is more of an arrangement, you will be spending most of your free time with someone you feel little in common with and/or have little or no desire to interact with.

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**6. Sex is rare or non-existent, and you see it as your duty.** Everyone's sex drive ebbs and flows over the course of a long-term relationship. We can't sustain the initial

excitement and highs we experienced when it was new, nor should we expect to. However, when we have an emotional connection with someone there is a desire for closeness, touch, and yes, sex. We also want to meet that other person's intimacy needs and therefore it doesn't feel like a chore. If it does, something critical is missing.

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**7. A slippery slope—using alcohol to escape.** If you feel the need to numb yourself, find ways to get distance, and/or use alcohol or other substances to escape your day to day reality—your relationship is in trouble. When we feel connected to our partner we seek more closeness. The sound of their voice, that feeling we have when they walk in the room, that little thrill we feel when they reach out and offer a hug or a caress are all signs that a relationship is strong and that the intimate connection is there.

If the above signs resonate with you—you have a choice to make. You can choose to continue in a union that satisfies your needs for comfort, predictability and security; or you can ask your partner to sit down with you and have that long overdue talk about how you are both feeling and how the relationship is or is not meeting your intimacy needs. This conversation would be an ice breaker and only the beginning of more discussion about what each of you wants that you aren't getting from one another and from your relationship. From there, my relationship advice is to establish goals and identify resources to help you work and grow together as a team. This would require a willingness to be open and vulnerable, and seeking out professional help may be essential to helping you get and stay on track. Success will rest on the strength of your joint commitment and ability to make the relationship one of your top priorities.

[Toni Coleman](#), LCSW, CMC is an internationally known

*psychotherapist, relationship coach, and founder of consummate relationship coaching. As a recognized expert, Ms. Coleman is the featured relationship coach in The Business and Practice of Coaching, (Norton, September 2005.) In addition, she authored the forward for Winning Points with the Woman in your Life, One Touchdown at a Time, (Simon and Schuster, November 2005.) among many other achievements.*

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## **Relationship Advice: What NOT To Do When You're Upset With Your Partner's Weight**





By Toni Coleman, LCSW, CMC for [Divorce Support Center](#)

What do celebrities like [Oprah Winfrey](#), [Britney Spears](#), [Mariah Carey](#) and [Christina Aguilera](#) have in common? They are all beautiful, talented women who have faced public scrutiny as they struggled with their weight. As people age, many struggle with their weight. It seems that between the stress, lack of time and energy, competing work and family demands, poor food choices and eating on the run, a healthy lifestyle often ends up at or near the bottom of many people's priority lists. This behavior can then be exacerbated when significant others, family and/or friends attribute the problem to the individual's apathy, lack of motivation or discipline, or an unwillingness or inability to make better choices. All of these assume something negative—which is not only unhelpful, it often leads to a continuing downward spiral. If your partner is not taking care of himself or herself, you may have fallen into using one or more of the following counterproductive strategies. If so, it is time to find positive and healthy ways to offer the support and encouragement your partner needs especially from you with a little [relationship advice](#)!



# Relationship Advice: What Not To Do About Your Partner's Weight

**1. Telling them how great they would look if they were thinner.** When someone is carrying too much weight, they are well aware of it. In fact many people, especially women, feel badly about themselves because of it. It isn't useful for them to hear how much better they would look without those extra 20 pounds; it only makes them feel worse as it reminds them that you are very aware and thinking about it. Even though this might seem counterintuitive, what you should do instead is offer compliments on their hair, outfit, how hot they look at that moment, or anything about their appearance that you find attractive. By doing so, you will help lift their spirits and sense of self, and offer them something positive to focus on, which will encourage and support them in taking their next steps towards a healthier lifestyle and weight.

**2. Making 'useful' suggestions for what, when, and how much they should eat.** "Useful" suggestions are often badly veiled attempts to control and manipulate someone's behavior. They can lead to a dynamic where one partner nags the other with their constant stream of suggestions, which then leads to feelings of anger and resentment that get expressed through their partner acting out, usually in the form of eating more of the unhealthiest food they can find. Dating tip: What you should do instead is be a good role model for your spouse. As a relationship expert, I think that you should make good choices for yourself in what and how much you eat. You can suggest (not push or insist) a date night where you do some meal planning, shopping and cooking together, while remaining open to their input and suggestions. Cooking several meals a week at home is a great start, as you will be eating healthier because the meals are made from fresh, whole ingredients. Taking good care of yourself will result in a happier, healthier, and more attractive you—this is what your partner

will notice and want for himself or herself.

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**3. Signing them up for a gym membership when they didn't request one.** It's likely they will repay your investment of money and effort by never using it. No one likes to be managed or to feel coerced or guilt-tripped into anything. The result is that it kills all motivation instead of encouraging it. If you enjoy working out—go to the gym or participate in a physical activity or sport. Definitely ask your partner if they would like to join you for a walk, a hike, to walk the dog, or any activity that you do that you would enjoy sharing with them. If they do express an interest in taking a class or joining a gym, ask them if they would like company. When we have a buddy, we are more likely to follow through and it is more fun. The key here is to listen to them and let them initiate, then you can jump in with an offer of support and companionship.

**4. Commenting on how good someone looks since they lost all that weight.** Adolescents sometimes do this in order to get someone to act out of jealousy; teachers of young children also use this as a way to motivate their other students to do the same and earn some of that praise. But feelings of jealousy, competitiveness, and/or insecurity are not effective motivators for adults who want to make lasting behavior changes. All this does is pile on their already present feelings of insecurity and self-disgust, which leaves them feeling less lovable and more unworthy of their relationship. When you are having a down day and don't feel good about yourself, do you find your motivation and enthusiasm to be higher than when you are having a good day? I didn't think so. A simple way to keep these kinds of comments in check is to ask yourself how you would feel if your partner used the same approach in their attempt to motivate you into action.



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**5. Bringing home their “trigger foods” because they aren’t a problem for you.** Here’s another instance in which it is useful to ask yourself how you would feel if you could not consume something due to a medical or other condition, yet your partner frequently brought it home and consumed it in front of you. It would probably feel as though they were unconcerned or unaware of your feelings. You would also be confronted with more temptation, which could lead to feelings of deprivation and resentment. If this were the case how might you act? Would you sneak the food when your partner wasn’t looking? Would you seethe quietly and want to find some other way to act out, or just withdraw and feel worse about yourself? Whatever your response, it’s likely it would be a negative one. Therefore, loving and concerned partners need to be aware of how their behavior can impact their spouse and then be willing to make adjustments to help create a more supportive and helpful environment. After all, if a partner can stick with their goal and make those necessary lifestyle changes, it’s a win-win.

**6. Sending mixed messages by voicing concern, then encouraging noncompliance.** This is a classic scenario where a spouse who is upset about their partner’s weight or alcohol consumption places them in situations that lead to them consuming unhealthy food, overeating, and/or drinking to excess. It’s as though the partner sends a strong message to them to maintain discipline and healthy habits, then sets them up by insisting they join them in activities with people and in places that will surely sabotage their efforts. When this happens, some partners even say things like, “it’s okay this one time,” or “you are not as much fun as you used to be,” when their partner is trying to abstain from certain food or drink. A driving factor behind this scenario is that the partner doesn’t want to be deprived just because their significant other has an issue. They want them to deal with their issue,

but not if it means they have to sacrifice something as well. Could this be you?

**7. Withdrawing affection and sex because you are angry at their weight gain.** Negative reinforcement rarely works. It has been demonstrated repeatedly to be an ineffective motivator. If you withdraw your affection, it will lead to them feeling unattractive and unlovable, which often leads to a sense of hopelessness and despair. My relationship advice is to stay engaged, show affection, offer positive and caring feedback, and remind them of all the ways they are special and important to you. This will help to energize and motivate them to do more and do it better. A belief in one's own abilities encourages us to reach beyond our fears in pursuit of our goals.

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If your partner is struggling with an unhealthy lifestyle and carrying extra weight, a loving and supportive environment will be important if they are to make any significant and lasting changes. The tone you set, the words you choose and the attitude you take towards them will play an important role in their success or failure. You cannot do it for them, nor can you threaten, cajole, intimidate, or guilt-trip them into being who you think they should be. They have to want it and work for it. But having you as their partner in success, celebrating their good choices and big steps along the way will help ensure they never feel alone.

**Have a tip for how you and your partner powered through weight struggles together? Share in the comments below!**

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# Expert Dating Advice: What is Love & How Do I Find It?



By Debbie Ceresa for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Have you ever wondered how [Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson](#) make their celebrity marriage work? How about [Sarah Michelle Gellar and Freddie Prinze Jr.](#)? You're not alone. Most singles wonder if they should wait for that magical attraction to happen. In our quest to solve this mystery, we often turn to expert [dating advice](#). We Google. We write, and we do research. However, the question remains: **What is love?** The question was even the hottest search phrase on Google in 2014.

Musicians have also ventured into love's mystery. John Lennon and Paul McCartney attempted to provide us with an answer with "All We Need Is Love." The lyrics say, "Love is everything." However, we are still searching for the answer to this elusive question. Is it because, if you don't have love, you have nothing? The prospect of nothing is a little scary.

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The ancient Greek philosophers broke down the word love into six categories: *Philia*, the deep bond between family and close friends; *Ludus*, the playful affection when flirting or joking around; *Pragma*, mature love found with couples who have been together a long time; *Eros*, our sexual desire and passion; *Agape*, one's love for humanity; and lastly, *Philautia*, the love we have for ourselves. You're lucky if you have all six. Some of us may only have one or two.

**But maybe, just maybe, we're looking for love in all the wrong places. Let's go back to the basics and take some dating advice from the experts.**

According to [Dr. Brené Brown](#), a relationship expert and research professor at the University of Houston, "Love is that intangible connection between two people that feels exceptionally good." She further states that the strength and depth of this connection is determined by the self-acceptance, openness, and honesty of the two individuals and how exposed each is willing to be.

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Although not logical, love is both easy and mysterious. Couples who have been together for years often confess that they aren't really in love with each other. Don't feel hopeless! You're not on this quest alone.

A love map that gets you from one stage to the next doesn't exist, but there are two important questions to ask yourself.

**1. What are you looking for?** Once you understand your desired qualities, make a checklist.

**2. What do you think your future partner would want from you?** Always keep in mind that no one is perfect. Recognize your imperfections and understand your future lover may have a few flaws too.

**Once you've answered these two questions, follow my love advice below to find The One.**

**1. Love yourself first:** You are the only *you* in the universe. Work on being the best you that you can be by taking care of your mind, body, and spirit. Do you have characteristics about yourself that you dislike? You're not alone – we all have them. Our disliked imperfections become our trigger buttons. How we deal with our buttons is the answer. Now is the time to start accepting your imperfections and reminding yourself that no one is perfect. Taking this first courageous step will help lead you to discovering your own special qualities. Loving your whole self will lead to loving another.

