

Role Reversals in Relationships and Love



By [Melanie Mar](#)

[Relationships and love](#) have progressively changed over recent decades, thanks in large part to women's rights. Today, there are more independent working women than ever before, and with that comes significant changes within the dynamics of romantic partnerships.

Top 5 Signs You Should Take the Lead in Your Relationship and Love Life

Ambition and masculine energy have become synonymous in society. Women find it beneficial to partner with a man who is supportive rather than competitive; that way, a peaceful home will be created that will help her achieve her goals. However, not all personality types are best-suited for these masculine and feminine role reversals in relationships and love. So how do you know if a role reversal relationship is right for you? Ladies, below are five signs that you might actually be happier if you take the lead in love:

1. You are a natural born **leader** in the relationship and instinctively guide the path that it takes.
2. You enjoy **setting goals** and reaching them in your personal life.
3. You enjoy achieving **success**.
4. You are **ambitious** and driven.

5. You are more **decisive** than indecisive.

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Now that you've decided that this type of relationship is for you, you may need some love advice on how to maintain a healthy, harmonious romance. Understand that, for every "pot," there is a "lid," and the key is to find a man with the opposite energy of your own. Know what role you want to take romantically, and stick with it. There are men who prefer stronger women to take the lead. They are usually the artistic, creative types who have no desire to compete, conquer, or control.

Women are still pre-conditioned to want a man who has the outward characteristics of a leader – someone who is decisive, self-confident, and aggressive. These types of traits are considered masculine. If your honey doesn't possess them, that doesn't mean he is weak or incompetent; he simply has a different set of dominant personality traits.

The man who is right for you is successful in his own career, desires a dominant women, and enjoys having you take charge at home. He loves to be your head cheerleader and devotes himself to making your life easier and more comfortable. Relationship experts say you may have already passed over this type of man, not realizing that he was a perfect partner for you. If you keep picking a man who always wants to take charge – because society or your loved ones tell you that's how it should be – then you will be in a combative, volatile relationship, which is not fulfilling for either partner and is ultimately very destructive.

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Expert Love Advice For Role Reversal Relationships

It might be difficult to accept that you prefer to be the leader in a marriage or relationship. It may mean giving up your childhood fairy tale wish of Prince Charming arriving on his white horse. Listen to my expert love advice because the fact is, traditional marriage roles simply do not work for everyone. Role reversal relationships are on the rise as more men and women discover that there is another path to happily ever after!

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Expert Dating Advice: Valentine's Day Tips



 By [Melanie Mar](#)

Valentine's Day: the red heart holiday. It's guaranteed to keep restaurants busy and flower stores in business. Whether you're single, newly dating, or married, this heartfelt day can be a bit tricky to navigate. Depending on your expectations in the romance department, Valentine's Day can be an incredible hit or a massive miss. So how do you make sure

you and your partner feel special on a day dedicated to love? Read my expert dating advice below!

Expert Dating Advice to Consider Before Valentine's Day

If you're single: Being single on Valentine's Day is not uncommon, so take some comfort in the fact you're actually in good company on this hyper-focused heart holiday. As a relationship expert, I believe this is an excellent time to fall in love with *yourself*. If you prefer to be alone, pamper yourself with a hot bubble bath, music and some fine, quality chocolates. Or let someone else do the pampering and book a soothing massage at a relaxing spa. Take the time to treat yourself well and know that you're worth it.

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If the thought of being alone simply fills you with dread, then gather up your girlfriends and put on a fabulous dress. Head out to a sexy lounge bar, enjoy some playful flirting, and kick up your killer heels. Another fun idea is to host a "singles Valentine's Day party" at your place. Invite all your fellow singletons over to eat, drink, and be merry.

If you're newly dating: If you've just started dating someone, Valentine's Day can be a little awkward. What if you go all out and he doesn't acknowledge it? Yes, there are men out there who are oblivious to all the heart decorations in the shop windows or who "just don't get it." What if your expectations of the day are at a certain level and the reality turns out to be completely different? How will you handle that?

My recommendation: If you are at a certain level of comfort with your partner, have a lighthearted (pun intended) conversation about the day and find out what they

think about it. Remember that it's a day mostly aimed at women. Most men only do what society has informed them because a good man doesn't want to disappoint his girl, so be gentle on him.

If talking about it prior is not an option for you, then remind yourself that, whatever happens on the day, you will embrace and accept it – even if that means you are dating one of those oblivious men and end up deeply disappointed. By the following year, you'll be more invested in the relationship; then you can give him a polite prod about making Valentine's Day plans!

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Valentine's Day Date Ideas for Married Couples

If you're married: Being married and celebrating Valentine's Day should be fabulous and stress-free. You already know each other's needs, wants, and desires *and* how to accommodate them. Over the years, that could be as simple as a card and a home-cooked candlelit dinner. After all, cooking together can be a very intimate and enjoyable process.

One of the things to be aware of with long-term relationships is complacency. The notion of not buying into this "commercial holiday" because you've been together so long is one you should ignore. My expert dating advice is to make it matter! If you're looking for Valentine's Day date ideas, do something out of the ordinary to celebrate each other. Surprise each other with the unexpected, whether it be lingerie or a weekend getaway –whatever is out of the norm for you as a couple. The element of surprise keeps romance alive; it reignites the flames of passion and, in turn, fills the heart with love.

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Top Ten Most Romantic Holiday Getaway Spots



 By [Melanie Mar](#)

This winter, some lucky couples will be cuddling up next to fireplaces, warming up with hot chocolate and marshmallows, and, depending on their location, riding in horse-drawn carriages and hitting the slopes together...all in the name of love. The holidays often bring out a softer, more romantic side as established pairs get nostalgic and newbies want to create magical memories. What better way to beat the winter blues and heat up your relationship than getting away for a fabulous rendezvous with your mate?

Pictures of celebrities often grace the covers of magazines at the most desirable locales, so it's no surprise we look to them when choosing a vacation spot. Make your fantasies a reality and become the star yourself with the following destinations. Not only are these celebrity-visited locations glamorous, but they're also some of the most romantic places on the planet. You don't have to break the bank to live your dream. Scour the internet for special offers and packages, and

enjoy these top ten most romantic holiday getaway spots.

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1. Aspen, Colorado is by far the ultimate romantic dream winter getaway, thanks to its breathtaking ski slopes, steamy hot tubs, high-end shopping, and endless fine dining. The Colorado Chamber of Resorts even called Aspen the “Rocky Mountain Playground for the Rich and Famous.” Aspen mountains are a favorite, as celebs don't stand out as much and can maintain their privacy. Stars that frequent the snowy town include longtime lovers Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell and hot new parents Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis.

2. Following Bridget Bardot's lead, tourists and celebs visit **St. Tropez, France** all-year round. The beaches of this small town are the perfect place to achieve that Victoria's Secret-like bronzed tan while getting close to your lover, so pack your colorful swimsuit and gear up for some snorkeling! It is no surprise that A-list stars frequent this coastal city, including Neil Patrick Harris and David Burtka as well as the lovely Naomi Watts and Liev Schreiber. St. Tropez will leave you never wanting to return home!

3. The Eiffel Tower lit up at night, carousels that spin around in delight, bunches of flowers in the marketplace, and balloons come to mind when I think of **Paris, France**. The City of Lights is one of the most heart-stopping, romantic vacation spots on the planet. How many movies do we see that whisk the couple off to Paris for a secret rendezvous? Take a stroll along the famous bridge and seal your love with a special lock and key, or set up your own lovely picnic along the river Seine and enjoy the magic.

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4. Lake Como, Italy is now a popular destination, thanks to stars like Brad Pitt and George Clooney. The view alone is

a postcard-like vision and enough to make anyone get dreamy-eyed. With the castles, lush gardens, giant cathedrals, and quaint shops, you're sure to find many places to reignite that romantic spark! Lake Como is a fairy-tale getaway for many celebrities including David and Victoria Beckham as well as Matt Damon and his wife Luciana Barroso.

5. The coastal towns **Carmel** and **Monterey, California** are both fabulous places to visit with someone special. The many cozy inns located here provide the perfect place to keep warm. Beaches, golf courses, upscale shopping, phenomenal spas, and many other beautiful outdoor spots will leave you feeling rested and refreshed. The wooded area near the Coastal Cruise on Highway 101 is the perfect place to stroll with a coffee before hitting the spa. End your day with a glass of wine at Pacific Edge Grill.

6. **Mallorca, Spain** is the largest island in the Balearic Islands along the Mediterranean Sea. This gorgeous location is a lover's favorite, so much so that recently a friend of mine decided to move there after falling head over heels in love with a man from the area! Have a glass of wine and snuggle up in a secluded restaurant, take a bike ride along the beach, or even scuba dive in the clear waters. Most celebrities choose this luxurious spot for a break from their fast-paced lives and for its cultural appeal. Frequent visitors include hot couple Justin Theroux and Jen Aniston as well as power pair Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones, who own a home there.

