How to survive dating in the 21st century.

Originally intended as a book, now it’s a freely available Google Doc.

May it prove useful to you.

- Adam

Follow your heart, but bring a compass!

What you are holding in your hands is a comprehensive guide to the (mis)adventure commonly referred to as “dating”. This book was written to serve you as a companion along your journey to finding and keeping quality relationships.

The information contained within is universal, applicable to every gender and sexual orientation, and is organized into an easy-to-follow, logical structure. Above all, it is practical to a fault! That’s right: no gray zones, fluff or ambivalent mishmash; only clear-cut, specific and precise information in your service.

This book does not intend to “redpill” you, to try to sell you something, or involve you in some embarrassing “alpha male” bit. It is neither a hookup guide, nor pickup artistry.

The book does intend to describe and analyze the dynamics of dating and romantic relationships, in addition to boosting your social skills.

Whether you’re a complete beginner or a seasoned dating pro, barely past puberty or about to celebrate your 60th, introverted or a social butterfly, whether you like men, women or both, this book has a lot to offer to you! Hopefully. So read on!

Table of contents

Follow your heart, but bring a compass! 2
Table of contents 3
Before you start 5
On gender equality and spiteful guys 6
On romantic feelings 8
Dating myths 9
Your looks 10
Your personality 11
Meeting people 16
The person you're looking for 16
Meeting people "in real life" 19
How to talk to strangers you're interested in 20
Flirting 21
How to tell if the other person likes you 22
Pulling the trigger 24
50 shades of NO 27
At the workplace 29
Making the date 31
Coffee date 32
Regular date 33
Handling the phone 34
Setting the date 39
How to handle schedule conflicts 42
A note on transportation 44
Online dating 46
The bio 46
Pictures 47
Your target 48
Making the date online 49
Deflecting awkward questions 51
Exotic scenarios 53
The first date 55
Location 55
Broken date 57
The actual date (finally) 61
Behave yourself 63
Keeping the conversation going 64
Ending the date 67

After the first date **70**
The next couple of dates 72
Imagine getting turned off 73
Sex 74
Surviving the relationship **76**
Avoiding complacency 77
Meeting the parents 79
Moving in together 80
Handling conflicts 81
Handling finances 82
How to save a sinking relationship 83
Handling a breakup 85
When you get dumped 86
When you do the dumping 89
In conclusion **93**

Before you start

Before starting out, let's consider what we're up against. The whole dating process can be (very) roughly boiled down to the following parts:

- You meet someone you're romantically interested in.
- The two of you go on dates with each other.
- You enter an exclusive relationship.
- You maintain the relationship and share a happy existence together for the rest of your lives.

My goal is to analyze each of the above parts in detail, logically breaking them down to the best of my abilities to help you understand how this ethereal, poorly understood process actually works. Now, you might protest: "Analyzing and breaking down the dating process? This feels too artificial and robotic! Why can't we just *let things happen* instead?"

I don't like the "just let it happen" sort of dating advice. For many people, most of whom are guys, things just won't "happen" no matter what they do. They lack social skills, and/or have no idea how dating is supposed to work. This is where I come in, hopefully.

If this feels overly rigid and artificial to you, I understand. However, I'd rather explain dating to people mechanically, rather than to see yet another *incel* mass shooting, or have hardcore misogyny fester online, borne out of lonely guys' bitterness and spite.

From where I sit, "just let it happen" is lottery. More often than not it only brings drama, breakups, divorce, and more drama. In contrast, as with all things in life, if you go into dating prepared, you'll get much better results. If you know what your dealbreakers and red lines are, how to conduct yourself during and outside dates, and what to look for in others, you'll have a

fun and successful time in the dating scene, culminating in the ultimate outcome: finding *the One*. Hopefully.

I also dislike the "just talk to people without expectations and it'll happen" line. It's like telling a starving person with a bad fishing technique to just go down to the lake, simply cast their net, and the fish will *surely* come. What if their net is badly woven and can't catch any fish? What if they're trying at the wrong places? What if they unknowingly do things that scare all the fish away? You don't know, they don't know. Such a person needs to be told specifics, not empty platitudes. Here's how you weave your net. Here's how you cast it. Here's where you cast it. Here are the signs you have a catch. Here's how you pull the net out; and that is exactly what I am here to explain. Dating, that is, not fishing!

On gender equality and spiteful guys

While this document is for everyone, we have to recognize that in dating, guys struggle a lot more with meeting women than vice versa. This has been the case for a long time, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. This is not to say women don't face problems in dating. They do, only different types. Whatever the case might be, this book is here to help.

Back in the day, most guys were able to find a partner, simply because for women there was practically no other option. In the US for example, banks could bar women from even opening a bank account on their own, all the way till 1974. Imagine trying to live independently, running your own business, having a career and so on, when you aren't even allowed to open your own bank account. Long story short: women were, for the most part, dependent on men.

The world has changed a lot since then, with both men and women now able to have a professional career. Women are no longer dependent on men for their survival, which means

many guys today, who could have easily found a wife in the 1950s, are now loveless and lonely. This phenomenon has been called the “male loneliness epidemic,” but, with all due respect, I reject this framing. If a man can only find female companionship in a world where women are forced to do so, then the fault lies not in today’s society, but the man in question. “Why is it that no woman wants my company unless they are literally forced into it?” is a question many guys should ask themselves instead of complaining about wokeness, feminism, and so on.

Since the advent of the internet, such lonely guys can network with each other, forming large, online communities of bitter and spiteful men, where instead of self-improvement, they just reinforce each other’s biases and wallow in their misery. They are the so-called incels, short for *involuntary celibates*, a mental illness disproportionately affecting men.

There is indeed a gender imbalance in dating, favoring women, heavily so. Women’s dating site profiles get absolutely bombarded with likes, matches, messages and the like, while men’s dating profiles are lucky to get a handful, if that. If a woman is suddenly overcome with the irresistible urge to have sex, she can be in bed with someone within ten minutes, depending on her place of residence and logistics skills. If a man is suddenly overcome with the irresistible urge to have sex, barring extraordinary circumstances, the only way he can realistically do so is to pay for it, and deal with all the potential legal consequences.

These imbalances are due to lingering conservative attitudes towards sex. Most women are told to safeguard their *purity* at all costs; a holdover from an era when reliable contraception didn’t exist. They are told that women initiating in sex or dating is unbecoming, that women who are too successful in their sexual lives are sluts, and that in dating, women’s role is to sit there, smile and look pretty as men do all the work, pay for everything, and so on.

In a better, more progressive world there is no stigma on women initiating. There is no prudishness about sex; it's just part of life. Women are not barricaded behind six lines of defense, and men aren't comically desperate to get laid. The exhausting and intricate social rituals around sex and dating are optional, with everyone able to express their romantic interest directly, without coming off as a weirdo. Society also doesn't pressure men to always initiate and pay for everything. Sounds good, doesn't it? Luckily this is where Western countries seem to be headed, a course we will hopefully stay on.

The above-described dynamics are already par for the course in the LGBT community; there, understandably, people are far more tuned into progressive ideas, enabling a much healthier and vibrant dating scene. Hopefully we will live to see the day when the *regular* dating scene catches up with them. For the time being however, that gap needs to be bridged, which is exactly what I am here to do.

