

Doing It All: 'The Bachelorette' Star Jillian Harris Launches Her Latest Project, Charlie Ford Vintage



Interviewed by [Lori Bizzoco](#); Editorial by Kristin Mattern

Many of us remember the charming Jillian Harris from ABC's *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. Since first revealing her sparkling personality, filled with irrepressible humor and emotional honesty, Harris has moved on to expose viewers to her design expertise on both *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *Love It or List It Vancouver*. Staying true to her motto of "doing it all," she is now sharing her adoration for vintage and antique items as founder and creative director of Charlie

Ford Vintage, a website that brings unique pieces, hand-selected by Harris and her team, to people across North America. "I've always been passionate about antiques. My mom used to take me antiquing when I was a little girl," says Harris. "And I realized that there was opportunity to share the things I loved with the world."

Harris is the quintessential busy bee, and she puts all of the energy her petite frame has into everything she does. Driven by her zeal for design and antiquities, she decided to launch her online shop with her closest friends, Tori Wesszer and Alyssa Dennis. *The Bachelorette* star is not only the face of the brand but also helps search for everything you see on the site. The website offers one-of-a-kind items from a variety of Canadian and American antique dealers that adhere to the company slogan of "redefining the way consumers view and buy vintage and antique home décor across North America." Harris is excited to work with her friends and the rest of her team, who she notes "is incredible!"

Related Link: [Exclusive: Maitland Ward of 'Boy Meets World' Believes that "Friendship, Trust and Laughter" Make for a Strong Relationship](#)

The inspiration for Charlie Ford Vintage came from a mixture of her live-in boyfriend Justin wondering what they were to do with the multitude of early 1900s apple boxes that Harris bought last year and repeated questions on her blog of, "Oh my gosh, where did you find that piece?" The brunette realized that saying she found an item in Vancouver didn't help someone in Idaho. She quickly decided she should offer the items she found online for others to buy. And with that, Charlie Ford Vintage (named after Wesszer's one-year-old son) was born.

But this isn't any regular online antique store. "Essentially, what I'm doing is personal shopping for you," Harris notes. "I go out, find the items and post them online, and then, our

vendors just take a commission. We aren't marking things up; we're negotiating to make sure we get the best price." In the future, she and her team plan to allow for client requests. "If there is something particular you are looking for, like an old cookie jar or a piece of art, we'll find it. We're out there all the time, in the trenches, searching for antiques that our customers want."

Harris certainly has her own sense of style and design. Her favorite piece is a blue, vintage buoy from the early 1900s that she bought while in Paella, Maui and made a part of a nautical vignette in her living room. When it comes to decorating and using antiquated items, she is a pro – and not just for women's spaces but for men too. "I think the great thing about vintage that a lot of girls don't realize is that guys love it too. If you put an old box for ammo on your coffee or side table, guys think it's awesome, and women love the connection and history. You really can't go wrong," she observes. "I think guys want the same thing girls do: something that's unique, something different. When you're decorating as a new couple or with a guy in mind, going vintage is great."

The former bachelorette has not only found love with antiques but also in her current relationship. Harris met Justin at a bar, and they immediately hit it off. "He was just gorgeous," she gushes. "He was very nice too. I was dating someone awful at the time and thought, 'You know, I'm gonna give this guy a try.' The rest is history."

"I will never let him go," she adds.

Through heartache, she learned what it takes to be happy in a relationship: "I believe that if you can't be happy with yourself first, you're not gonna be happy in a relationship. You can't beat yourself up too much, and you can't force something to happen. If it doesn't feel right, just let it go. Remember that there are plenty of fish in the sea and that you

only live once.” Wise words that the current bachelorette, Desiree Hartsock, should take note of.

Related Link: [Bachelorette 9, Episode 7: Confession in Madeira](#)

When not working as co-host of *Love It or List It Vancouver* (*Love It or List It 2* for viewers in the United States) or digging for treasures for Charlie Ford Vintage, she enjoys spending her date nights with Justin making dinner at home, playing cards and sipping wine by firelight. As for their future, she says, “I would like to have children in the next few years – in my late thirties, I think, would be a good time.” So do we hear wedding bells? “Marriage is really important to me, but I don’t think that marriage defines a relationship. I’m more concerned with our relationship being healthy and happy, and if the marriage part happens, it happens.”

Harris also dreams of some more time off and for Charlie Ford Vintage to become her main – and only – project. “It’s my passion,” she remarks. “I’m hoping one day it can be enough to support me and my family, and I can continue to share what I love about antiques with the world.”

To learn more about Jillian Harris, visit her blog www.jillianharris.com/ or stay connected through facebook.com/designerjillian or Twitter [@jillianharris](https://twitter.com/jillianharris)

Rumor: Miley Cyrus and Liam Hemsworth Reunite in Canada



By April Littleton

Lately, rumors have been swirling over Miley Cyrus' and Liam Hemsworth's postponed wedding. According to [People](#), Cyrus and *The Hunger Games* actor, Liam Hemsworth were finally spotted together in Alberta, Canada. Hemsworth has been in Canada for several weeks filming the upcoming movie *Cut Bank*. If the rumor is true, this has been the first time the couple has been seen together since June 17 in Hollywood.

How do you know when to go public with your relationship?

Cupid's Advice:

When you first begin dating someone new, it's a good idea to keep things under wraps for awhile until you figure out if the relationship is going to last. Spilling the beans on your love life too soon can cause some tension between you and your new

boo, especially if he/she isn't quite prepared to deal with your friends or loved ones. Do you think it's the right time to go public with your partner? Cupid has some tips:

1. Family matters: Has your significant other been asking questions about your family or friends lately? If he/she seems genuinely interesting in your family life, then it's time to go public with the relationship. Don't just break the news to everyone at once using social media applications like Facebook. If your love hasn't met the parents yet, invite your family over for dinner and let them get to know each other. If all goes well, gradually introduce a few of your friends to your boo.

2. You're in love: The obvious sign that it's time to go public with your relationship is if you're in love! You can't imagine being with anyone else and you spend all your time with your new partner. It's time to tell all of your loved ones who you're sharing your life with.

3. Enough time has passed: If the two of you have been a couple for several months now and things seem to be going well, then it's time to let the people you love know what's going on. There's a difference between keeping your love life private and keeping your relationship a complete secret. If you continue to shut your loved ones out of your private life, your partner might think you're ashamed of being with him/her.

How did you know when it was time to go public with your relationship? Comment below.

Victoria Beckham Says She Feels Guilty Being a Working Mom



By Kerri Sheehan

You may know her as Posh, but since her Spice Girls days Victoria Beckham has managed to have four kids, marry soccer star David Beckham, and start a successful career in fashion. However, Beckham admits that she feels a bit guilty about being a working mom. She told UsMagazine.com, "It's a huge juggling act, when you are a working mother and looking after your family. Millions and millions of women around the world are doing this every day, but it's not easy and yes, you feel guilty every time you walk out of the door to go to work."

How do you balance your career and family successfully?

Cupid's Advice:

For working moms there is never enough time in the day. Read on to find out how balance is key:

1. Set goals: Many people set goals at work, however it is important to do the same at home. Start small, like making it home for dinner and then transition into larger things like spending one whole day a week with your family.