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7. This past summer, Kanye West and Kim Kardashian jetted to **Punta de Mita, Mexico** and shared Instagram pictures of the magical sunsets, delightful spreads of food, and infinity pools in this romantic town. Punta de Mita is a beachfront village that offers high-end places to stay like the Four

Seasons Resort or the private retreat built by mogul Joe Francis. This is a wonderful spot to escape to this year, as it is both private and posh and will certainly bring new passion to your relationship.

8. Maui, Hawaii is not only a great place to visit in the summer, but it's a hotspot during the winter months as well. Just ask sweet couple Brian Austin Green and Megan Fox, who got hitched on the island. Maui offers its visitors breathtaking hikes, eye-popping volcanoes, and a variety of private beaches.

9. While most vacationers think that **Rio De Janeiro, Brazil** is a destination for the summer months only, celebs have long been fans of this tropical paradise. Sunbathe on the beach of Ipanema, take a bike ride through the village, or visit the many gardens and museums. Javier Bardem and his beauty Penelope Cruz and handsome bachelor Gerard Butler have been known to vacation here. It's the perfect place to relax, unwind, get closer to your partner, and enjoy a new culture all at the same time.

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10. Celebrities love to head to the beaches of **Los Cabos, Mexico**. One frequent famous guest, Jennifer Lopez, enjoys staying at the luxurious Mexican resort, Las Ventanas. This private getaway is a romantic vision with enormous suites and private bungalows, each with private Jacuzzis on their balconies. You will be enamored with your choice as you overlook the magnificent waters of Mexico.

Winter is the perfect time to escape from the stress, the cold, and the city, and there is nothing quite like finding the perfect place to unwind and just relax. Whether you choose a chillier climate to snuggle up in or a warmer one to throw on your swimsuit and show off your tan lines, these holiday hot spots are sure to make your winter sizzle!

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The Smarter Way to Meet New People and Actually Enjoy It!



 By [Melanie Mar](#)

These days, looking for love is more accessible than ever. To fit it into life's busy schedules, there are a vast number of websites and events available to attend, but often, one can start to see dating as a daunting task. To assist you in finding the joy of dating, I've listed some tips below on how to enjoy the process. It's time to date smarter!

1. Be proactive: "Should I sign up for that online dating event in my area this week?" "Perhaps I'll join that online dating site everyone's talking about to meet someone." "Maybe I'll go to that meet-up singles party tomorrow." These are all common thoughts that tend to ruminate in the mind of someone who is single and interested in finding love but feeling a bit overwhelmed.

Just pick one new thing to do at a time. See if you're comfortable and progress slowly on to other, more "scary" dating scenarios. If socializing in a bar with friends is a more appealing way to meet new people than a dating site, put

on that little black dress and go for it. If the idea of working your way through numerous interactions and exchanging resumes fills you with dread, then simply pass. Dating smart is all about not wasting your time. Knowing where you excel and where you're most relaxed is key to starting the process.

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2. Fly, social butterfly: Don't be a hermit! Make sure you're not saving all your love life activities for one day a month. Many singles tend to choose one or two nights to focus on dating. It's easy to get into a routine of coming home from work and getting into your pajamas, but make the effort to get out there. Otherwise, you're simply missing out on all the people you could be meeting. Consider the places that you're socializing and make sure that the type of mate you're looking for frequents those spots.

3. Talk to three new people each week: Look for ways to meet people who share the same passions you do. Compatibility is crucial, and meeting someone that already has common interests with you is a great way to go. Give yourself a goal and challenge yourself to talk to three new people every week. It's likely that you'll find a way to be in closer proximity to other people by doing so. Don't forget there are singles who cross your path every day. Practice flirting by striking up conversations with them!

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Being a smart dater means that you give everyone a fair chance, but you don't continue dating someone if they don't have the same long-term life plans as you. Always go on three dates with someone new. The first date could simply be awkward, and the second one may be "take it or leave it." By the third date, though, you should have a very good idea if

this person is someone you'd like to continue dating or not. It's important not to let weeks turn into months just because it's "comfortable" and you "can't be bothered with the dating scene." Eventually, this relationship will fizzle, and you'll be back to the drawing board.

So stay smart in your dating. Keep focused; know what you want and don't want; and make a list of your non-negotiables. Then, get out there and enjoy dating!

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Sharing Secrets



By [Melanie Mar](#)

You all have experiences in life that are so private that you choose to only reveal them to a small group of close confidants. But when you start a new relationship, one of the dilemmas you'll face is: When is the right time to share your personal secrets with a new love? Sharing your private life can be somewhat anxiety-inducing, whether it regards a previous relationship, a health issue, or a family problem. It takes a lot of guts to share your secrets with your partner with the hope that they are trustworthy enough to embrace what you're telling them with an open heart and no judgement. Below are four things to consider before disclosing

yourself:

1. Take your time: Get to know the person and observe how they react to others. Are they compassionate towards friends, co-workers, and family? When faced with a challenge, how do they handle it? You want to know that what you share is in a safe zone; does your new partner tell you secrets of others that should not have been repeated? When you feel comfortable, start by sharing smaller, less impactful parts of your private life and tread lightly. How did they handle this information? Were they emotionally mature and supportive? Do not reveal more until all of these questions are answered in a positive way.

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2. Maintain boundaries: However close you're feeling to your new partner, you do not "owe it to them" to share things until you are completely comfortable. Sharing your private life prematurely can lead to regret if the relationship fails a few months later. Do not feel the need to disclose every specific thing that occurred with previous relationships and only give information that is truly for the benefit of your new relationship. Maintain boundaries for yourself and understand your reasoning for implementing this trickle effect; this step will assist you in refraining from dragging your skeletons out of the closet before the relationship has a deep, solid foundation.

3. Build a trustworthy record: Trustworthiness and honesty are the backbones of any successful relationship, but while you're establishing yourselves as a couple, withholding certain information is not particularly a bad thing. If asked something directly that you do not wish to answer, gently steer the direction of conversation to another subject. If that fails, simply state that you would prefer to discuss it later as your relationship progresses. Initially, keep it

light when it comes to your discussions with your new significant other. Keeping a few secrets may be in everyone's best interest. You're not pretending to be someone you're not; you're just revealing things about yourself in small doses and at appropriate times.

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4. Know that some secrets are healthy: Not all secrets are bad! There's something to be said for the curiosity that can come from being with someone you don't know absolutely everything about. Withholding tidbits of information about yourself can add a sense of mystery that will keep the relationship fresh and exciting when your partner learns something new about you.

Remember personal information is sacred. It should not be disclosed without great contemplation. You have to decide if the things you're withholding will significantly alter the a new and vulnerable relationship. Still, know that in a long-term, committed relationship, secrets should be kept to an absolute minimum.

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How Soon Is Too Soon?



 By [Melanie Mar](#)

When is the right time for the first time in a new relationship? Yes, I'm talking about sex. There is no right answer to this question. Ask numerous people, and they will

each tell you a different story: “We had sex the first night we met. It was meant to be a casual encounter, but we’re still going strong nine years later,” or “We waited five months to have sex and then broke up two months later.”

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So there’s little wonder that many of you are confused on this topic! Below, I’ve outlined three points to consider when deciding to have sex for the first time in a new relationship:

1. Never assume: Unless you’ve had a conversation with your new partner about exclusivity, then you can’t presume that having sex will automatically make you a couple in a monogamous relationship. This is not true in most cases, and it can be very hurtful when you discover after the fact that you’re not on the same page in regards to what you want and expect in the relationship.

2. Premature sex: Having sex early on isn’t usually a good idea if you are seeking a long-term relationship. You are most often best served by investing time and energy getting to know the person *before* becoming sexually intimate. This enables you to discover if your new partner has good intentions and high integrity and is capable of making and keeping their commitments. These things are impossible to know on the first few dates but are crucial if you want a future together.

3. Oxytocin bonding: Oxytocin is biochemical that is released during sex that creates a feeling of attachment. Unfortunately, you may experience it with someone you’re not at all compatible with, but this bonding effect can override your logical sense of judgment and keep you in a relationship with a person who is completely wrong for you – another reason to not have premature sex!

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There are no hard or fast rules, and there will always be exceptions. By having an understanding of the basic principles above and being smarter in your choices, you can protect yourself from potential heartbreak. High sexual chemistry is difficult to contain, and it's very easy to get carried away with intense sexual desire, so don't put yourself in situations that make it harder to refrain. Keep your dating to public places, and let your hearts and minds be aroused before your body. Talk about intimate things and allow the relationship to turn you on mentally; the better connection you have out of the bedroom, the better connection you'll have in it. Enjoy!

