

# Expert Dating Advice: How to Straddle the Line Between Proactive and Pushy



By [Marni Battista](#)

In this day and age, females aren't expected (nor do they want) to be that delicate flower patiently waiting for the object of their affection to ring them up and ask them to the drive-in. We're making more money and finding fulfillment in ourselves, so by golly, we should be able to make the first move with confidence every once in a while!

# Expert Dating Advice: How to Be Proactive

In the interest of maintaining that magical feminine mystique that makes us such a desirable gender, it's important to determine where being proactive crosses into pushy territory. And since navigating that line can be a subjective and nearly impossible exercise on your own, here's a Dating With Dignity list from our relationship experts to help you keep your sexy confidence from turning scary:

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**1. Introducing yourself:** There is absolutely nothing wrong with walking up and saying hi to that cute guy you spot across a room. In fact, many fellas will say they find it attractive when a girl goes after what she wants. If you're a little unsure, follow this expert dating advice when looking for a relationship and love: Shoot him a smile first and see how he responds; then, read the signs from there. As long as you keep it casual, light, and flirtatious, any red-blooded, American man will welcome an attractive lady doing the hard part for him.

***Signs that you're being pushy:*** He's clearly trying to end the conversation; you catch him making subtle SOS signs to a friend; and/or he's wearing a wedding ring.

**2. Initiating follow up:** Many guys will be the first to admit they're clueless about when to pull the trigger, whether it's asking for a number, sending the first text, or suggesting a date idea. And much like being the first to say hello, it takes a heightened sense of social graces to determine when your go-getter attitude is a welcome one. If he's expressing interest during your initial conversation – actively engaging, making physical contact, listening attentively, and smiling plenty – you have your go-ahead to grab some digits or broach

the subject of hanging out.

***Signs that you're being pushy:*** He's trigger shy at every turn; his responses to your contact are short and infrequent; and/or he doesn't seem to open up as contact continues.

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**3. Making the first move:** This is a tricky one. We assume that men, being the supposedly simple creatures they are, will make a move if they're even remotely attracted to you. But believe it or not, that's not always the case. For every man who leaves a date wishing he had swooped in for the kiss, there is a lady who won't let that happen. When and where you decide to do it is completely dependent on your comfort level, but deciding to do it in the first place requires a key focus on body language. Here's some expert dating advice to consider: If you can sense the attraction is there but nerves are standing in its way, it may just be you who needs to break that physical barrier.

***Signs that you're being pushy:*** He maintains a healthy distance when the two of you are together; he doesn't initiate any physical contact; and/or he appears disinterested in conversation.

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# The Holiday Gift Guide for New Couples



By [Marni Battista](#)

The holidays are always an awkward time to start a relationship. There are few people who proclaim to be great gift givers and can wander through stores to pick out the perfect presents for everyone on their list. It's difficult enough to give thoughtful gifts to close family and friends and not be swayed by the latest and greatest gadgets that everyone wants but aren't necessarily thoughtful.

So how do you go about buying something for the "special" person whom you may not know so well? People are often so intimidated by gift giving that it may be a better idea to

decide *not* to exchange gifts. Expressing how you feel about presents early in the relationship can help gauge what's an appropriate gift, if any gift at all!

**Related Link:** [10 Rules for Couples Gifts](#)

If your partner is practical and hints at something that isn't too extravagant, it's probably best to listen. However, there are "big" gifts, such as jewelry, watches, and pricey electronics, that should be left for future years of dating or marriage. If you're unsure about what your significant other would like, here are five ideas that are thoughtful but not too overthought:

**A relevant book** is for the brave dater. Listening to your partner about books they liked in the past or things that they may be interested in learning more about can help you decide what kind of book is appropriate.

**Art** never goes out of style and never depreciates. Therefore, it works for anyone. It's finding the *kind* of art – a sculpture, oil painting, graffiti canvas, mosaic, etc. – that may be the most troubling. Listen to what kind of art your partner compliments or thinks is "cool."

**Something comfy and comforting** is always nice. If you're going to go this route, a really soft and plush robe, sweater, or slippers are great ideas for someone who finds comfort in the finer things in life.

**A DIY gift** from the heart, such as a photo book or personalized frame, is a crafty and cute way of showing your appreciation for that person.

**Related Link:** [Our 2014 Holiday Gift Guide](#)

**Experiential gifts** are a great idea because let's face it: It's fun for both of you! Planning a camping trip, a day at the museum, or a concert date shows that spending time with

your significant other is the most important gift of all!

Although it may seem like gift giving for that new special someone is intimidating, knowing their likes and dislikes can help you decide what is appropriate without going overboard. Plus, starting a relationship with more thoughtful gestures can lead to an easier gift giving experience in the future!

Happy holidays...and happy dating!

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## How to Know When to Make a Move For Him





By [Marni Battista](#)

Serious relationships, a status most singletons strive for, present their own set of complicated issues that naturally arise when two people are on the precipice of sharing the rest of their lives together. And then, life throws a crossroads into your partnership's trajectory: the dreaded move.

Regardless of the plans you've made, a too-great-to-resist job opportunity or unforeseen family emergency will make it suddenly imperative that he relocates, and the difficult question remains: Will you follow? Diehard romantics or impulse decision-makers might immediately say, "Of course!"