2. Separate your time: Nothing will make your children feel worse than you taking a business call during time you reserved for your family. Keep your career time and family time from bleeding together.

3. Communication: Make sure you're open to criticism from your partner and kids. If your family feels neglected then they may be scared to tell you so. Let them know that it's okay to tell you you're doing a bad job of juggling both.

How do you balance your career and family? Share below.

John Mayer Dedicates Love Song to Katy Perry





By Kerri Sheehan

John Mayer and Katy Perry haven't called it quits just yet! The two have recently rekindled their romance and Mayer made the audience melt when he dedicated a song to Perry on the opening night of his tour. The song, "A Face to Call Home," is a serene love song from his *Born and Raised* album. According to [People](#), Mayer said the song was for, "Katy, who is my face to call home."

What are some ways to use music to show your love?

Cupid's Advice:

Everyone identifies with music in some way. Use it to show your love. Here's some advice:

1. Dedication: If you and your partner have a night out then make a song request and have it dedicated to your significant other. Music can often say the things that we can't put into words.

2. Radio: You can also call in to a radio station and have

them play a request for your lover. This idea is good for if the two of you aren't in the same place. This will show your partner that you're thinking of them even if they're far away.

3. Write: Whether you're a good singer or a bad singer your significant other will still appreciate the effort and thought put into the song. You can even make it short and sweet if you have trouble finding the words.

How do you show your love? Share below.

Premarital Counseling– The Pros and Cons



By Laura Seldon for GalTime.com

You likely test-drove several vehicles before buying your last car, read every tech blog possible to see which smartphone was best for you and even texted a few dressing-room pics of yourself to a friend before buying that cute maxi dress. As an educated, modern woman, you know researching your options and getting a few opinions can be a good thing. So, why are we so afraid to get a little help when it comes to our relationships?!

Couples therapy, relationship coaching, premarital counseling – most people would agree these are all great ways to help your relationship grow and thrive. And yet, no one is ever excited about going to see their therapist. Is this reluctance to premarital counseling due to a fear of admitting our lives aren't "perfect?" Or do we just think it's a waste of time? Read on to get the pros and cons of premarital counseling from therapists, counselors and family-law experts who outta know!

The Pros of Premarital Counseling

1. You Can Talk Out Problems... Before It's Too Late

Premarital counseling is a chance for couples to dig up any potential pitfalls that could hinder their marriage from lasting a lifetime. "It causes people to consider and discuss things that will increase the likelihood of a successful marriage," says Mark Baer, a family-law attorney.

Money issues, anger problems, jealous tendencies; premarital counseling can help you and your partner get any potential issues out in the open now so that you're not shocked by them nine months into your marriage.

Related: [Relationship Advice: Reasons Being Nice Doesn't Lead to Love](#)

2. You Get an Outside Opinion

So, you're about to get married and you're pretty sure you and your mate have the best possible relationship you've ever come across – minus the passionately heated shouting match you had this morning over who was the last person to take out the trash. Going to premarital counseling can give you an outside perspective on your relationship, and how to make it last.

“Couples considering marriage would benefit from having a licensed marriage and family therapist’s wise and trained eye to talk to them honestly,” says Becky Whetstone, Ph.D., LMFT. “MFT’s know to look into each person’s beliefs and values concerning money, child-raising, spirituality, individuality, partnership, marriage in general and more. If we see an emotionally immature or incompatible couple heading for a marital train wreck, we’ll tell them.”

3. It Can Strengthen Your Bond

New flash: many of us were not born with stellar communication skills. Do you ever get mad at your partner and then refrain from telling them you're angry – let alone explaining why you're angry? Healthy relationships are based on open and honest communication, and premarital counseling can help you learn those skills.

“People are not born with good communication skills and most people never learn such skills,” says Baer. “Since most marriages fail due to communication issues, I would say that this is an excellent reason to participate in premarital counseling.”

The Cons of Premarital Counseling

1. It Can Create Bigger Problems

What if your premarital counseling actually creates more problems between you and your mate than you had before you

even stepped into your therapist's office?

"Premarital counseling has the potential of creating problems, in that it causes people to think about and discuss issues they may never have considered," says Baer. "While this can be viewed as a con, I would propose that it is also a pro because it forces the discussion before marriage, as opposed to after marriage. Why not be preventative and not reactive?"

Related: [Dating Advice: 3 Ways to Master the Art of the First Impression](#)

2. The Counseling May Not Be That Good

"As with anything, some marriage counselors are better than others," advises Baer. "If a couple goes to a marriage counselor, who is not particularly skilled at conflict resolution, what happens if the couple argue over an issue raised in the counseling?"

Just like buying a car requires you to take a few different vehicles for a test drive, you have to do your research when it comes to finding a therapist, or you may wind up working with someone who hinders your relationship more than they help it! A skilled marriage counselor should be well aware of the issues that tend to cause divorce and should also be skilled at properly addressing those issues!

3. You May Wind Up Calling Off Your Wedding

If seeing a therapist brings up major issues for you and your partner, it could turn into an argument that ends with you calling off your engagement. While this is not ideal, it can also save you from marrying someone who is not right for you and it can also save you from the heartbreak of divorce.

While there are a few potential cons to premarital counseling, the positives far outweigh the negatives. Couples therapy is a great way for engaged couples to discuss major issues in their

relationship before saying “I do” for a lifetime. Nothing can guarantee a successful marriage, but premarital counseling can help you figure out what it takes to ensure your marriage will thrive!

Nigella Lawson's Husband Is Divorcing Her



By Kristyn Schwiep

Charles Saatchi is seeking divorce from Nigella Lawson. According to [People](#), Lawson failed to publicly defend him during the fallout over their disturbing public fight. Saatchi

was seen grabbing the celebrity chef's throat at a London restaurant on June 9. "I feel that I have clearly been a disappointment to Nigella during the last year or so, and I am disappointed that she was advised to make no public comment to explain that I abhor violence of any kind against women," said Saatchi.

How do you know when to stand by your partner in a scandal?

Cupid's Advice:

Standing by your partner is an essential part of any relationship, but there are certain times when there are no excuses for your partner's actions. So, how do you know when to stand by your partner in a scandal? Cupid has some advice:

1. Twisted perception: Only you know how your partner acts on a day-to-day basis, which means only you know how to react to your partner's behavior. Out lookers can twist a situation way out of proportion, so if you know your partner was being harmless or meant it all in good faith it is your decision to stand by your partner even when others are ridiculing your relationship.

2 . Protecting your family: Sometimes standing by your partner in a scandal is a good way of damage control. Many times you decide to stand by your partner to protect your family. Showing support to your partner will show your family how much you truly care about one another and that the accusations can't amount to the love you share.

3. You don't want to lose hope: Don't lose hope in a relationship over one minor fallback. Relationships come with a lot of stress, sometimes leading others to act out of character. If your relationship is something you believe in make sure you stand by your partner in times of needs. You will then have the opportunity to discuss the situation in private at a later time.

How do you know if you should stand by your partner in a scandal? Share your thoughts below.

Niecy Nash Says That “You’ll Manifest What You Believe” When It Comes to Love



By Kerri Sheehan

Finding true love is never an easy feat, but Niecy Nash knows how to make it happen. The host of “Let’s Talk About Love” on Yahoo! believes that humans are programmed to be in a

relationship, yet the way women think nowadays limits their opportunities to find happiness. "You'll manifest what you believe. If you believe that all men are dogs and that you're the bottom of the barrel and have to take what you can get, then that's what's going to be handed to you."

