

# The Basics of Dating In The Digital Age



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## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: Are You Ready to Date?

Chapter 2: Getting a Date IRL (In Real Life)

Chapter 3: Is Online Dating Right for You?

Chapter 4: First Date Tips

Chapter 5: After That First Date

Chapter 6: Dating At Different Life Stages

Chapter 7: Post-Divorce Dating

Chapter 8: Dating Red Flags

Chapter 9: Healthy Communication with Your Partner

Chapter 10: How Do You Know If Your Partner Is Ready for Commitment?

## The Basics of Dating In The Digital Age

It's sometimes intimidating to think about the dating process, especially if you're new to it. You may have just left a long-term relationship or are finally ready to begin dating again after a long hiatus that involved travel, career or other life-happening.

Whatever the situation, you'll want to know if you're ready to start dating again and most of all, what you want to find in a partner. If you've been out of the dating loop for awhile you'll also want to know how to get a date and where you'll most likely find a match.

Have you experienced online dating before? You'll need to know the best and most effective way to create a profile that you can be proud of and one that you're most likely to make a connection from.

The Basics of Dating also includes tips about how to make your first date and repeat dates successful. You'll want to know about how to recognize red flags on a date and the various nuances of dating during various life stages.

Find out how you'll know if you and your dating partner are ready for a committed relationship and how to manage the future when there are kids, property and other considerations. Knowing the basics of dating is the best way to ensure a happy future.

### **Chapter 1: Are You Ready to Date?**

The best thing you can do for yourself before you begin to date is to be happy with yourself and the way you're living life. If you're looking to find someone to complete your happiness, you'll be sorely disappointed in time.

Have a plan before you begin the dating process. Without a plan of knowing what you want and what you're willing to give, chances are you won't get what you need or you'll end up giving too much of yourself.

The inner confidence you'll gain from fixing yourself before starting to date again is monumental in helping you feel more empowered. You won't be as apt to give control of your life over to someone else when you consider yourself top priority.

When you take responsibility for your own happiness, you'll gain a healthy attitude for the dating process and approach it in a positive manner. The introspection you'll gain about yourself can make you more aware of what you're looking for in a partner.

Beginning to think of your past relationship as a learning experience is a giant leap toward ensuring you're ready to date again. Rather than regretting the time you spent with your ex, view it as an experience that brings you closer to knowing what you want.

You've learned from those past mistakes, and now you can pinpoint exactly what it is you want and need from a future partner. The dating process will move along much smoother when you realize this truth.

Letting go of the baggage of the past can empower you to succeed in finding future happiness. When you no longer haunt social media pages of your ex and see the past experience as enlightening, you can pretty much be sure you're ready to date again.

Think about how much time you're willing to devote to dating. If you love to devote lots of time to your job or travel a great deal, you'll have to address it before you become serious about dating.

Trying to date when your schedule is full of activities or obligations that you can't or aren't willing to let go of isn't fair to the person you want to date and it also adds more stress to an already busy lifestyle.

Are you ready to ask for what you want? It's especially useful for women to feel comfortable about asking a man for date rather than taking a passive role. Feeling comfortable in your own skin and going after what you want can be attractive.

Take care of yourself. When you're healthy you feel more attractive and appear more attractive to others. Dark circles beneath the eyes from staying up too late and lack of exercise can cut your self-confidence and make you less attractive.

Get excited about dating again. Rather than seeing the dating process as grueling and stressful, concentrate on the fun you're going to have. Experts agree that being happy with yourself is the best way to be stress free during dating.

Know deep within that you're dating for the right reasons rather than trying to fill a void or trying to find someone to make you happy. You may feel blindsided by the relationship choices you've made in the past, but seeking immediate consolation isn't the way to reward yourself.

Boost yourself up until you know you're ready to engage in an honest and open relationship again. Take off those rose-colored glasses and face the facts about what is truly important to you and what you know will work in a new relationship.

It takes courage to enter the dating scene again after a miserable breakup with an ex and it may take some time for you to feel strong enough and empowered enough to try again. Just know that there is someone out there for you and you may meet him/her when you least expect it. Be sure you're ready.

## **Chapter 2: Getting a Date IRL (In Real Life)**

Dating apps can usually get you a date easily and fast – but there's still the romance and magic about meeting someone IRL – in real life, without looking through endless amounts of online profiles or wondering what to say in yours.

Finding a date in real life might mean you have to step out of your comfort zone and do things such as rev up your exercise regimen by signing up for a boxing class. You might also need to talk to new people you meet casually in social situations rather than chatting with friends.