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How to Recover From a Hurtful Split



By Melanie Mar

When CupidsPulse.com asked me to write an article on this topic, I stopped for a minute to reflect upon two emails I received this week, both requesting my help: one from a man who was struggling terribly to let go of his ex-girlfriend and move on, and the other from a lady with the subject "heartbroken." The end of a relationship can be extremely difficult, and I never underestimate the pain of a breakup. In severe cases, it is truly debilitating, causing mental anguish

and physical turmoil, affecting your health, and leading to weight loss and other associated illnesses.

Of course, the degree of distress is dependent on how a relationship ends. For example, if both of you have come to the conclusion that the relationship has “run its course” and each have apathy for the other, then the most likely feeling you’ll have is melancholy. You’ll wish each other well and mean it. In these cases, I recommend doing things that bring you joy to counteract the blues: dance, sing, surround yourself with friends, whatever makes you happy.

There’s also the “chipping away” of a relationship from bickering, lack of sex, lack of respect, etc. If these things have ultimately led to the end of your relationship, then relief is usually the first emotion felt. During this stage, I suggest doing things to rediscover yourself, like taking up a hobby or interest, pampering yourself, or taking some much needed “me” time.

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If your relationship ends because of betrayal or immoral or unethical behavior, you will experience deep agony. The ending is usually swift and extremely hard to comprehend. Understanding the process (and yes, it is a process) will make it easier for you. Know that what you are going through is not uncommon and that having the right tools in your tool belt will assist you as you handle your loss.

Here are some other feelings you may experience during a hurtful split:

Pain can be both emotional and physical. I always tell my clients that “pain indicates change is needed or change is in progress.” Do not push away the pain; instead, *feel it*. If you deny the feeling, you’re only prolonging the inevitable. People ruminate when they are in emotional distress, which is perfectly fine for a short time. However, if extended, it can

cause sickness.

Within weeks, you have to move on from the feel-think, feel-think, feel-think merry-go-round and do something positive to make it better. Remember that the way out of any negative thought is to follow it with a positive action.

Anger is a very frequently expressed emotion. As a certified transactional analysis, I use "child" and "adult" as forms of communication styles. With that in mind, there are four types of anger:

- 1. Frustration** is created from a deep dissatisfaction from unresolved problems or unfulfilled needs.
- 2. Resentment** is a bitter feeling of persistent ill will.
- 3. Denial** is a defense mechanism in which confrontation with reality is avoided by denying the existence of the problem.

The three angers above are all child angers and are not healthy in the aid of moving on and letting go.

- 4. Indignant** is adult anger in its simplest form, and it merely means you are logically angry about the situation. It's perfectly healthy to display your anger if done with facts and reasoning and not for an extensive amount of time.

Sadness comes after the pain has eased and the anger has subsided. It is, of course, sad to acknowledge that someone you loved deeply betrayed your relationship and that the future plans you had together will not happen. You miss that person and the special moments you shared. It's okay to mourn; in fact, it's normal, and it would be highly unusual if you didn't.

Just make sure that this phase doesn't continue for an extended period. Remember to keep reminding yourself the reason why your relationship ended.

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Acceptance is the last stage. There will be a day when you wake up and realize that it's over and that you survived. It didn't kill you, but it did make you stronger. When looking back at the relationship, you understand completely that it wasn't what you initially thought and that your ex was less than you deserve. It's the relationships that don't last forever that teach us the lessons that will.

You now have what I call a "clear head, clear heart" – both of which are necessary to start dating again. So get out there and enjoy the excitement of meeting someone new. You never know what it might lead to!

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5 Ways to Have a Stress-Free First Date



 By Melanie Mar

Butterflies in your stomach, questions running through your mind, and nervous energy are all natural reactions before heading out on any first date. The first date is an icebreaker, not a marriage interview, so sit back and enjoy! The beauty of a first date is that, if it goes poorly, you will most likely get over it quickly. Remind yourself that your best self is relaxed and confident. Follow the tips below to reduce your first date anxiety and set yourself up for fun.

1. Keep it short and sweet: The focus of your first meet-up is getting a feel for the other person, so stick with the basics. A first date is like an appetizer, not a main course. Don't go into every detail of your past relationships, be too flirty, or reveal too much about yourself.

A good rule of thumb is to keep your date to a maximum of two hours; a lot can be covered in this short amount of time. An hour at the local coffee shop with a short walk afterwards, a shared dessert at a fun new spot, or an early dinner are all simple ways to keep things light. Always leave the other person wanting to know more about you!

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2. Have fun: Lighthearted conversation is key. Just enjoy the time as you would with a new friend. You certainly don't need a super extravagant or creative plan for your first meeting. Try to look at the person across from you from a place of playfulness. Laughter is very attractive! This is a new, exciting stage in your life, so focus your intentions on having fun.

3. Just breathe: Your mind is naturally going to be overactive with pre-date jitters. Listen to some upbeat music, go shopping, or even exercise beforehand. This activity will help get rid of all your restless energy. Getting your body and mind centered is a big part of feeling mentally prepared for your date. Plus, people are their most authentic selves when they're relaxed. Go with the flow, breathe, and take it slow. By learning to have a nice, stress-free time, you will allow the true you to come out naturally, making you even more beautiful and attractive.

4. Be the natural you: When you're concerned with finding the right partner or overly-focused on making a good first impression, you often end up being awkward. Trying too hard results in a false sense of self. When you feel comfortable

with yourself, others will feel at ease with you too.

One of the biggest reasons people are anxious preparing for first dates is because they are overly concerned about how they will be perceived. You think, “Will this person think I’m funny or attractive enough?” Remind yourself that the someone who is meant to be with you long-term will like you even if you show up a little nervous!

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5. Be realistic: It’s easy to get carried away by a fantasy you have created in your head. Thinking of this new person as a potential fiancé or even marriage material can set you up for a total letdown. A date that has had too much pre-conceived thought or imagination added to it is almost certain to disappoint you. We’re all human and far less than perfect, so try to keep an open mind and heart.

It can be easy to waste time worrying about going out on a first date, whether it’s with someone you’ve met online, have been talking to over the phone, or have even already met in person. Try practicing some or all of these tips the next time you prepare for a first date, and you’ll feel more confident and relaxed as a result!

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Five Tips for Falling in Love in 2014



✖ By Melanie Mar

It's 2014 – a new year to rejoice new beginnings, celebrate new possibilities, and just maybe embrace a new love affair. It's time to shake off 2013! If you're single, here are some tips to get you ready to mingle:

1. Get ready for love: Forget bitter memories of the past and live in the present moment. Be ready for all of the opportunities that will arise in the new year. Start with a brand new idea of what love is and with a positive outlook on love to allow magical things to happen. It's your year, and bright and positive love adventures are coming your way.

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2. Rock your body: It's safe to say that, when you look great, you feel great. Staying healthy is another way to prepare for love to flow into your life. You should be excited to have fun meeting people and enjoy dating again. Don't give up on your regular workouts. In order to be fully ready and open for love, keep working hard on being your best self. Positive, healthy people do a better job of receiving love into their lives.

3. Become a chatty Cathy: Make it a point to talk to at least five people a day. Strike up a conversation at the gym; make small talk in line at Starbucks; smile while waiting to checkout at the grocery store; and give someone a compliment today. Watch how you are changed and how love comes in as you reach out. This exercise will help you become more relaxed talking to people and make first dates seem less awkward. Remember: Feeling comfortable in your own skin is key to truly enjoying the moment.

4. Believe: Simply having faith is significant for being able to fall in love again or even for the first time. Believe that

it *is* possible to love and be loved this year. Don't give up hope! Love is attainable. It exists, and it's ready to enter your life when you make space for it. Remind yourself that you are worthy of a romantic miracle this year. Be conscious of creating a "clear head and clear heart," an openness and eagerness to change your current way of thinking.

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5. Laugh: If you really want to fall in love this year, embrace laughter. When hoping to meet a potential mate, keeping a light-hearted spirit is important to letting love in. Laughter has been described as good medicine because it helps us feel better; it's infectious; and it gets our pheromones ramped up. So make a point to find humor in everyday situations and share funny moments when talking to someone new. These good feelings will leave a lasting impression on both of you.

Keep these basic tips in mind as you open up your heart and get ready to receive and enjoy all the love that is out there for you.

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How to Help Your Partner Through A Crisis



 By [Melanie Mar](#)

During any long-term relationship, it's inevitable that you

will eventually experience some form of crisis together. Whether it's a loss of a job leading to financial difficulties, the passing of a loved one causing immense sadness, or some form of addiction that is creating friction, life is challenging, and the stresses that occur can certainly take a toll. During these times, the only choice you have is to pull together or fall apart. So how can you ensure that, while enduring a conflict, your partnership remains resilient and you strengthen your love as a couple? Below are my top recommendations for supporting your partner through a crisis:

1. Communicate. Communicate. Communicate: I cannot stress enough how important it is to communicate. The art of verbally expressing one's thoughts and feelings is becoming less frequent as texting and emailing is becoming rampant – to the point of compulsion. This way of relating is not an adequate way of articulating your needs and wants, so keep your “conversations” via typing to an absolute minimum when handling important matters within your relationship.