Related Link: [Niecy Nash Explains Why 'It's Hard to Fight Naked'](#)

It's no secret that falling in love herself has been a recent highlight in her life. As the newly-minted author explains, "The fact that I'm in love with love makes me available to try. It makes me available to want to be better." To encourage other women to adopt a similar attitude, she filmed her 2011 wedding to husband Jay Tucker for a TLC special called *Niecy Nash's Wedding Bash*. For her, the decision to do so was easy: "I knew so many women who were my age and single after having been married, and they said, 'I'm just going to focus on the kids. I'm not going to worry about love anymore.' I wanted to show them that you can get a do-over. And it can be better the second time around!"

It's difficult for some people to adopt such a positive attitude, but for Nash, it's just part of her personality. "Being a no-nonsense, straight-to-the-point type of person is who I am. It's who I am as a parent, who I am as a lover, who I am as a friend." And when she does get down, she usually bounces back quickly. "I'm very happy that I have a resilient theory and a resilient heart when it comes to love."

The funny lady ensures that her marriage is a happy one by "celebrating *everything* and celebrating often" with Tucker. "Aside from birthdays and Christmas, we celebrate when we had our first date or even the first time we went to a certain restaurant." She adds that finding time to laugh every single day helps keep their spark alive and their love fresh.

Related Link: [How Can Jennifer Aniston Make Her Love Last?](#)

Another way that she keeps her commitment strong is by surrounding herself with people who share her values and lifestyle. “When you’re married, you have to have a support system. You can’t just be married and still hang out with all of your single friends – that’s going to be problematic. You have to have people around you who are committed to the same things as you.” For the actress, that means spending time with best friend and co-host of *The View* Sherri Shepherd and husband Lamar Sally. In fact, the gang had just gotten together for a double-date when we spoke to Nash.



Of course, Nash’s life isn’t all about love – she’s got a hot career to focus on too! TV Land’s *The Soul Man* got picked up for a second season, and she’s reprising her role as Lolli Ballantine, the wife of Cedric the Entertainer. She’s also starring in a new show called *Getting On*, which premieres on HBO in July.

There’s no doubt that there will always be a lot of love and laughs in this newlywed’s life.

You can purchase Nash’s new book It’s Hard to Fight Naked on Amazon. To keep up with the actress, follow her on Twitter @NiecyNash and Instagram www.instagram.com/NiecyNash1/. Be sure to check out her website <http://www.niecynash.com/> too!

Eliza Coupe Served With Divorce Papers by Husband Randall Whittinghill



By April Littleton

Two months after the cancellation of *Happy Endings*, the actress of the acclaimed ABC sitcom, Eliza Coupe, has been served with divorce papers by her husband Randall Whittinghill. According to UsMagazine.com, Whittinghill, a puppeteer and acting coach, cited irreconcilable differences and asked for spousal support. The couple has been together for more than 12 years. The actress has yet to comment on

their split.

How do you tell your partner you want a divorce?

Cupid's Advice:

Divorce is never an easy subject to bring up, especially to your significant other. Regardless of how much love a couple has for each other, some marriages just don't work out. Whether your partner is aware of the tough decision you have made or not, it's up to you to be upfront and honest. If you think it's time to start thinking seriously about divorce, Cupid is here to help:

1. The location: Where you tell your spouse about your decision to divorce is crucial. If you have kids together, send them to a friend's house or have a family member take care of them for awhile. To avoid any potential outbursts, pick a private location. Telling news like this in a public place might make your partner feel embarrassed and can lead up to an irrational response.

2. Don't play the blame game: When you explain your decision to your significant other, try to avoid statements where it seems as though you're blaming him or her. Your partner will already be upset, so it's best to express your feelings without using an accusatory tone. The relationship is already over, don't waste time pointing fingers at each other.

3. Talk about the kids: If you have children together, it's important that your spouse knows he or she will always be involved in their lives. Assure your partner that your intentions are not to tear him or her away from the kids, but as a couple, the two of you just don't work anymore.

How did you tell your spouse you wanted a divorce? Share your experience below.

Fend Off The Post-Wedding Blues



By Laura Seldon for GalTime.com

So, you finally met the love of your life, got engaged in the most romantic way possible and the two of you toasted your love in the biggest party you've ever thrown (which is a now a day you count among the happiest of your entire life). But after all that fun and excitement, you're finding yourself feeling a little down.

"Post-wedding blues are very normal," says Dr. Ramani Durvasula, a licensed clinical psychologist in Los Angeles.

“It’s as though the circus packed up and left town, and so too has the event that has motivated the bride’s every thought for months, if not years!” If your wedding excitement has turned into wedding-woe-is-me, then here are five great ways to channel your newlywed bliss.

1. Talk About It

If you’re feeling down now that your big day has come and gone, there is a good chance your partner knows something is up, but is unsure of what’s going on.

“With every great change comes discomfort,” says Cherilynn Veland, a licensed clinical social worker in Chicago. “Expect it, talk about it, even toast to it.” Who knows, maybe your mate is feeling the same way. Talk about it honestly and you’ll likely to start to feel better when you open up.

Related: [Premarital Counseling – The Pros and Cons](#)

2. Keep the Party Going

“Extend the fun a little longer,” suggests Dr. Durvasula. “When the pictures come out, have friends over and use all of those new dishes. Or, just have friends over and let your wedding be the event that re-connected you with people you care about.”

Connecting with your closest friends and sharing an evening of laughter can’t help but lift your spirits.

3. Get Back to What You Do Best

Not sure how to spend all that free time now that your wedding-planning days are behind you? Put those organizational skills to good use by volunteering at a local non-profit or simply planning a BBQ or movie night for your neighbors.

“Get involved with your community as newlyweds,” suggests Carolina Caro, a life coach based in Los Angeles. “You’ll have

more fun and get to know more people!”

4. Celebrate Your Marriage

We often hear that the wedding and honeymoon are the most exciting times in a relationship. “That is just not true – your marriage is,” say Doug and Leslie Gustafson, a married team of therapists in Denver, Colorado. “You are together, you are free, and you get to have all the romance, sex and excitement that you choose to have whenever you choose to have it! Live it up.”

Related: [10 Relationship Behaviors You Think Are Odd...That Are Totally Normal](#)

Celebrate your love by planning a few date nights, scheduling a romantic getaway or just surprising your mate with breakfast in bed – they’ll thank you for it and will be grateful they married such a catch!

5. Grow Your Marriage

After the hustle and bustle of wedding planning, many couples need to reconnect since they have been so focused on organizing their dream wedding for several months (or even years). Now that you’ve enjoyed that special time together, get focused on the special time you have together as newlyweds.

“Settle in to your new life and get to know each other in and out of the bedroom,” the Gustafsons suggest. “Stay involved with each other and keep the love alive by finding new ways to show your love every day.”

No doubt about it, weddings are exciting. With so much anticipation, emotions and adrenalin going throughout the months leading up to your wedding, it is inevitable you would experience some type of crash after it’s all done. Keep an awareness about the feelings you are having, which are normal

and natural responses to such a major life change, and you'll hopefully find your newlywed bliss in no time!