Shake up your life in small ways by finding a new coffee shop to frequent or finding ways to chat with people you don't know on buses or the subway. But don't use the old pick-up lines. Be real, make eye contact and try genuine interest in another.

If you really feel intimidated and are afraid to lose your introverted nature, begin with small overtures. Strike up a conversation with people in line at the grocery or the barista in your favorite coffee shop.

You don't have to be attracted to the other person. Practice your skills for when it counts by asking questions. You'll be surprised at how most people will become open and very honest when you seem interested in their lives.

Expand those people in your social circle by attending lectures or other public (or private) things that interest you. Change your mindset to be open to meeting new people.

Even if the people you initiate conversation with are not interested in you, their extended networks may hold the exact partner you're looking for. Once in awhile, try a new activity – either alone or enlist a friend to try it with you.

Travel to a nearby town nearby on a weekend and see what they have to offer that your town or the big city doesn't. You'll be surprised how a change of scenery can change your mindset to become more open to others.

Try meditation. That may seem incongruous to finding a date, but meditation can help you become more aware of how your thinking is keeping you from being stressed out about dating and finding someone to share your life with.

Turn off your phone when meditating. It can reduce anxiety and help you become more aware of your true feelings as you relate to others and your environment. Attempt to become highly aware of your surroundings and find things to be happy or laugh about.

As you're meditating or simply attempting to get through this new dating style of finding dates IRL, think about your present life and try being happy for who you are. Rather than the desperate attitude of having to find someone to fulfill you, be confident in whom you are.

When you come across to others as desperate, others are put off. Confidence can make you seem sexy – desperation does just the opposite. Think carefully about how you speak and approach others. Confidence shines through and makes others want to get to know you.

Who are you currently socializing with? Assess the groups and people you hang out with and the possibility of meeting someone new and interesting. Spending all your time with those who are already in relationships can dash your dreams of finding a potential match.

Experiment in your dating life. When you swear away from the online dating apps, you can think more about what you really want in a partner rather than letting the profiles on dating apps distract you.

You're actually collecting data about the qualities you'd like to pursue in others and can then zero in on what you want and don't want. The data

you collect can lead you closer to knowing which characteristics are going to make you happy and which you should avoid.

Approaching your dating journey IRL can also help clarify your dating beliefs. For example, your inner self may be telling you that a relationship will be the ultimate joy in your life when all you really need is to take joy in yourself and what makes you happy.

One way that IRL dating advocates achieve their dating goals and dreams is to follow the lifestyle of 50-30-20. That means you spend 50% of your time engaging in experiences you love and 30% exploring new options and adventures.

The remaining 20% should be spent focusing on singles events where meeting others you might be interested in is a near sure thing. Opening the door – and your mind – to all possibilities rather than narrow your options to a few can speed your dating IRL plan along.

You decide how much time you want to devote in terms of days and nights and check out a couple of venues that you might enjoy. Eventually, you'll find some options that really appeal to you and bring enjoyment to your life.

Deleting all your dating apps and relying on dating IRL can open possibilities that you never imagined. Be real when interacting with others in real life and you'll likely find someone who you can relate to and have fun with.

Changing your dating behavior patterns can be challenging, but rewarding and exciting. Some say that dating IRL can be the equivalent of swiping right every day to make the most of your dating life.

## **Chapter 3: Is Online Dating Right for You?**

It's no secret that dating apps have changed the way we socialize and meet people. But finding the right dating app can sometimes be challenging, especially if you're new to the scene.

Some people just dabble at online dating while others make it an integral part of their lives. Before choosing a dating site on which to place your profile and invest your time and efforts, spend some time checking out a variety.

When you decide to jump into the pool of online dating, it's best not to limit your options. For example, make it a point to be open to others who don't exactly tick all your boxes. Limiting yourself can keep you from enjoying your online dating experience.

Be truthful rather than putting out information of what you think people are looking for, but that isn't really you. You may love long walks on the beach and quiet evenings at home, but give the impression on dating sites that you're a social, fun-loving partier.

You may put in the time to create a profile that portrays you as a completely different person than you really are. That can result in disappointment when you do meet someone and they find out you're not at all what you presented.

After selecting a dating app, you'll be asked to create a profile, preferably with photos. Be sure the profile shots are fun-oriented and relaxed rather than stiff and posed. And please use current photos and not ones that depict you differently than you are now.

Decide how much time you want to devote to dating before signing up. Using a dating app shouldn't stress you out, but add fun and depth to your social life. And dating can be expensive.

Even if you go to a meet-and-greet event, you'll need to spend a bit of money on gas or transportation to get there and back and possibly making a small purchase of a drink or appetizer. Plan your events carefully to get the most out of the venue.