Related Link: [How to Communicate to Get What You Need](#)

2. Pay Attention to Body Language: With 85 percent of communication being non-verbal, it's important to be aware of your facial expressions, posturing, and gesturing when expressing yourself in conflict. Understanding how the brain works with verbal communication will help you stay focused on the issues you're trying to resolve. Always talk to your partner from your left lobe, which is used for thinking, acting, and doing. Recognize that your right lobe is responsible for being sensitive and emotional, and know that feelings are non-negotiable and will not assist you in solving your issues in a logical manner.

3. Make Your Commitment Clear: It's easy to love someone when everything is easy; the true test of strength in your relationship is when times are tough. It's paramount to let

your partner know that you will not abandon them during these rough patches. Understanding your significant other's needs is crucial when being supportive. When in a crisis, ask them specifically, "What can I do to help us do better?" and determine if there are solutions within your capabilities or if you need to accompany them to see a specialist.

Related Link: [Melanie Mar Offer Tips for Today's Relationships](#)

4. Give Each Other Space: In your efforts to assist your loved one, there may be a period when things become too overwhelming, and both parties agree to take a little time out for the greater good of the relationship. While you're giving each other space, it's very important to keep all points of contact open and available. Often times, after having a little solitude, each person can replenish their body and mind to a healthier place and resume communication with a positive attitude.

When a crisis strikes, there is little ability to predict the outcome or prevent the emotional chaos that may ensue. While it's easier to walk away, ultimately, it's better to face the problem as a team. Arising from the current conflict provides you with a new sense of love and support that will fortify your relationship, give you a positive outlook, and show you that you can conquer any future issues.

[Melanie Mar](#) is a celebrity relationship specialist, matchmaker, and life coach.

10 End-of-Summer Date Ideas



✖ By [Melanie Mar](#)

Have you been enjoying a summer of love? This season is often associated with long balmy nights and bright sunny days spent with our significant other, but within a few short weeks, autumn will be upon us. The nights will get cooler and the days, shorter. So, with this thought in mind, make the most of the warm weather with the following end-of-summer date ideas.

1. Picnic with a twist: A picnic is a cute couple thing to do. You get to spend time together doing simple things: going to the grocery store to shop for your favorite foods and then loading up the car with a packed basket and big blanket. For a spin on this classic date, why not do it at sunrise? The moment when the sun starts to peek over the horizon is very special, and as the sunlight starts to glow across the sky, it will make for a truly memorable start to your day together.

2. Go for a bike ride: Put some effort into the planning, and with a little creativity, this can be a lovely day out. First, if you don't both own bikes, figure out the most convenient spot to rent them. Sit down and decide your destination; go somewhere that neither of you have been to before and explore a new place together. Find a great place to stop for a leisurely lunch and then resume your adventure.

Related Link: [A Summer of Love](#)

3. Wine tasting tour: Even if you're not really a fan of wine, there is something rather romantic about being in the wine country surrounded by vineyards in the middle of nowhere. Plus, sampling a winery's finest is not expensive; some tastings are as low as 10 dollars or even free with a purchase. Once you learn the process of how wine is made and the history behind your favorite vineyards, you might want to bring a bottle home with you.

4. Rent a jet ski: If you're located near water, a jet ski can

be a great way to bond with your man. As you hold on tightly to each other, there's an element of trust, and combined with the adrenaline rush from the speed, you're sure to get your heart racing! Let's not forget that you're wearing your swimsuits, and skin-to-skin touch immediately amps up the excitement factor.

5. Fairground fun: Remember when you were young and the thrill of the fairground never ceased to amaze you? Well, it still can! Laughter is a fabulous aphrodisiac. Riding the ferris wheel while holding hands; chasing each other in the bumper cars; or enjoying feeding each other cotton candy can evoke fond childhood memories and also create new ones with your partner.

6. Sunset cruise: Nothing conjures up romance more than watching a sunset wrapped in each other arms. If you live near the ocean, take advantage of the sunset cruises available. As you sail away together, you can enjoy cocktails, dinner and music – a truly wonderful way to reconnect on a summer night.

7. Drive-in movie: These theaters aren't as common as days gone by, making them even more special. There is something quite iconic about a drive-in date. Think about your grandparents and imagine this is what they might have done during their courtship. Find a spot near you that's playing a romantic flick, recline in your car seats, and enjoy the unique experience.

8. Outdoor music festival: Music has and will always be a great way to achieve a feel-good factor. Singing and dancing together brings closeness to a couple. Check your local parks to see who is playing; there's a wide spectrum of mostly unknown but terrifically talented performers. Just grab a blanket, some munchies, and some sunscreen, and get ready to have some fun.

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9. Camping: Get ready to spend the night together outdoors. Make sure you have a double sleeping bag to cuddle in, and light a campfire to roast marshmallows and make s'mores. Alternatively, if you're not so in tune with Mother Nature, you can turn it up a notch and try "glamping" (glamorous camping). No tents to pitch or fires to build here! Enjoy the great outdoors without giving up modern luxury.

10. Dinner under the stars: Create a romantic ambiance in your garden or on your roof top (permitting). Play soft music, light many candles, and bring throw pillows and a blanket – really set the scene and reignite the flames of love in the privacy of your own space. After dinner, lie back to look at the stars with your dearest and savor the sweetest kisses.

Melanie Mar is a celebrity relationship specialist, matchmaker, and life coach. For more information on Melanie, you can follow her on Twitter @Melanie_Mar www.facebook.com/melaniemarinternational

Dating Advice: Top 10 Things to Know About Hiring a Matchmaker



 By Melanie Mar

A matchmaker works on behalf of a client to set that person up on dates and ultimately find them a happy and healthy relationship. In today's society, more and more people are turning to matchmakers as they look for a qualified mate

for a long-term, committed relationship that may eventually lead to marriage. Below are ten things that you should know about hiring a matchmaker:

1. Your time is premium. A matchmaker acts as a personal agent for your love life. You can go on with your busy day-to-day schedule, while matchmakers like myself are working behind-the-scenes to find your other half. It's an effective, timesaving approach.

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2. A professional matchmaker has the intention to orchestrate *quality*, not quantity, introductions. They only select matches that offer you the maximum chance of success. Identifying mutual compatibility in important areas such as religion and children help them decide who your potential matches are.

3. Your safety is of paramount importance. Matchmakers' clientele are screened for your security, allowing you to feel confident meeting the individuals selected for you.

4. Matchmaking is offline and highly personal. Matchmakers get to know you and find out what you think is most important in an ideal mate. All potential candidates are interviewed in person too. After all, you are hiring a professional to handpick someone who is perfect for you.

5. Matchmakers elicit feedback from both parties after each date, allowing them to better understand what you are looking for and to refine their search. They'll also gain insight into behavior patterns that you may not be aware of.

6. They keep your privacy in mind. Most matchmakers do not post your photographs or personal information on the Internet. Unlike online dating websites, it is a discreet way to handle your private life.

7. Matchmakers generally have a higher caliber of clientele.

People who pay to enroll a matchmaker's services are serious about relationships and not interested in wasting anyone's time.

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8. A matchmaker will coach you through the whole first date process, from what to wear to breaking the news to your match if you didn't feel that crucial connection necessary for a relationship. Chemistry is the only thing a matchmaker cannot guarantee.

9. Matchmakers specialize in the different needs of you, the client. Whether you are retired, religious or gay, find a matchmaker who caters to your very specific requirements.

10. Matchmaking services, especially those designed to be boutique or elite like mine, do not necessarily take every paying client who is interested in working with them. They have to feel that they will be able to match you and that you will meet the high standards of their current clients.

Once you have made the decision to hire a matchmaker, choose someone that you can truly trust and be honest with when it comes to what you want. Finding true love is one of the most important things in life, and emotions will be involved. Therefore, you must feel safe enough to share your feelings. Open your heart and mind and let your matchmaker guide you, even if they sometimes lead you down the road less traveled. Most importantly, remember that love is waiting for you; you might just need a little help finding it.

Melanie Mar is a celebrity relationship specialist, matchmaker and life coach. For more on Melanie, you can follow her on [Twitter](#).

Dating Advice: A Summer of Love



 By Melanie Mar

Are you wondering how you can find [love](#) this summer? Here's a list of things you can do *now* to get ready for a summer romance.

