



Dating Tips for Finding the Right Person

How to Navigate New Relationships and Find Lasting Love



Are you single and looking for love? Are you finding it hard to meet the right person? When you're having trouble finding a love connection, it's all too easy to become discouraged or buy into the destructive myths out there about dating and relationships. Even if you've been burned repeatedly or have a poor track record when it comes to dating, these tips can help you to keep things in perspective and put you on the path to finding a loving relationship that lasts.

What's preventing you from finding love?

Life as a single person offers many rewards, such as being free to pursue your own hobbies and interests, learning how to enjoy your own company, and appreciating the quiet moments of solitude. However, if you're ready to share your life with someone and want to build a lasting, worthwhile relationship, life as a single person can also be frustrating.

For many of us, our emotional baggage can make finding the right romantic partner a difficult journey. Perhaps you grew up in a household where there was no role model of a solid, healthy relationship and you doubt that such a thing even exists. Or maybe your dating history consists only of brief flings and you don't know how to make a relationship last. You could be attracted to the wrong type of person or keep making the same bad choices over and over, due to an unresolved issue from your past. Or maybe you're not

putting yourself in the best environments to meet the right person, or that when you do, you don't feel confident enough. Whatever the case may be, you can overcome your obstacles and find a healthy romantic relationship.

What is a healthy relationship?

A healthy relationship is when two people develop a connection based on:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Honesty
- Support
- Fairness/equality
- Separate identities
- Good communication
- A sense of playfulness/fondness

Source: UW Seattle

Reassess your misconceptions about dating and relationships

The first step to finding love is to reassess some of the misconceptions about dating and relationships that may be preventing you from finding lasting love.

Common Myths About Dating and Looking for Love

Myth: I can only be happy and fulfilled if I'm in a relationship or It's better to have a bad relationship than no relationship.

Fact: While there are health benefits that come with being in a solid relationship, many people can be just as happy and fulfilled without being part of a couple. Despite the stigma in some social circles that accompanies being single, it's important not to enter a relationship just to "fit in." Being alone and being lonely are not the same thing. And nothing is as unhealthy and dispiriting as being in a bad relationship.

Common Myths About Dating and Looking for Love

Myth: If I don't feel an instant attraction to someone, it's not a relationship worth pursuing.

Fact: This is an important myth to dispel, especially if you have a history of making inappropriate choices. Instant sexual attraction and lasting love do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. Emotions can change and deepen over time, and friends sometimes become lovers—if you give those relationships a chance to develop.

Myth: Women have different emotions than men.

Fact: Women and men feel similar things but sometimes express their feelings differently, often according to society's conventions. But both men and women experience the same core emotions such as sadness, anger, fear, and joy.

Myth: True love is constant or Physical attraction fades over time.

Fact: Love is rarely static, but that doesn't mean love or physical attraction is doomed to fade over time. As we age, both men and women have fewer sexual hormones, but emotion often influences passion more than hormones, and sexual passion can become stronger over time.

Myth: I'll be able to change the things I don't like about someone.

Fact: You can't change anyone. People only change if and when they want to change.

Myth: I didn't feel close to my parents, so intimacy is always going to be uncomfortable for me.

Fact: It's never too late to change any pattern of behavior. Over time, and with enough effort, you can change the way you think, feel, and act.

Myth: Disagreements always create problems in a relationship.

Fact: Conflict doesn't have to be negative or destructive. With the right resolution skills, conflict can also be an opportunity for growth in a relationship.

Expectations about dating and finding love

When we start looking for a long-term partner or enter into a romantic relationship, many of us do so with a predetermined set of (often unrealistic) expectations—such as how the person should look and behave, how the relationship should progress, and the roles each partner should fulfill. These expectations may be based on your family history, influence of your peer group, your past experiences, or even ideals portrayed in movies and TV shows. Retaining many of these unrealistic expectations can make any potential partner seem inadequate and any new relationship feel disappointing.

Consider what's really important

Distinguish between what you *want* and what you *need* in a partner. Wants are negotiable, needs are not.

Wants include things like occupation, intellect, and physical attributes such as height, weight, and hair color. Even if certain traits seem crucially important at first, over time you'll often find that you've been needlessly limiting your choices. For example, it may be more important to find someone who is:

- ▶ Curious rather than extremely intelligent. Curious people tend to grow smarter over time, while those who are bright may languish intellectually if they lack curiosity.
- ▶ Sensual rather than sexy.
- ▶ Caring rather than beautiful or handsome.
- ▶ A little mysterious rather than glamorous.
- ▶ Humorous rather than wealthy.
- ▶ From a family with similar values to yours, rather than someone from a specific ethnic or social background.

Needs are different than wants in that needs are those things that matter to you most, such as values, ambitions, or goals in life. These are probably not the things you can find out about a person by eyeing them on the street, reading their profile on a dating site, or sharing a quick cocktail at a bar before last call.