At least the dating apps usually offer free memberships. You may want to sign up for several dating sites before deciding on which is a better fit for you. Elite Singles and Match make it easy for you to upload photos and browse through the memberships.

There are also features on most dating sites that let you communicate with others in various ways. For example, you can instant-message, send emoji such as virtual winks to flirt and receive messages from others who may be interested in you.

One major advantage of utilizing online dating sites is that it makes good use of the time you do have for dating. We're all extremely busy with work, kids, exercise, chores, shopping and taking care of others.

Anything that will make our lives easier and helps us have fun is an added bonus. Many dating sites do much of the work for you that involve matching you with others. You don't have to agree with their suggestions, but it saves time that you might otherwise use to browse through profiles.

One of your top priorities when signing up to dating apps should be to make your profile as attractive as possible. No one wants the profile to seem that you're full of yourself and conceited, but the words should set you up as a positive and honest person.

Leave out clichés such as saying you love long walks on the beach and sunsets. That's boring. Use your wits to think of a real conversation starter that you particularly want another person to know about you.

Use action shots for at least some of your profile photos. If you love hiking have a friend take a photo of you with your backpack strapped on and

walking up a trail. That will send a message to others about what activities you enjoy.

Browse through some other profiles on the site for inspiration. Something you see or read might give you fodder to use on your own profile. Show others who you really are. Shun the sunglasses and get some clear shots of what you really look like.

And smile. Most people who peruse dating sites state they're more attracted to people who have a big grin on their faces than those who try to look sexy and bored. Update your photos regularly.

You may have decided to cut your hair short or dye it another color and your prospective date should know that. Just as your photos should be specific, so should your words.

Don't just mention that you love to travel. Say where you've been and why you like some places more than others. Being specific helps others know who you are and what you like – and don't like.

Always check your grammar before posting. It's one of the most important things you can do for your profile so you don't come across as a person who doesn't care about the image they project. Use an online spell check program to be sure.

After your profile is written and posted, it's time to browse the other would-be daters. Be discriminating in your search. For example, think twice before you decide to date someone whose photos are all taken in a bar with drink in hand.

Do they use words to describe themselves that make them seem arrogant or negative? Someone who consistently makes negative comments about their ex, jobs, friends or others they've dated should be skipped over like they're on fire.

A profile that rich with positive viewpoints and outlooks has promise. If s/he mentions kids and family or friends in a good light, it's probably a good sign. Someone who enjoys animals or has pets is likely to be a kind person.

Don't provide a great deal of information about yourself at first. Keep it light, but interesting. You can tell them about any deal breakers you might have such as liking cats, but leave out personal things such as weight and income.

While you should be careful about finding someone who ticks most of your boxes, keep an open mind to those who are different from you. It's surprising how many people who found true love on a dating site say that the person didn't tick any boxes at all.

## **Chapter 4: First Date Tips**

Should you kiss on the first date? If you really like the person, should you ask for another date? These and other questions can make you nervous and put a damper on a first date that should be fun and carefree.

Dating sites have polled their successful users and came up with a few tips for a first date that can put you at ease and release your nervous mindset to relax and have fun. Be upbeat about the date itself and don't try to project the date into a permanent relationship.

Rather than the usual dinner date for the first time you meet, try something out of the box. Be creative and come up with something to do that you've enjoyed in the past. Just be sure your date will enjoy it too.

As soon as you say yes to a date – or the other person accepts a date from you, begin to mentally prepare for it. Maybe you've already chosen a place and time, so now you can think about mental preparations that are just as important.

You could repeat positive affirmations to yourself in the mirror or listen to an upbeat song you like to take the edge off of meeting someone new. Practice your best smile in the mirror along with the perfect posture.

Of course you'll want to shower and shave before dressing. As you move along to get ready for the date, try to clear your mind rather than focusing on the day at work or other problems you might have.

Think about conversation topics that might be fun and light. You may have already discovered some mutual interests during your online conversations. If so, bring up those subjects. Talk about interesting stuff rather than where you work or where you're from.

Subjects such as types of entertainment you may both enjoy, hobbies you may have in common, books and other common interests can get the date started off on the right foot.

You should also think twice about bringing up certain topics of conversation. Politics and past relationships are usually taboo conversation topics on the first date. Religion and money might also backfire and ruin what might have otherwise been a great date.

Decide far in advance of the date how far you want to take relationship at the end of the night. It's usually best to put off having sex to another date and time rather than the first date.