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**2. Let your hair down:** Openness is a key ingredient to have in your relationships. We have different types of love in our life: sexual, mature, family, friends, and self. Think about

some of the people in your life who you are close with – maybe your partner or a friend – someone who has seen you at your very best and worst. They've seen you laugh and cry, be strong and weak. They were given permission by you to see the real deal. The totally exposed you is comfortable sharing yourself with a shared connection. Once you feel comfortable, you have the connection. And then, you have love.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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## Relationship Advice: 8 Creative Ways That Older Couples Can Keep the Romance Alive







By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Despite what the tabloids may say, not all celebrity relationships go down in flames. Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman were happily married for 50 years; Michael J. Fox and Tracy Pollan found lasting love; and Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson are still going strong. It may take a little extra effort to keep the love alive through the years, especially if you and your significant other have forgotten how to connect or are stuck in the same routine. But with some [relationship advice](#), the passion is sure to ignite again!

## Consider the relationship advice below to add a little spice to your love life:

**1. Get back to the basics:** As an experienced couple, you know what makes your love tick. It could be surprise kisses, breakfast in bed, watching the sunset together, or enjoying old movies. The relationship advice that I encourage you to



consider is to think back to the little things that made your partnership exciting over the years. Even holding hands or taking the time to express specific things you love about one another can make a big difference.

Leslie Stubenvoll, director of social services at [Palm Terrace Healthcare and Rehab](#) in Laguna Woods, CA, said, "The couples that shine the brightest are the ones that make the effort to hold hands, be extra nurturing, and pay attention to the other's needs." Sometimes, the most romantic thing you can do is give simple reminders and signals that they're on your mind.

**2. Go on a walk together:** Quality time is a must when it comes to romance. Walking is the perfect way to spend quality time, share meaningful conversation, and even do some of that hand-holding! You'll have the opportunity to reconnect, get some exercise and fresh air, and take a break from your usual routine.

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**3. Plan a photoshoot:** Over the years, you've probably taken many family photos with kids, grandkids, and a wide range of color-coordinated outfits. Try doing a photo shoot of just the two of you. Dress up in your favorite clothes, drive to your favorite spot around town or in nature, and have your photos professionally taken. Not only will this be a fun way to spend time together, but it'll also give you romantic photographs to hang up around your home. Not to mention, during the photo shoot, you'll be reminded of how her eyes sparkle or how his smile makes your heart skip a beat!

**4. Take a road trip:** Your favorite tunes, good food, new sights, and the endless road add up to one great date idea. A road trip could be just the trick you need to rekindle your romance. Try adding a little excitement by making the destination unknown or researching a bed and breakfast where

you two can spend the night.

**5. Go on a scavenger hunt:** This romantic idea is a fun twist on a road trip. Map out all the places that are significant to your relationship, including favorite restaurants, places you love to walk, or locations of good memories. You can design it as a scavenger hunt with the final location being somewhere new to both of you. By the end of the day, you'll both be reminded of the history that's made your relationship strong.

**6. Focus on intimacy:** Some couples struggle with intimacy as they grow older. A [healthier](#) sex life between you and your partner could be the key to your romance struggles. If your relationship is lacking in this department, trade in a date night for a weekend getaway. For an even simpler idea, light some candles to set the mood. Intimacy is essential to connecting as a couple and can often be a romantic experience for both parties.

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**7. Explore new hobbies:** Learning something new is a great way to bond and make exciting memories with your loved one. Take up golfing or attend an art class. The two of you will have something new to share while spending meaningful time with each other. This kind of experience can help shake up the routine and reignite the romance.

**8. Learn about your love language:** Sometimes, the best way to increase romance is to learn how you and your partner want to be loved. One of my favorite books is [The 5 Love Languages](#). The book outlines the five possible ways most people want to receive and give love. Understanding how your partner wants to be loved, whether it's through acts of service or words of affirmation, will help you connect and feel the love on a deeper level.

It's never too late to turn up the heat in your love life. Try out some of these tips, and the flame of your romance will be

reignited!

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**How do you and your sweetheart keep the romance alive? Comment below!**

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# Relationship Advice: How to Make This Valentine's Day Special for Your Loved One



By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

In 1653, a Mughal emperor shared with the world a token of his tragic yet enduring love for his favorite wife Muntaz Mahal, who died during childbirth. Today, the emperor and his wife have all but blended into the annals of ancient history, but the symbol of his love remains as the gleaming white marble 42-acre structure known as the [Taj Mahal](#). While most public expressions of affection don't end up being a timeless wonder, many of today's celebrities make their mark in different and extravagant ways. As a relationship expert, I wanted to give you some unique ideas to celebrate Valentine's Day. Here's some [relationship advice](#) on how to say "I love you" to the special person in your life, like these celebrity couples.

## **Relationship Advice: Making Valentine's Day Special Like The Hollywood Stars**

**1. Share a little bit of nature.** I'm not talking about cut flowers or baskets of posies. With a little bit of creativity, you can find a bit of nature that symbolizes the unique relationship and love you share. For example, [Angelina Jolie](#) purchased an olive tree to give to her husband, Brad Pitt. Angie may have spent \$18,500 on this olive tree, but you can find something just as special but much more affordable. Aloe Vera plants, palms, fruit trees, and flowering plants are excellent alternatives to cut flowers. Also, some companies manufacture innovative bouquets made out of alternative materials that last forever and offer unique scents. [Ecoflower.com](#) designs arrangements using environmentally friendly and recycled materials like wood, paper, recycled jewelry among other things, and they will provide any scent you like such as raspberry, musk or lemon.

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**2. Share a wardrobe indulgence.** For [Jessica Simpson](#), that meant getting a \$15,000 Birkin bag from her husband, Eric Johnson. For the rest of us, receiving a smart jacket, a silk scarf, a sparkling bracelet, or snazzy boots can generate the same feeling of confidence at one-third of the price. I recall a young newlywed presented his wife with a necklace made of aquamarine. It wasn't the most valuable of gems, but the color reminded him of his wife's eyes.

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**3. Share an experience.** Angelina Jolie bought Brad Pitt flying lessons. Of course, she threw in the helicopter for good measure. [Beyonce](#) found a million-dollar token to share with husband, Jay-Z, when she presented him with a Grand Sport, reportedly one of the top performing and most expensive cars on the market. For you, a shared experience may be a hike to a cherished location, or a picnic in a secluded spot. Most people will tell you the things are nice, but sometimes it's the thought behind the gift that counts the most. A friend who lived by an Olympic training site bought her husband a ride on the bobsled track used in the 2002 Winter Olympics. It was an experience he will never forget.

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With Valentine's Day approaching, it seems the extravagant gifts is what makes the news. The relationship advice to remember is that Valentine's Day doesn't have an audience nor does it need a giant price tag. It's an opportunity for you to share a moment, a knowing exchange, a personal connection that is meaningful for the two people that matter the most—you and your loved one.

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What has been your most meaningful Valentine's Day experience?  
Comment below!

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# Relationship Advice: How Your Relationships And Love Impact Your New Year's Resolutions



By Toni Coleman, LCSW

Now that we're closing in on February, it's a good time to take inventory of how your New Year's resolutions are progressing, or not. Have you made adjustments to your



environment, created a specific plan, tweaked your schedule or set aside time for following through on the short-term objectives that will get you there? If you have done even one of these, it's a real start. However, if you draw a blank when reading this, you may have already lost your resolve or even forgotten about your goals altogether. If this is the case, and you want to get back on track—it is important to examine where you got off course and what factors may have influenced it.

As a relationship expert, I notice that one variable people may overlook, but that carries a lot of weight, is how much support you get from your relationship and love. In assessing this, it's important to pay attention to what they do more than what they say. There are many subtle ways that a partner can sabotage your efforts, especially if he or she fears it will impact your shared lifestyle, threatens him in some way, or upset the status quo in general. If you believe this is occurring, consider talking to your partner about what you see happening and ask for help. My [relationship advice](#) is to look at the following eight behaviors to assist you in pinpointing and articulating your concerns and then moving toward a productive discussion on how you can best support one another.

## **Relationship Advice: How Partner's Can Sabotage New Year's Resolutions**

**Your partner resists changes that support your goals.** For example, you might need to eat an earlier dinner as part of your weight loss goal or you might find that early morning is the best time to work out, but it will mean your partner will then need to cover things at home. Perhaps you have found a class one evening that is just what you need to make an eventual career change, but it's during a time that would then require your partner to adjust their schedule. All of these are potential scenarios that people face when attempting to



make changes and a supportive partner will try to make accommodations whenever possible. Sometimes it just isn't possible and alternative solutions will need to be considered.

**Your partner insists on activities and interests that set you up for failure.** Maybe you have a long-standing tradition of eating take-out on Saturday nights in front of the TV that you follow-up with a decadent dessert. However, you need to make dietary changes that will support your goal for better nutrition and health. Maybe most of what you have always enjoyed together has been sedentary in nature, such as going to the movies, out to dinner, drinking with friends at a local pub, or hanging out in your bathrobes and reading or watching TV. While there is nothing wrong with doing any of these some of the time, if you have set a goal to be more active during leisure hours, these will need to be cut back in order to create time for something new. My relationship advice is to make sure your partner isn't insisting that everything stay the same. If they do this and pout, it will undermine your efforts and force you to make a choice between your relationship and your goal.

**Your partner makes negative comments about your changes.** Statements like, "You're no fun anymore," or "It doesn't look like it's making any difference," can lead to you feeling bad about yourself or losing resolve due to a concern that the potential downsides to making the change outweigh the benefits. What you need instead is a cheerleader who offers encouragement, finds positive things to focus on—and lets you know they support you, no matter what.

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**Your partner behaves punitively when he doesn't get his way.** Change is hard for everyone. Your partner might feel bad about losing his drinking or eating buddy. She might feel some resentment about making changes in her schedule or to giving

something up to accommodate your new needs. He might be feeling nostalgia for some things you used to do together and with others that you now need to refrain from. These feelings are natural and understandable, but your partner should bring them up with you in a non-defensive way instead of acting out. You might be able to come up with compromises that meet both of your needs while allowing your partner to hang on to some of the things that are most important to them.

**Your partner throws temptations in your path.** An all too common scenario is the one where one spouse decides to give up sweets or alcohol, and her partner begins bringing home a lot of what the other is trying to abstain from, and encouraging them to try just a little bite or sip. There are many reasons for why this behavior is so common, but none of them are good ones. If this is happening to you, my love advice is to address it immediately by making a gentle request for “free temptation zones” in your home.