**Related Link:** [Moving In Together: How to Know When the Time is Right](#)

But there are some absolutely essential questions to consider before you decide to make such a monumental decision based on someone else. I'm here at Dating with Dignity to guide you towards the right choice for you, your relationship, and your future with these five questions:

**1. Are you on the same page about where the relationship is going?** You don't necessarily need a ring on your finger to make the move, but ensuring you both share a vision about the future of your relationship is paramount to making this life-changing decision. Broaching the topic may feel daunting, especially if you're in the earlier stages of a relationship, but if the possibility of moving to be with him is already on the table, this question should naturally follow.

**2. Are you on the same page about living arrangements?** If you aren't living together in your current city, feel out his thoughts on where you would reside in the new one and don't shy away from your own expectations. There's no right or wrong answer on whether you should live together or separately, but it's all about making sure you know *exactly* what to expect. Clearing this up will also help you to plan financially as well – rent and utilities are a major expense, no matter where you're moving!

**3. What would you do if the relationship didn't work out once you're there?** You may not want to think about this possibility, but unfortunately, there are a number of reasons the move may not work out, whether it's because of the relationship itself, the city, or some unpredictable x-factor. Though letting your mind wander to negative outcomes may not feel productive or encouraging, it's important to have a back-up plan so your life isn't leveled by unforeseen circumstances.

**Related Link:** [The Big Merge: 3 Tips for Moving In Together](#)

**4. How do you feel about the new city in question?** Thinking about the new city is likely taking a back seat to the countless relationship questions you're churning over, but how you feel about your prospective new home has everything to do with the future of your relationship. Moving somewhere unsavory that has few opportunities within your chosen career field can cause you to build resentment toward your



significant other and ultimately lead to the downfall of your relationship. Plan regular visits and do your research to make sure this is somewhere you could build a healthy social and professional life.

**5. Do your current feelings for your partner outweigh those of your life where you live now?** Perhaps the most important question to ask is whether or not being with your fella alone fulfills you more than the current life you lead or if it would even be the same without him in it. This is a tough one because, in most cases, you will have built a social circle and comfortable life for yourself where you are, and the thought of moving somewhere completely new is nothing short of terrifying. This is where your rusty “trust gut check” comes in. No matter how bittersweet it may seem, someone you just know will make you happy no matter where you live is worth taking the leap for.

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## 5 Tips for Meeting Your Partner's Family Stress-Free





By [Marni Battista](#)

You've won over the guy, but winning over his family is even more daunting. While your feminine wiles and witty repartee may have tugged at his heartstrings, making a killer first impression and getting the stamp of approval from those closest to him takes a slightly different strategy. Much like a first date, the first time you meet the family doesn't always elicit fireworks. But there are ways to prepare, calm your nerves, and set the stage for a wonderful relationship with your fella's loved ones. So take a deep breath and let these five Dating with Dignity tips help you relax:

**Related Link:** [Taking Your Partner on a Family Vacation](#)

**1. Understand his family landscape:** Relationships between family members are often the most deeply rooted and intricate of them all, so gaining a solid understanding of existing tensions or unconventional family arrangements beforehand will save you from surprise. Schooling yourself on your boyfriend's step-siblings or tense background with his aunt will eliminate awkward situations and allow you to navigate some major conversational pitfalls.

**2. Learn their likes:** Ever fretted before a first date about what the two of you will talk about? You may be experiencing similar anxiety before meeting the family, but in this case, you have your boyfriend to help you prep. Don't be shy about pumping him for information about the personalities and interests of those you're about to meet. Not only will you naturally engage in more thoughtful and free-flowing conversation, but your genuine interest in your partner's loved ones will score you brownie points with him too.

**3. Avoid controversy:** No matter how vehemently you and your partner may agree on certain hot button issues, it's best to err on the side of caution when meeting his family. Sensitive subjects like politics or religion carry with them scores of touchy nuances that could make the conversation treacherous. If you're worried a certain subject might come up, plan to pre-vet opinions on the issues in question with your boyfriend beforehand in case you need to prepare a PC response or gently nudge him in the ribs to jump in and change the subject.

**Related Link:** [Meeting Your Partner's Family Over the Holidays](#)

**4. Mind your manners:** Hold that sailor's tongue, roll up the sleeves of your sensible yet stylish cardigan, and start setting the table. Your language and overall interaction with his family members will all roll into one well-formed opinion of your character. Of course, don't go overboard with the manners or sensible clothing to the point where you feel stiff and unnatural. You just want to create a sterling (and well-deserved) first impression.

**5. Be yourself:** You probably saw this one coming: The best way to succeed in any social situation is to relax and let others get to know the real you. Any time you find yourself getting nervous, remember that the whole reason you're meeting these people in the first place is because your mate is enamored with *you*. The more naturally you act, the more likely his family will follow suit.

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## Online Dating: Are Pictures Worth 1000 Words?



By [Marni Battista](#)

As much as we may try to seem above it, there's no denying that photos are a major factor when choosing whom to pursue in the online dating world. While I always encourage women to

look beyond a man's physical characteristics and delve deeper to determine overall compatibility, online dating presents a whole different animal.