Let's face it, some people are simply looking for a one-night stand. If you find yourself in that trap over and over again, trying getting to know the person before you jump into bed with them.

At the end of a good date, make it clear that you want to see the person again. Don't go overboard, but offer something about liking to see him/her next week if s/he is free. They can always say they're busy and lightly reject the invitation.

If you feel comfortable about scheduling another date when the first date ends, by all means, do so. Rather than playing games with the dating process, put yourself out there and text them that night or the next day to let them know you're interested.

Don't be clingy, but do make it a point to show your interest. Polite interest, rather than talking about your future kids is the best way to show interest without being clingy and scaring someone off.

If there were evident sparks on that first date, it will be easy to make another connection. But perhaps the other person didn't feel the sparks or just prefers to continue dating others.

It's no bad reflection on you if that happens. Simply go back to the drawing board and forget about the first date chemistry. If you didn't feel the sparks, but it's evident that the other person did, consider a second date to be sure of your non-feelings.

It's okay if you don't want to waste another second on dating someone you know isn't for you, but if you're not left with strong feelings one way or the other, try a second date to see if you click a bit better.

The first date can be stressful and generate high emotions. It can make you second guess yourself and your appearance, personality and other traits that you thought were assets, but didn't make an impression on the other person.

Dating apps can be a wonderful way to meet others either for a long-term relationship or simply to make good friends. Consider the possibilities and resolve to have fun on that one and only first date.

## Chapter 5: After That First Date

The follow-up after the first date is important to knowing if there's a future with another person. There is such a thing as a post-date high, where you're so enthralled with the person you just met that you might do crazy things.

The first date can be a lot like having a couple of drinks – releases your inhibitions, causes you to send frantic texts and say things you'll wish later that you hadn't. When to contact someone after the first date is often stressful.

You shouldn't wait too long to make contact – especially if you were interested – but waiting until the other person has likely forgotten you or moved on isn't the way to handle it either.

Other than that, there is no appropriate time when you should text after the first date. For once, use your gut feelings to act. If you really had a great time and are pretty sure the other person did too, text on your way home from the date.

If that's not your style, text the next day. Keep it simple and light with a note about what a great time you had. Maybe mention a date you talked about for the future – something that interests you both.

Even though it may be tempting, don't ask someone to text you when they are safely home. That's too much mothering for the first date and might be a turn off to some. Don't go on a texting binge after a first date, but allow a couple of days before asking for another date.

Never text anything with sexual overtones after the first date. Even if you let your inhibitions slide and went to bed with a person on the first date, sexting afterwards is not appropriate. Save it for the future – if there is one.

Approach the second date with a good heart and good feelings. If you're doing the planning, choose a setting where the two of you can get

to know each other in a casual setting – especially if you had a more formal first date.

Picnics, bike rides, the beach or a concert can all be more casual and better venues for a second date. Unlike the first date, the second will likely last longer and be less stressful.

Getting to know the other person more intimately should be fun and at the end, the future should look promising – or not. What may have been a bad first date could end up to be an incredible second or third date.

If you're really interested in the other person and want the second (and third) date to get to know him/her better, don't choose a noisy venue such as a loud bar or a movie or other place that could prevent you engaging in conversation.

Planning a date where you're engaging with a bunch of friends isn't a good idea either. If you click, there will be time for that later. Watching sports events or other shows on television isn't a great way to get to know someone.

And don't repeat the same dates over and over. It's okay to plan a dinner before going to another event, but just going to dinner for every date is boring. Talking to and getting to know each other are the goals of second and third dates. Make it interesting.

While you may want to try something new on a second or third date, be sure it's going to be interesting to the other party. If you're accepting an invitation, it's okay to try something new – like a sports event. You may end up enjoying yourself.

You may luck out on venturing to and enjoying an event or something else that you thought you wouldn't like. But you don't want to feign interest in something that will become tedious in the future.

Physical activities such as jogging or swimming can be great second and third dates for a budding relationship. Hiking through an area unfamiliar to you both is fun and good way to get to know each other.

Other outdoor activities you both might enjoy include boat rides, picking apples or berries or zoos. Museums, concerts, jazz and comedy clubs are good ways to socialize and share interests.

Parties are okay for future dates if at least one of you knows the people well and it won't be awkward. You may also have a favorite place or quaint restaurant in mind that you want to share with the person.

Women shouldn't be shy about making a suggestion about future dates. It's no longer necessary for the man to make all of the decisions, but it is conventional for the man to pay for whatever the couple decides to do.

When you embark on the second or third date, be sure and say things about yourself that conveys to the other person how you see yourself. For example, you may see yourself as trustworthy or resourceful. Try to paint that picture without being idealistic.