**Your partner lacks awareness of how your changes are threatening her.** It can be difficult for your partner to see you working towards a goal that he or she feels they should also be working toward. If you have always been overweight together, having a spouse who suddenly loses weight and feels good about her new appearance could be threatening, especially when other people of the opposite sex take notice. If you give up drinking, he may feel judged when he reaches for a beer, glass of wine or a cocktail; even if you don't indicate that you have an issue with it. Should he begin to act threatened by a change you are making that he or she believes they also should be working on, consider bringing up your observations gently with them. Remind him that this is a choice that you have made for yourself and that he is free to do the same or not, depending on his needs and wants.

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**Your partner creates a competition between you.** This one dovetails on the one above—you are not in competition, you are (or should be) on the same side. Being on the same team means you support one another's success, cheering each other along on the road to accomplishment. If your partner starts bean counting, it will undermine the relationship as this causes division and an attitude of me first, me only. If two people are focused on their needs and wants, the couple cannot function as a cohesive unit, which is the foundation of a healthy and mutually satisfying relationship.

**Your partner sees changes as meeting your needs vs. meeting his needs.** A supportive and happy relationship is not an "either, or" one. When problem-solving becomes a contest where one spouse is designated the winner and the other the loser, both people in the relationship lose. There is a very wide continuum between those two ends, and somewhere along the way are points at which a compromise can be found.

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Negotiation and compromise are essential to the health of every relationship, as is getting the kind of support that will help you stick to and achieve your resolutions. When you win, your partner also wins—and vice versa.

*[Toni Coleman](#), LCSW, CMC is an internationally known psychotherapist, relationship coach, and founder of consummate relationship coaching. As a recognized expert, Ms. Coleman is the featured relationship coach in The Business and Practice of Coaching, (Norton, September 2005.) In addition, she authored the forward for Winning Points with the Woman in your Life, One Touchdown at a Time, (Simon and Schuster, November 2005.) among many other achievements.*

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# Dating Advice: New Year's Resolutions To Rekindle Your Relationships and Love



By Debbie Ceresa for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Has your marriage lost that lovin' feeling? The same old New Year's resolutions of getting into sexy shape by going to the gym won't rekindle the once burning embers in your relationships and love. Now is the time to reignite your relationship flame. It's important to remember that you did find the right person, but somewhere along the way you lost yourself. Think back to the time you fell in love. Not long

ago, you could look at each other and instantly know each other's thoughts or just the memory of your loved one made you smile. You can be that right person for each other again. As a relationship expert, my [dating advice](#) is to start by conjuring up those lost memories while you work on the five following commitments.

## Dating Advice On Rekindling The Lovin' Feeling In Your Marriage

**1. Respect:** Aretha Franklin knew it was worth spelling out. You know respect when you feel it. It's an inner sense we all have. If you want to be admired and held in high esteem, know that your spouse is looking for that same feeling. Respect is essential in a successful marriage. Often it manifests itself in small gestures such as the endearing name that makes you feel loved or expressing thanks for the cup of coffee your spouse makes for you every morning. These are little gestures, but how about the bigger ones? Talk to each other when making joint decisions, whether it involves accepting a dinner invitation or making a huge purchase. Recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses and encourage rather than belittle your partner. Make a conscious effort to bring back your secret looks, kind acts, and loving nicknames.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: Why Your Dating New Year's Resolutions Fail](#)

**2. Teamwork:** "I'm on your side," should be your motto to each other. Author and marriage and family therapist [Tina B. Tessina](#) shared in her book, *Money, Sex and Kids: Stop Fighting about the Three Things That Can Ruin Your Marriage*, that instead of dwelling on who's right and who's wrong, the focus should be on solving the problem that the two of you are facing together. Her dating advice emphasizes on talking about your challenge long enough to understand it. Then you can move

on with mutual solutions. Working together to find a joint solution will add motivation to continue working as team players both during challenges and good times.

**3. Love:** I love you. This phrase never goes out of style. It's a powerful statement to each other that can't be said enough. We all enjoy being loved. Love is sharing, appreciating, and admitting our mistakes. Have you heard the saying, "You attract more bees with honey than vinegar?" The more love energy you send out, the more your spouse and others will want to be around you. Write down a few date ideas, initiate a date night and spend time being a couple. Incorporate your teamwork skills to schedule a special event without your cell phones, kids or friends. It's always fun to think outside the box and try a new activity, such as visiting a museum or a unique restaurant.

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**4. Commitment:** "When people say they are committed to his or her relationship, they can mean two things," said Benjamin Karney, a professor of psychology and co-director of the [Relationship Institute at UCLA](#). "One thing they can mean is, 'I really like this relationship and want it to continue.' However, commitment is more than just that." A deeper level of commitment, the psychologists report, is a much better predictor of lower divorce rates and fewer problems in marriage. "It's easy to be committed to your relationship when it's going well," said senior study author Thomas Bradbury, a psychology professor who co-directs the Relationship Institute. "As a relationship changes, however, you must say something like, 'I'm committed to this relationship, but it's not going very well – I need to have some resolve, make some sacrifices and take the steps I need to take to keep this relationship moving forward.'"

**5. Forgiveness:** You were the one who was harmed and feels bad—why should you forgive? Forgiveness doesn't mean you

excuse the hurtful behavior, but it does mean you can let go and move forward. Here's the benefit: After you forgive, you'll feel better. Your ability to forgive gives you a feeling of empowerment and the power to take charge of your happiness. Holding onto old disappointments, arguments, and hurt is a waste of your time and energy. Forgiveness will keep you healthy both physically and emotionally.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: 5 Questions To Ask Yourself Before Saying "I Do"](#)

So if your relationship has lost that lovin' feeling—take five. By focusing on mutual respect, teamwork, love, commitment, and forgiveness, you will find the keys to a new and improved relationship just in time for the New Year.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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## Relationship Advice: Why Your



# Dating New Year's Resolutions Fail



By Toni Coleman, LCSW

Once again it's time for that honored tradition of setting and then breaking our New Year's resolutions. Year after year we tell ourselves that this time it will be different; then armed with a renewed feeling of determination and optimism, we prepare to say goodbye to our bad habits, unhealthy lifestyle choices, and/or dead end job or even our relationship and love. Then at the beginning of February, we find that much of our resolve has been replaced with a feeling of defeat and a resignation that our life probably won't ever be what we want it to be. As a relationship expert, I know it's hard when your dating goals aren't met. Keep reading for my [relationship advice](#) on why you're dating New Year's resolutions are failing

and what to do about it.

# Relationship Advice On Your New Year's Dating Resolutions

**1. Avoid the number one reason for failed resolutions.** Essentially we set ourselves up for failure every year. We do this by setting unrealistic goals, having too many goals, and not having a concrete and reasonable plan for how we will work toward them. This especially happens in the dating world. When we don't make any progress, our self-esteem and confidence take a hit, we feel defeated, and we abandon our plans. Our defeat contributes to a belief that this goal is just not possible for us, and if we do this year after year it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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**2. Set a maximum of one or two achievable goals.** These don't have to be major goals; they can be smaller objectives that will lead to bigger changes that can happen further down the road. By approaching change in small and manageable steps, you will help ensure your success, which will provide you with continued motivation and a boost of self-esteem along the way. It's also important to think about your core need or desire—in other words, what is the key problem or desired change you want to address. By correctly identifying this and tackling it first, you will find that most other issues you think require a separate resolution are connected to the core need, and will be impacted by addressing it.

**3. Write down how and when you will take your action steps.** Unless you have a concrete plan for working on your resolutions, they will not get acted on. Your calendar contains a record of work obligations and tasks, social

events, and other life priorities so you won't neglect or forget them. Can you imagine what would happen if you never wrote anything down? Many things would slip through the cracks, and you would be hopelessly off track. The same problem presents itself when you make an agreement with yourself to work on a resolution—if it isn't put into your schedule, it simply won't happen. My dating advice is to set small goals like making an online dating profile, going on three dates, etc.

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**4. If a goal proves unrealistic or unattainable, tweak it until it works.** This seems to be a hard one for many people as they equate stepping back with failure. However, this is no different from when you are involved with any project that presents unforeseen issues or challenges and requires you to make adjustments and changes along the way. If you are cutting a piece of wood for a home repair project and find it is too long or short, you will either have to shorten it or start with a new piece. If you are completing a work document and find omissions or errors, you go back and change, correct and/or delete until it is correct. Applying this same approach to achieving a resolution will work in much the same way, keeping you engaged until you are satisfied with the outcome.

**5. Celebrate every small win—this keeps momentum going.** It's hard to sustain ourselves through long, dry spells when we aren't receiving any feedback on our investment of time and energy. This is why using short-term objectives as building blocks to success is a great way to keep up the momentum. If you resolve to lose 5 pounds over 3-4 weeks as opposed to losing 40 pounds over 6-8 months, you increase your chance of success. At the end of those few weeks, you can congratulate yourself on achieving that first objective and get a boost to your self-esteem, which will help you to remain positive and more confident that you can continue achieving your ideal

weight.

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The people who are successful at realizing their New Year’s resolutions do not have more self-control or discipline than you. They don’t succeed because they are lucky, and many or most aren’t blessed with more resources or a special talent that gives them an edge. What they do have is a clear and strong desire for change, a written and well thought out plan, and a willingness to be flexible with their process and open to making adjustments along the way. My relationship advice is to do the same thing.

*[Toni Coleman](#), LCSW, CMC is an internationally known psychotherapist, relationship coach, and founder of consummate relationship coaching. As a recognized expert, Ms. Coleman is the featured relationship coach in The Business and Practice of Coaching, (Norton, September 2005.) In addition, she authored the forward for Winning Points with the Woman in your Life, One Touchdown at a Time, (Simon and Schuster, November 2005.) among many other achievements.*

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# Relationship Advice: 5 Questions To Ask Yourself

# Before Saying “I Do”



By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

In light of John Legend and Chrissy Teigen’s exciting pregnancy announcement, I couldn’t help but take a look at when John knew he was ready to propose. In an interview with Oprah, the gushing celebrity couple gave the inside scoop on their relationship and love and John recounted exactly how he knew it was the right time to propose. Check out the [relationship advice](#) below for what questions you should ask yourself to see if you’re ready for your man to put a ring on it and start a life of bliss together.

**Related Link:** [Celebrity Pregnancy: John Legend Says He’s Always Been Attracted to Pregnant Women](#)

# Dating Expert Shares Relationship Advice On What To Ask Yourself Before Saying “I Do”

**1. Do you love him?** First and foremost, it's important to be honest with yourself and your significant other about your feelings in the relationship. Remember that being in love doesn't mean you think he is perfect or you never fight. It does mean you're able to talk openly with him, care about his dreams and ambitions in addition to your own, and feel a deep connection with him emotionally, mentally, physically, and intellectually.