Other than the mysterious algorithm working behind the scenes, most online dating sites give you a guy's stats, a few sentences, and a gaggle of photos to base your first impression on. It's only natural – and wise – to read into the pictures these potential men choose to provide. So that you don't step on any online dating landmines, here's a Dating with Dignity guide to potential photo faux-pas:

**Related Link:** [Dating Red Flags Revealed on Facebook](#)

### **Obviously Outdated**

It's tempting for us all to pick the fit, tanned photo from senior year sorority formal over the slightly paler and softer-around-the-edges candid photo from brunch last weekend. But the most secure and successful daters realize the value in posting something more recent and realistic. Guys who've posted something clearly from decades past are cause for a red flag. There's something on the outside or the inside that they haven't quite come to terms with.

### **Angles and Filters on Filters on Filters**

Women have long been accused of using "the angles" in online photos, but just as many men are guilty of snapping profile pics from unnatural vantage points that put their most flattering face (or body part) forward. Popular apps such as Instagram add a whole other layer to the problem: This and other photo-editing apps can make any average Joe look like an A-list Hollywood stud.

Again, when you encounter someone who feels as though they need to dramatically alter their photo in order to appear attractive to potential women, you're likely dealing with

someone who carries a level of insecurity, narcissism, or some combination of both.

**Related Link:** [How to Be Successful with Online Dating](#)

### **Another Lady**

It blows my mind when I hear of men posting photos with significant others, whether past or present, to their online dating profiles. However, it's not uncommon to encounter men online who have purposely included photos with girlfriends, wives, fiancées, or even blatantly exposed wedding rings. Some dating apps, such as Tinder or Hinge, pull profile photos directly from Facebook, inadvertently including cuddly couple pics from profile pictures past. But beyond that, there isn't much of an excuse for this kind of online dating behavior. Guys with other girls have got to go!

### **No Picture at All**

A man who foregoes photos doesn't constitute an automatic deal breaker, but proceed with caution. Reasons abound for choosing to remain physically anonymous on an online dating site. Perhaps he's new to the concept or simply hasn't yet taken the time to upload any.

If a photoless gent reaches out to you and the conversation flows freely or something in his profile piques your interest, be sure to ask for a photo or at least a last name for a Google background check before meeting in person. But if his words aren't impressing and he balks when asked to put a face to the name, it's time to move on to someone who isn't afraid to show his true self.

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# Top 3 Mistakes Women Make in Relationships



By [Marni Battista](#)

As much as we'd like to think of ourselves as relationship experts and place all the blame for failed attempts at love on pure male stupidity, women may unknowingly make crucial slip-ups that land them back in the singles pool time and time again. If you find yourself chronically heartbroken, it's time to take an objective look at your past relationships and 'fess up if you've been guilty of making some of these common missteps. To help you do so, here are the top three mistakes women make in relationships and how to avoid them.

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**1. Trying to Change Him:** We've all heard the age old saying that loving someone makes you want to be a better version of yourself, which is often misinterpreted and manifests itself as the number one mistake women make in relationships. We have a tricky habit of seeing men for the way they could be and not the way they are...and then we give ourselves the mission of being the one who helps them bridge that gap.

If you find yourself inclined to guide your man down a path you've envisioned for him, pause to analyze what small stuff you can let go or gently encourage. Ultimately, if you're wanting to drastically change someone, this isn't a good relationship for you in the long run anyway.

**2. Acting Passive-Aggressive:** Conflict is bound to arise in even the happiest of relationships, and unfortunately, some of it could leave you feeling upset or put out by your significant other's words or actions. Many of us are guilty of employing the old standby silent treatment or just responding with curt answers, all the while assuming he knows exactly why you're angry and impatiently waiting for a heartfelt apology.

While it can be comforting to a bruised ego to let him sweat it out, squirm, and press for what's bothering you, passive-aggressive behavior will ultimately lead to a loss of respect or a fight without the issue really getting resolved. If you're hurt or have a problem that needs discussing, be straightforward and address it head on.

**3. Not Giving Him Space:** In a relationship where you're feeling either particularly lovey dovey, you can easily slip into the habit of insisting on spending all your time with your man. In the case where you simply cannot get enough of him, remember that you'll appreciate the time spent together so much more if you maintain an active social calendar outside



of your relationship. Furthermore, having your own activities and hobbies that you participate in independent of him will make you that much more appealing.

If you're feeling especially drawn to him because he's been withdrawing from you, it could be that he's needing to sort through an internal issue unrelated to the relationship. Men are wired differently and prefer to deal with tough issues on their own rather than reach out to others for help. If his seclusion is isolated to within your relationship, it's time to open the lines of communication and air out whatever it is that isn't working. Smothering him without addressing the heart of the matter will only drive him further away.

**Related Link:** [How to Listen to Your Heart and Take Back Control of Your Love Life](#)

If you have a tendency to make any or all of these three mistakes, it's time to take a dating break and look at what fears or insecurities are behind your behaviors. Often, trying *not* to make these mistakes can feel akin to a Monday morning diet promise: easily made but rarely implemented once we get triggered. Forgive yourself for the errors you've made and give yourself an opportunity to change-up your dating game. The result will be worth it, of that we are sure!