Show interest in the other person on future dates without gushing and pushing yourself on them. Just let it be known that you have a special interest in the person and would like to explore a possible relationship.

After you've experienced the third or fourth date, you may want to bring friends into the mix. Meeting each other's friends can be a good beginning in paving the way for the relationship to progress.

## **Chapter 6: Dating At Different Life Stages**

Your current stage in life is important to the basics of how and whom you date. For example, it's unlikely that you'll want to go on the same type of dates in your 30s the same as you did in your 20s.

Look at dating in your 30s on the bright side. You've gotten through that immaturity of youth (hopefully) and are ready for a solid relationship based on true feelings rather than infatuations.

You likely realize that dating isn't the only thing you should be focused on. Now, the focus is likely concentrated on passions and friendships. Of course, a career might be all important to you at this age and take up a lot of your time and energy.

If you're dating in your 30s, you'll also notice that the dating pool has become smaller and many of your friends and relations are currently in marriages or long-term relationships.

That makes it more difficult to accidentally find your true love through social circles. It may be time to try the online dating options. While you know the clock is ticking for marriage and a family, desperation isn't the right way to enter the online dating mindset.

It's so much more meaningful at this time in your life to find the right one for you – not to simply grab someone out of the mix to provide you with children and a relationship. Communicating your desires online can be done without a sense of urgency.

You should enjoy the romance of dating in your 30s much more than when you were in your 20s. You'll be more confident in your sexuality and you've likely learned what's important to you in a potential partner.

Physical appearance and other characteristics that you once perceived most important in a date have now become less important than personal qualities that can complement your own values and traits.

You've also reached a stage in life where you are secure in your own power of selection and can handle the ups and downs of romantic life much better. Your romantic life isn't as critical as it once was and you can be more relaxed in the process.

Making better choices can happen now more than it could when you were in your 20s and hooking up was the all-important goal. You're now able to avoid your past mistakes because you learned from them and to build true and lasting relationships.

Forging into a mature relationship means that you should use communication skills you've learned from the past. Communicate with others in a direct and honest manner rather than assuming that they can read your mind.

Dating in your 40s and 50s can be even more rewarding than in your 30s or younger years, but it can also be daunting. You may have been in a relationship for a long time and are just getting back into the dating scene.

Some things you may want to think about include knowing that your age has matured you to the point that gives you decided advantages over others who are dating in their youth.

One of those advantages is that you're no longer thinking about the biological tick-tock. You can concentrate on building a relationship based on likes and passions rather than a mate that can provide children and help you financially make ends meet.

You can likely enjoy the good life more with nice dinners and travel to places you once dreamed about. And as partners, you are independent of each other and have separate lives, releasing the pressure on one to be the end-all.

Men and women who enter the dating scene later in life might expect to be confronted with the opportunity to date someone much younger than yourself. Even though you know the age difference might present problems, it's unlikely you'll listen to your own advice.

When dating someone younger – or older – than you will cause people to talk. Know that there will be those who don't approve and those who are genuinely happy for you. Nothing in life is guaranteed and you should move ahead with relationship plans.

But you should also proceed with caution when you're dating someone older or younger than you. Be aware that you could be moving ahead with the relationship more rapidly than you should.

If a person is much younger than you, s/he likely doesn't know everything you've learned from experience. A younger person might want to jump into a long-term relationship much faster than you're ready for.

Dating an older person might also present challenges, such as feeling as if you're the kid in the relationship. In both cases, you should be diplomatic in your reactions and words, but be perfectly clear in your goals and aspirations.

A younger person might be embroiled in all the aspects of a career path, while the older person in the relationship is settled and ready to let go and live it up a bit. If you've made your wishes and goals clear, you can still have the relationship but enjoy life as you wish to live it.

In the long run, relationships – no matter how young or old you are – take a great deal of work. Anything that makes it more difficult, such as an age gap, can add stress to the relationship.

Self-confidence and self-awareness and tons of good communication can make any relationship work. You just need to be committed.

## **Chapter 7: Post-Divorce Dating**

There's so much to be considered when you begin dating after a divorce. You may still be experiencing the five stages of grieving the lost relationship – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

It's sometimes difficult to know when to move on and can trigger the absence of rationality in thoughts and behaviors. You could experience good or even great moments and also have relapses where anger reigns and you're desperate for answers.

When you finally realize you've accepted the breakup and have hope for the future, it could be the time you'll want to cautiously delve into the dating process – post divorce. When you have children, it's very important to know the safest way to approach online dating.

