

Why Haven't I Found Mr. or Mrs. Right?

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You want love in your life and haven't found "the one." It is my firm belief that no one should be without a partner if they truly want one. So, let's explore your current life situation and determine the best way to go about finding Mr. or Mrs. Right.

You Have Never Married.

Today, there are more single people living by themselves than ever before. In fact, marriage rates in the United States are at historic lows. Why? Because people are living longer, birth control is widespread, and women are pursuing career paths that make them financially secure. And with people living well into their eighties, it makes sense to approach marriage cautiously. After all, settling down in your mid twenties means spending six decades with the same person—making it more important than ever to find a partner who truly shares your values, morals, and life goals. I strongly recommend taking whatever time is necessary to choose a partner wisely. But I also urge you to take an honest look at what obstacles may be getting in the way of you finding the right person.

Do You Have Unrealistic Expectations?

Are you—a quiet, shy, average looking, forty-year-old librarian—looking for a tall, dark, handsome thirty-year-old investment banker? Or do you—an overweight fifty-five-year-old plumber—only want to date slender, twenty-two-year-old bombshells? If so, you are really limiting your options. Nicole Leclerc, a matchmaker and owner of Compatibles in Vermont finds that her male clients tend to start out with completely unrealistic expectations. “Paul sent me his list of criteria for women he wanted to be introduced to. I always appreciate this, as it’s a great place to start the relationship with a new client. But I couldn’t help thinking that the list of criteria Paul sent was a joke. Turns out he was one hundred percent serious. He had listed women’s bra cup sizes that were acceptable to him, women’s shoe sizes, measurements of hips, thighs, calves, ankles, and waist all to the inch! I was stunned and told him I could not offer the degree of scrutiny he wanted for these physical attributes—I do not measure my clients or ask their bra cup size. However, I do have wonderful women that I was certain he’d find attractive if he could be a little more flexible.” Wonderful human beings are packaged in all sorts of unique ways. Be adventurous and consider opening up to more possibilities.

Are You a Workaholic?

Do you spend more time and energy on your work than on your personal life? If you’re consumed by your job, it’s time to take a look at why. What are you avoiding? Why are you letting work dominate your life? Julie Ferman a matchmaker in Oak Park, California talks about her client Darryl, a thirty-eight-year-old management consultant who spends twenty days a month on the road building his own management consulting business and living the life of a workaholic. In time, he plans to hire enough junior consultants to take over the long-distance travel gigs because also high on his list of life goals is marriage and family. His current problem is finding and lining up first dates with women who may be “marriage material” for him. “He hired me to be his ‘love broker,’ to sift and sort and line up the most fitting candidates for him to meet on the ten or so days a month he’s home in Los Angeles. The plan—by the time

his business is developed he'll be engaged or married, and by the time the kids are born, well, he'll be traveling much less and able to be a family man. Darryl and I keep in touch via e-mails and voice mail messages and through monthly telephone coaching calls, and he's enjoying the process of meeting what he considers to be qualified candidates. He's learning how to date, how to relate with women at a higher level and he calls this process one of 'grooming him to be a groom.'" After all, nobody's dying wish is that they had spent more time at the office.

Do You Tend to Make Unwise Partner Choices?

Are you attracted to the bad boy types? You know, the tall, dark, mysterious, larger-than-life guys who are all over you one minute and seem to just disappear the next? Or do the wild party girls, blonde, bubbly, and fun excite you most? Anne Teachworth, certified Matchmaker and author of *Why We Pick the Mates We Do* says, "It has been my experience, taking family of origin histories, that women who like 'bad boys' and men who like 'wild girls' consistently had a parent who was a 'bad boy or girl.' Their 'chemistry' attraction to that type is programmed in at an unconscious level and they need the direction of a good matchmaker to intervene and effect a change in their mating pattern."

Are You Socially Awkward or Shy?

Many people aren't comfortable in social situations. If you are a little awkward socially or just plain shy, you probably prefer solitary activities like reading, watching television, and surfing the web. That's fine, but it's important to get out. The only way to become more comfortable is to throw yourself into social situations as often as possible and, as the saying goes, "fake it until you make it." The more you get out and interact, the more comfortable you'll feel. But it is hard for us to break our lifelong patterns. Going from social isolation to social butterfly can be extremely difficult. In fact, we often make excuses to avoid the discomfort of change in an attempt to keep our status quo at all costs. Rob Anderson of Club Elite, a matchmaking service in New York City for gay men, tells a story of his client Jeff, who had a tendency toward nesting and isolating

himself in his apartment. “When Jeff called asking about our Club Elite service, we talked about what he was looking for in a mate, and after a lengthy discussion, he said, ‘To be honest—I just moved into a new apartment and I’m torn between spending the money on your service or the new couch I have been eyeballing and really want.’ I didn’t hear back from him so I guessed he opted for the couch. Six months later—out of the blue—Jeff called again. ‘Did you get that couch you were in love with?’ I asked. ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘and I’m sitting on it all alone.’ He joined Club Elite and after a few dates met someone he is extremely happy with. He is so grateful and I love the vision I have of them cuddling on that couch.”