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# Can You Really Find Love on 'The Bachelor'?



By [Marni Battista](#)

The reason for our culture's collective obsession with *The Bachelor* franchise is obvious. What single, soul mate-seeking dater wouldn't dream of being presented with 25 gorgeous single men or women and a period of 6 weeks to strategically whittle down that group to a proposal at the end? The all-expenses-paid fairytale dates, exotic destinations, and expensive sports cars probably don't hurt either.

**The conducive environment of 'The**

# **Bachelor' makes finding relationships and love seem like a breeze. But the real question is, are the happy celebrity couples really as in love as they look?**

But underneath the fluffy fanfare that leaves us hopeless romantics watching at home with hearts a-fluttering, at the show's core is a promise of two people finding everlasting relationships and love. After all, the show has resulted in a few happy marriages, with last month's nuptials of happy celebrity couple Sean Lowe and Catherine Giudici from *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* Season 1 couple Trista and Ryan Sutter's ten-year vow renewal.

**Related Link:** ['The Bachelor' Stars Sean Lowe and Catherine Giudici Are Married](#)

However, in an environment so unrealistic and clouded with so many distracting factors, I can't be convinced *The Bachelor* process is conducive to building the foundation for lasting relationships and love. Do I think it's possible to fall in love on the show? Taking into account the myriad of other ways couples meet these days, sure. Still, I think the success stories are the exception rather than the rule, and here's why:

**1. The Isolation:** Before they even meet the star of the season, the 25 contestants who make it through the arduous casting process are then sequestered in a Los Angeles mansion for the remainder of the process. At the beginning of any relationship, I advise daters to make space in their schedule to reflect and allow true feelings to come to the surface. With no escape from this microcosm and no contact with anyone other than the bachelor, crew, and other contestants to

distract you, it's easy for the show to become your world, distorting your judgment and emotions.

**2. The Game:** As much as the creators would like you to think that the show allows one lucky man or woman to naturally select a lifelong partner, it's simply impossible for one person to get an accurate impression of 25 different people's personalities in one night. From the get-go, the show becomes a strategic game where the more extroverted contestants come out on top and those who take a little bit longer to open up often get shafted without a fair shot. Even the contestants who make it past the first couple of rounds of elimination still have to be pretty brazen to stay on the guy's (and camera's) radar, and as a result, many of them get caught up in the competition while losing sight of their true purpose.

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**3. The Entertainment:** Ultimately, the show's creators prioritize entertainment value over all else. That means there's a whole other slew of factors that make this dating game less natural and more complicated. The over-the-top dates to exotic locales with private performances by the latest up-and-coming country artist may be fun for the viewer to watch, but it distracts the two people from truly getting to know one another. I mean, who wouldn't fall in love with someone in a rose petal-dotted hot tub overlooking the mountains of Thailand while Josh Groban serenades them softly in the background?

The show's creator, Mike Fleiss, has also openly admitted that they make sure to stock at least half the cast with potential villains or loose screws because they know their audience wants to see drama more than they want to see a proposal. So before the show even begins, cattier girls are selected over more compatible mates, and those stroking the drama are kept around longer than they should be.

To put it simply, any situation that brings people together that normally wouldn't meet carries with it the possibility of true love. But considering the numerous reality-distorting factors involved in *The Bachelor*, I'd steer you toward taking your chances in the real world.

*[Marni Battista](#), founder of Dating with Dignity, is an expert dating and life coach with a 10-step system to manifesting love for your self and others.*

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## How to Listen to Your Heart and Take Back Control of Your Love Life





By [Marni Battista](#)

It may sound cheesy, but listening to your heart is essential when navigating the path to a happy ending. And as important as this may be, doing so can be especially difficult with input from loved ones clouding your true feelings. Be it a long-term boyfriend, a new prospect, or a re-ignited flame, here is a simple, step-by-step guide to drown out other's opinions on your love life and follow your intuition.

**Related Link:** [‘Tough Love: Co-Ed’ Star Kyle Keller Says, “Listen to Your Heart”](#)

**1. Take Time to Think:** Before you completely shut out your loved ones, make sure you take some time alone to sort through your thoughts on your current romantic situation. And I mean *alone* time; even just talking it through one-on-one with a trusted friend can invite a trickle of unsolicited advice that leads to confusion and self-doubt. Sometimes, quieting your surroundings, making a cup of tea, and cracking open your journal are all you need to allow the truth to softly float to the surface. Whether your “thing” is to go for a run in

nature, collect your thoughts in a long, hot bath, or write until your hand hurts, the truth *will* bubble up when you take time to listen carefully.

**2. Trust Your Gut:** Once you've had time to develop a solid stance, you've likely also developed a nagging voice in the back of your head that's constantly urging you toward a particular decision. If you've made your list of pros and cons about staying with a long-time boyfriend and you know deep down the right move is to end it, let that nagging voice drown out that of your mother trying to convince you he will provide you the stability you need. Choices like these are not always so cut and dry, but the more time you allow yourself to process the relationship, the more strongly your gut will lead you in the right direction.