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**2. Do you see yourself living with him?** After the big 'I do' comes getting a new roommate! Do you know if you're compatible with your man's living habits? While a dirty sock on the floor is nothing to freak out about, it's important to notice how he treats his space. It's best to know this *before* you move in together so you can talk about living preferences and make any necessary compromises. Also remember that moving in together means you'll be seeing a lot more of each other. Are you ready to see each other everyday when you wake up and every night when you go to sleep, or does it feel too early in the relationship to take that step?

**3. Do you want to spend forever with him?** He may feel like the love of your life right now, but do you see him in the picture years down the road? As a dating expert, I know that growth and change are inevitable aspects of life. If you see yourself growing and changing with him, then you're headed in the right direction! It's important to talk about where you see yourselves in the future and make sure you want the same things.

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## [Seven-Year Itch](#)

**4. Do you want to have kids with him?** Asking this question is a great way to decide whether or not you have a future together. Do you want this man to raise your sons and daughters? If you envision him by your side as you play with and teach your children, then you've got a good thing going.

**5. Does it feel like the right time or do you feel pressured?** In the interview with Oprah, John Legend said, "She didn't pressure me, she didn't say, you know, it's time to put a ring on it...I felt like 'it's time for us to put a ring on it.'" It's important that the two of you are thinking about marriage because you both *want* to get married. If one of you feels unhealthy pressure, whether it's from you, him, or your parents, then you need to think long and hard about whether it's something you really want.

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Choosing whom you marry is a big decision. It's important to feel confident about your choice before you say yes. My relationship advice is to ask yourself these questions inspired by John Legend will help you decide whether to say yes to the love of your life or wait until you're more sure of your feelings.

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# Expert Dating Advice: How to Rebound from a Solo Holiday Season



By Debbie Ceresa for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Does Christmas have you singing the blues? The holidays are supposed to be about good times with family, friends, and traditions. Yet, many of us dredge up old feelings from divorce, job loss, money, or even the death of a beloved pet. December has more stimuli than other times of the year, sparking memories that are both happy and sad. The many holiday sounds, traditions, and smells take us down memory lane, but often that road runs two ways, lined with both cherished and painful memories of what once was part of our lives.

# Dating Advice for Rebounding From a Solo Holiday Season

While the sparkling lights, decorations, and songs may leave you with an emptiness that magnifies your new single status, here are three pieces of expert [dating advice](#) to help you avoid an unhealthy rebound relationship and love and bring the ring back into the holidays and throughout the coming New Year.

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**1. Follow your heart:** We all need a connection with someone. However, before beginning a new relationship, make sure your heart is telling you it's right. If you can't fully commit emotionally to moving forward, you may still be grieving over a previous loss. Resolving feelings following a failed partnership or divorce takes time.

Instead of getting involved with someone, step back and evaluate your unresolved grief. Many of us don't give ourselves credit when it comes to our instincts. The pain of loss is sharp and lingering, but awareness of your feelings can help you avoid a rebound relationship that will surely complicate your ability to move forward and hurt the other person involved.

**2. Take your life on a vacation:** That's right. Take a vacation. Instead of thinking and rethinking your new marital status, start planning a life vacation. Think about how motivated you are while planning a trip! Most of us have so many tasks to get done before leaving, so try looking at your life this way.

Social psychologist Erica B. Slotter, Ph.D. calls it looking for the silver lining. "Focus on the good things that may come out of the end of your relationship and love. Perhaps now you feel you can cook foods your partner never liked or finally

take that pottery class,” she writes in the article, “3 Ways to Take Care of Yourself After a Breakup.” “Maybe you can simply feel grateful that a painful relationship is over, and in the future, look for a better one.”

Focus on a to-do list of how you can improve your situation, however small or large, and write it down. Look at your list daily, and promise to check off one item each day. Channel thoughts from past trips that improved your well-being and feel confident about taking this emotional vacation.

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**3. Love yourself:** You are a wonderful human being! Take a few minutes every day to remind yourself of the many good things you’ve done in your life. “When relationships end, people tend to be very hard on themselves,” writes Slotter. “Stop it. Self-compassion involves viewing yourself with kindness and acceptance, not being overly focused or identified with negative emotions, and acknowledging that many others in the world have likely been where you are now at some point in their lives.”

If you want to listen to my expert dating advice, you should add meditation to your to-do list. It works wonders for your well-being. Along with meditation, a great daily exercise is to tell yourself you’re a good person and deserve to be happy. Think about the many things that would make you feel whole again and concentrate on the positive.

By following your heart, using personal accomplishment and growth to help heal, and remembering to love ourselves, we can all have beautiful views in our lives, one needs only to step back and look.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband’s battle with cancer, which*

*ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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## **Relationship Advice: Is Friendship After Divorce Possible?**





By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Headlines are filled with photos of happy celebrities vacationing in remote places with their children in tow. It's a picture perfect story—almost. For some celebrity exes such as Miranda Kerr and Orlando Bloom and Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon, the marriage ended long ago, but the family unit remains. It's not uncommon to hear stories of former couples vacationing together, living by each other and spending family time together. With such a high-profile breakup, how can co-parenting be such an easy transition for them? My [relationship advice](#) for you is to emulate these famous relationships because the success largely depends on the parents' ability to move forward.

## **Relationship Advice Navigating Friendship Post-Divorce**

Though the success of co-parenting is largely dependent on the circumstances of the split, these celebrity couples are proof that children can still grow up with the positive influence of

both parents, even after the marriage or longtime relationship and love has ended. Here is my relationship advice for how to successfully transition from a married household to shared parenting between two households.

**1. Focus on long term.** A swift dose of reality should remind you that carrying anger or other negative feelings won't change the outcome. Your marriage died. Mourn the loss of that part of your life then move forward to create a new future for yourself and children. "I am always impressed when I see couples who manage to stay friends, as it takes strength in character and an understanding of the bigger picture to rise above the hurt," wrote Seth Myers, Psy.D., in the article, *Stay Friends After Divorce: Why, Coping, and Moving On*. "While we can't do much to change the state of affairs in other couples, you can reflect on your own relationship." Recognize that your former partner must make the same effort. This often means a new relationship—and you need to be okay with that.

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**2. You are not defined by your divorce, so don't allow it to dictate your actions.** Your role as a spouse may be over, but your parenting role continues. Don't allow the end of your marriage to overshadow the positive, future memorable moments you owe your children. By making the choice to fill your life with positive and hopeful plans for the future, you'll have a solid base on which to build new relationships. But, you do need a plan. A personal strategy will lessen the potentially negative effects if you witness your partner moving forward. It will also remind you to stay focused on the plans you have prepared for your progress. This transition requires a great deal of discipline and compromise since you're putting your feelings aside for the sake of contributing to a positive parenting environment for your children. A large part of this growth is recognizing that was then, and this is now. Your actions will be a lasting example for your children. What message do you hope they remember? Whether positive or



negative—it'll make an impact.

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**3. Relationships are life's classroom.** Seth Myers described it best when he wrote, "Too often, men and women end relationships and feel that they made a mistake in choosing the partner they committed to in the past because the relationship didn't work. But such a perspective betrays the bigger picture that relationships are one of life's greatest classrooms and it's within this context that we figure out what we need and learn how to move closer to true fulfillment." Instead of focusing your energy on changing the result of your ended marriage by making him pay for what he did, recognize your role in the demise of that relationship and make it a goal to learn from that experience. Feelings of resentment and revenge do nothing to change the outcome. All it does is affect those you still fully love—your children. "Barring cases of abuse," added Myers, "learning to forge a friendship with your ex after divorce can be a truly healing experience and allows for an important integration of your past with the present."

By staying committed to long-term goals, maintaining a positive and hopeful attitude on your future, and viewing your relationship as a learning experience, you're set to develop a surprisingly supportive relationship with the one person who used to know you best and that's a winning strategy for you and your children.

*For more information about and articles by our Hope After Divorce relationship experts, click [here](#).*

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# Relationship Advice: Top 6 Contributors to Infidelity



By Toni Coleman

We read celebrity gossip about infidelity all the time. Sometimes, as in the cases of Debra Messing or Claire Danes, it's a part of their dating behavior. But what compels a partner to cheat? And why are the perimeters of commitment such a mystery to them? In this article, relationship expert Toni Coleman, LCSW, gives [relationship advice](#) and explores the hidden meanings behind infidelity and what we can do to secure our relationships and love.

# Relationship Advice On Infidelity

When infidelity occurs, it often leads to a lot of blaming that focuses on the violation of trust and a realization that one's partner isn't the person who they believed them to be. There's a clear distinction made between victim and perpetrator. While this is certainly true to a point, it ignores the dynamics that left the relationship vulnerable in the first place. And it leads to a simplistic and erroneous conclusion that nothing could have prevented the infidelity except for the wronged spouse to have picked someone else to marry. Remaining stuck in this thinking is a sure way to end up in divorce court. My relationship advice to healing is that both people need to take an honest look at the state of their marriage prior to the cheating, what each contributed to their problems, and how they could work together on building an infidelity proof union. Identifying which of the following issues played a role in their marital breakdown is the first and most important step. Below are the top 6 contributors to infidelity.

**1. A breakdown in communication.** A "problem with communication" is the number one reason couples give for seeking relationship help. It has a broad interpretation but essentially boils down to having difficulty connecting through daily conversation, misunderstandings and hurt feelings due to an inability to express feelings and needs clearly, conflict when discussing sensitive topics or issues they disagree on, and/or withholding through silence. Any of these can contribute to increasing distance, which leaves a void that one partner might attempt to fill by going outside the relationship. This is of course a poor choice, and one that can bring the couple to a place there is no coming back from.

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**2. A decrease in emotional and physical intimacy.** There is a lot of emphasis placed on a couple's problematic sexual relationship as the cause of marital unhappiness. However, this is only one facet of what they share and though it is important, addressing it alone will not offer a complete solution for repairing their broken bond. Emotional intimacy provides fuel and is foreplay in a relationship—and unless two people share a strong friendship and good intellectual chemistry, their physical relationship can become another chore that is best avoided or handled quickly and without wasting any of the little emotional energy that their relationship has left them with. One partner might make the poor decision to reach out to someone who they can laugh with, who listens to them and seems to really get them, and who challenges them and inspires them in a way their spouse no longer seems to have any interest in doing.

**3. Unaddressed stressors related to family and job.** Couples encounter many challenges on the long road through commitment, marriage and family life. Sickness, loss of a job, an ill or handicapped child, unexpected financial problems, and the day-to-day struggle to find balance in a too-crowded life all lead to stress. For many people, this is something they try to ignore or just push through, thinking that in time, things will get better on their own. Then, one day, they realize they are completely overwhelmed and experiencing physical and emotional symptoms that contribute to an “every man for himself” mindset. When this happens, the marriage is often put on the back burner and the individuals hunker down, focused on getting through another day, unable or unwilling to add to their own burden, even for the well-being of their partner.