For example, never, ever post photos of your children within your dating profile and forget introducing a new date until it becomes a serious relationship. The emotional and physical well-being of your children far outweighs your initial urge to introduce them to the new person in your life.

You may feel extremely vulnerable at the beginning stage of dating after a divorce. You may be unsure of the rules of dating since you were last in the game. Such questions as who pays for the date, what to wear and say are paramount to post divorce daters.

Although post-divorce dating can seem like you're in a minefield, it can also be fresh and exciting. It's a new world of online dating sites and matching profiles, and you need to learn how to maneuver correctly and safely in this new world.

Once you're clear in your mind and know you're ready to begin dating again, you may have to squelch the fear that's nagging you and simply go for it. You may have dealt with a major betrayal or life changes, and it's perfectly okay to wait awhile longer.

Be aware of your mindset during this time. You may keep repeating things to yourself that aren't productive such as the thought that all men or women are jerks or already in a relationship.

Whether you mean it or not, the negative thinking can jeopardize your future dating happiness and douse the chances of finding true love. Your mind might also be telling you that there's something wrong with you because of the failed relationship.

Now is the time to contemplate what you really want from dating at this stage of your life. It could simply be that you want companionship – someone to do things with outside the nucleus of your children and family.

This thought process will determine how you want to approach people. Avoid giving the wrong message to those you do decide to date. If you're not yet ready for a long-term relationship, you don't want to give that impression.

Rather than thinking about the post-dating process as a terrible chore that you have to go through, try thinking of it as an adventure. You'll have the opportunity to socialize, meet people and perhaps learn something about yourself and others.

When you decide to try the online dating scene in your post-divorce world, don't linger online thinking you'd like to get to know the person better before you meet. It's best to quickly find out if the relationship is worth pursuing.

If you're afraid the person might turn out to be a stalker or catfish (even if there's no reason to think that), be sure to tell a friend or family member when and where your meeting will take place and when you think you'll be home.

Initially meeting in a public venue is the best idea and can calm a lot of fears. Nothing lost but a bit of time if there is no chemistry or reason to

pursue the relationship. And you might learn something about yourself and your own wants and desires.

It's normal in the post-divorce dating process to compare dating partners in terms of personality, intelligence and looks. It's perfectly fine to date several guys or women at the same time before you decide what you like and don't like and what's most important to you.

Having a support system is of the ultimate importance when post-divorce dating. If you've been away from the dating scene for quite awhile and are recovering from a traumatic breakup to boot, you'll need a support system to keep you grounded.

That same support system can also provide feedback to you about the person or persons you're choosing to date. Listen to them carefully. They may have valuable insight that you hadn't thought of before.

They'll also help to keep you inspired and motivated to date the right people. Your support system can be a group of friends, handful of family members or extended friendships. They're all valuable and useful.

If you don't happen to have a set group of people who can provide feedback and give you inspirational and motivational advice, consider procuring the services of a counselor or other professional who can help you continue on a health mental path as you're achieving goals.

Post-divorce dating sites can be found online and you'll find lots of help and advice from others who have been down the same road. Keep a positive outlook and attitude and have fun.

## Chapter 8: Dating Red Flags

Online dating basics include being aware of red flags that could alert you to potential future disasters. Some of these red flags might include catching a date in lies, extreme jealousy and disrespecting your boundaries.

It's easy to ignore red flags when you're caught in the throes of excitement and enthusiasm of a new relationship. But if you want a true relationship with the person you're dating and not just a fling, it's important that you recognize what's really going on.

True relationships are based on trust, so catching them in one lie after another can be cause for concern about your future. Also, if your date turns into a person who only wants to keep you company late at night, it might be because s/he only wants sex.

Abruptly canceling dates at the last minute should also concern you. It's a sign that they don't respect your time and possible efforts. Don't settle for someone who stands you up all the time and doesn't seem to value your time.

When a person doesn't respect your boundaries and consistently tries to make you do things you feel uneasy about, it's time to take a serious look at the relationship. Showing up at your door unannounced or demanding sex at inopportune times isn't respectful.

Another red flag is a situation where you've been dating for awhile, but s/he hasn't introduced you to friends or family and keeps your relationship more of a secret than something s/he's proud of.

That's a sign that the person may not be ready to make a long-term commitment, but you haven't received the message yet. And speaking of messages – if a person is constantly on his/her phone, it could be the sign of a serious phone addiction.

If they're not addicted to their phone, they are disrespecting you by intentionally diverting their attention to something other than the date you're on. If a person can't give you the undivided attention needed to develop a relationship, they're rude and not worth your time or effort.