On romantic feelings

Romantic feelings are **conditional**. Meaning, if you do things that turn the other person off, they will like you less. If you do things that turn them on, they will like you more. *This is very complicated.*

For romantic feelings, the upper limit is a type of powerful love that makes you feel as if you're drunk. A great feeling! On the other end of the spectrum there is utter indifference, where you couldn't care less if a bus ran over the person in question right in front of you.

Here's the fun part: on the spectrum between the strongest love up high, and complete indifference at rock bottom, there is a small, thin line. It just sits there, right in the middle, at an exactly equal distance from both extremes. This line can only be crossed one way: down. Once

someone's romantic feelings dip below that line, they can never be recovered. Let me repeat that: once someone's feelings dip below the dividing line, **once the romantic spark is gone, it's never coming back**.

In that scenario, the relationship – if you even made it that far – has too much negative baggage, and can never be truly restarted, though many people try. It's a complete waste of time. If that romantic spark is gone, it's never coming back. Instead of trying to reignite a pile of ashes, you should consider the mistakes you made that turned the other person off, then go look for someone else, with whom you can start a new fire. Needless to say, I'll be covering this topic in greater detail later on.

Dating myths

When it comes to dating, a question that will inevitably surface is: "do I need to have specific physical characteristics to have a chance?" The answer to that question is a simple *no*.

This question, or rather *issue* comes up with guys most often, namely with the "I'm not tall enough for women" idea, which is a complete myth. For women, a similar fixation is breast size, or height in reverse ("I'm too tall"), at least in my personal experience. The good news is, you don't have to worry about any of that.

If someone won't touch you because they only date people 2 meters tall or above, or D-cup or above, or 160 cm or below, chances are you'd want nothing to do with them to begin with. Think about it: if they're so shallow they'd miss a great catch (i.e. you, hopefully) because you're a few centimeters off here or there, then good riddance. You've dodged a bullet.

I've particularly often seen incel guys use "I'm not tall enough" as an excuse to not improve, and just wallow in their loneliness and misery instead. In reality, it's not that they aren't

tall enough. It's just that women don't like being around bitter sadsacks who openly despise them.

In real life, personality traits such as sense of humor and confidence overwhelmingly trump superficial things like height. For guys, think of it this way: being confident and funny makes you two heads taller, a lack thereof makes you two heads shorter.

The same goes for penis size, breast size, or whatever else we choose to fixate on as a society this time around. What you were born with doesn't really matter, barring genetic deformities or something of that gravity.

Additionally, for all the guys out there: an overly large penis can cause actual issues, by physically not fitting inside your sexual partner, and/or by causing them pain or discomfort, preventing both of you from enjoying sex together.

The bottom line is this: there is no such thing as "my X isn't big/small enough", barring actual genetic deformities. Different people are into different things; there is no real rule of thumb in terms of physical characteristics.

Oh, and for god's sake, don't be the type of person who thinks the genital sizes in professionally produced porn are the 'average'. It's like thinking WWE wrestlers are representative of the average American body type.

Your looks

When it comes to your looks, the rules of thumb are as follows:

- Dress nice.
- Smell nice.
- Look *too* clean.

Even if you don't look like a model, looking clean, dressing nice, and smelling nice can and will take you a long way. Therefore:

- Shave / trim your facial hair if you have it.
- Wash your hair, and get a haircut if needed.
- Cut and clean your nails properly.
- Dress in simple but elegant clothing you feel comfortable in.

With regards to clothing, you don't need ten thousand dollar suits in order to have a chance, despite what some gurus or influencers would want you to believe. For men, the easiest way to dress up is a plain polo shirt with some nice shorts or jeans, with belt and shoes matching in color. The same goes for women with dresses, skirts, and so on.

I'd avoid novelty clothing for the sake of keeping things simple. I'd also avoid warmups, hoodies, ripped jeans and sports sneakers, unless worn deliberately, as part of a specific style or outfit. Otherwise these carry negative connotations in today's society, i.e. "trashy", "dumpy", "immature", "life not in order", et cetera. There is nothing inherently wrong with such clothing; all I'm saying is, you should keep societal expectations in mind to help maximize your success.

Your personality

Question: "I feel like I don't have an interesting or fun personality. Do I therefore have to pretend to be someone else?"

Answer: "No."

The four things you'll need in the personality department are as follows:

- Confidence.

- Good manners.
- Being at least somewhat challenging.
- At least some sense of humor.

The above traits are **universally attractive**, regardless of sex, gender, culture, country, or even time period. These are the only things you need to succeed; forget things like personality measurements, charisma types, communication physicality rates, or similar convoluted nonsense, that online gurus or *charisma coaches* pollute our collective consciousness with. Such people make a living out of taking simple concepts, like the above four points, overcomplicating them, and then selling that convoluted hodgepodge back to you bit by bit.

Confidence.

Question: “How do I become confident?”

Answer: “Fake it till you make it.”

Confidence means being the only one in the room who knows you’re insecure. Everyone has insecurities, but confident people don’t put theirs on display. Sharing insecurities is okay; don’t be an emotionless brick. However, don’t put them out there for everyone to see, or badger people with them. Both are incredibly annoying, and you’ll come across to most people as timid and spineless, which is deeply unattractive for most people, barring sexual fetishes.

The natural learning process for confidence is faking it till you make it. There is no other way. A great example are children, who do this by emulating their parents’ observed behavior.

Little Billy is on the playground with his mom and dad. Suddenly a drunken lowlife emerges from the bushes, yelling incoherently, waving a bottle of cheap booze around. Scared, Billy looks up at his parents and sees that they’re calm and unfazed, quietly glaring at the drunkard. The latter eventually shuffles off; the danger is over. Everything returns to normal.

Lesson learned for little Billy: *stay cool and calm during a stressful situation*. From then on, Billy will try to act calm and unfazed just like his parents, and over time he'll get better and better at it. He develops his confidence; if little Billy can do it, so can you.

Try to stay cool at all times, don't lose your head. Actively calm yourself during stressful situations. Slow yourself down, don't flail around, keep a relaxed posture. Straighten up and put your shoulders back, and, above all, practice maintaining eye contact with people you interact with.

If you're shy and/or socially awkward by default, this will be difficult for the first five hundred times, but it'll get better, I promise. You just have to keep doing it, especially the eye contact part. Nothing screams lack of confidence more than a person averting their eyes, so keep them on the proverbial prize!

One thing you should avoid doing under all circumstances is putting *yourself* down in front of others. What do I mean by this?

"Wow, that breakup between Chad and Stacy sure was messy, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, but at least such a thing will never happen to me, because I'm like, a zero out of ten, ha-ha! Stacy wouldn't even touch me with a stick!"

The above is incredibly annoying to everyone, including your friends. You're not being funny, cute or witty. It's painfully clear that you're just looking for affirmation to stave off your crippling insecurities. Aside from burdening your friends with your emotional baggage, this is also a massive, universal turnoff to everyone ever. This will instantly kill your chances with anyone, so don't put yourself down or engage in self-deprecating humor under any circumstances.

Politeness.

This one is self-explanatory I hope. Don't be rude. Be aware of basic manners, both on the street and by the table. Say "please" and "thank you". Don't talk down to people. Treat everyone with respect, like equals. Remember the lessons you've learned in kindergarten.

Being somewhat challenging.

Let's consider baby's first observation for a moment, the good old "girls like assholes and reject nice guys". This observation most guys make at an early age is actually a misunderstanding of social dynamics; one that is useful for us to examine.