How Do You Handle Your Ex's New Partner?



By Jane Greer, Ph.D. for GalTime.com

Some people are better at romance recovery than others. Recent reports suggest that Elin Nordegren is struggling to accept the new partner of her ex-husband, Tiger Woods. Though it has been rumored that he has been dating Olympic skier Lindsey Vonn for many months, they only recently went public with

their romance, stating they are “happy” together. Elin and Tiger divorced in the summer of 2010. Their marriage ended in scandal when it was revealed he’d had multiple affairs, and was soon after treated for an apparent sex addiction.

Elin has been connected to billionaire Chris Cline, but that reportedly hasn’t seemed to make it easier for her to accept the fact that Tiger’s girlfriend is spending so much time with their children, and comments have been made about restricting his custody access. Though the trio managed to be civil at the kids little league games, it’s not difficult to imagine why there may be some tension behind closed doors. What can people do to ease that tension, leaving those bad feelings behind and trying to finally let them go?

Related: [Dating Advice: How to Introduce Your Kids to Your New Partner](#)

Being betrayed is so traumatic, and then having to face feeling replaced by someone who is now taking the spot you used to occupy with your husband and children can be even harder to take. In some cases, your ex’s new companion may even look like you, perhaps just younger. Adding to that, now you have to share your children with the last person on earth you would want them to be with. Sometimes betrayals are an outgrowth of unaddressed conflicts that were there for a long time and may have created a large enough rift for someone to get in between you. However, regardless of what might have been a catalyst for the infidelity, it doesn’t diminish the intensity of the loss you have to face. Finding the maturity and emotional muscle needed to deal with this difficult experience can be a challenge.

Friends and family might respond by suggesting you just get on with it, and leave the other person in the past where he or she belongs. Even if that is hard to hear, it is the goal you want to strive for. Continuing to focus on your ex can

unwittingly keep you stuck in your anger. Even if you have moved into a new relationship, all that negativity can hold you back and run interference in your life and with your current partner.

Related: [Can You Date Your Friend's Ex And Keep Your Friend](#)

Instead of using your anger and sadness to launch an attack that keeps you mired in the past, use it to disengage. Put boundaries in place: formalize the necessary times to see each other, be it for picking up belongings or dropping things off; begin to build up new support systems rather than looking to your ex when you have a problem in the house, a flat tire or too much laundry; if there are kids, limit communication with your ex to discussing only necessary subjects surrounding the logistics of their caretaking. Wherever you can, fill in and replenish the areas of your life where you feel the most loss. The more you do that, the less resentful and angry you are going to be.

None of this is easy, but if you become aware of how you direct your energy, you might be able to turn things around. Unfortunately for Elin, “hating” Lindsey Vonn, or any future partner or spouse to Tiger, will not heal the wounds inflicted by a devastating divorce. That effort could be better spent investing in herself and her new life.

Please tune in to “Let’s Talk Sex” which streams live on HealthyLife.net every last Tuesday of the month at 2 PM EST, 11 AM Pacific. We look forward to listener call-in questions, dealing with relationships, intimacy, family, and friendships, at 1.800.555.5453. Connect with Dr. Jane Greer on Facebook, at www.facebook.com/DrJaneGreer.

How to Celebrate a Fourth of July Themed Wedding in Style



By April Littleton

The Fourth of July is a very special day for most Americans. This holiday gives people the chance to express their patriotic side in fun, creative ways. Many [couples](#) see Independence day as the perfect opportunity to exchange “I dos” and share their [love](#) for each other and their country. Couples who dream of nothing more than to live the “American Dream” love the idea of knowing that while their celebrating their love, the whole country is celebrating right along with them on this day. Here’s Cupid’s guide to having a spectacular Fourth of July themed [wedding](#):

Location: The first thing you should think about is where you want your wedding to take place. More than likely, it will take place outside. Maybe even think about holding the [ceremony](#) at a carnival (funnel cakes, anyone?) Whatever location you decide on, make sure it has plenty of open space – that way all of your guests will be able to see and hear fireworks going off.

Related: [10 Ways to Keep the Honeymoon Phase Going Strong](#)

The attire: You can't have a Fourth of July themed [wedding](#) without the proper color scheme. Consider having your bridesmaids and groomsmen wear red or blue – you can even let them dabble with both colors. Maybe the ladies can wear red dresses with white flowers, or blue dresses with red accessories to match – like headbands accompanied with studded stars, while the fellas wear navy blue suits with red bow ties.

Centerpieces and decorations: Keep the American flag in mind as you think of decorations for your wedding. Use the pattern for your linens and chair covers. For your centerpieces, you can fill picnic baskets with flowers or you can choose to fill glass bowls with an assortment of red, white and blue candies. The creative possibilities are endless as long as you stay true to the theme of the American holiday.

The food: What better way to celebrate the Fourth of July on your wedding day than with food that fits the theme? Think about serving barbecue during your special day. Include foods such as hamburgers, ribs and corn on the cob. Get creative with your refreshments. Serve coca cola in vintage glass bottles or set up a lemonade stand. Red, white and blue decorated cookies or a popcorn bar would also give your wedding more American flair.

The reception: Hold your reception at night and let the [sparks](#) and sparklers fly! No Fourth of July wedding celebration would

be complete without a few fireworks. You could also switch things up by adding a few sparklers to your centerpieces when the party really gets started. Think about letting each of your guest set off a firework in honor of you and your new [spouse](#). They'll feel even more involved in the wedding and the night sky filled with colors will be a sight to see.

The party favors: Red, candied apples, sparklers and Fourth of July themed magnets would make great favors for your wedding. Give away miniature Liberty bells and American flags as a bonus. If you're more of a foodie, consider making fruit baskets with strawberries, blueberries and blackberries.

Related: [Add a Little "Luck O the Irish" to Your Wedding Day](#)

The music: What good would a Fourth of July wedding be without a little All-American music? Although it would fit the theme, refrain from playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" during your reception. Instead, play a little Elvis Presley or Bruce Springsteen. Songs like "Surfin' U.S.A." by The Beach Boys will surely be a hit with your guests.

Do you have any other ideas for a Fourth of July themed wedding? Share them below.

Date Idea: Color Your Love in Red, White and Blue





By Sarah Ribeiro

You and your sweetheart have been together for every holiday so far, and now for the Fourth of July, you're ready to take a unique approach. Celebrate in a non-traditional way by making everything red, white and blue. The easiest way to set up this color spectrum date is to split it into thirds. Decide which part of the day will be linked to which color, and go from there.

Start your morning with red. Get up before the birds, hike up to the tallest point in town and cuddle with your man while you watch the sunrise. Then, share a breakfast picnic made out of red foods: pack a fruit salad with seasonal favorites like strawberries, cherries, blood oranges and red grapes, or make some roasted red breakfast potatoes. You can even allow yourselves a bit of red wine to drink during the sunrise.

Then, have a white afternoon. Rather than picnic-hopping all day, throw a "white party" with your love. Invite all your friends and family to come over wearing only white. To set the mood, rent some white tents, tables and chairs. Encourage your

guests to bring a white food, such as vanilla ice cream, white chocolate-based desserts, grilled cheese sandwiches on white bread and risotto. Serve “white” drinks like cream soda or a white wine sangria. You can also provide small splashes of color by making red, white and blue jello shots or having a red-and-blue candy bar in the midst of all of the white.