Also, if the person takes a long time to call you back or text you, but are constantly on their phones when they're with you, beware. That's a big red flag. Jealousy can also be a thorn in the relationship.

Extreme jealousy is definitely a concern. You might be flattered at first and dream that s/he is trying to protect you, but in time the jealousy may become worse. You may get into arguments and disagreements more frequently and become unsure how or if to proceed.

Many people get a great deal of pleasure in smack-talking about their exes. It's not fun to listen to – and can be a red flag that indicates a real problem with the person. While it's normal to want to vent once in awhile, but constant bashing is unacceptable.

Have you ever been with someone who made you feel stupid or less-than. It's a form of gaslighting that makes you doubt your sanity and even reality of a situation. S/he might make fun of your ideas or opinions and never value your viewpoint.

If you're dating someone who makes you feel unappreciated or stupid, they're not worth your time or effort. Why continue a relationship with someone who tears down your self-confidence and erodes your self-esteem?

Is your date being pushy about taking the relationship to the next level? That's a red flag that you shouldn't ignore. If you're not ready for sex or to introduce the person to your children and family, you shouldn't be coaxed or brow-beaten to make it happen.

Those people who attempt to upset or drive a wedge between you and your friends or family shouldn't be given a second thought when it comes

to a long-term relationship. Run while you can before they destroy important relationships you built in the past.

Although it might not affect you directly, when a person doesn't bother having a work ethic, it could be a red flag toward other parts of his or her personality. When a person isn't working toward a goal(s) in life, they may have a permanent negative attitude.

Demanding to see your phone on a constant basis, going through your email and wanting your social media passwords mean they have no trust in you. Chances are, it's a reflection on them rather than you.

Know that you are entitled to privacy and anonymity if you wish and that no one should interfere with that part of your life. Perhaps your date guilt trips you into revealing certain subjects or makes you feel responsible for the bad luck s/he may be experiencing.

That is also a reason for you to question whether or not this relationship has a chance to succeed. Having a personality that's similar to Jekyll and Hyde is also a red flag about someone's temperament.

Switching from anger to happiness in a flash is reason for concern. During fits of anger, they may call you names that aren't acceptable to your sensibility. It can show a real tendency for disrespect.

What if your date cheated on their last relationship with you? Knowing your partner's history of relationships can reveal a great deal about how they will be with you. It may only be a matter of time before they are unfaithful to you.

Emotional abuse is another element you should look for in a relationship. Emotional abuse is often subtle. You may be subject to physical bruises in the relationship, but your heart may be bruised from the mental and emotional abuse.

Cutting remarks about your body or how you could improve it or that you should or shouldn't dress in a certain manner, get a better job or find a swankier place to live are all red flags that shouldn't be tolerated in a relationship.

You may think of other cautionary red flags that you should pay attention to as time goes on in the relationship. Keep your own health and happiness first in your life and decide on what are the real deal breakers in a relationship.

## **Chapter 9: Healthy Communication with Your Partner**

You may have a different style of communication than your dating partner. That doesn't have to be a deal breaker, but you should know how these various styles of communication can affect your relationships.

A communication style could also be called a conversational style. After all, we can only know things through conversing with words (either through writing or talking). We share information about our emotions, physical well-being and thoughts.

But it's the way we share communication that varies from one person to the other. Your gender can determine your communication style or how you were raised, educated and other factors.

One style of communication could be called competitive. If you're the type of person that craves power and loves competition, your communication style is likely more focused on those goals.

Affiliative communicators tend to bring others into the process to solve problems together. Friends, family or partners in a relationship may be asked for their input and decisions are made after the input rather than the competitive style of deciding immediately.

Think about how you communicate with others to find your own style. For example, do you tend to listen to everyone's opinion before voicing your own or speak up immediately if someone says something you disagree with?

You may be perfectly happy in the affiliative communication style to take directions from others and are your best in relationships based on a hierarchical arrangement? Or, do you have trouble in giving up your power to others and prefer to be in charge at all times.

Neither competitive or affiliative styles of communication are wrong – they're just different. But it could cause conflict in a relationship where one person prefers direct ways to communicate and the other prefers a collaborative method.

Direct or indirect styles of communication can also make a difference in the way the relationship progresses – or dies on the vine. For example, if you express that you really love Chinese food, your partner might not get the message that you'd like to go to dinner.

A more direct way of communicating would be to say that you want to go out for Chinese food and state your restaurant preference. The direct style of communication leaves less room to be misunderstood, but some people aren't comfortable with it.

Different communication styles can cause stress and lack of understanding, but those who have competing styles of communication can make it work with understanding and becoming more flexible.