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**4. A negative or hostile home environment.** When a couple stops communicating, puts their focus on their own needs, and withdraws due to overload—the environment often becomes

charged with negative energy and feelings of resentment and anger. The tension is often palatable as one or both seek a way to escape through watching TV, going online, spending time alone in different rooms and parts of the house—and seeking companionship and dialogue with others outside of the relationship/family. Essentially the negative energy pushes them further and further apart until home is not a comfortable or happy place to be, so they look elsewhere for that lost comfort.

**5. Stressors related to physical or mental illness.** This is the “in sickness and health” part that is contained in the marriage vows. For many couples, naiveté contributes to that feeling of invulnerability that many start out their marriage with. Sickness happens to other people, but won’t happen to them. Then when something bad strikes, it feels completely unexpected and can have a sudden destabilizing impact on a relationship. Even if the couple can quickly put resources and supports in place to deal with the crisis, it can be a game changer, depending on the type, severity, and chronicity of the illness. Physical and emotional exhaustion, draining or depleted resources, lack of down time and fun, and the potential for a large shift in how the couple interacts and relates—can push one or both people over the edge. If one individual ends up in a caregiver role for their partner, it shifts the dynamics in a way that can leave them unable to get their own needs met—and they may feel resentment and a desire to escape this new life they had not planned on. Even if the illness is not chronic and can be eventually resolved, the stress can alter how two people relate and lead to emotional and physical distance that leaves a void of unmet needs.

**6. Financial problems.** Money problems are often said to be the root cause of marital conflict and discord. Difficulty managing joint finances, agreeing on a budget, keeping secrets about purchases and debt, and conflicting values regarding saving and spending are some of the common issues that arise.

If these are not addressed quickly, they can lead to a loss of trust, and respect, and an unwillingness to be open and candid regarding important financial decisions that could have a long-term impact on their family's security and well-being. When this happens, some people are vulnerable to thinking about what it would be like to be with someone else, to have a partner that offers financial security and someone who wants what they want for their future.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice On Financial Infidelity](#)

No wonder the marriage vows include the phrase “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health...” Marriages are tested by all of these, and if a couple doesn't work together, they will slip apart—and the space that is left is what a third person moves in to fill.

*Toni Coleman is a licensed psychotherapist, certified relationship coach and internationally recognized dating and relationship expert and founder of consum-mate relationship coaching. She is frequently quoted in many local and national publications and top ranked dating and relationship websites and has been a guest on a number of radio and TV programs seeking to provide their listeners with her cutting edge expertise. She is a regular contributor to Hope After Divorce and HealthyLiving.care.*

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# Relationship      Advice      On



# Financial Infidelity



By Toni Coleman

While celebrity news cites irreconcilable differences as the final blow for [celebrity divorces](#) such as Brandi Glanville of “Real Housewives of Beverly Hills,” actress Kaley Cuoco, and celebrity chef Giada DeLaurentiis, it doesn’t take long for the matter of money to surface as part of the proceedings. Whether finances are openly discussed as an asset to a healthy relationship and love, or used as fodder when your vows start falling in the red, money is an integral part of any marriage.

## Relationship Advice On Handling

# Money Issues

If you're concerned about how you and your partner communicate about money, pay attention to the following relationship advice. Watch for these four warning signs of financial infidelity.

**1. You never sit down and talk specific numbers.** After two people are married, their lives become intertwined. Their home and individual possessions essentially become the property of both. And ideally large purchases, investments, and decisions regarding long-term financial goals are decided jointly. But what if a couple never discusses a budget or decides how they will handle savings and investments? That answer is usually that you're both too busy, one of you is better with money and handles all the bills without the input of the other, or you each handle your money in your own way. If any of these are true you could be on a slippery slope. Continuing down this path could lead to important financial decisions being made without the knowledge or consent of the other, which constitutes financial infidelity.

My relationship advice is to address this by sitting down and listing all your income and expenses. Then, decide on a budget that covers joint expenses while also allowing each of you a discretionary pot of money that only you control. Every few months conduct a joint review to assess how your system is working and make adjustments as needed. Handling it this way allows you both some autonomy but not at the expense of your marital financial health and happiness.

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**2. Discussing finances becomes heated and defensive.** What happens if you agree to sit down and talk about your finances and one of you reacts with defensiveness or anger because you feel you're being accused or challenged in some way? When you

attempt to talk it through, do the words “yours” and “mine” get used too often? Does it ever feel like money is a taboo subject that you shouldn’t really be discussing at all because it often leads to hurt feelings or conflict? If any of these sound familiar, you’re at risk of ending up with no financial plan, which often leads to impulsive, short-sighted, and costly choices. When this happens, partners can begin to focus on protecting their share of the assets, which increases secrecy and contributes to a further breakdown of cooperation and an increasing loss of intimacy. The way to address this issue is to decide together that continuing to avoid the problem is not an option. Then you may need to seek out resources to help if you continue to be unsuccessful in your attempts to resolve it on your own. Try talking with an experienced counselor or a financial planner.

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**3. Large purchases are hidden.** When there is a breakdown in cooperation and a loss of intimacy, secrecy flourishes. These conditions create an environment in which partners can begin to act autonomously and in their own interest, hiding large purchases as they tell themselves they have no other option. Over time, one partner can run up huge amounts of credit card and other debt, liens are placed against the home due to unpaid taxes, and properties go into foreclosure—all happening without the knowledge or consent of the other partner. Yes, these are all examples of worse case scenarios, but they happen with alarming frequency. The solution is open, honest communication—again seeking out competent, experienced professionals when needed.

**Related Link:** [Child Expenses After Divorce](#)

**4. You discover a secret bank account or PO box.** When one partner is being secretive, the other one usually senses something is up and begins to pay closer attention. This is

often when the discovery of a secret bank account or PO box is discovered. Sometimes the partner happens upon the information as they're attempting to get a better handle on the couple's bills and complete paperwork. Either way, it not only spells serious trouble, but it also says that the problem has been going on for some time and has most likely reached a serious stage. It is at this stage that large secret purchases, huge debt or liens and potential foreclosures come to light.

When you hear about money being the number one reason for divorce, this is why. Because so much damage has been allowed to occur, the solution will be more complicated and costly in terms of money, time, and marital goodwill. Immediate crisis intervention is needed, which consists of professionals who can help the couple triage their debt, cut their expenses, come up with a payment plan—and continue in their home and adjusted lifestyle if possible. When a couple finds themselves here, they must act quickly and work towards a new normal. Otherwise the financial consequences can be dire and the marriage un-salvageable.

You have worked hard to build your financial security. Don't allow it to collapse by falling victim to poor financial decisions by someone you love and trust. By watching for signs of financial infidelity, you can be sure your wallet is protected as well as your heart.

*Toni Coleman is a licensed psychotherapist, certified relationship coach and internationally recognized dating and relationship expert and founder of consum-mate relationship coaching. She is frequently quoted in many local and national publications and top ranked dating and relationship websites and has been a guest on a number of radio and TV programs seeking to provide their listeners with her cutting edge expertise. She is a regular contributor to Hope After Divorce and HealthyLiving.care.*

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# Love Advice: Roll With The Punches, Don't Get Rolled Over



By Debbie Ceresa

You know the feeling. It's that unsettling doubt that surfaces when the best of days turns into the worst of moments. It's like the time Taylor Swift was awarded the 2009 MTV Best Female Video Award only to watch helplessly as the self-

proclaimed 'expert' on artistry, Kanye West, took the microphone to express his differing opinion. Thankfully, most of us aren't confronted with these instances on national television, yet our reactions to these experiences are just as emotionally charged. As a relationship expert, I know these moments happen in relationships and love all the time. During these occasions, you're faced with a choice. How you handle that decision can make all of the difference in the outcome.

## Love Advice On Rolling With The Punches

Several years ago, I was asked to present several awards during an annual high school honors ceremony. This year, one of the awards would be presented to my team of ambassadors and I couldn't wait. I caught the smiles from the audience and was ready to begin my accolades of the young people on the team. However, before I could say another word, a loud ringing phone rudely interrupted this high point. I could have tried continuing over the interruption. Or, I could have gotten angry and flustered. But, I didn't. The ringing eventually stopped and the audience sat silently. Looking over the crowd, I smiled and jokingly said, "I guess another student wants to apply." The laughter was overwhelming and so was the applause.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: 4 Reasons To Leave The Past In The Past](#)

I learned a lot from that incident. Often in our lives, many unexpected events happen. What we do with the unexpected is what matters. My love advice: Instead of living in fear of being knocked off course, here are four strategies to navigate the surprise bumps and keep you on the straight and narrow for success in your love life.

**1. Change your course and navigate the unexpected life**



**bumps.** You know the unexpected is going to happen when you least expect the disruption. Why not channel your adventuresome side? Use the detour as an opportunity to find a new discovery. Many of us hide our longing for adventure by turning cautious and reserved. Remember your curiosity when you were a child? Some of your inquisitive adventures were great learning experiences; others earned you a time-out. Either way, it didn't take long to learn from one of your escapades. As adults in your love life, not all of your challenges bring about immediate positive outcomes. Nevertheless, accept this love advice, your "time-out" experience, and learn from it.

**2. Learn to laugh.** By keeping an open mind, you'll find yourself laughing and enjoying some of the unexpected. It's easy to focus on the familiar and never look beyond the narrow comfort zone you created. Often times, the comfort zone is only in our mind, prohibiting us from seeing so much more. Life is constantly changing; why not enjoy the unforeseen? My expert dating advice: Laugh, join the party, and live in the moment.

**3. Don't listen to the criticism.** Many people rely on the emotional destruction of others to boost their own place in life. Just like Taylor Swift in 2009, and the 2015 Grammy awarding artist Beck for Album of the Year (whom Kanye West also tried to upstage), sometimes this happens when you least expect it. In those seemingly powerless instances, the outcome is entirely up to you. Your strength lies in your ability to rise above the negativity and be an example of grace, maturity and professionalism. Both Swift and Beck displayed immense diplomacy and both gained enormous respect as a result.

**4. Accept and share compliment.** How do you feel when someone hands you a compliment? I don't know about you, but I feel good when that positive gesture comes my way. Focusing on what's good in our lives and taking note of our good fortune in every aspect helps us operate on a higher level. It

encourages us to rise above the pettiness and negativity and remain focused on what is everlasting and important. Accept and be grateful for that positive vibe that comes to you. Think about the many ways you can spread your own thankfulness. I guarantee the positive energy will make your day.