Men (well, boys) believe women are attracted to men being rude and inconsiderate to them. This assessment is incorrect. Quite simply, the asshole, by being cold, distant and hard to read, by often not returning girls' texts and the like, accidentally emulates aspects of being a challenge. Most of everyone loves a good romantic challenge, not just women. It's a universally attractive feature. Because of this, the asshole is accidentally attractive to high schoolers, but falls off later in life, as girls around him cease being fourteen.

I'll be covering the concept of challenge in greater detail later on.

A sense of humor.

If you are funny by nature, great. Everyone likes people with a sense of humor. If you aren't, the easiest way to start is jokes that carry things to the ridiculous extreme:

"Do people ask you out a lot?"

"Two people proposed to me today. It was a slow day."

"How many others are you messaging on Tinder?"

"I lost count after eight hundred."

Note: if you're a very online person operating on ten simultaneous levels of irony, do not rattle off your favorite edgy jokes and memes from the Internet. In real life 99% of people you'll

come across are *normies*, who find the things you're into weird and off-putting, so calibrate your humor accordingly.

Mental health.

Be in a reasonably good mental state when meeting and dating other people. Get eight hours of sleep (or whatever your natural amount is), and always go to sleep and wake up around the same time. Go outside every day. Do some movement every day. Do not use weed or alcohol as emotional substitutes. In case of advanced problems, consider whether those inhibit your ability to maintain a healthy relationship; get therapy or medication if needed. You wouldn't want to date a basket case; conversely, if you are one, people wouldn't want to date you.

At this point you look presentable, smell nice, are mentally stable, treat people with respect, and are at least a bit confident and humorous. Hopefully. If that is indeed the case, congratulations! This already puts you above half the population in my estimation. You are ready to move on to the next part, which is where things start to get exciting (or terrifying, depending on where you sit).

Meeting people

The person you're looking for

Before jumping into the action, it's helpful to consider what kind of person you're looking for. I took the liberty and did the work for you; below you'll find the list of attributes you (should) want in another person.

Single.

Don't go after people who aren't single, I hope I don't have to explain why. You want a clean deal: no breakups or divorces *currently* in progress. No exes floating around them. For the sake of your mental health, the other person should be single and fully available.

Within your area.

As a rule of thumb, aim for a maximum of one hour travel distance between each other. If you live in the same city or out in the sticks, it can be more, depending on the situation. Otherwise constant traveling will get old for both of you, and you risk coming off as desperate for insisting on spending so much time commuting.

Within your age range.

Up to the age of 25 or so, there should ideally be two years between you at most. Above 25, five years maximum. These are rules of thumb; the idea is that both of you should be of equal maturity, and have similar life experiences. A twenty-year-old has way more in common with a twenty-two-year-old than with a thirty-year-old.

You find them attractive from the start.

Surprisingly, many people screw up on this, despite it being obvious. If you don't find them attractive to begin with, things will fall apart. They just will. You'll eventually dump them to look for someone "better", i.e. you wasted their time and hurt them for nothing.

This applies even if you believe they have *potential*. "Oh if they just gained / lost some weight . . ." No. Stop. You're trying to change someone before even getting to know them properly. Not only is this the height of desperation, it's also insulting to the other party. Imagine some random loser showing up to the first date, and handing you a list of things you should change about yourself in order for them to find you attractive. You'd throw your drink in their face, and they would deserve it; so you shouldn't do this to others either.

They like you back.

This is extremely important, considered common knowledge, in fact. And yet, tons of people chase after others who just won't reciprocate their romantic feelings. If someone isn't attracted to you romantically now, as far as you're concerned they never will be. It is completely useless to chase after them; though this doesn't stop millions of people from wasting inordinate amounts of time and money on people who just aren't interested. How to tell if someone likes you romantically? We'll be covering that soon.

They are mentally stable.

You're not a psychiatrist, and they aren't your patient. It's not your job to fix them. It's not your job to fix *anyone*. If your date suffers from mental or emotional problems, they should get professional help before coming at you. You're there to date them, not to conduct therapy sessions.

Their baggage is manageable.

Everyone has baggage, but it *can* be too much. Unresolved childhood issues causing them to blow up at you randomly; inherent distrust of men due to an abusive father; twenty jealous, gun nut exes wanting to get them back; take your pick.

Sit down and rationally consider if you are okay with their baggage. If it bothers you now, it'll bother you ten times more once you're in a relationship, and fifty times more once you're married. If you feel like it's too much, your instincts are probably right, and you should pull the plug while you can.

No deal breakers.

A deal breaker is a type of baggage which is, well, a deal breaker. It's a fatal flaw, a massive red flag, an issue precluding any further progress in your relationship at best.

Here, too, consider what you aren't okay with; think about what your deal breakers are. Here are some examples:

- Excessive swearing.
- Smoking.
- No volume control.
- Low intelligence.
- Smartphone addiction.
- Excessive drinking.
- Rudeness towards strangers.

As a rule of thumb, if you aren't okay with something now, you won't be okay with it later. Consider what your deal breakers are, and whether the other person's annoying habits constitute one (or multiple) for you.

While annoyances are manageable as long as there aren't too many of them, deal breakers are deadly from the start. They have an intense and highly potent corrosive effect on the relationship, and will cause resentment in you faster than you'd imagine. Do some introspection, figure out your deal breakers are, and avoid those who fit the bill.

???

Notice how I didn't put "is within your league" on the list. That's because **there is no such thing as someone being "out of your league". Your "league" is whoever finds you attractive.** This is wildly subjective and impossible to predict. If you don't consider yourself particularly attractive, but a "ten out of ten" person happens to be attracted to you for whatever reason, don't ask why, just be glad about it, and invite them out on a date.

Also notice how I didn't specify anything else about the other person beyond the general stuff. I did NOT tell you to look for your *type*, whatever that might be. Notably I also did not suggest looking for people with specific physical characteristics. That's because I want you to give a chance to everyone you find attractive. As long as they pass your bar of romantic attraction, you should pursue the lead. Who knows, someone starting out as a "five out of ten" in your book might just end up a "ten" because of their irresistible personality. Conversely, you might just find out that the "ten out of ten" you fell in love with instantly has the personality of a brick, killing the romance immediately.

Meeting people "in real life"

Q: "Where do I meet people?"

A: "Literally anywhere."

There is no strict limit on places where you can meet people with the intention to date them. Restaurants, events, the gym, bars, stores, public transit, everything goes. The one prerequisite is **having something in common first**. This is to avoid you coming off as a creep in public, which is a preferable outcome.

NO: Walking up to random people at the store and striking up a conversation.

YES: Accidentally bumping into each other, apologizing, making a joke about it and starting a conversation.

Different locations make it less or more difficult to talk to strangers. The hardest is on the street. It's a very public, common area with noise, strangers around you, and so on. Commonality is also much harder to find, if at all possible.

Locations more conducive to asking people out include private events, such as lectures you're both attending, parties, weddings, banquets, and so on. Such situations offer commonality by default: both of you were invited and/or chose to attend, are interested in the subject of the event. During such events it's socially acceptable to strike up a conversation with other participants, which is your opportunity to shine.

How to talk to strangers you're interested in

The goal here is three-fold:

- To not come across as a creep,
- To gauge whether the other person is interested in you romantically, and
- To get the ball rolling in terms of dating.

For starters, here are some things you should definitely avoid doing:

Asking overly personal questions.