Once the sun starts to set, get in a blue mood. Put on your best blue outfit and get red-carpet ready with your honey. The two of you can head to a blues club to spend the night in each other’s arms, sipping on Blue Hawaii’s and reflecting on an especially great holiday.

Have a unique Fourth of July date idea? Share it with us below.

The Good, Bad and Ugly of Dating Advice Guides





By Sarah Showfety

What can be gained from reading twelve dating advice books in a row? Some valuable insights, actionable information and after a while – a headache.

After years of false starts and flame-outs, I decided to give myself a dating education, buying half the self-help section at Barnes & Noble to try and change my luck in love. I thought quick salvation lay in their pages. I thought if I put on my Love Lab Coat and followed instructions, fruitless years of speed, blind and online dating would be swiftly rewarded with a marriage-minded man.

Wrong! The books did work, but not in the way I thought they would.

The Upside of Dating Advice

How did these dating books help? For the first time, I saw clearly the mistakes I kept repeating. These included being overly available, letting things ramp up too quickly and intensely (hence, the aforementioned flame-out), reacting

emotionally if a guy pulled a Houdini and then reappeared, and pretending I was content to casually hang out when I craved a committed, exclusive relationship.

They gave me a toolbox of quick, easy tips to increase the quantity of men in my life. I learned where to go, how to use body language, what (not) to say. I learned to flirt better, keep first dates short, go places without a girl posse and decide what time I'd come home before a date started.

The books also flipped my usual story on its head. Through them, I saw that my poor track record wasn't due to the scapegoats I'd grown fond of blaming (men, "the scene," my parents). The responsibility lay with me – my self-perception and my choices. These were two things I could change.

Related: [QuickieChick's Video Dating Tips: Summer Love](#)

Too Much of a Good Thing

Of course, there were drawbacks, too. The more I looked outside myself for answers, the more my self-doubt grew. *Did I say what I was supposed to say? Was giving him shrimp off my plate too girlfriend-y??*

I got overly focused on following a formula and trying to do it "right." But the fear I was doing something wrong—that perhaps I was incapable of long-term romance—was the real issue. The very act of trying to "fix" myself reinforced the false underlying belief that something was wrong.

Related: [4 Steps to a Stronger Long-Term Relationship](#)

The Takeaway

What I really needed was to trust my own value – only then would I stop compromising what I wanted. So after months of following textbook rules, I *stopped* trying so hard. I let go of the pursuit and gave up worrying I'd said too much or texted too soon.

Instead, I took care of me. I meditated, hiked, swam and went to outdoor concerts at Coney Island. Only after I cultivated my own joy was I ready and able to meet the man for whom I'd been looking. More than all the techniques, I had to love me and my life first. (Which is the primary message of all the books – though it took me a while to listen).

So, do I recommend dating guidebooks? Yes, so long as they're not used as weapons of self-destruction. Skills and knowledge are important, but no amount of dating tricks will get you what you want unless you believe you deserve it.

*Sarah Showfety is a New York-based life coach and author. You can read about her experiences taking dating advice in her memoir *Dating by the Books: One Blundering Singleton's Search for Love in the Self-Help Aisle*. Connect with Sarah at her website www.straightupyou.com.*

Relationship Advice: Maintaining a Positive Image While Going Through Divorce





By Joanne Pittman of Pittman Consulting & Image for Hope After Divorce

The teenage son of a dear friend of mine said something one day that really stuck with me. He was speaking about a relationship his mother was building with a new boyfriend, and he flatly stated, "He is not the star of my show!"

As an image consultant who has worked with celebrities, models and public figures as well as professionals and individuals, I see all of my clients as "stars of their shows." Life is filled with transitions, and divorce is one of them. While in a transitional state, it's common and needful to make adjustments to our images that allow us to circumvent needless and costly detours on our road ahead.

In fact, we are each the stars of our show – train wrecks, triumphs and all. We have our own paparazzi in the form of friends, peers, colleagues, parents and children. Dare I mention the long line of predators ready to take advantage of our tender state while undergoing divorce and all of its rigors?

Related Link: [The EX Word](#)

While most people don't have the advantage of having a team of public relations (PR) experts ready to announce or confirm rumors of personal relationships in failure, the need to have help managing the distress of divorce is no less significant. In order to attract the best people into your world, I impress upon you the importance of maintaining an authentic and clear image statement during this precarious time in your life.

Two celebrity couples that have navigated their divorces brilliantly are Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt and Courteney Cox and David Arquette. Each leading lady maintained consistent appropriate looks and, with the help of her PR team, was clear about her messages. They both managed to appear simple, chic and tastefully put together and demonstrated their resolve to stay true to themselves while going through divorce with dignity.

Pitt and Arquette also managed the very public ending of their marriages gracefully by preserving a well-defined message and image presence. Despite the media blitz making Pitt out to be the man who broke the heart of America's sweetheart, he maintained his impish good looks by keeping his intentions clear. Similarly, Arquette has kept his understated look with a slight modern edge while being committed to a healthy and friendly co-parenting relationship with his former wife.

Related Link: [Must We Remain Friends With Our Ex-Husband?](#)

Consider your image just as important as that of a public figure or a rising actor.

Here are a few tips for you as you move forward with reshaping your storyline. As the leading character, choose your look wisely. Be clear about who you are and why you matter. This isn't always easy to ascertain when going through the metamorphosis of divorce, but I assure you, now is the time to create your outline, your plot and your script.

- Create a personal mission statement. Use key character traits that you possess like integrity, loyalty, highly-organized, etc. Then include character traits that you wish to improve or that you admire in others. Doing so helps keep you focus on goals and desires which are meaningful.
- Rid your closet **and** overall image of anything that is incongruent with your intended message. For example, if you have the goals of becoming "holistic, natural and healthy," refrain from elective and excessive plastic surgery, implants, hair extensions, filler injections, etc. We all know those choices are fake and far from holistic! For clothing, you would choose natural fibers and textures as well as colors and prints that are soothing.
- Create a budget and acquisition plan. You're not an A-list celebrity; you're not going to be offered free clothing from the A-list designers so they can use you for their PR campaigns. However, **you are a star** and should dress yourself accordingly. Therefore, take time to work out a budget that will allow you the **BEST** for your needs. Don't settle for less!

While you may not live the dream of receiving an Oscar, Tony, or Emmy, you can live the dream of a happy and authentic self as the star of your show!

For more information about Hope After Divorce, visit our Experts page.



As founder of Pittman, Lamitie & Associates, Joanne has developed their proprietary IMAGE Authenticity™ Training Programs which address the multifaceted work and lifestyle demands on employees and executives in the corporate world today. Her innovative approach has evolved over the past twenty three years in the fashion, fitness, luxury retail and image consulting industries.

Joanne has been writing training curriculum and presenting developmental workshops to large and small audiences for over eighteen years. She is known for raising new questions and expectations which successfully foster authentic corporate and personal brand presence.

You can contact Joanne at Joanne@PittmanLamitie.com or visit her at www.pittmanlamitie.com.

Celebrity News: NeNe Leakes Ties the Knot with Gregg Leakes, Again!