**Related Link:** [Dating Advice: Create The Person You Want To Be](#)

We can't eliminate the unanticipated twists that happen in our lives, but we can decide today how we plan to navigate them. By remaining flexible in the need to change, using humor to buoy our decisions, turning away from negative people, and focusing on our contributions to the world and being grateful for the goodness that comes our way in return, we can handle the unexpected. In this way, the one thing we CAN expect is much success and happiness in our near future.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on Amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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# Expert Love Advice: Handling Debt & Credit Scores Post-Divorce



By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT

As the media shares details of [celebrity break-ups](#) we learn that even the rich and famous aren't immune to financial hardships. With stars like Brian Austin Green and Avril Lavigne taking steps toward a life on their own, we are reminded of the importance of keeping our financial history intact.

# This Expert Love Advice Will Save Your Credit Score

Divorced or not, we all understand the importance of having a high credit score. Unfortunately when divorce decrees are drawn up, a simple attorney error or oversight can result in long-term negative affects on your personal credit. Since these papers identify who is awarded what debt, it's essential that debts that came from joint accounts are only in the person's name that is awarded that debt per the decree. In most cases the decree is a simple agreement between divorcing couples. It *does not separate liabilities* – and that's where the problem lies. If, while you were married, your significant other had created some debt on your joint accounts, both of you are affected. Each of your social security numbers are attached to the obligations – and all three credit bureaus have this information.

**Related Link:** [Kelsey Grammer's Ex Could Get \\$30M in the Divorce!](#)

When you decide to end your relationship and love, a divorce decree is not the best way to handle debt. The reasons become obvious when you explore a number of likely possibilities. What if, a couple of years after the divorce, your ex decides to be late on a debt obligation that is still reporting in your name? Imagine what will happen to your credit score! It can suddenly drop 150 points – and you may not even know it! Unfortunately, this is not uncommon. And the problem is now yours even though the debt was awarded to your ex. What if it's a house at stake and your former spouse decides to let it go to foreclosure? Are you aware that you cannot buy a home for the next three years because of the foreclosure record on your credit report?

**Related Link:** [Facing a Divorce? Don't Take the Adversarial Approach](#)

Here's some expert love advice offered by divorce financial planners. They insist that divorcing couples should never rely on the other spouse to pay bills that were awarded to them per decree. In essence, this is a disaster waiting to happen. These issues must be tackled up front so you're not vulnerable once the divorce is final. If you are among those who have already made this mistake, it's important that you go back to court to get those debts off your name. If a house is involved especially, get it refinanced out of your name or sold, depending on the situation. If your ex is behind on the mortgage, you might want to go back to court and take over the mortgage payment in return for having the house awarded back to you.

Divorce is tough enough without having to deal with financial crises in the months and years to follow. Be aware. Make sure you don't have debts in your name that get awarded to your ex. Don't put him or her in the position in which they can ruin your credit. If you are not sure about your credit rating, get your current credit report with credit scores to make sure there is no damage done. There are many resources on the Internet for accessing this information. My relationship advice: Don't put it off!

*For more information on and expert relationship advice from Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).*

*For other free articles on child-centered divorce, a free ezine, valuable resources for parents, coaching, and other services, visit <http://www.childcenteredddivorce.com>. Rosalind Sedacca, CCT is founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network and author of the new ebook, How Do I Tell the Kids ... about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love!*

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# Relationship Expert Talks When To File For Divorce



By J'Nel Wright for [Divorce Support Center](#)

If your relationship and love has been confronted with unexpected and undesirable changes, you might consider ending your marriage. While we witness the threat of [celebrity divorce](#) surface almost every day, along with other nasty allegations, the fact remains that the decision to pursue a divorce is a personal choice.



# Relationship Expert: What To Consider Before Ending Your Marriage

Before you make a serious decision about your future, consider our love advice and ask yourself these questions:

**1. What do you value most about the marriage?** Is it the security the marriage provides? Do you value the companionship that's shared? For many, mutual respect is a highly favored characteristic, but whatever it may be, consider the strength of that factor now. For example, relationship expert, Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, says "When one or both spouses stop respecting one another, the foundation of the marriage is torn apart and little can be done to mend it. This is the biggest cause of divorce and is usually behind all the other issues involved." If the value you cherish is lost, you need to decide if it can ever be reclaimed. If not, you have the answer on what the next step should be.

**Related Link:** [Is Your Life Working?](#)

**2. What do you value in your partner?** Think about what attracted you to your honey in the first place. Was it integrity? Was it the prospect of a lifetime of financial support? Does your partner make you laugh or offer protection that makes you feel safe? If something has happened that compromises their character or desirable traits, you need to consider what's left. Moreover, is it enough to sustain your marriage in the future. The key is to identify the difference between reacting to an emotional experience and becoming more self-aware about what ultimately matters to you and what you want in your life.

Divorce support relationship expert Cathy Meyer says "If you're ready for divorce, you've let go of any emotional attachments you have to your spouse. These are good and

negative feelings that often come into play during marital conflict. Deciding on divorce at a time when you're overwhelmed with emotions won't solve problems. It will generate problems and compound any hurt and frustration you may be feeling."

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**3. How much is an outside party influencing your feelings or decision?** At the first sign of infidelity, the pressure to leave the marriage is palpable. Often the hint of staying leaves feminists howling "once a cheater, always a cheater." But what if the infraction is viewed as redeemable? In a variety of instances that go beyond infidelity, how do you piece together the logic of the woman who chooses to stand by her man? Truthfully, a third party has no place in your decision. If they have information that's important for you to know then it should be shared, but if you find yourself overly concerned about the reaction your decision may receive, your focus is misdirected. Only you can decide if this marriage has the foundation to withstand hardship. You're the one to decide if you have the strength and desire to rebuild it. Whatever your decision, be prepared to defend it to those who question it, but make it clear the decision was yours to make.

**Related Link:** [Expert Dating Advice: Moving On After a Divorce](#)

We are surrounded by failed marriages that kicked the bucket for a host of reasons. Unfortunately, the commonality of it doesn't make the decision to end our marriage any easier. By establishing our value system and monitoring the present state of a relationship that we once held in high esteem, we can better prepare ourselves to estimate the current value of our love and whether or not it can make it over the threshold to better days.

*For more information about and articles by our Hope After Divorce relationship experts, click [here](#).*

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# Expert Relationship Advice: Three Questions Crucial to Co-Parenting Success



By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT

Michael Matracci, Esq. is one of the “good guy” collaborative divorce attorneys who avidly supports the concept and principles of a child-centered divorce. He is the author of a new [self-help relationship book](#), *Fighting Over the Kids: Resolving Day-to-Day Custody Conflict in Divorce Situations*, which can be found at his website, [www.divorcewithoutdishonor.com/](http://www.divorcewithoutdishonor.com/).

# Expert Relationship Advice from Michael Matracci, Esq.

Recently, I interviewed the relationship author, who is a divorced parent himself. He shared with me a valuable technique he uses when dealing with parenting issues with his former spouse. I loved his expert relationship advice and am passing it along to other parents who face continuous challenges, month after month, year after year, as they raise their children following a divorce.

**Related Link:** [A Reminder About Relationship Mistakes to Avoid](#)

Michael asks himself three basic questions that get to the heart of what a child-centered divorce is about: doing the very best for your children. When a parenting issue arises that he and his former spouse have to face, before he takes any action, he first answers these questions:

- 1. If we were two “normal” married parents, what would I do?**
- 2. If we were still married, would this issue really be a big deal?**
- 3. Is this about our child – or more about ME and HER/HIM?**

These questions put you in the right perspective for taking wise and effective action. They help you to detach from the emotional “drama” of your divorce. Have you been caught up in your “story” about being a victim, abused, hurt, angry, jealous, or exploited by your former spouse? By questioning your motives, you can remind yourself that parenting issues are not about you; they are about what’s in the best interest of the children you love.

That can mean sacrificing some ego gratification, biting your tongue when you want to be sarcastic, and being more tolerant of an ex who sees things differently regarding discipline,

rules, and other parenting choices. At the same time, it can also bring you into closer alignment with your children's other parent, which will help you to determine the best outcomes for your children together as their parents.

**Related Link:** [How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce](#)

Most important of all, these questions will remind you that when it comes to parenting decisions, always take the high road. Be the "mature" parent who puts their children's needs first. That's always the answer you are looking for – and one that you will never regret.

*For more information on and expert relationship advice from Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).*

*For other free articles on child-centered divorce, a free ezine, valuable resources for parents, coaching, and other services, visit <http://www.childcenteredddivorce.com>. Rosalind Sedacca, CCT is founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network and author of the new ebook, How Do I Tell the Kids ... about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love!*

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## Relationship Expert Talks About Being Friends With Your Ex





By Debbie Ceresa

“Today, I marry my friend.” It’s a common declaration of love shared between two people as part of their wedding ceremony. We promise “to love and cherish until death do us part.” But what happens when the relationship and love you once shared dies? Is it possible to stay friends with your ex?

## Relationship Expert Shares Her Thoughts on a Friendship With An Ex

“If you don’t have children or financial reasons tying you together and you want to stay friends, you need to think about how the friendship would work,” advises Dr. John Aiken, a clinical psychologist and [relationship expert](#), in the article [“Can You Be Friends With Your Ex?”](#) Even if you share children with your former partner, Aiken refers to the importance of establishing boundaries, measuring expectations, and evaluating the true motivations for wanting to keep your ex in your life. We see this challenge in the recent celebrity break-ups of Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck as well as Gwen



Stefani and Gavin Rossdale as they move forward with separate lives yet combined parenting.

**Related Link:** [Expert Dating Advice: Moving On After a Divorce](#)

Sometimes, the reason the relationship ended supports the need to cut ties and walk away. However, as a relationship expert, I know that, many times, if you struggled on a romantic level, a friendship can still flourish. If you choose to develop a friendship with your ex, here are some things to remember:

**1. Mourn the loss of the relationship you once knew:** You've ended your relationship. For whatever reason, you're no longer romantically together. Now is the time to stop the fighting and blaming and get on the path to recovery. "Give each other time to mourn the death of the relationship," advises Ami Angelowicz in the article "The longer you two were together, the longer it will take before you're ready for friendship. It could be two months or two years – feel it out. You'll know when the time is right because both of you will feel ready for it. Let hearts heal and flames fizzle out before hopping on the friendship train." You'll have challenges along the way, but you'll find that healing and forgiveness will bring you new insights. Once you step away from the negative thoughts, you'll find yourself a new person who is able to renew your old friendship with your ex.