"Which street do you live in?"

“How old are you?”

By prying too much you risk coming off as a creep or a serial killer, depending on severity. Keep the conversation away from their intimate personal details, for it’s none of your business (yet).

Being a spicy internet memelord.

Other people generally don’t respond well to verbal retellings of Reddit memes, so don’t even try, unless you like coming off as a sweaty loser to people.

Oversharing about yourself.

This is an awkward thing to do when talking to complete strangers. It makes you look lonely and desperate. That person you've known for 2 minutes doesn’t need to know about your embarrassing childhood stories or your messy breakup. Save that kind of talk for your group of friends on a Friday night.

Flirting

Lots of people, mostly guys, are worried sick about others misunderstanding their flirting attempts, and coming across as creepy or off-putting. I get that. However, I have good news: you don’t need to bother with flirting. I repeat, **flirting is not necessary**. Just focus on having a fun, light-hearted conversation.

If someone finds you attractive, they find you attractive. Period. You don’t need to *make them* like you with some corny one-liner or some tired pickup routine. Nature has already done the seduction part for you - if the other person is into you, that is. If they aren’t, no amount of flirting could change that anyway, so once again you need not bother.

How to tell if the other person *likes* you

There are ways to reliably guess whether the other person also has a romantic interest in you. Good signs include them seeming receptive to you talking to them; they ask questions back, want to know things about you, the conversation flows, they seem enthusiastic and help you out if things get stuck.

Bad signs include the conversation being flat; they're passive, their answers are unengaging, they don't ask questions back, and the whole process in general feels like pulling teeth.

Let's take an example. You see someone attractive at a party. You have the venue in common, which makes for an easy and awkwardness-free conversation starter:

You: "Hey, nice party!"

Them: "Hi, yeah!"

You proceed with a bit of back-and-forth, like cracking a joke, commenting on something about them that jumps out at you(interesting jewelry, cool shirt, etc.).

"That's a cool necklace you got!"

"Oh thanks! I bought it on my trip to X country, where . . ."

They go on for ten minutes detailing the trip they went on. You nod along and engage with their story by asking followup questions. Once the conversation comes to a natural lull, you ask for their **first** name:

"What's your name by the way?"

"I'm Sarah."

"Nice to meet you, Sarah!"

One thing you can do here to gauge their interest is not telling them your first name automatically in response, only if they specifically ask. If they do, it's more likely that they're interested in you. If they don't, it's more likely that they aren't.

Them: "And what's your name?"

You: "I'm <your first name>."

"Cool, nice to meet you!"

Now compare the above conversation to the one below, and tell me which person has a higher chance of being romantically interested in you:

You: "Hey, nice party!"

Them: "Hi, sure."

"That's a cool necklace you got!"

"Thanks."

"What's your name?"

"July."

"Nice to meet you, July!"

"You too."

Of course there are no definite, 100% accurate ways of figuring out whether the other person likes you, save for them telling you directly. It's possible that they ask for your first name out of simple politeness, or forget to do so due to feeling overly anxious or embarrassed. These aren't supposed to be surefire confirmations of the level of their interest in you; rather, these are simple good and bad signs. You can get a pretty good idea of where the other person stands based on your interactions though. The more excited and energized they seem when talking to

you, the higher the chance that they're interested. The less excited and energized they seem when talking to you, the lower the chance that they're interested. *This is very complicated.*

It goes without saying, but you'll want to spend your time and energy on people who actually seem interested and excited when talking to you. If they aren't, they aren't *playing hard to get*. There is no such thing. A person is either interested in you, or they aren't. If someone is interested, but nonetheless pretends they aren't and actively pulls away from you, that's a type of mental illness you're not equipped to deal with, nor should you want to. For every one person that makes it difficult for you, there are a thousand others that will make it easy, which is what you're looking for.

I'd like to highlight the two, crucially important points from the previous paragraph. It is absolutely vital that you drill these into your head, and act accordingly in the dating scene. I promise you, by remembering these two rules at all times you'll be saving yourself from an unbelievable amount of heartbreak, drama and frustration. Ready? Here it goes:

RULE #1: IF THEY LIKE YOU, THEY WILL MAKE IT EASY FOR YOU.

RULE #2: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS "HARD TO GET", JUST LACK OF INTEREST AND/OR MENTAL PROBLEMS.

Got it? Good. Accepting and internalizing these two rules of dating puts you above 90% of people as far as I can tell. Good for you!

Pulling the trigger

Suppose you're in an *ideal* situation. You've met someone, had commonality and started up a conversation. It went smoothly, they helped you, seemed enthusiastic, and asked for your name back. All indicators point to the fact that they are, in fact, interested in you! Great! So what happens now?

You ask for their phone number.

Wait, what?

You heard me right. You will ask for their phone number. Why? Because you're going to call them to invite them on a date.

Asking for the phone number might strike some people (or you) as strange, especially if you're on the younger side. However, there are very good reasons why I'm suggesting it.

The phone number is more intimate than social media, but less intimate than their home address (please don't ask for that under any circumstances). The phone number occupies that sweet spot in the middle, where it's intimate enough that the person giving it out must be motivated to give it to you, but at the same time not overly intimate to the point where they wouldn't give it to a stranger. All that is to say, asking for a phone number is a great way to see if someone is truly interested in you.

Asking for the phone number is you confirming that the positive signs they're showing you really mean something. Everyone can be nice and friendly in a conversation, flirty even, but once the stakes are raised by just one measly phone number, those who were just playing with you will likely chicken out and drop the act.

Bottom line: if they're interested, you'll get their phone number upon asking. If they aren't interested, you'll get anything but the phone number. Well, most of the time. We'll be covering this soon in more detail.

If your conversation up to that point was your sales pitch, asking for the phone number is you closing the deal. There is no need to overcomplicate things, simply lead into it:

"I've really enjoyed talking to you. By the way, what's your phone number?"

Once you ask for the phone number, you **SHUT UP** and see what the other person comes back with. Do not interject to break the awkward silence in case there is one. It's tough, but that way you're leaving the ball on their court, forcing them to give you a genuine reaction.

Suppose you were successful, and got their number without any hassle. Once you have it noted down, you should politely end the conversation and leave. The number was your goal, and you've achieved it. Don't linger, because you'll risk talking yourself out of this hard-earned victory. You'll have enough time to continue the conversation on your first date.

If the location is such that you cannot leave any time you want, time your request so that you ask for the number at the very end, when you are free to leave. The idea is to not get in front of them again after having asked for the number. It would be an awkward situation, and you'd be risking doing or saying something under stress that might turn the other person off, thereby potentially ruining your chances. If you linger around, talk too much and overshare, you risk saying something goofy, which then risks turning the other person off. An awkward, off-putting comment isn't a big deal among friends and acquaintances. They know and like you, as such they're more charitable and tolerant to your occasional gaffes. On the other hand, your romantic interest is likely a complete stranger. You haven't built any charitability with them yet, so your gaffes can cause disproportionate damage. "I found them attractive, but then they opened their mouth" is a very common complaint, go figure.

In addition, you should not mention *why* you're asking for their number. It should be self-evident. If they ask you why, you might have a problem, see the next section. Not telling them why is also part of being challenging, as in: intriguing, as in: not boring, as in: attractive.