When you become aware of another person's distress over miscommunication, understanding must occur to overcome the problem. Flexibility in your style of communication means that you are committed to finding a different approach when it comes to communication with your partner.

For example, you might want to vow to be a better listener. If you're constantly told by others that you just don't listen to what they're saying, you may want to take a good look at yourself and take steps to improve your communication skills.

Finding a communication style that will work in your relationship will ease any tension you might have from attempting to communicate. Becoming a better listener might mean you need to paraphrase what your partner says for awhile.

Listening isn't always an innate trait, but something we have to practice and cultivate. Use all skills available to you – your body language and holding back a comment or reaction until the entire conversation is communicated to you are great skills.

But what if your communicative skills crumble and you morph into an argument with your partner? That's when you really need some communication skills. Concentrate on the rules of friendly fighting which includes welcoming conflict to learn about each other.

Also, think about the issue – not the other person. And be respectful when it comes to listening to your partner's problems and feelings about a subject. Listen to what s/he is saying.

Rather than shout or lose your temper, talk softly. It's an odd phenomenon that the louder you yell, the less likely you are to be heard. Communicating in a soft voice can help you both begin to focus on the issue.

Instead of vehemently voicing your innocence during accusations, ask for specifics about what the other person is trying to communicate. And if you're doing the complaining, be prepared to offer specifics to your partner.

Try to find things you can agree on and look for options that will lead to cooperation. Asking for options to solve the matter shows respect and value for the other person's opinion.

Finally, make concessions. Even small concessions can make a difference in how the communication efforts turn around. After all, it isn't about how much you win – it's all about making peace and finding harmony in your relationship.

## **Chapter 10: How Do You Know If Your Partner Is Ready for Commitment?**

This is the question that most people want to know after spending awhile in the relationship. There are some telling actions and communication efforts that can help you know.

For example, when your partner begins to include you in his plans for the future. You're no longer just hanging out with each other, but making plans for trips, future places to dine or have fun is part of the conversation.

He may begin to introduce you to his friends and family. That's a sure sign that he's ready to evaluate how you fit into his world outside of your dating life.

Your partner introduces you to her family. This is a sure sign that your date is considering a future with you because it means she is evaluating how you fit into her world.

Serious talk about your relationship also indicates that your partner may be ready for a permanent relationship. Those who shun from commitment rarely want to have serious talks about how the relationship will progress.

Good communication is the hallmark of any good relationship. When your partner is attempting to keep the lines of communication open and uses

their written, oral and physical skills to communicate, a permanent and committed relationship is forthcoming.

If your partner is flaky about their communication and may text you on a consistent basis for a week and then abruptly stops texting for a good while, it could mean they're not ready for a committed relationship.

It may become evident that your partner sincerely values your opinion. If a person is thinking of a long-term relationship, valuing your opinion is one of the first and most important things that can happen.

For example, if they want your opinion about purchasing a new car or redecorating a home, they're ready for you to become active in their lives and trust and value your opinion.

Those who are ready for commitment will usually discuss what they're looking for in a permanent relationship. This can provide much insight into whether or not you have a future with the person.

When you want a commitment, but the other person isn't ready, you should know that as soon as possible. After awhile of wondering and not knowing, you may want to take the direct approach and ask if the person is ready for commitment.

Finding out where you stand with your partner isn't an unreasonable request. A bit of enthusiasm about a commitment can ease your fear of hanging on to a relationship that doesn't have a future and let your relationship progress in a natural manner.

One of the most important and telling ways you can know if your partner is ready for commitment is that they are exclusive in their relationship with you. A so-called commitment while they're dating others isn't sincere and shouldn't be considered.

Also, group dates and parties need to slow down and the dating venues should be more about the two of you as a couple. You need one-on-one time for a sincere relationship to develop with no distractions.

It can also be a sign of sincerity and honesty when someone is dating you exclusively. They don't have to look at their date calendars before they commit to a date with you to see if there are conflicting date times.

When a person is ready to commit, you can expect the relationship to move up a notch on the comfort scale. You'll begin to have more fun and be better able to communicate when you know you and your partner are in a committed relationship.

Making a commitment is where open communication is so vitally important to any future relationship. You've got to know that you're not wasting time on a relationship – or convey to the other person that you're not ready.

It's important to avoid miscommunication so that your relationship can thrive on its own time. When neither side communicates their thoughts of the future clearly, you risk wasting time on a relationship that wasn't meant to be in the first place.

The basics of dating can lead you to meeting and getting to know others that might make a difference in the rest of your life – and finding true love!



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