**Related Link:** [Should You Listen When Your Parents Advise You to Break Up?](#)

**3. Be Open:** Keep in mind as you dissect your thoughts that even the most unsolicited or inaccurate advice about your personal life from loved ones stems from the best of intentions. Remember that your parents, girlfriends, and siblings are giving advice based on *their* experiences, not yours. While they just want the best for you and to see you with someone who makes you happy, find a sensitive way to explain to them that, though you appreciate their concern, you have a handle on how you feel and what to do. Thank them for their support and remind them that you will certainly come to them for advice when you truly need it. Not only will this open communication show your appreciation for those you care about, but it will hopefully quiet some of those real-life opposing opinions as well!

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# How to Move On and Keep Your Dignity (And Hope) Intact After Heartbreak



By [Marni Battista](#)

In recent months, there have been a couple of sudden, celebrity deaths that have no doubt left family, friends, and significant others reeling. Both *Glee* star Cory Monteith's fatal drug overdose and former *Bachelor* contestant Gia Allemand's tragic suicide opened up much speculation about how their partners, Lea Michele and Ryan Anderson respectively, have been coping.



These tragedies got me thinking: All of us will experience heartbreak in our lives – whether in the form of a difficult breakup or the death of a significant other – and will surely find ourselves desperate for ways to move on with as much grace, ease, and dignity as possible. Here at Dating with Dignity, I've developed five simple practices that certainly won't eradicate the pain of your loss but **will** give you the tools to begin healing.

## **1. Allow Moments of Grief**

The most important thing when untangling yourself from a broken heart is to express whatever you're feeling and do so in a healthy way. Allow yourself to cry, write, listen to or make music, or talk with a close friend or family member. As you become further removed from the incident, be cognizant of when it's time to distill this period of grief into brief, private moments, and then eventually your loss will become less acute. Grieving is healthy, but if you continue to dwell on it for more than one year and it feels like it's turning into chronic depression, make sure you seek help from a healthcare professional.

**Related Link:** [Gia Allemand's Boyfriend: 'I Don't Love You Anymore'](#)

## **2. Don't Cast Blame**

It was widely reported that Allemand's suicide occurred immediately after a blowout fight with her boyfriend, NBA player Anderson, that culminated in him saying, "I don't love you anymore." In this situation, it would be easy for Anderson to process his loss by blaming himself and wondering if he could have saved his girlfriend by choosing his words more carefully.

But it's important to remember that there are endless numbers of factors that contribute to something so serious, and

whatever you feel you did wrong is only the tipping point (if even a factor at all). There's no way to truly know, and blaming yourself or others will only alienate you as work through your grief – so train yourself to focus your energy on moving past it.

We're ultimately **not** responsible for the actions of others. Of course, we want to make sure we're always compassionate and empathetic; however, each of us must take personal responsibility for how we react to what we hear from others each day.

### **3. Adopt a Mantra: “The Only Way to Get Through It Is to Get Through It”**

Whether recovering from a breakup or the death of a loved one, you've been placed in an undesirable situation beyond your control. As much as it may feel like the world has stopped turning and nothing will ever be the same, there's nothing you can do but focus on the better times ahead.

Each relationship can help to form who we are as well as who we'll become. There are no such things as mistakes. If you soldier through these dark days and keep yourself focused on the gifts you experienced as a result of your lost love, you'll gradually start to feel better...and one day, you'll reflect on that dark time from a much lighter point of view.

### **4. Re-Install Routine**

Depending on the gravity of your loss, it's possible that whatever incident you're recovering from has completely wiped out your usually bustling schedule. Even though holing up at home may seem like the most appealing option, one of the best ways to begin to move on is to re-introduce routine into your daily life.

It may feel forced at first, but a schedule will allow a sense of normalcy to return and provide a welcome distraction. If

there's something in your routine you used to partake in with your absent partner, create a new ritual with a close friend or family member in its place.

**Related Link:** [Lea Michele Is Grieving With Cory Monteith's Family](#)

## 5. Lean On Friends and Family

After the death of Monteith, mourning fans across the country cast much of their concern toward his longtime girlfriend and *Glee* costar Michele. People began speculating about when and how she would make her first public appearance in the wake of her tragedy. After a couple weeks of silence, the brunette was spotted going to a baby shower and has since been seen surrounded by at least one or two close friends. Loved ones provide a welcome distraction, but they'll also help force you back into your routine and listen when you need to talk about how you're feeling.

Heartbreak is a part of life, and when it happens, all you can do is work towards moving on. If you diligently hold yourself to these five practices in the wake of a tragedy, I'm certain you'll gradually start to feel lighter.

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# Relationship Advice from

# Justin and Selena: Should You Get Back with Your Ex?



By Marni Battista

In recent years, Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez have had quite the whirlwind romance. The two pop stars were in a much-talked-about long-term relationship before they broke up and have subsequently reunited multiple times...although as of publication, their relationship status could easily have changed again. One thing we do know: breaking up and getting back together multiple times is mostly a good indicator that you should NOT get back together. So should *you* get back with your ex?

There's no simple black-and-white answer. The answer will

differ for each person and each situation. For example, if you ask your mom, she'll have a bevy of "solid" advice based on her experiences. Your sister will issue forth another set of breakup rules she created during her formative relationship experiences. Perhaps one best friend says "forget him," while the other, who just reconciled successfully with her ex, urges you to take it slow and give it a try.