If they do ask why, just fire something back along the lines of "because I want to bring happiness into your life", or some other quick, cheeky comeback, and then leave it at that. If they

persist and ask you again, it's almost certain they aren't interested. Think about it: if a person you're attracted to had a nice conversation with you, and then asked for *your* phone number, would *you* start interrogating them about their reasons for doing so? Absolutely not, as that would ruin the fun and the mystery, and would risk making you look like some neurotic, paranoid weirdo, thereby chasing them away for good.

You shouldn't give them your number automatically in exchange; only if they specifically ask for it. They will have it automatically anyway once you call. Do not ring their phone on the spot either, as that sends the wrong message: "let me just check if you're bullshitting me with a fake number". Such behavior makes you look desperate and spiteful, so avoid doing it.

One final thing to note is that if there are two people together, and you're interested in both, you can only get one number, so take your pick. Taking the numbers of two friends or acquaintances in front of each other puts them in conflict: only one of them can possibly become your exclusive partner in the end, so they'd need to fight over you. Since you're a complete stranger going up against them potentially knowing each other for years, chances are they'll just decline, as their friendship is more important than the good graces of some random idiot (you).

50 shades of NO

When asking for numbers, chances are most of the time you'll be rejected, and that's okay. The bad news is, you will rarely hear the word "no". You have to read between the lines, as most people are polite and/or non-confrontational enough to not shut you down directly. This is also perfectly fine; other people can communicate in any way they please. You have no right to demand from strangers that they talk to you in *your* preferred way.

The good news is, by bottom-lining the situation, reading between the lines and understanding indirect communication will become incredibly easy. Consider the following responses to you asking for someone's number, with my pithy commentary added below each:

"Why do you want it?"

Unless they escaped from a Himalayan monastery two days ago, they know exactly why. Chances are they're just playing around without any actual interest in you, and/or looking to blow you off.

"How about email / social media instead?"

A classic way of rejecting someone. They don't have the confidence to say no to your face, therefore they're trying to redirect you into a less personal medium. They don't like you, and are looking to blow you off later, quickly and easily; and it's much easier to do so off via chat versus a phone call.

"I'm not comfortable giving my number out to strangers."

I bet if their highschool crush asked for their number, or the celebrity they have the hots for, suddenly they would have no such issues. In your case they do have an issue: they just aren't interested in you.

BOTTOM LINE: if you did not get the number, they aren't interested. They are hoping you'll catch the drift and leave them alone.

As I've said, most of the time you won't get the number, and that's okay. It's a numbers game (no pun intended). As a rule of thumb, out of 10 asks:

- 5-6 will reject you on the spot,
- 2-3 will give you the number but blow you off later, and
- 1-2 will make it to the first date. Maybe.

If you get rejected, don't fret. Just get out there and try again. Your success can also fluctuate heavily: one week you're on a winning streak, the next week it's nothing but rejections. You just need to get through the rough times, and enjoy the good times.

At the workplace

As a rule of thumb, be careful with asking out colleagues, and/or people who work for you. Each can go very wrong in its own way.

Asking out a colleague at your workplace has its own challenges. For example, it might be difficult to limit your meetings to dates, which is what you should do. At the workplace you will risk bumping into them, which erodes the aura of mystery and wonder, and takes the *magic* out of the dating process if you will. You also risk running your mouth, and saying something awkward in front of them. Spare yourself the potential awkwardness and gaffes; only meet for dates initially, when you are in the correct mindspace, and come well-prepared.

If the workplace is big enough, and there is virtually no risk of the two of you running into each other, then you might have a shot at asking a colleague out. However, do keep in mind the risks involved if things don't work out between the two of you. Especially if you end up dropping them: you don't want them spreading vicious rumors about you out of spite, or badmouthing you to the bosses, thereby jeopardizing your employment.

If the colleague you're after is your subordinate, DO NOT ASK THEM OUT. Not only is it extremely awkward for them, you end up essentially abusing your power over them. From the perspective of your subordinate, rejecting you can also jeopardize their livelihood. You do not want to put anyone in such a situation. Not even yourself: imagine going on a date with someone, and not knowing whether they're there because they really like you, or because they're afraid to lose their job, or hope for a promotion.

If the colleague you want to ask out is your superior, similarly do not ask them out. They might think you're after a promotion, or want to secure your position in a more hands-on way. None of these are a good start to a healthy relationship, so don't even bother.

The definition of *workplace* extends to establishments where you are the customer, and the employee you're about to ask out is performing a service for you: a waiter, a store clerk, a salesperson, and so on. It's okay to ask either of them out, under one condition: you must wait until after your business is concluded. You do not want to make them feel like they're beholden to you. As the customer, you are above them in the business hierarchy. Do not abuse this position to get a date. Wait until all transactions are done and over, once the two of you are peers again.

Once the waitress / salesperson / clerk gives you their number, you will not visit the establishment they work at for as long as the two of you are dating. This is once again to prevent awkward situations, and to keep the romantic air of mystery and challenge alive. Additionally, they will not feel like you dating them is contingent upon the service they provide to you.

As a side note, keep in mind the possibility of things not working out between the two of you. Should any of you dump the other, your visits to your favorite restaurant will be about to get a lot more awkward. If you do not wish to take that risk, the solution is simple: don't play where you eat.

Making the date

A date is a fun, romantic meetup to get to know each other, to bond with the other person, and to determine whether the two of you are right for one another. Think of dates as test runs for both of you, helping to find potential red flags and deal breakers before it's too late.

Once you have at least one number from a person you're romantically interested in, you should invite them out on a date. Before you do however, consider the following caveats:

You should invite them out on the phone, obviously.

You want to hear their voice to further gauge their interest in you. When answering, do they sound like they just won the lottery, or like they just got back from their mom's funeral? As a rule of thumb, the more upbeat they are the better your chances.

You should wait 4-5 days to call, counting from the day you got their number.

Most people get in touch immediately, but you'll be different. You'll leave some space for them to wonder about you, and to show that you aren't lonely and desperate to get in touch. If they like you, they won't forget who you are in 4-5 days. If they don't, they likely will. This is another good way to tell where the other person stands.

You should call on a workday, ideally between 18:00 and 20:00.

This is usually a convenient time window when they're already at home from work, calm and relaxed, able to answer your phone call. Calling on weekends is not ideal, as people usually have things going on, like being with friends, family, and so on.

You should set the date 4-5 days to a week in advance, on a weekday.

Setting a date too early, i.e. literally the next day or the day after, is rude, as you assume they have nothing going on in their lives and are infinitely flexible. Setting a date too far out, i.e. 14 days, is also rude, as you imply you care very little for actually meeting them. Setting the date

4-5 days to a week out is the golden middle; not too soon, not too late. During those 4-5 to 7 days both of you have a chance to look forward to the date, building excitement and anticipation.

Now that we covered the caveats, let's get into the dates themselves. We differentiate between two main types of date:

- Coffee date, and
- "Regular" date.

Coffee date

You talked for around 5-10 minutes or less when you first met, meaning you're practically complete strangers still. This means your first date should be a coffee date. The idea of the coffee date is to give the two of you a safe, neutral meeting spot to talk, to gauge whether there is a spark between the two of you. Coffee dates are short and low-expense to avoid having to spend disproportionate time and money in vain.

This is actually a really classy move: instead of trying to drag them into a regular date right off the bat, you're giving the other person space, without forcing them to commit to a 2-3 hour dinner in the evening with someone who might not even be a good match for them.