By Kerri Sheehan

[Real Housewives of Atlanta](#) star NeNe Leakes chose to give marriage a second go with ex-husband, Gregg Leakes. The couple remarried Saturday, June 22, according to [UsMagazine.com](#). Nene, 45 tweeted on June 21, "Got big plans this weekend? Cause I do," she wrote with a smiley face.

How do you know if you should get back together with your ex?

Cupid's Advice:

A big part of life is giving out second chances. Cupid has some ways to tell if you should give one to your ex:

1. All has been forgiven: Obviously, the two of you broke up for a reason. It's important to be sure that the reason has been completely resolved before giving the relationship another go. You can't start on a new journey until the old one has ended.

2. Don't bail: Before getting back together with an ex the two of you should make a pact not to abandon the efforts to revive

the relationship. Getting back together will take some work so you have to be in it for the long haul.

3. Check your goals: If the two of you have similar goals in life then it is likely you can make a relationship work. If your goals are completely different than rebuilding after a breakup might not be worth the effort.

What do you think about getting back with an ex? Share below.

Date Advice: 5 Conversations Every Couple Should Have Before Getting Married





By Mark B. Baer ESQ.

While it may seem odd receiving marital advice from a family law attorney, remember that people retain us to assist them in dissolving their marriages. Although the people and situations may differ, the reasons marriages fail tend to be rather consistent. We are therefore in an excellent position to give marriage advice. Here are five conversions every couple should consider having before tying the knot:

1. Communication

Poor communication happens to be a major cause of divorce. Since you are planning on marrying, you should already be familiar with each other's communication style. If you believe that your fiancé could use some improvement in that regard, it is advisable that you address that concern before marriage. After all, if the problem exists before marriage, what makes you think that it will improve with marriage?

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

2. Finances

Before people marry, they have little need to discuss their relationship with money because it is not of particular importance. After all, as long as each person is pulling their weight financially in whatever manner is acceptable to both, there is no need for any discussion. However, as Harvey A. Silberman, family law judge for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, in California likes to remind people, "Getting married in and of itself creates a pre-marital agreement – the *Family Code*." In other words, the terms of your pre-marital agreement can either be the terms set forth in the *Family Code* or terms that you specifically negotiated as part of the pre-marital agreement. What do pre-marital agreements address? They address financial issues. Therefore, you automatically become financial entangled with each other just by virtue of getting married. The failure to discuss such issues before marriage is a major regret for many. Such conversations should include the nature and extent of your respective pre-marital assets and debts, your values and beliefs with regard to spending and saving, expectations you each have with regard to the source of money to be used to pay for marital expenses, and many other such issues.

Related: [Celebrity Couples Who Let Money Ruin Their Relationship](#)

3. Commitment

Marriage is a wonderful institution that affords couples significant psychological, emotional and financial benefits, in addition to being a commitment of their love to each other. Problems ensue when the couple's level of commitment are not aligned. How will this play out if one spouse is a workaholic? Are you committed to the marriage if you are disrespectful of your spouse? A conversation on the issue of commitment would be wise.

4. Expectations

People's expectations for themselves, their spouse and their marriage change over time. Those with the most successful marriages share these expectations with each other.

5. Human Nature

Rounding off the list is human nature. People don't change and nobody is perfect. The question is not whether you can change someone, but whether you will be happily married to them warts and all. This requires a conversation because one might expect to change the other.

Enjoy a happy and healthy marriage.

Mark is the owner of Mark B. Baer, Inc., a Professional Law Corporation. His is a Family Law Attorney, Mediator, Collaborative Divorce Practitioner, Author, Lecturer, and Keynote Speaker. He has been licensed to practice law in the State of California for over twenty years.

Celebrity News: Heather Locklear's New Love Interest, Dr. Marc Mani





By Petra Halbur

Heather Locklear is in her first public relationship since she split with fiancé, Jack Wagner, in 2011. [People](#) reports that Locklear is currently involved with plastic surgeon, Dr. Marc Mani. Mani was listed as one of *Extra*'s most eligible plastic surgeon bachelors in 2008 and he has frequently appeared on television as a plastic surgery expert. Locklear and Mani stepped out as a couple one-and-a-half months ago. They were most recently photographed leaving a Mexican restaurant together in West Hollywood on June 19.

How do you know when it's time to move on from a past relationship?

Cupid's Advice:

It's reasonable to go through a grieving period after the end of a relationship. Eventually, though, you have to move on. How do you know when you're ready? Cupid is here to help:

1. You've readjusted to single life: Strange as it may sound, it's probably best to wait until you're reaccustomed to

single-living before you jump into another relationship. As wonderful as romance can be, it's important to not become so dependent on it that you're incapable of living life on your own.

2. You really are over it: If you're still crying yourself to sleep every night, whispering your ex's name in the darkness, then you're not ready for another relationship. You are simply not emotionally prepared to invest in another person yet. Take some time to heal. There really is no rush.

3. You've reaccessed your priorities: You probably changed a bit (or a lot) during your relationship. Your goals, priorities and interests may have changed. What you were looking for in a partner the last time you were single may no longer be what you want or need. Consider this before getting back in the game.

How did you know that you were ready to move on after a relationship? Tell us below.

Relationship Advice: Understanding How Assets Get Divided In Divorce





By Jeff Landers for GalTime.com

Dividing the family's property during a divorce can be quite difficult, especially if there are significant assets such as houses, rental property, retirement and pension plans, stock options, restricted stock, deferred compensation, brokerage accounts, closely-held businesses, professional practices and licenses, etc. Deciding who should get what can be quite a challenge, even under the most amenable of situations. But, if your divorce is contentious, then this can be especially complicated.

Assets should not necessarily be divided simply based on their current dollar value. You need to understand which assets will be best for your short- and long-term financial security. This is not always easy to discern without a thorough understanding of the asset itself – its liquidity, cost basis and any tax implications associated with its sale.

However, before we go any further, we need to discuss the differences between Separate and Marital Property and why that's critically important to you. In my experience, this is

an area that is not well understood by most people.

States differ in some of the details, but generally speaking, Separate Property includes:

- Any property that was owned by either spouse prior to the marriage;
- An inheritance received by the husband or wife (either before or after the marriage);
- A gift received by the husband or wife from a third party (your mother gave you her diamond ring);
- Payment received for pain and suffering portion in a personal injury judgment

Warning: Separate property can lose its separate property status if you commingle it with marital property or vice versa. For example, if you re-title your separately owned condo by adding your husband as a co-owner or if you deposit the inheritance from your parents into a joint bank account with him, then that property will most likely now be considered marital property.

All other property that is acquired during the marriage is usually considered marital property regardless of which spouse owns the property or how the property is titled. Most people don't understand this. I've had many clients tell me that they were not entitled to a specific asset, because it was titled in their husband's name – such as his 401K. This is not true! This is worth repeating because it is that important. All property that is acquired during the marriage is usually considered marital property regardless of which spouse owns the property or how that property is titled.

(State laws vary greatly, especially between Community Property & Equitable Distribution States, so please consult with your attorney).