If you're considering taking your ex back (and it isn't the fifth time around like Justin and Selena), what do you need to know first? Here are five things Dating with Dignity advises that you think about before you get back together with your ex.

**Related Link:** [Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez Confirm Rumors That They're Back Together!](#)

**1. Why do you want to get back together?** Is it because you're lonely? If you feel as if you'd literally be in a relationship with ANYONE – including the Starbucks barista – because you're missing a warm body next to your's each night (and he's not half bad-looking), you might need to reevaluate getting back together with your ex. However, reasons such as "I don't think we gave it a good enough shot" or "We've both been doing a lot of internal work, and I actually think it will be healthier and more fulfilling if we try again" are both good reasons to give it another go.

If you need to think about it, take at least a few hours and really make sure you're getting to the core of why you want to try again. Our best advice is don't respond to his text, email or call immediately. Let it soak in. Consider all the options and **then** form a responsive (rather than reactive), solid reply to his request.

**2. Why did you break up?** If any of the reasons for breaking up include addiction, behavior dysfunction, physical or emotional abuse or cheating, the answer is always going to be a clear-

cut no. According to most addiction specialists, a person must be sober at least one full year before engaging in a relationship. That said, make sure the timing is right if the reason you broke up involved any form of addiction.

However, if it was a reason such as one of you wasn't fully out of a prior relationship or one of you needed to focus on some "loving myself" time to really be ready for a relationship, a redo could be a good idea to consider.

**3. Is the issue something that's consistent or a one-time event?** If cheating was the reason you broke up but it was an isolated incident, getting back together can be put on the table. However, if it was consistent cheating or a repetitive cycle of adultery or being disrespectful, the chances your relationship will be successful the second time around are very low. One-time events can be something that each individual can work on over time, but it still absolutely needs to be addressed.

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

**4. How has your life changed since the split?** Evaluate your current lifestyle. Has it improved since your breakup? If yes, it's probably a good idea to steer clear of your ex. Perhaps you just didn't feel as good about yourself when you were with him, or your health wasn't a priority because you were so focused on the relationship. In that case, don't even think about it.

But if you feel like giving it another try could improve your quality of life, it may be worth reaching out or responding to him if he's been attempting to contact you. The reason to get back into a relationship isn't because you feel like you need him to be complete or happy. Instead, make sure you're coming from a place of "wanting" the relationship to enhance an already fulfilling and sweet life.

**5. Let him show you, not tell you.** Is your ex starting to show up repeatedly? Can you see the changes in his life? Did he finalize his divorce or get a new job? Has his demeanor changed? Are your interactions different? Does it really seem as though he's worked on the shortcomings that led to the end of your relationship? Words are great, but actions are everything. So if you can see notable changes in someone, it can be a great indicator of a high chance of success in your "new relationship."

Remember, if you get back together with an ex, you must start over. The time you spent apart allows you a clean break for you to begin to date again. Don't rush into anything and don't try to pick up where you left off. Have realistic expectations and pace the relationship just as you would with a brand new suitor. Hopping into bed with your ex right away and assuming you'll be back to exactly how you were before is a great way NOT to be successful in trying again. Collect data, have fun, make sure to keep your non-negotiables in place, and make sure you keep your three c's top of mind: compatibility, chemistry and communication!

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**Expert Dating Advice: The Benefits and Pitfalls of**

# Dating a Younger Man



By Marni Battista

*Demi Moore, Mayor of Cougarville – Population: 1?*

Demi Moore has done it again. Earlier this year, she scooped up a hunk of a fellow, and this time he is even younger than Ashton Kutcher. In January, Moore, who is currently in the middle of her divorce with Kutcher, was seen out doing nothing but drinking and partying with the younger set. She was photographed with art dealer, Vito Schnabel, who is 26 years old – which, in case anyone is counting, is half of her age. So should our collective response be along the lines of “you go, girl!”, or should we feel sorry for her? She shares her admiration for younger guys with the likes of Jennifer Lopez, Mariah Carey and Madonna, so it seems to be a common trend in Hollywood. Is there really a difference if a woman dates a man



fewer than 10 years younger than her versus 20-plus years younger? Does it matter?

We can learn a few things from these famous ladies about the benefits and pitfalls of dating a younger man.

**Related Link:** [Cougar Dating Love Lessons Even Demi Moore Can Use](#)

## **BENEFITS**

***Lack of baggage:*** Hooray! No psycho ex-wife? Check. No kids who hate you? Check. When dating a younger man, you can be confident that he won't have a nightmare ex to drive you crazy. Plus, he won't come loaded with a horrendous view of women based on his traumatic past relationships.

Having grown up in a slightly more modern society than you will most likely enable him to have a fresher perspective on women as well as a different opinion of "the working woman," as his mom may very well have been that very girl. In addition, because there is less baggage, there is less compromise for the older woman. There is less "stuff" to have to incorporate from his life into yours. And as a result, he's more likely to slip into your everyday world effortlessly.

***Health:*** A younger guy has a much higher probability of being healthy and fit. This means that, when you go on that beach stroll or hike in the hills, he's not going to be complaining about his knees. For a woman who feels "young at heart" and also has a healthy lifestyle, a younger man will feel like more of a match.