First, consider your lifestyle. Wintertime is synonymous with wrapping up in layers of clothes and eating hearty meals. While that may be comforting during the dark, cold days, it can also create complacency in your healthy living and add some extra-unwanted weight. But now, spring has sprung, and it's time to refocus on your well being. So take a look at your eating habits, write in a food journal to help you clearly see where you can make some healthy changes and give yourself an attainable goal. When you look good, you feel good and ooze confidence, which is very attractive. Plus, men are visual; they initially pick who they want to date with their eyes.

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Next, add exercise into your daily routine. Now would be a fine time to enroll in a fitness class or purchase a gym membership. Rather than look at this step as a chore, think of it as fun and a great place to flirt with some very fit men. If money constraints are an issue, lace up your tennis shoes and go for a hike or even just a walk around your neighborhood. Again, make it a joy by saying hello to

prospective, single gentlemen. Another great and easy way to get your body bikini-ready is to simply purchase a workout DVD. Whatever you do, make it a routine and truly incorporate it into your lifestyle.

Once your body starts to transform, you will have a great excuse to go shopping for a new dress for a first date. It doesn't need to be a major investment, as there are plenty of outlet and retail discount stores, like Nordstrom Rack and Off 5th, where you can find great bargains and still look fabulous. It's important to decide what your favorite features are and choose clothing to enhance your best bits and detract from the parts that make you feel insecure. If you're overwhelmed, a friendly salesperson can help you. Don't put everything on display, as this may send the wrong signal to a potential mate. Be subtle in your sexiness.

With your new body and new clothes, it's now time to get a new haircut and/or color – nothing has a greater ability to make you feel more vibrant! Start tearing out photographs of celebrity hairstyles that you like. There are websites, like [InStyle](#), where you can upload a picture of your face and see what the styles will look like on you. It's a terrific way to try before you buy. Then, pop into your local department store and get a free makeover from one of the beauty vendors. They will teach you how to apply your makeup and show you all of the latest colors and tricks.

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And finally, the most important thing you need when getting ready for new love is what I call a "clear head, clear heart." If you have any residual emotional issues from a previous relationship, you cannot possibly expect to present yourself to others with the openness needed to be viewed as available and seriously wanting to date. Make a conscious effort to move forward. Leave the past behind and look to the

future with fresh eyes. There's a summer romance waiting for you. Put your best foot forward and go get it!

For more information about Melanie Mar, click [here](#). Melanie is a relationship and life coach, as well as co-owner of the Millionaire's Club International Matchmaking Agency for the U.K. and Europe. She is certified by the WANT Institute in Androgynous Semantic Realignment and a Transaction Analysis practitioner certified by the United States America Transaction Analysis Association. You can also visit her [Facebook page](#) or www.melaniemar.com.

Relationship Advice: Can an On-Again, Off-Again Relationship End in the Real Deal?



 By Melanie Mar

Happy endings happen in all different ways. So, when someone asks me if a relationship has staying potential when it's constantly on-again, off-again, the answer is "yes." Contrary to popular belief, on-again, off-again relationships can be the real deal.

All relationships, at some point, go through turbulent and challenging times, which may result in a breakup or even breakups, plural. Even so, that doesn't necessarily mean that you won't one day be walking down the aisle together. Case in

point: Jessica Biel and Justin Timberlake. If the reason for the split is not of an immoral, unethical or a very serious nature but instead due to timing, immaturity, financial stresses, etc., and the two of you have a deep, emotional and mental connection, there is a good chance that you will reconnect again physically.

If, however, the relationship is volatile and unstable with high-highs and low-lows, it's not healthy. I wouldn't recommend anybody committing to a long-term relationship of this type. If you have a steady, calm relationship that has gotten off track because of a small matter, then resolution may be achieved.

I understand you may be missing your [ex](#) and feel the need to contact him or her, but before you repeat previous behavior patterns, ask yourself these questions: What is the fundamental issue that is causing your breakup(s)? And what can you do to stop it from happening again? Maybe consider some outside assistance from a therapist. If you do make a plan to see each other again, come with a solid idea of what you're willing to commit to with regards to establishing a solution moving forward.

Related Link: [Can You Be Friends With an Ex?](#)

Don't call someone just to say, "I miss you." This action will lead to you both falling back into a dysfunctional relationship and making the same mistakes.

Don't jump into bed and have make-up sex either. It's tempting to do when high chemistry is present but will only mask the underlying problems temporarily.

If your relationship is consistently on and off with someone who breaks up with you at his or her whim, then you will eventually have to up the ante. You cannot allow your ex to keep coming back into the relationship at the same level. You

must stay strong and insist they commit to something deeper (i.e. from dating to girlfriend, girlfriend to fiancé, fiancé to wife). Otherwise, you have the potential to remain in this back-and-forth relationship for years with no intent of a full commitment from your partner.

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Ultimately, if the pull between the two of you keeps bringing you back together, there is a real reason for that. Finding someone with whom you have a deep connection is very difficult. Think about how many people you have been on one date with – even just a coffee – and the number is probably quite high. Now, think about how many people you have told you love, and it most likely drops dramatically. And now, think about how many people in your life who you have really been in love with, and my guess is maybe one or two.

So, with this thought in mind, if you have found a special someone that you have a true love connection with, iron out the kinks and commit 100 percent to the relationship. When two people are destined to be together, it will be, regardless of what obstacles get in your way.

Can You Be Friends With an Ex?



By Melanie Mar

Lovers cannot be friends until both parties have a new lover. Many factors come into play with regards as to whether you can remain friends with a former loved one.

Did the relationship end on good or bad terms? If the two of you merely grew apart and perhaps the physical intimacy died in the relationship, then you may have already started developing a friendship within the relationship. It is far easier to continue an already-established friendship post-breakup. However, if one of the parties did something immoral or unethical and hurt the other one deeply, the chances are certainly much slimmer.

Does one of you not have the ability to remain friends mentally or emotionally? One's life experiences and role models (i.e. if you are a product of divorced parents, did they maintain a friendship post-breakup?) will dictate one's emotional ability and openness to establishing a future friendship.

Is it in your nature to remain friendly after an intimate relationship? I have clients who literally go into relationships telling their partner that, if this doesn't work out, there will not be a friendship afterward, which makes your desire to maintain a friendship impossible, however disheartening this truth may be to you. I have other clients who are friends with most everyone they have dated and would feel sad at the thought of losing that person from their lives.

If you're currently in a relationship that you know has a limited shelf-life, but you desire to eventually have some form of friendship post-breakup, here are some things to consider:

Related Link: [How to Break Up Without Breaking Down](#)

1. Why is the relationship breaking down, and is it mutual? A lot of relationships fade to grey.
2. Were you friends before you became lovers, and had you put in the foundations of friendship before you became intimate?

3. What will this person positively bring to you and your life as a friend, and vice versa?

After asking yourself these questions and writing down the answers, you'll have a clearer vision of whether or not a friendship is something viable. Here are a few more points to remember:

1. If you want to end this relationship, and your partner is unprepared, unaware, or wanting to continue the relationship, it is unrealistic to think he or she would want a friendship with you.

2. If you had a secured friendship prior to becoming intimate, the chances of you establishing a friendship are higher. If you became intimate sooner rather than later, having not gotten to know the other person as an individual, and your connection was short-term and sexually driven, then it could be less likely.

3. Are your lives better by having each other in it? Can you rely on this person? If you're in need in any way, is this person going to be there for you? If the answer is yes, that is a true friend. Nobody needs another type of friend, so make sure the ones you choose to have in your life are worthy.

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Now, if your relationship has already expired and you hope for a friendship with an ex, the only thing that you can do is lay yourself bare. Put yourself out there and ask your ex if enough time has passed for feelings to heal and if he or she is willing and wanting to be your friend. There are many famous faces that have achieved a post-split friendship; examples include Demi Moore and Bruce Willis, Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe, and, most recently, Courteney Cox and David Arquette. And some relationships actually work better as friends. Engaging in a friendship with someone who knows the most intimate parts of your life and accepts you

despite them means that the friendship will be stronger and much more successful than any romantic relationship could have been for the two of you.

Ultimately, there are no hard and fast rules on whether or not you can be friends with your ex. Each split is the same as each relationship: completely different. The most important thing to consider is...do you both really want it?

How To Break Up Without Breaking Them Down



 By Melanie Mar

We've all heard of the phrase "I love you but I'm not in love with you." Hopefully it wasn't being said to you. It's a hard thing to let someone down, especially a person that cares for you more than you care for them. What does this phrase mean? Moreover, how can you express this sentiment to someone you care for deeply while causing the least amount of pain? We'll explore some key ideas that can help you break the news as easily as possible:

Love: Humans need to give and receive love for emotional and physical reasons. In fact, there have been studies in orphanages that show physical contact is vital to well-being. Babies who are not held or nuzzled enough will literally stop growing, even if they are receiving proper nutrition. Literally loving one another is crucial to our overall wellness. Fortunately, mutual loving can be exchanged between close friends, family members and beloved pets. You don't have

to be exclusively romantic partners.