Marital property consists of all income and assets acquired by either spouse during the marriage including, but not limited to: **Pension Plans; 401Ks, IRAs and other Retirement Plans; Deferred Compensation; Stock Options; Restricted Stocks and other equity; Bonuses; Commissions; Country Club memberships; Annuities; Life Insurance (especially those with cash values); Brokerage accounts – mutual funds, stocks, bonds, etc; Bank Accounts – Checking, Savings, Christmas Club, CDs, etc; Closely-held businesses; Professional Practices and licenses; Real Estate; Limited Partnerships; Cars, boats, etc; Art, antiques; Tax refunds.**

In many states, if your separately owned property increases in value during the marriage, that increase is also considered marital property. However some states will differentiate between active and passive appreciation when deciding if an increase in the value of separate property should be considered marital property.

So what's the difference?

Active appreciation is appreciation that is due, in part, to the direct or indirect contributions or efforts of the other spouse (e.g. your husband helped you grow your business by giving you ideas and advice; he entertained clients with you; he helped raise the kids and did some household chores, which allowed you to work late, entertain clients, travel to conventions; etc.).

Passive appreciation is appreciation that is due to outside forces such as supply and demand and inflation. For example, a parcel of land increases in value even though you and your husband made no improvements to it. However, if you used marital income and/or assets to pay the mortgage and/or taxes on this parcel of land, you might have a very good argument that this property, or at least the increase in value during your marriage, should now be considered marital property. As you can see, this can get quite complicated and convoluted.

Hiring a good divorce financial planner can help you sort this out.

It is also very important for you to know if you reside in a Community Property State or an Equitable Distribution State. There are nine Community Property States – Arizona, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. Community Property states consider both spouses as equal owners of all marital property (a 50-50 split is the rule).

The remaining 41 states are Equitable Distribution states. Settlements in Equitable Distribution States do not need to be equal, but they should be fair and equitable. In Equitable Distribution, several factors are taken into account, including the financial situation of each spouse when dividing assets.

Some of the factors considered are:

- The length of the marriage
- The income or property brought into the marriage by each spouse
- The standard of living established during the marriage
- The age and physical/emotional health of each spouse
- The income and earning potential of each spouse
- The financial situation of each spouse when the divorce is finalized
- The contribution of a spouse to the education, training or earning power of the other
- The needs of the custodial parent to maintain the lifestyle for the children

In addition to these, a court can consider any other factors

that it feels might be relevant. This makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to predict the outcome. The bottom line here is that you want to stay out of court, if possible. There's a good reason why more than 95% of all divorces are ultimately settled out of court.

Also, please remember that debts usually get divided in divorce as well. However, Community Property states treat debt differently than Equitable Distribution states, so please make sure that you consult with an experienced divorce specialist.

Hopefully this basic description of how assets get divided in divorce will help you as you are going through your divorce. But as you can see, this can be an extremely complicated process filled with unseen potholes. Having a competent divorce financial professional on your team can help you get your fair share of the assets that you've worked so hard to accumulate.

'Between Us' Tests the Boundaries of Old Relationships





By April Littleton

In this comedy drama directed by Dan Mirvish, two couples reunite over two evenings. Grace and Carlo (played by Julia Stiles and Taye Diggs) are newlywed New Yorkers who decide to visit their old friends Sharyl and Joel (played by Melissa George and David Harbour) in their Midwestern home. Behind closed doors, the hosts are in a disastrous marriage, but an unlikely meeting between the couples years later, shows the roles have reversed.

Should you see it:

If you're a fan of Hollywood actresses like Julia Stiles and Melissa George, then this is the movie for you. Let's not forget to mention the eye candy that comes in the form of Taye Diggs. If you're familiar with David Harbour and some of his previous roles in films such as *W.E.* and *Kinsey*, you won't be disappointed with his performance in *Between Us*.

Who to take:

This film will be perfect to see with a best friend, family

member or spouse. Don't feel left out if you're in the early stages of a new relationship, you and your new boo will be able to relate to some aspects of this movie as well. *Between Us* isn't just your typical "chick flick." Considered a dark comedy, this film is sure to have intense moments and plenty of comedic scenes, so the fellas won't be sitting in the back of the movie theater bored out of their minds.

Related: [Katy Perry and John Mayer Hang with Friends](#)

How do you turn a failing marriage around?

Cupid's Advice:

Marriages begin to self-destruct for many reasons – whether it be from lack of trust, intimacy or communication. When your marriage reaches a certain point, it's time for you to decide whether you're going to fight to save the relationship or let it go. If you choose to take the steps toward reconciliation, you have to know where to start first. Cupid has some advice:

1. No fighting: When you and your partner have an issue to address, don't resort to verbal abuse. Think about what you say before you say it, no matter how emotional you may be feeling at the time. If you feel yourself reaching your boiling point, take a step back and cool off. Don't let your rash decisions and emotions ruin a relationship you considered perfection not so long ago.

2. Get to know each other: Sometimes you have to start all over to get back to the relationship you used to have with someone. You've probably been out of touch with your partner for so long that you don't even remember the little things that make him or her smile. Start from scratch. Let go of all the bad memories and try to rebuild from the good ones. Talking to each other again – even if it's just about the basics (like your spouse's new favorite song) is taking a step in the right direction.

Related: [Second \(and Third\) Marriages: Destined For Divorce?](#)

3. Be patient: Don't assume your marriage will be fixed overnight and don't give up at the first sign of struggle. It's going to take some time to gain back the love and trust the two of you once had in each other. When you do finally bounce back, the two of you, as a couple, will be stronger than ever.

Are you in a marriage that almost didn't last? How did you turn the failing relationship around? Share your experience below.

Date Idea: Celebrate Half-Christmas





By [Sarah Ribeiro](#)

It's been six months since the cuddling and gift-giving time of year, and you're running out of summer date ideas. This weekend, ditch the summer activities and celebrate the half-way point to Christmas with your love.

Start by decorating your home like it's Christmas: hang garland, lights and maybe even mistletoe in every room. You can even get a little crafty and make paper snowflakes or a DIY Christmas Tree. Try involving every sense so that it really feels like the holidays. Light an evergreen tree-scented candle and pop some gingerbread in the oven, making your whole place smell like Christmas. You can even turn up the air conditioning just a bit so you can wear your favorite Christmas sweater (ugly or not).

Plan a holiday feast that you and your beau can make together. Make the traditional holiday foods, such as stuffing, turkey, ham, sweet potatoes and roasted vegetables. This half-Christmas is also a chance to try out unique and innovative recipes in advance of the next holiday. Try a color-themed menu of red and green foods, including baked apples filled

with brown sugar, butter, and cinnamon, an egg frittata with green spinach and red or green peppers, kale soup or cherry pie.

Don't forget the holiday beverages. To cater to the warm summer weather, try making frozen hot chocolate. Serendipity sells a mix with directions to make things easy for you and your sweetheart. Sip on some eggnog while you bake cookies for Santa. Be sure to play some holiday carols on your iPod while you cook and bake!

After dinner, you and your partner can watch one of your favorite holiday movies. If you're in the mood for something classic, watch 'It's a Wonderful Life' or 'Miracle on 34th Street.' Or go for a more contemporary film, like the Jim Carrey adaptation of 'The Grinch' or the hilarious holiday favorite 'Elf.'

Then you and your honey can swap gifts. Maybe you just want to fill your stockings with little presents for each other. Plan in advance whether you will be buying something serious or a gag gift. Either way, be sure to set a price range.