An added bonus? When it comes to the care and feeding of her partner, the extent of a younger man's daily intake will be more along the lines of a B vitamin rather than Preparation H or Tiger Balm. We like the former option better.

## **PITFALLS**

***He may not know what he wants to be when he grows up:*** When you date a man who's your age (or perhaps five or ten years your senior), he'll most likely be established in his career and set on his life intentions. But a younger man might be just starting out or still struggling with what he wants to do. Not only can this cause an issue regarding his financial security, but it can also lead to an identity crisis – for both of you. Being with a man who is launching a professional career or perhaps is between jobs can be a daunting task. You just have to be up to the challenge.

***Fear of leaving you for a younger lady:*** Jennifer Lopez supposedly has asked boyfriend Casper Smart, “Why don't you go find a young girlfriend and get out of here? What do you want with me?” Well, we can think of a few things... But he doesn't appear to be going anywhere, so perhaps she has nothing to worry about anyway.

**Related Link:** [J. Lo and Casper Smart: What Their Body Language Says About Their Love](#)

That said, it's a common for an older woman dating a younger man to fear that he'll leave her for someone younger. Unfortunately, you can't make yourself younger or make him older, so it's critical to get comfortable and trust that his feelings for you extend beyond the physical.

Whether your type of guy is older or younger than you, just remember that if it feels right and he meets all your needs (emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual), you can go for it while still holding on firmly to your dignity!

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# The Pros and Cons of a Long Engagement



By Marni Battista

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

They parted amicably, according to their reps, but could the lengthy engagement have caused the split? Or did it just make

it clearer that they should call off the whole thing?

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

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

A year-long engagement in the '50s and '60s would have seemed endless to a blushing future bride, but these days it seems to be more common. In fact, modern couples are holding their "I do's" for two, three, even five years before actually tying the knot. There are plenty of reasons: costs of a wedding, the pressure of daily life (it's hard to schedule a manicure, let alone pick a wedding date) and commitment anxiety. While it makes sense for some couples that are on a second or third marriage, is it really better to wait it out?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Dating after Divorce: Lessons We Can Learn from Taylor Swift, Queen of Heartbreak



By Marni Battista

Taylor Swift has been splashed across almost every magazine in the past few weeks, telling story after story about yet another failed relationship and her tendency to get over someone by getting “under” someone new. The twenty-something country crooner is beautiful and successful, but it seems she can’t break the three-month relationship cycle.

Perhaps it's because she has a "broken picker," or maybe it's just that she's 22 years old and has no idea what she really wants. Whatever the case, Swift is repeating the same mistakes in each and every relationship. Her romantic trysts are unable to move past the infant stage. With actors and boy-banders alike (even a Kennedy!), the songstress dives in head-first each time – and comes out like a drowned rat within a few months.

When you begin dating after divorce, you're actually in a similar position to Swift. You might not know what you want; you might be jumping in too fast; or you might believe that someone new can take away the heartache of a failed relationship. And, unlike Swift, you are most certainly very out of practice. So what lessons might we be able to learn from the Queen of Heartbreak herself?

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

**1. Don't jump into a relationship too quickly.** After a relationship's gone wrong, take time to assess what you learned and how it can inform future choices. We call this the "Dating Fast" at Dating with Dignity because a "cleanse" from a relationship can help you reconnect to who you are outside of that relationship, help you refine your relationship goals, and aid you in making adjustments to your "picker."

Once you're in a space where you want a partner rather than need or crave companionship, you're most likely ready to return to the dating pool. When you're dating, take time to get to know someone fairly well before either of you decides you want to take it to the next level. This phase of "data dating" (collecting data about him/her while simultaneously having fun and creating new shared experiences) can last somewhere between one and three months, which is generally a good time frame for figuring out if this new person meets your needs.

Deciding after one coffee date that you're madly in love, that you should spend every minute together for the next five days, and that you're in a serious, committed relationship is almost always a recipe for disaster. Be conscious of the pacing of the relationship and strive to really get to know the other person, based not on who you want him/her to be but rather on how he/she shows up consistently over time!

**2. Have clarity about what you want.** If you find yourself confused about what you really want to create in your next relationship after a recent divorce or breakup, take comfort in the knowledge you're not alone. A great idea is to take an hour or two and create a list of what it is you're looking for based on what you were *not* getting from your marriage or last relationship. Also include a list of your values and the traits you admire in other relationships. Combine the lists and choose five characteristics to be your ultimate non-negotiables. By choosing just five, you can ensure you're selective but not too picky.

Check in with yourself periodically and confirm that what you were looking for two weeks ago is the same thing you're looking for today. If you're not looking to get into a serious relationship right at the moment, date casually to your heart's content and practice the art of setting boundaries, flirting, courting, and having fun. If a long-term relationship is your end goal, then date with that intention. Just be sure you know what you truly want.

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

**3. Give relationships time to evolve.** When you get comfortable in a relationship too soon, you often find out things about your partner that you didn't know before you started seriously dating. What happens, then, is that you begin to ignore or rationalize the importance of these possible red flags.