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In love: Being “in love” is a precious, euphoric experience. This is a deeper bond that goes beyond the boundaries of love as defined above. Your significant other’s happiness and emotional needs are paramount to you. To be in love is a rare experience. Think of all the people you love and have loved in your life, then narrow that down to the chosen few that you were willing and hoping to spend forever with. I’m willing to bet that list shrunk considerably.

How do you tell someone “I love you but I’m not in love with you?”: This is not easy to say. However, if you don’t mirror someone else’s feelings, then it’s critical that you communicate it concisely and with compassion. It is incredibly important to keep it simple.

Related Link: [Dating After Being Dumped: How To Avoid Messy Rebound Relationships](#)

In a new relationship: It is easy to get caught up in that invigorating feeling when you meet someone new. Remember, that adrenaline rush could lead someone to mistake their intimate feelings for genuine love. If you don’t feel the same way, you need to be crystal clear about it.

When having this conversation with someone, you should be as courteous as possible. First, you need to say “thank you.” It takes a great deal of courage for someone to lay themselves bare. If you acknowledge their courage, it might help soften the blow. Next, you should explain your emotions. You shouldn’t make excuses or act defensively, but you should make it clear why you don’t reciprocate this person’s feelings. Finally, you need to look forward and explore your options. Maybe there’s someone else that has your eye, or maybe you’d benefit from being single. The choice is yours, but keep moving forward.

In an established relationship: The sense of calm, peace and stability one feels with a long-term partner can quite often transfer to boredom and apathy for the other. If you're the bored party, don't drag it out! Gently tell your partner that you feel a disconnection. Ask them if they feel the same. Regardless of what the answer is, a decision needs to be made on how willing you both are to commit. If it becomes apparent that the flame is extinguished, you should move on. In situations like these, relationship therapy has worked for some couples. It can help assist in understanding the root of the problem. This can help you end your relationship amicably, or help you find a route to a solution that keeps you together.

Melanie is a relationship and life coach, as well as co-owner of the Millionaire's Club International Matchmaking Agency for the U.K. and Europe. She is certified by the WANT Institute in Androgynous Semantic Realignment and a Transaction Analysis practitioner certified by the United States America Transaction Analysis Association. Visit www.melaniemar.com for more information.

Can a Rebound Relationship Turn into True Love?



 By Melanie Mar

When embarking on a new relationship, having some residual emotional attachment to your ex is not something I generally advise. Having said that, there are times when a "rebound relationship" is just what the doctor ordered. The

end of any serious relationship can take its toll on your personal and sexual self-confidence and you might no longer be feeling attractive, feminine or sensual. Embracing someone whom you actually feel excited about might be exactly what you need to feel better. Though you shouldn't count on a new romance to magically eradicate all your insecurities, once in a while you will find the joy that was lacking in your last doomed coupling. Can these rebound relationships lead to true love? Absolutely! I married the man who was my rebound relationship. Here are some simple tips to help you do the same:



Related: [Dating After Being Dumped: How To Avoid Messy Rebound Relationships](#)

1. Be honest: Be completely honest with your new partner and, most importantly, yourself. Being truthful about where you are in the process of moving forward and letting go of the past is key.

2. Be vulnerable: A secure man who truly cares for a woman will not be not deterred. Hitting slight bumps in your relationship will only inspire him to protect and support you more. It's okay to be vulnerable, as that will often only make your relationship stronger.

3. Be open: Don't be closed-off to the potential of what this new relationship could be. If you're not open, you could be letting someone wonderful pass you by. Remember, rebound relationships can be successful. If you're still afraid to open yourself up, consider hiring a relationship coach to help you.

Related: [Rachel A. Sussman Helps Us Recover After A Breakup In 'The Breakup Bible'](#)

4. Be relaxed: Remember, stay relaxed, have fun, enjoy the courting phase and just let things take their natural course. Being nervous will only make things harder.

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3 Dating Mistakes That Prove It's Time to Use a Matchmaker



 By Melanie Mar

Dating is certainly much more challenging than it used to be. For example, in the good old days, boy meets girl and off they run into the sunset together- cue screeching sound as the movie comes to an abrupt halt and fast forward to the 21st century and today.

Why is dating so difficult now? Although there are many reasons, here are just a few examples:

1. Women are more independent now, than ever before: Being a housewife is becoming less and less the norm. While working is great for financial independence and self confidence, it can also make you too tired and overly stressed to have the energy and high spirits needed to get yourself out socially,

in the hopes of meeting your 'Mr. Right.'

Related: [Why Amazing Confident Women Remain Single](#)

2. Online dating sites: The internet is saturated with these. While we've all heard the success stories, the reality is that the success percentage is very low, and the time and effort needed to sift through all the profiles may feel like a full time job. But, the real problem here is, if the first date isn't fabulous, then there are another 20 people in your "inbox" allowing you to just move onto the next, without giving one person a real fighting chance.

Related: [5 Low Profile Online Dating Strategies](#)

3. The 'bigger is better' syndrome: This is most frequently recognized in the more cosmopolitan cities. A midst all of the swanky bars and hotels in town, women are hunting men. There's this feeling of having a constant itch that needs to be scratched. There's an insistent desire to find someone younger, richer, smarter, better looking and better bodied. So, what used to be a nice night out has become an extreme sport with everyone competing for the gold medal (the hot guy), which doesn't necessarily mean the right one.

Could a matchmaker make it easier for you to find a substantial suitor?

A lot of people are curious, and ask me about the match-making process and how it works. In simple terms, a good matchmaker takes all the guess work, time, energy and effort out of the whole 'meeting new people with potential' scenario. I screen my clients and make sure they are who they say they are, look the way they do in their photographs and then check their real age. I gauge people's energy, code their body language, listen to the words they use to communicate and find out what their requirements are for a mate.

There's an art and skill to true matchmaking, and my advice is

to go online, find three in your area and make appointments with them all. See who you have a connection with and who can assist you with your particular, unique needs. There really is no a downside in seeking a little professional assistance, only the possibility of finding that person with whom to walk down the aisle.

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Stop Bickering Before it Starts with Pre-Marital Counseling



 By Melanie Mar

We are living in a fast paced world. We eat fast, drive fast and as statistics show, we divorce fast. It is so quick and easy to exit when the going gets tough, what can you do to ensure you are giving your all to making your relationship work?

My advice for if you are thinking, talking or planning to get married is to try pre-marital counseling. Most people believe counseling is only required when they actually have

relationship issues which need resolving. I say: On your best day, remember, this too shall pass.

I am a fan of the Covenant marriage, which was initially introduced in Louisiana in 1997 in an effort to control divorce rates, it is offered to couples before they get married with the view that it is harder to end the union. In simple terms, you enter a covenant by signing and agreeing to certain stipulations in order to save the marriage before filing for divorce. The first of which is mandatory pre-marital counseling.

Surprisingly, sometimes the best counseling can be achieved when there are seemingly no problems at all. When you are both calm is when you are most likely to mentally receive the information, tools and suggestions given. You are not defensive, you like your partner and it is a pleasure to gather ideas of what to do to help each other when problems arise, which they invariably do. It can be something you both look forward to, it can be a relief to talk about how you are doing and to keep each other in check and it can stop you sharing your private life with friends. Prevention is better than cure and ultimately, you will be stronger as a couple and united as a team to face life's hurdles together.

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5 Ways Playing Hard to Get Can Damage Your Love Life



By Ashley DelBello with contributions by relationship expert, Melanie Mar

“You value the things you have to work hard for, not the things that are handed to you,” says a mid-twenty something male friend of mine when discussing if a woman should play hard to get when she first meets a guy. While that may seem to sum up the answer to this ultimate singleton question, it’s a bit more complex than that. A guy may think a girl is really cool, but if she’s too available at first, then he will question it. The opposite is true, too. If a girl plays too hard to get and is unavailable, then he will lose interest.

So, throw out the “dating rules” – you don’t have to wait three days before calling or texting back, but you do need to consider each situation and act accordingly. For instance, don’t be available every time he asks you out, but be sure to offer an alternative day to meet up. Celebrity life coach and relationship pro Melanie Mar chimed in on what women should do when they first meet a guy and how to keep his interest:

1. Understanding men: “I do not advocate any game playing, but there is certainly an element of truth to the theory that men ‘like the chase,’” said Mar. “Nature is that reason, as men are built to compete, conquer and control.” Mar goes on to say that there is a big difference between women playing hard to get and men enjoying the thrill of the chase. That said, there does come a point when the chase has to stop. It’s important to keep it fun and light in the beginning, but if after a while it starts to seem that the relationship’s not going anywhere, then you might want to move on.

