

# Relationship Advice: Listen With Your Heart



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

How many times have you said this to your partner? “You never hear what I say! Aren’t you listening to me?” Or maybe they’ve accused you of not hearing or remembering what was said. The longtime celebrity couple Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn credit listening as a secret to a successful relationship. “Learn to listen and live in the moment. Don’t over plan your future; focus on being the best partner you can be in the present moment, and the rest will follow.” Listening is key to building and maintaining a healthy relationship, but it’s not easy. The skills of a good listener require dedication and a heart with ears. You must have the ability to give yourself totally to the person who is talking. It’s not easy because we

are constantly inundated with outside distractions, such as our thoughts, cell phones, and social media. In his book, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, Jon Kabat-Zinn, professor of medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, defines mindfulness, or active listening, as paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. We listen to understand, to obtain information, and for enjoyment, but researchers and [relationship experts](#) at the University of Minnesota found that “the average person only remembers half of what he or she has immediately heard said by another person.” Over time, that result can have a devastating effect on your relationships. A key factor in a successful relationship is to become a pro in active listening. Active listeners make an effort to hear what has been said and understand the message. To accomplish this, you must master four of these dating tips.

## Relationship Advice On Active Listening

**1. Create a listening ritual and space.** Find a comfortable place to sit and listen to each other, particularly when the conversation is important. Your special place should be free of distractions thereby giving yourselves total attention to each other. Unplug, de-clutter, shut the door, do whatever it takes for some priceless listening time. My husband and I have created a morning coffee time on our patio. The morning sounds of birds, the tranquility of mountains in the distance, and the early neighborhood sounds provide us with a peaceful space to share stories daily.

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**2. Pay attention.** Give yourself to the speaker with a nod of your head, a slight gesture, or smile. Maintaining eye contact

demonstrates you are in the moment. Most importantly, try to focus on hearing with your heart. “Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you’d have preferred to talk,” said relationship expert Doug Larson.

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**3. Put yourself in your partner’s shoes.** Don’t be afraid to be empathic. Recognizing your partner’s perspective will give you the opportunity to think beyond yourself. You’ll be surprised as you discover their hopes, dreams, fears and expectations. These discoveries will lead to you honing in on your listening skills as you begin to know your partner more intimately.

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**4. Collect moments and be prepared to retell the story.** When your partner shares a story with you, it’s important to them. The story is their moment, and it has now become yours. How many times have you and a friend retold the story of running through the airport together or the time you celebrated your anniversary at a special restaurant? “One of the best ways to remember something better is to know that you are going to tell what you learned to someone else,” said writer Henrik Edberg. “Then you’ll be more alert, naturally start asking more questions to understand and what is said – in my experience – simply seems to stick better.” My best relationship advice is to learn from retelling your special moments, remember the eye contact, gestures, and emotions. With so many distractions vying for our time, the ability to listen is a quality often longed for in today’s relationships. By creating the ideal atmosphere, paying attention, showing empathy for our partner, and being fully engaged in listening, you can show your loved one how much you care by not saying a word.

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## Relationship Advice: Have You Been a Victim of Cyber Bullying?



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

Typically, I don't spend much time on the computer. However,

the past several months have been different. I started experiencing insomnia, fatigue and headaches because I was consumed by the internet when I no longer felt safe. I was outsmarted by a woman that I've known for years. I'll call her Lena. Lena insisted I participate in a group discussion about personal matters, but I declined her meeting. I felt it was not appropriate for me to be involved. Nevertheless, Lena continued to pursue my involvement, claiming I was unsupportive. One day I dialed Lena's number and left a voice mail, explaining why I wouldn't attend the group. Lena asked for me to follow up with a text message, claiming she couldn't hear the recording. Lena forwarded my text message to members of the very group I declined to attend. The message was used to embarrass, humiliate, and alienate me from her supporters. Rude comments appeared on my Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts. Many of these messages were from people I didn't even know. I became a victim of cyberbullying. And sadly, I received only a taste of what cyberbullying is like in the online dating world. Long-term relationship problems can arise as a result of cyberbullying if not properly dealt with. As a relationship expert who has gone through it, I offer my [relationship advice](#) on how to get over cyber bullying.