Wrap up the night with an all-time favorite Christmas activity. Get that gingerbread out of the oven and build a house with your sweetheart! For something simpler, you can build marshmallow snowmen. You can even plan ahead to next Christmas, thinking up early gift ideas for family and friends and going so far as to design your own wrapping paper.

How do you celebrate half-Christmas? Share your ideas in the comment section below!

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.

Related Link: [What Does Unconditional Love Look Like?](#)

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.

Related Link: [Don't Settle: Get Him to Commit](#)

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](#).

Plan a Summer Wedding in

Eight Weeks or Less



By Kelly Rouba for GalTime.com

If you recently got engaged and just can't wait to tie the knot, famed party planner Martie Duncan says it's not too late to plan a summer wedding.

A summer wedding can be put together in under two months, assures Duncan, who shares many of her expert tips on her website MartieKnowsParties. Duncan's experience in planning weddings on the fly began when a friend recruited her help not long ago.

"They got engaged on a Saturday and wanted to get married the next Saturday," she recalls. "It wasn't a joke, and we did it! (It turned out to be) a beautiful, simple but sweet and sentimental family wedding with a seated reception dinner for

30. We even ended with fireworks!”

Contrary to what one might expect, the planning process went rather smoothly. “The reason it was so easy is because the couple had seen my work and knew my style. They trusted me,” says Duncan, who gained popularity as the runner up on Season 8 of Food Network Star.

After the couple first approached Duncan for guidance, they agreed to meet to go over details. “We sat down for one planning meeting to discuss what they wanted and what it would cost. Within hours, I had most of it pulled together because I knew what was important to them,” she says.

It also helped that Duncan’s friend had already found a farm to serve as the venue for the ceremony and reception. “That made things easy,” Duncan says, adding that she made sure the wedding theme reflected the couple’s personalities. “The flowers, decor, food and drinks were all very rustic—a perfect fit for both the setting and their laid-back style.”

For all those other couples out there who are ready to march down that aisle, Duncan offers these simple tips for planning a summer wedding in eight weeks or less:

SET A BUDGET

“The first big step is to decide on the budget,” Duncan says. “Often, planning a wedding quickly means you may pay more for things because you do not have time to shop around or delay making purchases.”

Also, keep in mind that the vendors you have to select from at the last minute might be more expensive, and there could be added expenses you never anticipated. In fact, while helping her friend plan her wedding, they realized there wasn’t a kitchen at the farm. “We had to create everything,” Duncan says, noting that it certainly made things more difficult, especially since they only had a modest budget.

In the end, it worked out because “we communicated openly about what was possible and what was not under the circumstances. Since we had to bring everything in, we kept it all very simple,” she said.

HIRE A WEDDING PLANNER

If the couple or their close friends have experience planning events, know vendors they can rely on, and have plenty of time on their hands, then a wedding planner might not be necessary, Duncan says. Otherwise, “I would always advise finding someone who knows the ropes to make the process easier. The biggest problem is finding trustworthy vendors who might still have the date open. A planner can certainly help, since they typically know all of the vendors in their area.”

Always make sure you have a contract in place with the vendors you select. “Don’t skip over these precautions just because you are trying to pull things together quickly,” Duncan warns.

STICK TO A SCHEDULE

“When planning a wedding in a short amount of time, you have to make decisions quickly and move on,” Duncan says. “There is no time to procrastinate or labor over the choices you have to make.”

BE FLEXIBLE

“Most importantly, the couple has to have some degree of flexibility when making decisions,” Duncan says. “For example, if the peonies you always dreamed of are not available, you might have to settle for something else. You just cannot be rigid when you only have days to plan. Decide on a few basics, like overall style and color. After that, you almost have to see what’s available and go from there.”

Comedian Marc Maron Proposes to Longtime Girlfriend



By Kerri Sheehan

Funny man Marc Maron proposed to his longtime girlfriend, Jessica earlier this month. According to UsMagazine.com, Maron let the food do the talking. "I served her pancakes on her birthday and stuck the rock right in the middle of the top cake on the stack," he said. "We cried and laughed." After two divorces, this will be Maron third journey into the marriage world and he hopes that this one will yield successful results.

What are some creative ways to propose to your partner with food?

Cupid's Advice:

Everyone loves food, that's why it's a grand idea to use food to propose. Cupid has some ways to do it:

- 1. Picnic:** This gesture is simple, but oh so romantic. The only thing lovelier than two lovers being one with nature is when food and diamonds are involved. Being surrounded by serenity will make the proposal truly authentic.
- 2. Favorite food:** As their partner you should know what their favorite food is. Use that knowledge to your advantage and place the ring right on top of the dish.
- 3. Play with your food:** Try using the food to spell out the proposal. This is unorthodox and will really catch your girl or guy off guard. Some ways to do this are with either berries on a cake or maybe the pepperoni on a pizza.

Like these ideas? Share your own below.

Is Your Perfect Man Criteria Keeping You Single?





By [Whitney Baker Johnson](#)

When you're looking for love, it's tempting to want to find the "perfect" man, someone who embodies all of the qualities that are on your checklist. In truth, doing so could be detrimental to your love life. You may end a relationship with that nearly perfect guy because you're so focused on the one thing he's missing. By the time you realize it, chances are he's already moved on to someone who loves him and thinks he's enough. Here are five reasons why your perfect man criteria is keeping you single:

Related Link: [Why a List of Requirements Won't Get You Mr. Right](#)

1. You focus on the wrong things. "The fact is that you're not looking for a walking list. You're looking for a feeling," explains dating mentor and QuickieChick Laurel House. "With your list, you're essentially putting blinders on." Instead, look for someone who brings the best out in you, who makes you feel happy, fulfilled and who is a true-life partner.

2. You lose sight of what really matters. You automatically assume someone isn't the right fit for you because he's got dark brown hair or he's not at least six feet tall. Maybe's he been married before and you never saw yourself with a divorced guy. Ask yourself this question: In ten years, are those things really going to matter? Open your heart up to every possibility, and you may find a man with qualities you didn't even know you wanted.

3. You put too much trust in "paper perfect." Sure, you've had an idea in mind – and maybe you even put it down on paper – of your perfect man since you were a little girl. You pictured meeting him when you were 23, getting married a few years later and starting a family shortly after that, but reality doesn't always live up to expectations. As House says, "Like when a smile doesn't touch the eyes, just 'paper perfect' sometimes doesn't touch the heart."

4. You miss out on the good parts of love. We all know that nothing is perfect, yet we want a perfect connection, a perfect partner and a perfect relationship. By trying to make your love life flawless, you fail to truly take in those moments that make finding The One so special. Without the negative experiences and broken hearts, you'll never know when you come across that one guy who makes you feel just right.

Related Link: [Finding Your True Destiny After Losing Love](#)

5. You begin to veer away from "must-haves" when developing your list. It's easy to get caught up in superficial desires rather than only including your "can't live without" qualities. If you must have a list, it should focus on your belief system. "At the end of the day, what matters is if your core values mesh. You may find your 'paper perfect' man some day, but you'll be disheartened if your morals don't match or if you have zero chemistry," House shares.

Don't set yourself up for disappointment. Instead, throw away

your list – or at least whittle it down to only a few “must-haves” – and let your heart lead the way.

Are your standards too high? Share your experiences below.