Imagine someone asking you out while you're not really sure whether they pass your bar. They immediately go for the big dinner date, and as soon as it starts, you realize there is just no spark from your part. Now you'll be sitting there for 2-3 hours, as the person across you is spending money on you, and doing their best to entertain you. Meanwhile you already know full well that things will not go anywhere. It's best to avoid such situations, and use the coffee date as a helpful buffer to see if a regular, big date has any prospects.

This should go without saying, but I will add nonetheless: coffee dates are a one-time occasion. You only have a maximum of one per person, otherwise you'll risk coming off as

cheap, unwilling to spend money on a dinner for a person you're into. One coffee date per person per life, goes the rule. The second date, if there will be one, should always be a regular date.

- Recommended location: cafe, in a frequented, safe area.
- Time: after work, in the afternoon or evening.
- Duration: approximately 30 minutes.
- 1-2 non-alcoholic drinks per person, host pays.
- Transportation: everyone gets there and leaves on their own.
- One coffee date per person per life.

Regular date

If the two of you talked for at least a good 20-30 minutes when you first met, and you are certain there is a spark between the two of you, you have the option to open with a regular date.

Compared to the coffee date, the regular date is a longer, costlier affair. Most people wouldn't be comfortable having a full meal for 2-3 hours with someone they only met for a few minutes. After a substantial initial conversation however, it's generally fine to do so.

In popular culture there exists this meme of going to the cinema for your first date. A boy and a girl, sitting side by side in the dark theater as the boy is sheepishly trying to put his hand on top of hers on the armrest. This tired cliche is wrong for multiple reasons. First off, you don't paw over people on your first date. Second, movie theaters are as bad a date location as it gets. How are you going to get to know each other if both of you just sit next to each other in the dark, staring at the screen?

At least for the first 4-5 dates, do not go to places like clubs or cinemas. Your goal is to get to know each other better, and that happens through *talking* to each other. If both of you are silently watching a movie in the dark, or if there's loud music blasting from everywhere, none of

that will happen. You'll be the same near-complete strangers before and after, i.e. you wasted your time and money.

For the first 4-5 dates, restaurants are your go-to option. Restaurants are calm, quiet, controlled spaces offering virtually no confusing or stressful situations. It's the ultimate place to get to know each other, allowing you to talk for hours over food and drinks. If you find restaurants too calm and/or boring, trust me: during a date with someone you're really into, even the most boring restaurant will feel like the Thunderdome.

- Recommended location: restaurant, in a frequented, safe area.
- Time: in the evening.
- Duration: 2-3 hours.
- Full meal, host pays.
- Transportation: either meeting near the restaurant, or offering to pick them up.

Handling the phone

In order to make the date, you'll have to call them and arrange your meeting via the phone. Ideally they pick up almost immediately, sound happy and excited upon learning who you are, and after a few minutes of light-hearted chatting they help you schedule the date effortlessly. Life is not that simple however; more often than not you'll be encountering curveballs left and right.

Suppose you let it ring 6-8 times, but they haven't picked up. A common situation. Perhaps they're busy at the moment, or have their phone on silent. First off, check if your number isn't hidden. Many people won't answer calls from hidden numbers, so make sure yours is displayed for others.

If they don't pick up, you will **not** immediately try calling again. That's a move reserved for desperate, insecure losers. Instead, you'll send them a text message:

"Hi <insert their first name>, this is <insert your FIRST name>. Call me back on this number: <insert your phone number>. Have a nice day!"

To make it look a bit less technical:

"Hi Chris, this is John. Call me back on this number: 123456789. Have a nice day!"

The reason I want you to type out your phone number in the text message is to leave no loose ends. Maybe their phone doesn't display the numbers text messages are sent from. Maybe they're changing phones, and only the contents of the text messages get transferred. Maybe they're having some other technical issue. The chances are low, but when trying to date someone you're really into, it's best to cover all your bases at all times, to make sure there are no accidents that could sabotage your efforts.

So you sent the above text message. Now what? You wait for them to reach back. It might be a good idea to turn off *silent* or *vibrate only* mode on your phone, to make sure you catch their call if or when it comes.

Wait 3-4 days for them to reach back. If they don't, try calling again. If they don't pick up once again, you can try sending the same text message again. If they don't reach back after that, **you're dead.** They will never answer your phone call. They are just trying to blow you off, hoping you'll get the hint and leave them alone.

Think of it this way: if they liked you, they'd take the first opportunity to reach back to you. If someone you're really into tried contacting you, would you not try to get back to them as soon as possible?

Suppose they answer the phone. Great, but you're not out of the water just yet, You fire off your opening line:

"Hi <their first name>, this is <your FIRST name>!"

You introduce yourself with this, and nothing more. Do not give them your full name, the place and time you met, a visual description of yourself, and/or your social security number. Your first name is enough, since you're once again trying to gauge their interest in you. Consider the two possible responses to this:

Good: "Oh hi <your first name>, how's it going? I was wondering when you'd call!"

This is great. The other person remembers who you are, additionally they're excited and enthusiastic about you calling them.

Bad: "Who?"

Assuming you told them your first name when you first met, them not remembering you after a few days is bad news. Chances are they aren't interested. Well, why did they ask for your number then? You don't know. You don't care. The bottom line is: they don't remember who you are after a few days. If someone you're really into asked for your number, would you forget them after just a few days?

I realize this might be a bitter pill to swallow for some, so let's be extra charitable. Let's assume this could be a temporary slip of mind from their part. In that case, you can help them out just a bit:

"Hi <their first name>, this is <your first name>!"

"Who?"

"This is <your first name>."

Good: "Oh right, I remember, sorry! What's up?"

Bad: “I’m sorry, doesn’t ring a bell.”

If they don’t recall on second try, **you’re dead**. There is no point in continuing the conversation. Pretend you called the wrong number, then hang up and delete it from your phone:

“I see, must have called the wrong number. Goodbye!”

If they don’t remember you even after repeating your first name and giving them a bit of time to think, there is virtually no chance they’re interested in you.

Some people would still try to rationalize this however: “Oh, what if they are interested, but just had a memory lapse?” Right. If forgetting about you really was just the mother of all memory lapses, they’ll remember who you are later, and call you back apologizing profusely. Don’t hold your breath for them to call however, because they never will. Why would they? They aren’t interested in you.

If someone forgets who you are like that, don’t even try calling them back again. You would come across as the world’s most desperate loser. Do not chase after people who aren’t willing to make an effort in return, or who can’t remember who you are after a few days. Stop wasting your time, and find someone else, who will remember.

Let’s stick to the positive scenario for now. They remember who you are, and sound generally happy and enthusiastic when talking to you.

After introductions are done, engage in **brief** smalltalk a couple of minutes at maximum. Do not hang on the phone for hours! You’re there to ask them out on a date, not to learn about the weird-looking branch their dog fished out of the pond last Friday. That’s a fine conversation topic for a date, but in order to have a date, you must set a date. That’s what the phone is for, and only that. I repeat: the phone is for setting dates only. Save your conversation topics for the actual date, when you’re sitting across each other.

Your brief smalltalk must be light-hearted and positive. Do not talk about negative and/or serious subjects. Once you feel like you had enough small talk, it's time to pull the trigger:

"Listen, I want to take you out on a date. How about meeting on X day, at Y time, at Z location?"

If the two of you met only briefly, your first date will be a coffee date. If that's the case, make it clear:

"Listen, I'd like to invite you out for a coffee. How about meeting on X day, at Y time, at Z location?"