Ignoring the “quiet voice within” is not a smart move. Instead, communicate your concerns while remembering that your perfect match will want to work through speed bumps to come to a real win-win. If it’s not something that’s appropriate to share with your partner, make sure you have a coach or therapist (not your best friend) who can help guide you in making informed relationship choices.

When you don’t let relationships progress at an organic, natural speed, you may skip over important characteristics of your guy, or he may miss something important about you that’s a deal breaker. So be yourself and let the getting-to-know-you part last, and then make that decision for a full commitment in a conscious way. Choosing someone just because he/she chose you is a Mr. Right Now move rather than a move toward finding Mr. Right.

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## Dating After Divorce: How Soon Is Too Soon?





By Marni Battista

There is a certain philosophy that touts the best way to get over someone as getting *under* someone else. When we peruse the headlines and photos that cover those magazines at the check-out line, it seems clear that most Hollywood celebs certainly subscribe to this way of thinking.

Although Kim Kardashian's divorce from Kris Humphries isn't even finalized, there's talk about Kanye West designing her engagement ring. Plus, we've seen photos of their romantic trip to Italy for her birthday and heard rumors of them moving in together. Her recent marriage, albeit a short one, should have still been a significant part of her romantic life. It seems as though it's long forgotten – almost as if it didn't exist at all.

Thus, we wonder, when is “too early” to start dating after divorce? Here are a few lessons learned from Kimye's whirlwind romance and a few tips on navigating the dating world after divorce and answering the question, “How soon is too soon?”

**1. It's okay to stay private about your romantic life.** Kim's

relationship with Kris, their wedding, and their subsequent divorce was splashed across every news outlet, gossip rag, and television station, practically documenting every minute of every day of her most private moments. Then, just weeks later, we got to watch concerned Khloe meddling in her sister's relationship business further as she questions Kanye about *his* relationship with Kim.

After a somewhat catastrophic end to a 72-day marriage, Kim pledged to keep her private life under wraps. But it seems as if she's been more enthusiastic than ever to share her life with millions, which could prove to be her downfall. While we know *People* will most likely not be camped outside your door, it could be yours too. If you were recently divorced or your divorce was just finalized, it is not necessary (nor do we recommend) to announce to the world your newfound status. (This includes minute-by-minute tweets and Facebook status updates.) There's no glory or dignity in "punishing" your ex by going public.

**Related Link:** [6 Things Women Should Never Do in a Divorce](#)

Moreover, subscribing to Facebook as "Vaguebook" is also not recommended. Posts such as "So over it" or "Remind me never to trust men again" aren't going to help you recover in the long term. Avoid sharing your pain publicly, as it ultimately only creates ill will, makes friends of both you and your ex uncomfortable, and leaves everyone feeling shocked and helpless.

If you feel ready to date, however, get out there! Whether it's six months post-divorce or two years, there's no need to call everyone in your social circle and ask if they have anyone to set you up with. We say keep it on the down low and take it easy. Also, consider your underlying motives for putting "the word out" to the general public. If it makes you fiendishly delighted that your ex finds out your "good news," thereby thinking you have "moved on," it's time to re-think

your dating readiness. Any sort of delight in his possible pain means you still have some healing and forgiving to do before diving into the dating pool.

In fact, Kim may even be taking a bit of our advice; she *has* stated that if she does indeed get married again, “The next time, I want to do it on an island with just my friends and family, and that’s it.” Kim, we gotta tell you: we 100 percent agree.

**2. Take your time.** Kim says of her marriage to Kris Humphries, “I think I fell in love so quickly and wanted that to be my life so badly, but I just didn’t take the time to find someone.” Taking your time applies to standard dating as well as dating after divorce. Some of the biggest losses you’ll experience in divorce are things like having regular love in your life, a warm body next to you, an activity partner, and someone to rely on.

So while it may seem like Kim is barely heeding her own advice by jumping quickly to a serious relationship with Kanye, she does note that they have known each other for 10 years; perhaps she did, in fact, “take her time.” What’s important to remember is that jumping into anything will not get you any closer to happiness if you forget about your actual needs.

**Related Link:** [Breaking Up Without Breaking Down](#)

Check in with yourself post-divorce and evaluate if your needs have changed. You might be looking for someone different because you yourself have also changed. Remember, more than 60 percent of second marriages fail, and more than 70 percent of third marriages fail. That’s typically because men and women marry the same person with a different face again and again. Make sure you reflect on your dating patterns and do the internal work necessary to change those patterns. Fixing your broken picker now, before you head back into the pumpkin patch to look for your horse and carriage and the Prince

Charming who comes with it, can help you prevent making the same mistakes.

**3. You are in control of your life.** Kim has a string of rocky relationships and two failed marriages behind her, but she hasn't let that affect her faith in love, marriage or happiness. One of the main reasons people wait to start dating after a divorce is caution about the prying eyes of family and friends, along with worries about what others will think about your new dating life. Kim seems to have skipped over that part rather breezily, and she has many more people to contend with than you probably do.

She has stated she ignores negative comments and no longer follows gossip blogs. If you're worried about what people around you will think when you begin dating again, avoid bringing up your dating escapades right away. But if it's making you feel good, just remember that **you** are in charge of your own happiness. When it comes down to it, it's you, yourself, and you – not anyone else.

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