**2. Set clear boundaries:** Recognize that you're now at a different stage in your relationship with your ex. All couples have their own song and dance, but now is the time to change yours. This new dance could bring back what you miss about your lost friendship. "The same rules don't apply anymore, so toss out old expectations," advises Dr. Gabrielle Morrissey, a sex and dating expert for bodyandsoul.com. "Setting clear and defined boundaries means that, when you become attached again, you'll have an emotionally healthy relationship with your ex." Why not treat your ex like your other friends, acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses? Focus on your

ex's friendship strengths, but keep the relationship at an appropriate level. Just because you're rekindling your friendship doesn't mean you're looking to rekindle your romantic relationship.

**3. Move forward:** Be angry. Be jealous. You can even spend time feeling hurt. Then move on. It's essential for you to date other people and make new friends in different social circles. "You might not realize it, but keeping your ex around as a friend after a break-up can keep you from moving on," observes writer Karley Sciortino in the article "Breathless: Should You Be Friends With Your Ex?" "Moving on is hard, and the impulse to keep your ex in your life can be really strong – we all get it. But you first need to give yourself a window to move on physically and emotionally."

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: 4 Reasons To Leave The Past In The Past](#)

Reaching out to a former love certainly has its rewards. You need to allow yourself time to mourn the loss of the relationship and embrace new parameters as well as set clear boundaries as to what those parameters include. Then, after moving forward by welcoming opportunities for love to become a part of your life, you can enjoy the support of a former partner who knows you better than anyone else while you gain strength and focus on finding a new path to personal happiness.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on Amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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# Expert Dating Advice: Moving On After a Divorce



By Debbie Ceresa

“I don’t regret getting the divorce,” a close friend confided recently. “It’s more resentment. My ex seems to be moving on with his life so easily. I fear I may never find someone I can trust again.” Sound familiar? Many divorcees can relate to these circumstances, and celebrity couples are no exception.

We saw it play out in Hollywood with [celebrity exes](#) Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon, who handled a private and painful break-up in the public eye. Inevitably, two people who have ended their relationship and love with each other must move forward. Most of us hope to get a second chance at love, but sometimes, that isn't the case, and you find yourself standing still while your ex moves on.

## Post-Divorce Expert Dating Advice

My expert dating advice is to take ownership of your feelings, complete yourself, and forgive. You need to be able to handle this change while preparing yourself for your own happiness.

**1. Take ownership of your feelings:** Often times, in failed relationships, one or both partners misunderstand emotional responsibility. What does this mean? Take a minute and think about the many arguments or disagreements you had during your marriage. Do you find yourself saying that your partner made you mad? Instead of owning your feelings, you're blaming someone else. As a relationship expert, I can tell you the result: If you aren't able to look at your own emotions, you're creating a victim mentality, which will certainly land you in an emotional jail of your own making.

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**2. Ask yourself, "Am I getting over a relationship or getting complete?":** The first thing we think of when someone recommends "getting over" a relationship is to forget, but is it really possible to not remember falling in love with someone or having children together? Consider my expert dating advice, and find closure in your relationship by writing down your unrealized dreams and expectations. Think about some of the things that never materialized during your marriage. Keep your notebook in a safe and private place. Remember that

it's for you to think about and not share. You may discover writing gives you an opportunity to look honestly at the situation. Making a list of your broken hopes in your personal notebook is a step towards forgiveness.

**3. Forgive and be free:** I recognize that insensitive, uncaring, and even evil actions by your ex hurt you terribly. However, if you persist in holding onto your resentful and unforgiving mentality, you will only continue to hurt yourself. An important aspect of recovery is remembering that forgiveness is designed to empower you. You're not condoning negative aspects of your marriage. Set yourself free by recognizing what was incomplete during your relationship.

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There are few things more painful than realizing the person you once loved so deeply has found love with another. The feelings of inadequacy and doubt can take a beating on your heart and your hope for a happy future. But, by taking control of your emotions and owning those feelings, focusing on building inner strength, and allowing forgiveness to release those feelings that weigh you down, you are preparing yourself for a future filled with hope, happiness, and, perhaps, a second chance at everlasting love.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on Amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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# Relationship Expert: The Economic Reality Of Divorce Is No Excuse For Irresponsible Parenting



By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT

While the economy is turning up, middle- and lower-class Americans are still struggling with financial challenges. Many couples that are ready to call it quits in their [relationship and love](#) are postponing the divorce decision because they can't afford it or the two-home reality in their future. As a



relationship expert, here is my love advice for how to cope with the economic reality of divorce.

## **Relationship Expert Shares Love Advice About Divorce**

Does postponing divorce mean couples are finding new ways to get along and reconsider their marriages? I've seen some cases where the relationship and love survives because they put off breaking up. But for many, it just means adapting to continued states of unhappiness and coping with disappointment and frustration. This approach, of course, does not bear well for the children of these unions. They experience the negative consequences of a distressed marriage whether their parents split up or choose to stay together because of economic factors.

Too many couples are so financially dependent on one another that they can't make a clean break. But, at the same time, they've lost their emotional interdependence, which helps a partnership thrive during outside challenges. Without the affection and emotional connection, they're basically roommates sharing a home and living expenses.

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The problem is that they're also parents of children who may be more confused than ever about life at home. Mom and Dad are still married and together – but are they? It's a big concern for therapists, school guidance counselors, clergy, and others who understand children's emotional and psychological needs during times of high stress. There are no clear resolutions for today's economic challenges or for parents caught up in making the divorce decision. However, staying together in a marriage that continues in “form” can only be a damaging

situation for the kids. That's because those marriages often fail to focus on the emotional safety and security factors that children need in order to thrive, feel self-confident, and express themselves.

## **Dating Expert Gives Tips For Moving Ahead – In Or Out Of A Marriage**

Parents, whatever you do, stop and ask yourself some fundamental questions before moving ahead, whether you choose to stay in your marriage or get divorced:

- Despite economic stress, are we taking the time to give our children the loving attention they deserve?
- Are we as parents providing a loving environment for our children, either in the same residence or two separate abodes?
- Are we providing the nurturing values and personal time we want to instill in our children despite our own challenges as adults?
- Are we creating rituals with one or both parents so our children feel that we still are a “family” regardless of the form it takes?
- Should we be seeking outside professional help to make sure our children are feeling safe, secure, loved, and peaceful in their home environment(s)?
- Are we being honest with our children about our circumstances without sharing adult details with them that would be confusing and burdensome at their age?
- Are we restraining from arguing, badmouthing each other, and creating tension? Are we avoiding bitterness, sarcasm, or other negativity when the children are present?
- Are we reminding our children how much we love them and will continue to love them regardless of changes in where and how we live?

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As a dating expert, I know that how you answer these questions will determine the quality of life your children experience, whether they are residing in one residence or two. Always remember: You are parents first and a couple struggling with marital or divorce issues second. Isn't that the way it should be?

*For more information about and expert relationship advice from Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).*

*Rosalind Sedacca's Child-Centered Divorce Network provides free articles, an e-zine, coaching services and other valuable resources for parents at [www.childcenterreddivorce.com](http://www.childcenterreddivorce.com). Her signature ebook, How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love! is also available at [www.howdoitellthekids.com](http://www.howdoitellthekids.com).*

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## Expert Love Advice: How To Tackle That Nagging Seven-Year Itch





By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Can you remember the first time you were in love? Do you remember how the mere image of your partner took control of your thoughts? Your actions? Your view of the world? Life was vibrant and hopeful. Most of us can relate, but fast forward seven years, and the crowd thins a little. The intensity has dimmed or even disappeared long ago. Were we wrong about that person...or are we just incapable of maintaining a lasting [relationship and love](#)?

## Relationship Expert Shares Love Advice On Seven-Year Itch

As a relationship expert, I know that there's some empirical truth behind the matrimonial seven-year itch. According to the US Census Bureau, statistics continually support this behavior pattern and offer a theory showing that, after seven years of marriage, most couples have raised their children and have realized they don't want to be around each other anymore.

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In an article for *PsychologyToday*, author Dario Maestripieri, Ph.D., referred to the findings of anthropologist Helen Fisher. She theorized that humans may have a predisposition to being serial monogamists. This means that “people are socially bonded to one partner at a time but don’t stick to the same partner their whole life.” Instead, they switch from partner to partner. This often follows a four- to seven-year pattern.

So how do you explain those couples who defy the odds of statistics and anthropological patterns? What is it about the pair that remains together for 30-plus years that we could emulate in our own love life? Here is some expert love advice about what those enduring relationships have that yours may not:

**1. The relationship is flexible:** Most long-term goals need to adapt to endure, and the same holds true for long-term relationships. An article for eharmony.com warns of adhering to patterns that don’t work or weaken a partnership. For example, if one or both of you start taking the other one for granted, if either or both of you adopt a condescending tone in communicating with your spouse, or if you start seeking comfort and support from someone other than your spouse, the healthy relationship can break down. “To help avoid long-term unhealthy side effects that can lead to the seven-year itch, it’s important to change those relationship-weakening patterns and habits,” the article reads. “In doing so, you may discover what you love about each other and ultimately deepen the bond you share.”

In an article for *PsychologyToday*, author Robert Taibbi, LCSW, stresses the importance of updating your vision. “What do you both envision in the next year, five years, or ten years? It’s not so important what you say as you both have the ability to say it,” he explains. “This is what will help you both narrow the gap between your daily life and your inner needs.”

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## Second Chance?

**2. Communication, communication, communication:** Communication is a habit that should emerge during the early dating stages and continue throughout a marriage. Make it a habit to express your needs. Moreover, be sure to ask your partner what his or her needs consist of as well. This doesn't mean you'll always agree, but it will teach you how to handle conflicting views. In the eharmony.com article, we are reminded to expect bumps in the road. "The goal is not to avoid them at all costs but to understand how to navigate them in healthy, effective, loving ways," it says.

**3. Partners choose happiness over the need to be right:** It often comes down to choosing one or the other. Are you drawn to having the last word? Do you relish those opportunities when you have proven your partner wrong? Is defending your point of view worth taking it to the mat at every opportunity? If so, you may win the battle, but you are destined to be alone at the end of the war. "By letting go of the desire to always be right at any cost, you give yourself and your partner permission to enjoy life again," says eharmony.com. "A happy relationship AND less stress? Sounds like a win-win."

Problems will certainly make a regular appearance in your relationship, whether motivated by self-serving strategies or not. In this case, long-term couples understand the importance of solving problems when they arise. They know that unresolved problems or unchecked behavior creates an unhappy environment. "It just becomes another land mine that you have to carefully walk around," writes Taibbi. "If you're always looking down at where you are stepping, you never can really look at each other."

**Related Link:** [Romantic Relationship Advice: From Roadkill to Recommitment](#)

So how can one scratch that dreaded seven-year itch? Our



relationship advice is to make sure your partnership is important to you. Expert love advice shows that, by maintaining flexibility, communicating, showing respect for your partner's opinions, and handling conflict openly and with fairness, you can uphold the value of your relationship and enjoy an itchy-free future with the one you love.