What *feels* right to you?

When looking for lasting love, forget what looks right, forget what you *think* should be right, and forget what your friends, parents, or other people think is right, and ask yourself: Does the relationship *feel* right to me?

Dating tip 1: Keep things in perspective

Don't make your search for a relationship the center of your life. Concentrate on activities you enjoy, your career, health, and relationships with family and friends. When you focus on keeping yourself happy, it will keep your life balanced and make you a more interesting person when you do meet someone special.

Remember that first impressions aren't always reliable, especially when it comes to Internet dating. It always takes time to really get to know a person and you have to experience being with someone in a variety of situations. For example, how well does this person hold up under pressure when things don't go well or when they're tired, frustrated, or hungry?

Be honest about your own flaws and shortcomings. Everyone has flaws, and for a relationship to last, you want someone to love you for the person you are, not the person you'd like to be, or the person they think you should be. Besides, what you consider a flaw may actually be something another person finds quirky and appealing. By shedding all pretense, you'll encourage the other person to do the same, which can lead to an honest, more fulfilling relationship.

Tip 2: Build a genuine connection

The dating game can be nerve wracking. It's only natural to worry about how you'll come across and whether or not your date will like you. But no matter how shy or socially awkward you feel, you can overcome your nerves and self-consciousness and forge a great connection.

Focus outward, not inward. To combat first-date nerves, focus your attention on what your date is saying and doing and what's going on around you, rather than on your internal thoughts. Being fully present in the moment will help take your mind off worries and insecurities.

Be curious. When you're truly curious about someone else's thoughts, feelings, experiences, stories, and opinions, it shows—and they'll like you for it. You'll come across as far more attractive and interesting than if you spend your time trying to promote yourself to your date. And if you aren't genuinely interested in your date, there's little point in pursuing the relationship further.

Be genuine. Showing interest in others can't be faked. If you're just pretending to listen or care, your date will pick up on it. No one likes to be manipulated or placated. Rather than helping you connect and make a good impression, your efforts will most likely backfire. If you aren't genuinely interested in your date, there is little point in pursuing the relationship further.

Pay attention. Make an effort to truly listen to the other person. By paying close attention to what they say, do, and how they interact, you'll quickly get to know them. Little things go a long way, such as remembering someone's preferences, the stories they've told you, and what's going on in their life.

Put your smartphone away. You can't truly pay attention or forge a genuine connection when you're multitasking. Nonverbal communication—subtle gestures, expressions, and other visual cues—tell us a lot about another person, but they're easy to miss unless you're tuned in.

To truly connect, tune in

Feeling loved happens face-to-face, from one moment to the next, between you and the other person. The way you look, listen, move, and react to another person tells them more about how you're feeling—and how you're feeling about them—than words alone ever can.

Feeling Loved: The Science of Nurturing Meaningful Connections and Building Lasting Happiness (<http://www.helpguide.org/feeling-loved/>), by Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

Tip 3: Put a priority on having fun

Online dating, singles events, and matchmaking services like speed dating are enjoyable for some people, but for others they can feel more like high-pressure job interviews. And whatever dating experts might tell you, there is a big difference between finding the right career and finding lasting love.

Instead of scouring dating sites or hanging out in pick-up bars, think of your time as a single person as a great opportunity to expand your social circle and participate in new events. Make your focus having fun. By pursuing activities you enjoy and putting yourself in new environments, you'll meet new people who share similar interests and values. Even if you don't someone special, you will still have enjoyed yourself and maybe forged new friendships as well.

Tips for finding fun activities and like-minded people:

- [Volunteer](/articles/healthy-living/volunteering-and-its-surprising-benefits.htm) (/articles/healthy-living/volunteering-and-its-surprising-benefits.htm) for a favorite charity, animal shelter, or political campaign. Or even try a volunteer vacation (for details see Resources section below).
- Take an extension course at a local college or university.
- Sign up for dance, cooking, or art classes.
- Join a running club, hiking group, cycling group, or sports team.
- Join a theater group, film group, or attend a panel discussion at a museum.
- Find a local book group or photography club.
- Attend local food and wine tasting events or art gallery openings.
- Be creative: Write a list of activities available in your area and, with your eyes closed, randomly put a pin in one, even if it's something you would never normally consider. How about pole dancing, origami, or lawn bowling? Getting out of your comfort zone can be rewarding in itself.

Tip 4: Handle rejection gracefully

At some point, everyone looking for love is going to have to deal with rejection—both as the person being rejected and the person doing the rejecting. It's an inevitable part of dating, and never fatal. By staying positive and being honest with yourself and others, handling rejection can be far less intimidating.