Do You Have Limited Access to Potential Partners?

If all your friends are married or coupled, if you don’t date work colleagues or work from home, if you belong to a same sex gym, and haven’t found time to volunteer in your community or join social organizations, then finding potential partners may be difficult. And remember, the older we get the further we are from our school days where single classmates were in abundance and our exposure to potential mates was great. So now you need to be more proactive in order to gain access to wonderful single people who may be compatible mates. You need to branch out. Ask everyone you know if they have a friend who may enjoy going out with you. Make a list of all your family members and friends. As you write these names down, old friends you haven’t seen lately will come to mind. Invite them out for a drink and ask if they have a single friend they can introduce you to. There really is no down side to asking. They may not be able to come up with a prospect right there on the spot. But in a week or two, they just might call back having remembered a single friend who’s perfect for you.

I had a friend from graduate school who still lived in the Midwest and didn’t have a lot of access to single people because she worked long hours. I gave her my advice about asking everyone she knew to think of someone for her. So she called one of her old friends that she had not talked to

in a while and asked him if he knew any men to introduce her to. At first he couldn't think of anyone, and he too was working crazy hours. But my friend didn't let him off the hook. She kept calling and one night took him out for dinner. Over dinner, the more they talked and she described what she was looking for, he then remembered an old high school friend of his who had just finished his law degree and was single. He introduced them and they dated for over a year. He didn't end up being the love of her life, but he remains a great friend to this day. You never know who people will think of when given a little push.

Do You Choose Unavailable Partners?

Are you attracted to emotionally distant, unavailable types? Is the love of your life married? Or is he constantly on the road traveling? "My client Rachel's last two boyfriends lived out of state," relates Anne Teachworth of Perfect Mate in New Orleans. "She came to our matchmaking office in desperation wanting to know why this always happens to her. She wanted someone to go to parties with, not airports, and wondered if I could find someone for her who lived locally. She worked as a medical drug sales representative traveling in the southeast region. Traveling was familiar for her—so was loneliness. Her childhood history revealed her attraction pattern. She grew up on military bases, the child of an air force captain, and constantly moved from base to base. Rachel, like the other army kids, was always leaving classmates and moving to new schools—good-bye was such a familiar scene that she hardly minded it. Based on this history, I knew Rachel needed someone who would not be leaving town or someone who could take her with him. Jim was perfect. A salesman, he worked the same southeast region her company covered. He had been looking for a gal who could get used to his traveling. His last girlfriend constantly complained that he wasn't available. Rachel was much like Jim . . . They met and have been happy on the road together ever since. In fact, they have coordinated their sales calls so they travel to the same towns at the same times. They are so happy together and yet they never would have met had they not worked with a matchmaker who understood who they are and exactly what they are looking for in a mate."

Are You Viewing Partners Through Marriage Eyes?

If you are in your thirties, chances are you're wondering if each potential partner is marriage material. Rather than causally going out, having fun, exploring the person's uniqueness, you are looking at them and wondering if this person could be the parent of your children, the "one" you will spend the rest of your life with. You're probably asking yourself, "Can I actually make my life with this person?" instead of just enjoying each moment of getting to know one another. Approaching any budding relationship with marriage eyes puts too much pressure on the relationship too quickly. Give yourself time to discover, explore, and play with each new partner.

I once worked with a woman who was thirty five years old and in a hurry to get married and have kids. She tried to go on as many dates as possible to sift through "who was serious and who was wasting her time." Any potential great guys were scared off by her Spanish Inquisition-style—they wanted to get to know her and instead were being interviewed and questioned ad nauseum. By looking at each date through marriage eyes, I believe she sabotaged her own time frame and made the process of finding "the one" much more difficult. If she had relaxed and gotten to know her dates, and let her dates get to know her, they may have been able to see what a wonderful woman she was and enjoyed getting to know her.

Newly Divorced or Separated

You miss the companionship of the opposite sex, want to start dating, and don't know where to start. Rest assured you are not alone. Dating after divorce can feel daunting. But it doesn't have to. I urge you to take it slowly and have fun. Remember you are an attractive, interesting person who deserves to go out and enjoy yourself. Approach dating with an explorer's sense of adventure!

One of my clients was very nervous when he got divorced. He was used to having someone in his life on a daily basis and didn't know if he had

the knack for small talk. After the first few dates with a couple different women, he found that he loved getting to know new people and actually saw a curious and social side to himself that he forgot he had. Dating again after a divorce can be a wonderful time for relearning about yourself as a social creature. Take advantage of this time and have fun.

Feeling Anxious and Out of the Dating Loop?