Do notice that in both cases, I proposed a **definite day**, a **definite time**, and a **definite location**. Moreover, I did not beat around the bush: I was direct about my intentions of inviting them out for a (coffee) date. With this, I gave them the full package. They don't have to dig for information, everything is laid out in front of them very clearly. All they have to do is accept, and the date is a go!

Compare the above to a bad example. Below is how NOT to do it:

"Would you like to maybe meet up somewhere sometime?"

Could this request be any more sheepish and pathetic? Where? When? Meeting up? What do you want to do? Stop wasting their time! You're the one initiating, they shouldn't have to pull the information out of you!

Imagine calling a car dealership to arrange a test drive of the car you're considering buying from them. The salesperson on the phone will not beat around the bush; you won't be hearing words like "sometime", "somewhere" or "maybe". They will nail down your meeting so hard as if they were the fifth Roman governor of Judea. Your brief phone call will end with you

having the exact date, time and place for your test drive. This is the energy I want you to channel when it comes to inviting people on dates through the phone.

Setting the date

So you pulled the trigger, suggesting a definite date, time and place for your date:

"Listen, I'd like to invite you out for a coffee. How about meeting on X day, at Y time, at Z location?"

Let's go over the caveats of each component, for there are some.

The date of your meetup.

Set the date 4-5, maximum 7 days in advance, on a workday **from Monday to Thursday.** You're strangers still, weekends and Fridays are off-limits for now. Those are reserved for their friends and family, and later you, once you become exclusive.

Additionally, the reason why you're making the date 4-7 days out is to avoid schedule conflicts. Most people already have plans for the next 1-3 days, but far fewer people do for the next 4-7 days, leaving you more room to insert the date.

The time of your meetup.

Meet them after work hours, preferably in the 18:00-20:00 time period. Do not try an earlier time, as it might conflict with their work schedule. Do not do late dates, as they will have to get home somehow afterwards. A late date might also prevent them from getting a good night's sleep, increasing the chances of them declining your offer.

The location of your meetup.

Whether a coffee date or a regular date, make sure the establishment you're planning to visit is at a safe and accessible location. Do not take them to places they might be uncomfortable in, I don't care how much you love the atmosphere of shady trucker bars.

Repeat.

Once they accept the date, reiterate the details in passing:

"Alright, great! So I'll see you on X day, at Y time, at Z location."

This is you being thorough and attentive to details. Just like the salesperson, you're reiterating the details one more time, making sure the other person got them properly. This is a small addition, but as I've said before, you should cover all your bases constantly. You do not want to wait around at the meeting spot for half an hour in vain, only to find out the other person misheard you on the phone, and went to a completely different location.

A bonus hot tip from me to you.

I find it very classy and thoughtful to make it clear to the other person via the phone whether the date will involve eating or not. This prevents situations where the other person shows up for the dinner when they already ate beforehand, or showing up with an empty stomach and finding out that the date won't involve a meal after all.

Ideally the other person accepts the date, time and location you offer right away. In that case the date is set. Congratulations! Now **you have nothing else to do till the date**. Politely end the phone conversation.

This is an important point I'd like to hammer on a bit more. Once you proposed the date and the other person accepted it, your job is done. You do not need to do anything else till the start of the actual date. You shouldn't contact the other person, only in case something comes up on your end, and there is no way for you but to reschedule. On the other hand, if they reach out to you between you calling and the start of the date, e.g. to share some interesting story with you, gently shut it down as follows:

"Wow, that sounds interesting! Can't wait to talk about it on our date!"

Do not chit chat on the phone outside of dates. You'll want to have as many possible conversation topics for a date as possible, to avoid awkward silences and the like. If you exhaust all conversation topics before the date, what will you do on the date itself? Besides, leaving the other person alone between dates will build anticipation and excitement for both of you, which is a good thing.

To reiterate, here's the ideal course of you closing the deal on the phone:

"Listen, I want to take you out on a date. How about X day, at Y time, at Z location?"

"Sure, sounds good!"

"Alright, great! So I'll see you on X day, at Y time, at Z location. Don't eat beforehand, because we're going to!"

"Got it! Thanks for letting me know!"

"Sure thing! See you then!"

"Till then!"

To reiterate one more time, once you set the date, do not call or otherwise communicate with them, save for an emergency rescheduling. Everything is set, there is no need to confirm or verify anything.

You also shouldn't call them before the date, to confirm that they're coming. Doing so would be a desperate move, giving the other person the impression that people tend to ghost you a lot, therefore you're confirming out of insecurity. I'm not saying that's necessarily true about you, but that's the impression you're giving.

There is no need to confirm anything in addition. You set the date, both of you are aware of the day, time and location. You promised to show up, they promised to show up. You will do so without any further prompts, and you will trust them to do the same.

If the other person reaches out to confirm, then you should obviously let them know the date is on, and at the same time indicate that they need not do this in the future:

"Hey, I just wanted to check in, are we still on for tomorrow?"

"Of course we are! When I promise to be there, I'll be there! If anything would come up, I would let you know in time."

How to handle schedule conflicts

Sometimes, when making a date, the other person will not make it so easy for you. You will inevitably run into schedule conflicts, which you should handle appropriately. Consider the exchange below, with my commentary in *italics*.

"Listen, I want to take you out on a date. How about X day, at Y time, at Z location?"

You made the pitch as you're supposed to.

"I'm sorry, I can't make it on X day . . ."

Uh-oh. What comes after this will tell you a lot about their feelings towards you.

Option A: "But I'm free on Y day!"

Good. They like you, they want to see you, so they help you with the rescheduling.

Option B: silence.

Not good. If they don't help you out, they might not like you after all. This is very likely their way of blowing you off without risking a direct confrontation. At this point you should suggest one more day. If they decline AND won't counteroffer, they aren't interested, and are just waiting for you to take the hint. Wish them a nice day and hang up.

"Listen, I want to take you out on a date. How about Monday, at 19:00, at the <place>?"

"I'm sorry, I can't make it on Monday."

"I see, how about Tuesday at 19:30?"

“That doesn’t work for me either.”

“I see.”

“Yeah.”

“Too bad. I gotta go now, have a nice day!”

“Bye.”

As soon as you hang up, you delete their number and forget about them. They aren’t interested, and are just waiting for you to take the hint and piss off. They likely only gave you their number because they were afraid to say no to your face for whatever reason. Maybe they had bad experiences in the past, maybe they are just non-confrontational by default. You don’t care about any of that however; the bottom line is, they declined two of your suggestions without a counteroffer. It’s time to go and look for someone else who will accept your date suggestion, or at least actively help you reschedule.

Let us look at a good example for a change:

“Listen, I want to take you out on a date. How about Monday, at 19:00, at the <place>?”

“I’m sorry, I can’t make it on Monday. I can make it on Wednesday though!”

“Great, how about Wednesday at 19:30 then? Same place.”

“Sounds good! No, wait, Wednesday won’t work for me, I have an appointment. How about Thursday? Same time, same place?”

“That works for me! So I’ll see you on Thursday, at 19:30, at <the place>.”

“Sounds good! Looking forward to it!”

“Great! Me too, meet you then and there!”

“Got it! See you then!”

“Bye!”

When making a date, remember the eternal rule of thumb:

IF THEY LIKE YOU, THEY WILL MAKE IT EASY FOR YOU.