## Relationship Advice On Dealing With Cyber Bullies

**What is Cyber Bullying?** Cyber bullying is not beyond the realm of adult intellect and responsibility, nor is it limited to young people. The cyberbully uses technology to intentionally mistreat others. Computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices become weapons to cause fear, distress, or harm. But the bully is not driven by revenge alone. According to Violence Prevention Works, "Cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, involves an imbalance of power, aggression, and a



negative action that is often repeated.” In other words, a cyber bully needs an audience to be fully satisfied and therefore takes the bullying to social media, where humiliation is up for public viewing and twice as shaming.

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**Cyber Bullying Can Take Several Forms.** According to Violence Prevention, cyber bullying is achieved through these means:

- Offensive, rude, and insulting messages.
- Posted derogatory information, and/or digitally altered photos.
- Arguing online, often with the use of vulgar language.
- Hacking another’s email or social media to post embarrassing material.
- Sharing of secrets to cause embarrassment.
- Repeated threats or online activity that makes a person afraid for his/her safety.

My husband and I were both profoundly affected by this woman’s actions. We joined the ranks of other victims and suffered the many emotional and physical symptoms that are common after such an attack.

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**How Cyber Bullying Can Affect You.** As celebrity news often shows, many of today’s stars, such as LeAnn Rimes, Ciara, and Adele can attest the emotional toll of cyberbullying on one’s health. A few of the psychological health conditions that are brought on by bullying include stress, low self-esteem, depression, mood swings, fatigue, embarrassment and feelings of shame. Your physical health can also suffer with reduced immunity to infection, stress headaches, elevated blood pressure and post-traumatic stress disorder. Lena’s assault forced my husband and I to escape to our private little island

to cope with the pain and grief caused by the loss of trust and expectations from this woman. Like so many grieverers, we were embarrassed, ashamed, and depressed. The unrealistic expectations of this woman awakened my skills as a relationship expert and helped me uncover necessary tools to address my unresolved grief and negative feelings.

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**Have You Been A Victim of a Cyber Bully?** Here is some relationship advice to help you cope: Your first step is to acknowledge that you need to take care of yourself. If you are experiencing many of the same symptoms—don't ignore them. Your pain and the side effects of the attack are not going to go away by themselves. Don't fall into the trap of developing a lifelong relationship with your pain. You were a victim, but don't hang around waiting for the cyber bully to apologize like I did. It's not going to happen. I never received an apology. Understand that you need to forgive, not condone. To forgive means to cease feeling resentment against an offender. To condone is to treat as if trivial, harmless, or of no importance. Forgiveness is not condoning the situation. How do you forgive the cyber bully? NOT directly! Here's what I finally told myself: "I acknowledge that the things you did or did not do, hurt me, and I'm not going to let my memory of those incidents hurt ME anymore."

Don't be embarrassed, ashamed, or depressed about your grief. It's more exhausting to stay on the pain island than it is to admit you are filled with grief. In the long run, I must thank the cyber bully for showing me the path to helping others. I'm now confident I can be a lifeline to many by offering relationship advice.

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

# the experts.

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

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

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

- 1. What are you looking for?** Once you understand your desired qualities, make a checklist.
- 2. What do you think your future partner would want from you?** Always keep in mind that no one is perfect. Recognize your imperfections and understand your future lover may have a few flaws too.

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

- 1. Love yourself first:** You are the only *you* in the universe. Work on being the best you that you can be by taking care of your mind, body, and spirit. Do you have characteristics about yourself that you dislike? You're not alone – we all have

them. Our disliked imperfections become our trigger buttons. How we deal with our buttons is the answer. Now is the time to start accepting your imperfections and reminding yourself that no one is perfect. Taking this first courageous step will help lead you to discovering your own special qualities. Loving your whole self will lead to loving another.

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**2. Let your hair down:** Openness is a key ingredient to have in your relationships. We have different types of love in our life: sexual, mature, family, friends, and self. Think about some of the people in your life who you are close with – maybe your partner or a friend – someone who has seen you at your very best and worst. They've seen you laugh and cry, be strong and weak. They were given permission by you to see the real deal. The totally exposed you is comfortable sharing yourself with a shared connection. Once you feel comfortable, you have the connection. And then, you have love.

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

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