It's natural to feel a bit disoriented and insecure as you try to navigate dating after having settled down for what you thought was "until death do us part." Give yourself a break and remember that you're a beginner again. Approach it as you would any new activity. Your date is probably nervous too, so try to relax, be yourself, smile, and before you know it, you'll both be more at ease. Dating is about getting to know another person and seeing if you enjoy their company. If the first few dates don't go as you hoped, take note of what worked and what didn't and view it as a learning opportunity.

One of my clients tended to talk too much on dates because he was nervous. He felt if he opened up and told them all about himself, his dates would be impressed and like him even more. This in fact was not the case. People like it when you are curious about them and ask questions to balance the conversation. His dates thought he was too self-involved and lost interest pretty quickly. This, of course, was the opposite of his intention.

Is Your Dating Mode Outdated?

Are you hitting the bar scene the way you did before you got married? Or going to the same places you did with your ex? Dating strategies and venues that worked when you were a young single or comfortable married may not be right for you in this new life stage.

I had a client that would take his dates to the same place he used to go with his ex because he felt comfortable and knew the staff there. The only problem was that everyone there knew him when he was married and

would talk about the past with him. This made his dates feel uncomfortable and left out. Avoid trying to recreate the past. Instead, get involved in new activities and find new places to go that intrigue you. If you meet an interesting member of the opposite sex, say at a book signing, don't expect sparks to fly immediately. Get to know this individual—talk about commonalities, take a walk together. As you begin to feel comfortable with this person, you may be surprised at how romantic feelings just naturally develop. Be open to new ways of approaching dating.

Think About Different Partner Choices

Divorce provides a unique opportunity for personal growth. It gives you the time and wherewithal to focus on yourself and examine your values, life goals, and interests separate and apart from your ex. Keep in mind that what you wanted at age twenty-five may not be what's important to you at age forty. If you take the time to learn who you are and what qualities are important to you now, you're assured of making more satisfying, empowering partner choices. One of my clients was thrilled to discover that he was a lot more adventurous now that his kids were grown. He realized that he wanted to meet a woman he could travel the world and explore with rather than someone that would help him raise his kids. He loved being able to share common interests with his dates that he had not thought about since he was in his twenties.

Widowed

Dating after a spouse dies is especially difficult because the loss is involuntary and unexpected. Memories of wonderful times spent together make it difficult to imagine getting involved with someone new. Certainly losing the love of your life is painful, yet being alone for the rest of your life is also painful.

Comparing Potential Partners to Your Deceased Spouse

It's hard not to compare new partners to your deceased spouse, and yet it sets each date up for disaster. You can't have the shared history,

commitment, and years of devotion with someone new that you enjoyed with your spouse. So stop comparing your date to your spouse—no one will measure up. Instead, notice the special qualities this new person has to offer. Acknowledge and honor the newness. Allow yourself to fully experience the uniqueness another individual can bring to your life.

One of my clients kept telling me that each of the dates I introduced him to were not as smart, attractive, or funny as his deceased wife. Until one day, I introduced him to someone who was an avid skier. His wife hadn't skied and he forgot how much he loved going to the mountains on the weekend to ski. Once he and this new woman started skiing together, he began to open up, enjoyed discovering this woman's depth of character and decided to give it a chance—to get to know someone else and her uniqueness.

Feelings of Betrayal

On the one hand you may feel like you're betraying your deceased spouse by having feelings for another and on the other hand you may feel like you're betraying your new partner by still loving your spouse. Dealing with these feelings of guilt and betrayal is a part of the experience of being a healthy, active, dating widow. Of course nobody can replace your deceased spouse, but if you meet someone whose company you enjoy, think of this person as someone who may want to share the next chapter in your life's adventure with you.

One of my clients had a wonderful relationship with his wife, who died after a long bout with cancer. They were able to discuss what life would be like after her death, and she wanted him to find another love so that he would not be alone. This was very hard for him to accept at first. However, over time he realized that he too would have wanted the same for her and he owed it to himself to honor life by continuing to live.

Letting Go and Creating a New Life

As happy as you and your spouse were together, and as terrible as becoming a widow feels, you will continue to live. More than anything, you need to give yourself permission to experience joy, both alone and with others. Julie Ferman's client Neil came to see her a couple of years after losing his wife of thirty years to breast cancer. The post-date feedback on Neil kept coming back with the same criticism—Neil talks about his wife all the time. If, for example, travel was the topic of conversation, he would speak about the trip he and Nancy had taken to Maui. The impression he was giving to the new women in his life was that he was still mourning his wife and there wasn't room in his heart for another love. "We put his search program on pause for some grief therapy sessions and then some date coaching, which included plenty of role-playing conversations that have helped Neil focus on the present. He is now having a wonderful time traveling to all sorts of exotic places that he and his wife would never have gone to." Your spouse would not have wanted you to be unhappy for the rest of your time on earth. So acknowledge what you've had the good fortune to create: good health, a loving marriage, and possibly a lot more. No one can take these or the loving feelings you have for your deceased spouse away. Think of your marriage as a particularly rich and rewarding chapter in your autobiography and allow yourself to experience a new kind of love experience in this next chapter.