Related: [7 Ways to Flirt in a Web 2.0 World](#)

2. If we're not into playing the game, but men like the chase – what do we do?: “Well, you let him chase you,” says Mar.

“But if you don't show a man some acknowledgement, he will move onto someone who does. Always respect and respond to his efforts, but remember easy is not interesting to a man. He wants to pursue you as it is in his innate, natural design. Remember the sperm chases the egg!”

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

3. Dropping the hanky: To subtly let a man know that you are interested in him, hold his gaze for a few seconds and smile.

It's not easy for men to approach women, so give him an opening signal to put him at ease and prompt him to come to you. Be engaging by playing ping pong with the opening.

4. Showing interest beyond the first interaction: It's simple – if he contacts you, return his call. If he asks you out and you don't have other plans, then go. Ladies, do the 3 to 1 ratio: if he takes you for dinner three times, return in kind by cooking him dinner once. “If a woman is being non-responsive in the beginning of a relationship when a man is actively engaging and pursuing her, she definitely will experience a feeling of control, but it will be short-lived. Eventually he will grow tired of chasing someone who acts as if she's not interested – even if she truly is – and he will stop the chase,” said Mar.

5. Finding that balance: As my guy friend said, men question if a woman is always available to hang out, so you need to show that you have your own life, too, and quite frankly that others think you are the amazing person that you are. While this may seem a bit ridiculous, men are ego driven and do want that validation that you are someone worth investing time in.

Mar added, “Men don't want you perfectly presented on a silver platter – they want to get to know you. Their focus in the

early stages of a relationship is chemistry; there has to be something about you that makes him want to see you more.

Maybe in the way you touch his arm when you laugh or the way you hold eye contact when he's talking to you – these are the things that make a man stay interested in YOU, not your unavailability.”

Getting Physical on the First Date: And as for the other question that all women want to know – if you get physical with a guy the first time you meet him or on the first date does it ruin your chances of a relationship forming from that?

There's no right answer and every guy is different from what I've been told. If there is a real connection there, then for most guys it won't matter. But, there has to be a pretty strong connection for that to not matter. So again, read each situation before you decide how far you will go with a guy and trust your instinct.

Playing hard to get is all about balance – because if you play it too much, you'll end up having relationships that won't go anywhere past the first interaction; but if you don't succumb to human nature and play it a little, well you'll mostly likely end up in the same boat – single.

Do you think a woman should play hard to get? Share your comments below.

Valentine's Day Love Advice: How to Survive the Holiday



By Melanie Mar

Congratulations, you survived! During the past couple of months you plowed through the relationship equivalent of a marathon. You survived the agony of choosing the perfect gifts for your loved one during the holidays, then rang in the new year with great cheer, good spirit and much love. So, now it's time to sit back, relax and take it easy on the romance front, right? Wrong!

Before you can even catch your breath, Valentine's Day is upon us, the most romantic day of the year – so we are told. Contrary to what popular culture wants us to believe, for many people, Valentine's Day is less fun and flirty and more stressful and sad. Maybe it highlights that another year has passed and you're still not in a relationship, or recently have suffered a hurtful separation. Perhaps you just simply don't know what to do to make this day as special and romantic for your partner as societal pressure dictates. Talk about unneeded anxiety!

There is no escaping this pressure, either. All the shop windows have comical, over-sized hearts displayed and cheeky cherubs pointing their arrows at you, not to mention the red bows and the red ribbons and the cute cards and the cute teddy bears ... STOP! Take a deep breath – we will get through this together.

If you are single, I want you to create your own ideal Valentine's Day. View it as the one opportunity this year that you can truly pamper and spoil yourself. Whether you buy flowers, light candles, listen to music, get a massage or find a jacuzzi and relax, make this day about romancing yourself. This is your special day! Do it for you, because you love you and try not to get too wrapped up in the hype.

Another way to enjoy Valentine's Day as a singleton is to celebrate those you love. Your lucky valentine can be your

parent, your friend or your dog whose day you have chosen to brighten. It's a fabulous excuse to show extra love to those you care about.

When you are in a relationship, one of the biggest pitfalls is gift expectations. I suggest you buy a joint journal – you may even call it your dream journal. You both can write in this journal at anytime, expressing anything that either of you would like to receive from the other. These dreams can be both sexual and non-sexual; they can be a highly sought after material item or a simple request that costs nothing. Whenever the fancy takes you, jot down these thoughts, ideas, things, web sites or photos, knowing that at some point they will be seen and read by the other person. Do not expect anything of each other and you may well be pleasantly surprised!

Happy Valentine's Day!

Love, Melanie

For more information, visit Melanie's Mar's Facebook page or contact her at info@melaniemar.com. A complete overview of her services can be found at www.melaniemar.com.

Heidi Klum and Seal: Marriages Don't End Overnight



 By Melanie Mar

When a seemingly “rock solid” celebrity couple separates – as with Heidi Klum and Seal's divorce announcement after seven

years of marriage – the first public reaction is always surprise. Thanks to the sheer volume of attention paid to celebrities' lives via television, tabloids and other media, it is easy to believe you actually know these stars. You feel a connection to them that makes their relationship issues cause you to feel like a personal friend's relationship has broken up. You begin to analyze the celebrity relationship in the same manner, questioning what happened and what went wrong. Of course, the tabloids add fuel to your frenzy when they get down and dirty with many and varied rumors: He cheated. She cheated. He has anger issues. She has an alcohol problem. You begin to feel dismayed, thinking, "Again? Another one bites the dust?"

Related: [Heidi Klum and Seal – What Blew Up Their Marriage?](#)

Having had the pleasure of socializing with Heidi and Seal, I found in them a friendly couple with open affection towards each other. There is no doubt in my mind they still love each other and may have the possibility of a potential reconciliation; however, the only people who truly know what is happening behind closed doors are the two in the relationship themselves.

Related: [Finding Love After a Breakup – Should You Jump In?](#)

Marriages, especially those that have young children, do not end overnight. Heidi and Seal were together almost a decade, and their marriage could not have ended over only a matter of days or weeks. There is usually the constant chipping away of the relationship that causes the cracks and ultimately the break. Some of the warning signs of this are; infrequent sexual intimacy, apathy, disrespect and/or lack of cherishing.

The most important thing is to be aware and look for these signs. As soon as you think they are beginning, address the issue immediately. The longer the behavior pattern exists the harder it is to stop. Most every relationship problem can be

helped with concise communication. State what you want and don't want in a non-threatening, respectful, loving manner. Ask how you can help each other do better and feel better. Learn how to listen and also be heard. With that in mind, write down the following and read it daily to help keep yourself in check.

Beware of your thoughts, because they become your words.
Beware of your words because they become your actions.
Beware of your actions because they become your habits.
Beware of your habits because they become your destiny.

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RHOBH EXCLUSIVE: Taylor Armstrong's Life Coach, Melanie Mar Answers Our Questions



 By Ashley DelBello

Last Monday night, the world was introduced to Melanie Mar on *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* (RHOBH). As we all saw, she was giving life coaching advice to Taylor Armstrong and helping her through her marriage woes to her now late husband, Russell. We published an interview with Melanie the day after the episode aired, where she offered advice for both couples

looking to strengthen their relationship and singles searching for Mr. Right. This week, Melanie shares insight with us that answers our burning questions about the Armstrong's, what it was like to work with Taylor, and what type of counsel she gave to her over the past six months.

We loved watching you on the show. Can you tell us a little about your history with the Armstrong's and how you came to be Taylor's life coach?

I've known the Armstrong's for about a year now. We met through mutual friends. Initially I was brought into the RHOBH to help resolve the marital problems of both Russell and Taylor. However prior to filming, Taylor privately disclosed personal details (since made public) within the marriage which made it unprofessional for me to counsel them as a couple on the show. It was my opinion and suggestion that I would be most beneficial as Taylor's life coach.

How long have you been a coach to Taylor?

Our first session began in March. I found her to be very forthcoming and open. This is an incredibly important characteristic as it enables me to assist the person with understanding what they want and don't want in their lives and relationships. Once I have established that, we can begin the process of putting in place the actions needed for change. Pain indicates change is needed or change is in progress.

What were you doing to help Taylor and her marriage? What were your sessions like?

As with all my clients, I begin with educating a different way to communicate within relationships. I teach the biological differences of men's and women's brains and why they think and feel things differently. Ultimately, if a relationship is beyond repair I then have to progress onto alternative options available for that individual or couple and help them to make the best rational, logical decision depending on their

circumstances.

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

On the episode it appeared that you were trying to help Taylor with her marriage, not sway her to leave like the rest of the women were convincing her to do. Can you tell us more about that?