By staying positive and being honest with yourself and others, handling rejection can be far less intimidating. The key is to accept that rejection is an inevitable part of dating but to not spend too much time worrying about it. It's never fatal.

Tips for handling rejection when dating and looking for love

Don't take it personally. If you're rejected after one or a few dates, the other person is likely only rejecting you for superficial reasons you have no control over—some people just prefer blondes to brunettes, chatty people to quiet ones—or because they are unable to overcome their own issues. Be grateful for early rejections—it can spare you much more pain down the road.

Don't dwell on it, but learn from the experience. Don't beat yourself up over any mistakes you think you made. If it happens repeatedly, though, take some time to reflect on how you relate to others, and any problems you need to work on. Then let it go. By dealing with rejection in a healthy way it can increase your strength and resilience.

Acknowledge your feelings. It's normal to feel a little hurt, resentful, disappointed, or even sad when faced with rejection. It's important to acknowledge your feelings without trying to suppress them. [Practicing mindfulness](http://harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm) (/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm) can help you stay in touch with your feelings and quickly move on from negative experiences.

Tip 5: Watch for relationship red flags

Red-flag behaviors can indicate that a relationship is not going to lead to healthy, lasting love. Trust your instincts and pay close attention to how the other person makes you feel. If you tend to feel insecure, ashamed, or undervalued, it may be time to reconsider the relationship.

Common relationship red flags:

The relationship is alcohol dependent. You only communicate well—laugh, talk, make love—when one or both of you are under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

There's trouble making a commitment. For some people commitment is much more difficult than others. It's harder for them to trust others or to understand the benefits of a long-term relationship because of previous experiences or an unstable home life growing up.

Nonverbal communication is off. Instead of wanting to connect with you, the other person's attention is on other things like their phone or the TV.

Jealousy about outside interests. One partner doesn't like the other spending time with friends and family members outside the relationship.

Controlling behavior. There is a desire on the part of one person to control the other, stop them from having independent thoughts and feelings.

The relationship is exclusively sexual. There is no interest in the other person other than a physical interest. A meaningful and fulfilling relationship depends on more than just good sex.

No one-on-one time. One partner only wants to be with the other as part of a group of people. If there's no desire to spend quality time alone with you, outside of the bedroom, it can signify a greater issue.

Tip 6: Deal with trust issues

Mutual trust is a cornerstone of any close personal relationship. Trust doesn't happen overnight; it develops over time as your connection with another person deepens. However, if you're someone with trust issues—someone who's been betrayed, traumatized, or abused in the past, or someone with an [insecure attachment bond](/articles/parenting-family/what-is-secure-attachment-and-bonding.htm)—then you may find it impossible to trust others and find lasting love.

If you have trust issues, your romantic relationships will be dominated by fear—fear of being betrayed by the other person, fear of being let down, or fear of feeling vulnerable. But it is possible to learn to trust others. By working with the right therapist or group therapy setting, you can identify the source of your mistrust and explore ways to build richer, more fulfilling relationships.

Tip 7: Nurture your budding relationship

Finding the right person is just the beginning of the journey, not the destination. In order to move from casual dating to a committed, loving relationship, you need to nurture that new connection.

To nurture your relationship:

Invest in it. No relationship will run smoothly without regular attention, but the more you invest in each other, the more you'll grow. Find things you enjoy doing together and commit to spending the time to do them, even when you're busy or stressed.

Communicate openly. Your partner is not a mind reader, so tell them how you feel. When you both feel comfortable expressing your needs, fears, and desires, the bond between you will become stronger and deeper.

Resolve conflict by fighting fair. No matter how you approach the differences in your relationship, the important thing is that you aren't fearful of conflict. You need to feel safe to express the things that bother you and to be able to [resolve conflict](/articles/relationships-communication/conflict-resolution-skills.htm) (/articles/relationships-communication/conflict-resolution-skills.htm) without humiliation, degradation, or insisting on being right.

Be open to change. All relationships change over time. What you want from a relationship at the beginning may be very different from what you and your partner want a few months or years down the road. Accepting change in a healthy relationship should not only make you happier, but also make you a better person: kinder, more empathic, and more generous.

More help for relationships and communication

[Relationship Help](/articles/relationships-communication/relationship-help.htm): (/articles/relationships-communication/relationship-help.htm) Advice for Building Caring, Meaningful Relationships that Last

[Effective Communication](/articles/relationships-communication/effective-communication.htm): (/articles/relationships-communication/effective-communication.htm) Improving Communication Skills in Your Work and Personal Relationships

[Nonverbal Communication](/articles/relationships-communication/nonverbal-communication.htm): (/articles/relationships-communication/nonverbal-communication.htm) Improving Your Nonverbal Skills and Reading Body Language

Authors: Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., Lawrence Robinson, and Greg Boose. Last updated: May 2017.

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