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## Relationship Expert Talks About Helping Kids Through Divorce





By Debbie Bartashius-Ceresa

Whose divorce is it? Perhaps this sounds like a strange question when talking about the Hilary Duff and Mike Comrie custody dispute or the battle of where Jodie Sweetin and Morty Coyle's little Beatrix will attend pre-school. But as a [relationship expert](#), I know that a divorce can cause many losses, especially for the children.

## Relationship Expert on Losses of Divorce

There is truth that divorce is a family matter, but in the end, it's the couple who is ending their relationship and love together. The kids are merely in the midst of a war zone, and the damage to them can be immense. Divorce, like death, creates losses for everyone involved. Children can experience any or all of the following:

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**1. Loss of expectations:** We teach our children to love, trust, and be loyal to us. Children think that their family will always be together. Think about the many stories you've read to your kids; most of them have a family that stays together. Children are also exposed to the vows and commitments parents make to each other through movies and religion. Try to imagine how confused a child feels when they're told that their parents can no longer keep this pledge.

**2. Loss of trust:** Children have a difficult time dealing with the conflicting feelings of love and divorce. These emotions tend to cause the child to believe that their parents are distrustful.

**3. Loss of familiarity and routines:** A divorce sometimes causes a move from one home to another or a change of schools. Everything that was familiar and routine in the child's life is disrupted.

**4. Loss of safety:** What makes you feel safe? Most of us feel stable when we are in our day-to-day routine and our comfort zone. Oftentimes, children caught in the battle lose their sense of safety.

## **Expert Love Advice For How To Help Your Child Through Your Divorce**

As a relationship expert, I look at celebrity divorces, such as the Duff-Comrie and Sweetin-Coyle cases, and see that they create an awareness of how to understand the effect of break-ups on our children. My expert love advice, whether you're dealing with a divorce of your own or someone close to you, is to focus on the kids. The following can help your child:

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**1. Don't "fix" feelings:** Be there to listen to your child without trying to tell them how to feel. Every child is different and reacts to a divorce uniquely. The problem with emotions that are sad, negative, or painful is that we try to fix them. We don't try to change or fix good feelings. Remember that feelings are feelings.

**2. Find a safe zone:** Give your child a place to express any happy, sad, or painful emotions. You need to be able to listen, hear, and acknowledge their feelings. This safe zone also means not taking sides with the other parent.

**3. Complete your own emotions:** The world isn't perfect. Divorce happens. Every divorce is unique; your feelings are unique. Taking actions to complete your own emotions with your divorce will give you the ability to hear and listen to your children.

*Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on Amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit [debbieceresa.com](http://debbieceresa.com).*

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# Expert Dating Advice: Should You Give Your Ex a Second Chance?



By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

In the latest celebrity news, actress Pamela Anderson recently announced that her celebrity divorce to two-time husband, Rick Salomon, was final. In retrospect, she realized she never should have traveled down that path a second time. In contrast, my aunt Marie Osmond reunited with and remarried her first husband, Stephen Craig, 26 years after they divorced. This [celebrity couple](#) is fantastic together, and I'm thrilled to see them back together. As Uncle Donny stated in *People.com*, "These two people are right for each other."

Deciding whether or not your ex is the ultimate soul mate for you can be a complicated decision, and it's one that requires some soul-searching. Six percent of people remarry their former spouse, and sometimes, it results in happiness, while other times, the old problems flare up again. As a relationship expert, I think the wisdom behind that decision largely depends on what caused the marriage to break up in the first place and what changes are happening now. My expert dating advice would be to consider these three reasons for remarrying your spouse and these three reasons to move on:

## Expert Dating Advice For Giving Your Ex a Second Chance

**1. You're able to forgive each other:** What was once considered a deal breaker to your marriage may take on a different look as time passes. In her *Huffington Post* article, "Remarrying Your Ex-Spouse," author Lois Tarter believes the ability to forgive comes with time, stating, "If the two ex-spouses worked on themselves while apart and they are in a better place, they may be able to forgive their spouse for all that went wrong."

**Related Link:** [Expert Dating Advice For Finding Love After Divorce](#)

**2. Bad timing caused the break-up:** Could it be the right guy came along at the wrong moment? If so, follow my expert dating advice and look at the personal growth of both of you during the time apart. "Sometimes, two people feel that they need to grow a bit on their own in order to be fully committed to a marriage," wrote Tarter.

**3. The problem wasn't the marriage:** In some cases, it was the baggage that was brought into a marriage that cast a destructive shade on the relationship and love. Rachel Clark, who blogs for Psychology.com as "Marry, Divorce, Reconcile,"



refers to her own experience when she writes, “It was never the marriage. It was a habit of thinking that questioned and doubted, that spawned negativity instead of positivity. And I can say that came from my childhood because my own parents had divorced.”

## Relationship Expert Gives Reasons to Move On

**1. Toxic behavior is ruining the relationship:** As we witnessed with Anderson, a failure to acknowledge the effects of unhealthy behaviors can doom a relationship and love. It’s like opening the refrigerator door, hoping to find something to eat, not finding anything, and closing the door, only to open it again a few seconds later in the hopes that something new appeared. That type of thinking is irrational, and so is thinking the same negative behavior patterns will not have an adverse effect on you as they once did.

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**2. You are remarrying for the wrong reasons:** Contrary to most Disney movies, remarrying your ex-spouse for the sake of the children, the grandparents, to save the family farm, or any reason that lies outside of genuine love for this person is sure to end in disaster for the second time.

**3. Your ex-spouse has moved on:** If your former spouse has invested his time and affections into another, your time speculating what could have been is over. “Life would be so much easier for everyone involved if our feelings of desire, love, and attachment were reciprocated,” was an opinion shared on truthaboutdeception.com. “But more often than not, these basic emotions do not align themselves that way.”

By taking an honest look at the reasons behind your split, you

may be facing an opportunity to make right what went wrong long ago. Or you may be proud of your ability to escape a destructive relationship that left your heart as empty as your checking account. Either way, toying with the prospect enables you to confirm your choices and feel good about what is to come.

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## Romantic Relationship Advice: From Roadkill to Recommitment



By Elaine Taylor

I am a woman for whom the relationship “r-word” had been “roadkill” more often than “recommitment” (not nearly as often as my almost namesake Elizabeth Taylor but more in the range of Demi Moore or [Jennifer Lopez](#)). So it’s surprising that I leapt to the assumption that “May is National Recommitment Month” was for romantic relationships. A Google search, however, led in a different direction.

## Romantic Relationship Advice on the Importance of Recommitment

Apparently, Recommitment Month originated as a time to look back on New Year’s resolutions and reenergize (recommit to) goals set and vows made with a champagne glass in one hand and a noisemaker stuck between pursed lips. Recommitment Month is also an overused leitmotif commandeered by addiction facilities to hawk their pricey rehab gigs.

My only New Year’s resolution is never to make one because I already know my commitment will be lip-service deep. I’m going to stick with what I, multi-divorced but now blissfully hitched, finally figured out about both commitment...and its scary twin, “recommitment.”

My romantic relationship practices in years past have followed the basic animal kingdom model. I have:

- Been attracted to the peacock version of the species: tall, dark, handsome. Who could resist a nice tail?
- Gone for the all-too-common, unambitious, suburban songbird. He sits atop the feeder, happily chirping at the bright blue sky, waiting for Santa Claus to show up with the seed bag.
- Tried out a white-rumped sandpiper. It could be said that I was attracted to his breeding territory(San

Francisco). It could also be said I didn't realize his breed was not monogamous.

**Related Link:** [Expert Relationship Advice: I'm Divorced, But He's Married](#)

Recommitment? Ha. More than once I sprinted down the aisle – in reverse – to Peggy Lee crooning, “Is that all there is?” Not that any of my paramours had grim character flaws. They were perfectly acceptable husband material. Just not for me. At some point, I poked an accusatory finger at the mirror and confided, “With your track record, maybe it's time to consider that *you* might be the problem.” So I went to an astrologer/psychic to ask if Peggy Lee nailed it: That's all there was?

“Oh, no,” the psychic said. “You are destined for great love – the kind about which stories are written – but not until you're ready.”

Seriously? I had a workout regimen and a classic sense of style, and I waxed routinely. What more did a woman have to do to be “ready” for a relationship and love? Ashton Kutcher came along with his tidbit of relationship advice – vulnerability is the essence of romance – a couple decades too late for me; I had to figure it out for myself. Even more scary, it became obvious that I had to be willing to be vulnerable with *myself* before I could be vulnerable with anyone else.

Over the next years, I spent time on the therapy couch, and I:

- Held my nose and, reluctantly, dived headfirst into my emotional dumpster.
- Dug to the back of the withheld-feelings closet – the one I had never dared peek inside because, yes, I had in fact stuffed it with an army of destructive memories and their full-dress uniforms: shame, sorrow, and self-denigration.
- Didn't stop diving and digging until that dumpster and

that closet were emptied out, spit-shined, and springtime fresh.

That was my first big step in making myself “ready.” The second step – and perhaps my most important insight – was to realize the one person to whom I had never even *considered* committing to – much less *recommitting* to – was...me! Of course not – that would be selfish! I was committed to mothering and wife-ing and bread winner-ing. *Me-ing* would have taken time from the ones I loved.

**Related Link:** [Dating Advice: Create The Person You Want To Be](#)

My therapist asked if I included myself on the Ones-I-Love list. The question didn’t even make sense. Wasn’t it someone else’s job to love me? The someone I hadn’t yet met?

## Focusing On Your Relationship and Love with Yourself

The therapist’s answer came in the form of a question: If you don’t love yourself – believe yourself worthy of love, deserving to be cared about and cared for – then why would that elusive “someone else” love and care about you?

Whoa! That was like a pistol-whip to the head. It left me stunned and reeling. Was she saying it wouldn’t be selfish to expect from others what I was so willing to give? Respect? Nurturing? Security? To feel I had the right to the same “love-entitlement” that I accorded the Ones-I-Loved?

The psychic had been right when she said I wasn’t ready. I had always hidden my vulnerability, never believed in my own self-worth. I worked hard to change. Soon after, the love – that someone for whom I had yearned for so long – slid right into my life. For more than a decade, he has colored my world with a rainbow of happiness and contentment. Never again have I found myself asking, “Is that all there is?” Recommitment – to

him and to myself – is, at last, something I do most willingly, joyfully, and often.

*Elaine Taylor is the author of Karma Deception and a Pair of Red Ferraris: A Memoir. She is a former IT headhunter, Contingent Workforce Management specialist, and Board member of Raphael House in San Francisco. She can be found at [www.KarmaDeception.com](http://www.KarmaDeception.com)*

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