I work with what I have. If someone tells me they will do anything to make their marriage work, then I will do my utmost to give them all the tools, information and support necessary to make it possible. If someone tells me they want to leave their marriage, I will give them all the tools, information and support to make it possible. I cannot tell anyone what to do – they have to tell me what they want to do and my job then is to assist them in getting there.

According to reports, Taylor and Russell were also being counseled by psychiatrist Dr. Charles Sophy. Did you work with him?

I have not worked with Dr Charles Sophy. Unlike psychiatrists, I am not licensed to prescribe medication. What I teach is a form of cognitive behavior therapy. I am working with the left lobe of the brain responsible for making logical decisions. Most people regret something they have said or done when it has come from a state of being irrational, emotional or illogical. I help people deal with conflict in their life, whether it's with loved ones, friends, co-workers or family, in a rational way.

What counsel do you provide someone who is not only having relationship and communication problems, but domestic violence issues as well?

My advice to anyone suffering from domestic violence is to contact the experts who specialize in domestic abuse cases.

Related Link: [Hollywood Portrayals of Domestic Violence](#)

How is Taylor now? Are you still her life coach?

I have not seen Taylor since the funeral, but she knows I am here for her when she is ready to talk privately.

What are some reasons a person would hire a life coach?

Everybody needs to talk to someone during trials – it is unhealthy to suffer in silence. However, most people, particularly women, who share their intimate problems do so with several people. This causes more confusion because everyone is giving different and uneducated advice. I am unbiased and am certified in what I do. My coaching is based on scientific studies. I teach specific tools to enable my clients to take control of their life, to get what they want by knowing what they don't want.

If someone wanted to hire you to coach them in the same way you did Taylor, what would that look like? What's the process?

My first session with a client starts with me explaining my qualifications, who I am and what I do. I give a brief background into the brain and why men and women do, say and behave in certain ways. I ask what their particular problem is and then begin teaching the behavior modification techniques. In each session after that, we continue working together on their issues, implementing the tools and following up on their progress. I end every session with a "contract" for that individual or [couple](#), something that they are verbally agreeing to do or stick with.

What other services do you offer?

Other than coaching, I offer complete makeovers. As a former runway and photographic model, fashion and style are paramount to me. I am a big believer in the thought that when you look good, you feel good. I think first impressions do count and,

whether you are on the market for a new relationship or a new job, making the best of yourself never is a bad thing. I garner great joy from helping others transform themselves and seeing their confidence soar.

Visit Melanie's Mar's Facebook page or contact her at info@melaniemar.com if you're interested in learning more about she helps others in their lives and relationships. A complete overview of her services can be found at www.melaniemar.com.

Taylor Armstrong's Life Coach from The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills Offers Tips for Today's Relationship and Finding Mr. Right



 By Ashley DelBello

"I teach women to be ladies and men to be gentlemen," says model turned relationship coach, Melanie Mar who has worked with Hollywood's most elite celebrities and couples to help them find love in their life and more importantly, within themselves.

Melanie Mar is the founder of Melanie Mar International and a partner of Patti Stanger's Millionaire's Club Matchmaking Agency. You may also recognize her from last night's episode of *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, where she is seen

coaching Taylor Armstrong about her marriage to Russell Armstrong. We had the chance to catch up with Mar and get her advice for couples in a relationship, as well as for those who are navigating the single scene. She offered some amazing insight. Ladies take note.

One of the most common dating challenges for single women who live in big cities like LA or NY is that they find it too hard to meet a man. "Women have become much more independent and now they're competing with men," says Mar. "There's a lot of masculinity out there these days and it takes so much courage for today's man to approach today's woman. He has no idea what reaction he'll get," she explains.

Mar continues by noting that anytime women are working, it means they're using their left brain, which is their logical and doing mode, it's the one that's needed to do a job successfully. The opposite lobe is where our emotions lie. Interestingly, the left brain is also the lobe that men use, hence where the competitiveness comes into play.

"There are four people in every relationship because we're all masculine and we're all feminine. You know when you're being one or the other. In fact, one of the things that I tell my women [clients] when they're struggling with this is when you've finished work, come home and take one hour and do something feminine. I don't care if it's taking a bath, walking the dog, or playing music. I don't care what it is, but get into that feminine side."

A Harvard study on why we marry found that approximately two-thirds of women marry for status and stability and the other 33 percent marry for sensual and sexual pleasure. However, the study found the exact opposite for men – where two-thirds of men marry for the sensual and sexual. When these men come home after work, they want to come home to a sensual home – meaning they don't want to work or compete once they've walked in the door.

“If you’re a woman who wants a “real” man, turn it off when you get home,” Mar advises. “It’s so crucial to take that one hour – and you should tell your partner that you need to do this to become a better girlfriend, wife, or significant other. It’s so important for women not to compete, control or conquer their men because you won’t respect them and the men if they’re real men, won’t tolerate it. You’ll be banging heads every time you open your mouth.”

Mar’s generously offered some tips for those looking to find that special someone:

– **Stop going out in groups:** It takes a lot of guts for a guy to approach a woman, much less a group of women. Mar advises if you’re specifically going out to meet a guy, then don’t go out with more than one girlfriend. If a man does approach you, remember to be nice to him even if you’re not interested (unless he is a drunk or a creep of course!), since he mustered up a lot of courage to come talk to you.

– **Make your body language very clear:** Look around. Find a guy you’re interested in. Make eye contact, hold it and SMILE. Melanie calls that “dropping the hanky” and men need a hanky dropped! It’s very difficult for men to understand what women are doing so Mar always says to “drop the hanky,” hold the look, smile, and be open and inviting because he’s taking cues from your body signals.

– **Do not sit there, huddled in a deep conversation with your girlfriends:** Enough said.

– **Do not go up to him:** Let him come to you. And if he still doesn’t approach you, then you know that you did your part. He’s either in a relationship, not interested or gay.

– **Keep the ball in his court:** If he gives you his business card, turn it over, write your number on the back, and hand it back to him.

– **Let him chase you:** “That’s another mistake today’s woman is making,” says Mar. “Women are calling, texting, inviting – making it far too easy for men. He doesn’t want it to be that easy. He might think he does, but he doesn’t. He wants to work for it.”

– **Flirt five times a day for five minutes:** Practice on guys that you’re not interested in. Smile at a guy at Starbucks. Catch the eye of a guy in the grocery store. Wherever you go – practice. You may not be into them, but you’re practicing flirting. Some of them will come up and want to talk to you, but that’s more practice (just don’t forget to be polite when exiting the conversation). Eventually, you’ll see a guy who you like and it won’t be difficult because you’ve done it so many times.

– **Ask yourself what type of guy you like and go where they would go:** If you want a business guy who is worldly then go to an elegant hotel bar like the side bar at Beverly Wilshire. If you want a younger person who is more hip, then go to a trendy restaurant like Boa. If you want a church guy, then go to church. Make sure you’ve answered these questions before you step out the door.

Not wanting to leave anyone out, Mar’s also offered advice for those who are already in a relationship:

– **Get a verbal contract:** “I’m not a moralist, but when you decide to sleep with a guy, it does make a difference.” Mar says that having a verbal contract is important so that you both are clear about what you’re doing. “I don’t care what that contract is. I don’t care if you have one that says this is a one night stand but you need one. “There’s nothing worse than a woman having sex with a man and presuming that they’re in a monogamous relationship. Just because a woman spends a month or two getting to know a guy doesn’t mean he isn’t dating other people. A verbal contract will let you know where you stand so that you’re both clear on your

expectations.

– **Negotiate time, sex, money and space:** Take “time” for example. You say it’s important to have a certain amount of time to yourself – negotiate with your partner how much time that is. For each of these categories, you should also negotiate “I,” “We,” and “Us.” The “I” is time by yourself, the “We” is what you guys do together, and the “Us” is what you’re doing together with other people. “It’s really important to negotiate these things in order to keep the lines of communication open. If you do this, then the arguments are less and the peaceful atmosphere is more.” Melanie advises couples to negotiate often: every two months during the first year, every three months during the second year and every six months after that.

– **It always comes back to communication:** “If you can’t communicate, you’re in trouble. If you can logically communicate with each other, then you’re already ahead of the game.”

– **Sex is important:** You need to negotiate what’s right for each of you and find that middle ground that you’re both happy with. “If it happens more than what you negotiated, and you both were in mutual agreement, then that’s great. If it’s less, then you need to work on it,” says Mar.

– **Reconnect with your feminine side:** Take a bubble bath, drink a glass of wine, do your nails – just do something feminine.

– **Communicate clearly and often:** “What I teach is so important because verbal communication only takes up 15 percent of our communication ... so you better make sure what comes out of your mouth makes sense.”

To learn more about Melanie Mar and where she’s taking her advice next, visit her Facebook page or www.melaniemar.com.