If someone is making it unnecessarily difficult for you to meet, guess what? They might not be interested in you after all. In fact, they most likely aren't.

If someone likes you on the other hand, and wants to spend time with you, they will come back at you like a boomerang, looking to initiate every chance they get. When dating a person who's really into you, you will almost have no choice but to date them. They will pursue you, they will be kicking down your door, they will make time for you almost no matter what. That is the energy you're looking for.

Obviously there are degrees of attraction; someone might not be into you *that much* initially. As time goes on however, both of you should start liking each other more and more, resulting in the above high motivation.

A note on transportation

If there is good, frequent public transit accessible to both of you, you can meet near or at the date location with everyone getting there on their own. If there is no public transit, the host can pick up the invited party and take them to the date location with their car.

If the latter case applies to you, ask for their home address on the phone, making it clear you'll come pick them up. They might decline your offer, insisting they will get to the date location on their own. This is fine, not everyone is comfortable ridesharing with a near-complete stranger.

If the same occurs for the second date (assuming the first one went well), things get a little suspicious. After one full-length date they should be comfortable enough to ride with you, but some people can be simply extra cautious.

If they refuse to give you their address for the third date, I'd consider passing on them. Assuming the previous two big dates went well, they are either paranoid, suffer from some sort of trauma, or, as the most common scenario, they are not interested. In the latter case them not sharing their address with you is their way of keeping you at arm's length. They like the free meals, but don't you get too close! You're their free food and entertainment dispenser, not a romantic interest. Pass.

Think of it this way: if they like you, gave you their number and spent two dates with you already, AND you didn't act like a schizo on either occasion, they should be comfortable giving you their home address for you to pick them up.

If they do have some past trauma regarding this, like a crazy ex stalking them or something similar, they should (and I'd imagine *would*) make it clear to you:

"Listen, please don't take me not sharing my address the wrong way. It's not that I'm not interested in you, it's that I've had a very bad experience in the past, so please give me time."

There, mystery solved. However, I'd imagine you won't be hearing this a lot, as the other person refusing to share their home address is usually due to a lack of romantic interest in you.

Oh, and one more thing: if you're driving them to the date, abide by the speed limit and other traffic rules. If you drive like a Formula-1 pilot, you will ruin your chances with most people. Nobody likes fearing for their lives for 30 minutes inside a stranger's car.

Online dating

Warning: do not use online dating services if you're below the age of 18!

Provided you do things right, online dating enables meeting people on a potentially industrial scale. Your success in online dating begins with your profile, which has two components: your pictures and your written bio.

The bio

If you're using apps like Tinder, almost nobody reads your bio, so you shouldn't bother filling it out if you don't want to.

If you insist on writing a bio, don't try to be funny, sarcastic and so on, as those don't come across the screen as well as you think. You're just creating an opportunity for the other person to misunderstand your brilliant, searing wit, and write you off as some weirdo as they swipe your profile away.

Leave your bio blank, or write something short and sweet:

"Looking forward to your best joke in person!"

Don't share personal details about you, that's what dates are for. On dating sites that put more focus on users' bio, you will sometimes see people typing out their life's story in there. Way to ruin the fun of the other person slowly getting to know you over the course of your dates!

Otherwise avoid typing out anything that could give people the wrong impression about you, and consequently write you off. Don't destroy your chances like that, keep the bio short and sweet.

Pictures

Your pictures are the single most important aspect of your dating profile. Everybody, and I mean *everybody* will judge you based on those, so make sure you get them right!

You'll need 3-4 pictures of yourself. Not anyone else. Not a group photo with your friends. A picture of **you**.

I recommend at least two types of photos: one where you're wearing a casual outfit, and one where you're wearing formal clothes. In addition, I would also include a photo with your pet (or the neighbor's if you don't have one), and a photo of you engaged in your hobby activity, whatever that might be.

For the casual look, put on some informal but elegant clothing; for guys, these are nice shorts, a polo shirt, and so on. For women, basically anything below a cocktail dress, though I might not be the right person to consult in this regard. Dressing casually does not mean taking a selfie in your ratty pajama pants and stained hoodie, unless you want to give people the impression that your life is a mess.

Your formal look can range from a blazer with nice jeans to a full tuxedo for guys. For women, I'm sure you'll figure it out.

Next is the picture of you with your pet, assuming you own something normal like a dog or a cat. If your pet is a rattlesnake or tarantula, it might be best to skip this part.

A picture of you performing your favorite hobby or freetime activity will serve as a conversation starter, and to show people you aren’t boring.

On all the above photos you should be the absolute focus. You should smile and appear friendly and relaxed. **No sunglasses**, as those give the impression that you’re hiding something.

Your pictures should also be recent, as in: they should look like you right now. Do not put up old photos of yourself, on which you were 20 kilos lighter. That's false advertising.

It should go without saying, but also make sure your photos are well-lit, properly focused and stable, that they're in portrait mode, and that you are at an appropriate distance from the camera. Don't be staring down the objective from up close, or stand way in the back as part of the scenery. If it's a photo from the waist up, your shoulders should not be out of the frame. If it's a full body shot, you should comfortably fit inside a portrait-mode photo from head to toe.

Additionally, if you're wealthy, do not flaunt it under any circumstances. Putting up photos of you chilling in your jacuzzi, or sitting in your Rolls Royce, pulling back the sleeve of your Louis Vuitton suit to check the time on your Rolex, can and will attract the wrong kind of people: gold diggers. People like that couldn't care less about you. All they care about is your wealth, and that it's being spent on them. Therefore, unless you want to be always guessing whether your date is there for you or your money, don't advertise your wealth online. Keep it a secret until the two of you are exclusive, just to be sure.

Your target

Most dating sites let you specify your target group when sifting through other people's profiles. Here are the settings I recommend using:

- Within your geographical area.

1-1,5 hours maximum to get to each other. Long distance relationships don't work. Depending on the area, this should be 30-40 kilometers at most.

- Within your age range.

If you're 35, don't go chasing after 18-year-olds. Under the age of 25, you should set the age range at plus minus 3 years. At or above 25, plus minus 5 years.

- **You find them attractive from the start** based on their pictures.

This is a no-brainer, yet a surprising number of people refuse to abide by it. Do not initiate with people you don't find attractive. Period.

With the above information, you should be able to put together an at least serviceable dating profile. As time goes on, you should start getting some matches, messages and whatnot. Do keep in mind, online dating favors women overwhelmingly. While most guys are lucky to get 2-3 messages / matches per week, girls will be absolutely inundated with them, receiving up to hundreds in a week.

Granted, most of the requests women receive online tend to be low quality: dudebros one step above cavemen asking them to “come over” and the like. As long as you have your photos in order however, and know how to conduct a brief and fun conversation online, you’ll be a shining beacon above the swamp. How so? Read on.

Making the date online

Once you match with someone, start a regular, light-hearted conversation just like you would face to face. Ask about or comment on something they have in their photos or bio, in a way that your question is engaging, meaning the other person will have fun answering it.

Compare the questions below:

According to their profile, they went to X university.

“How was X university?”

“What did you like the most about going to X university?”

They’re holding a dog in one of their pictures.

“Is your dog friendly?”

"What kind of personality does your dog have?"

In one of their photos they're standing in front of the Eiffel Tower.

"How was Paris?"

"What was the most interesting thing about Paris for you?"

Within each pair, question number one is boring, and can be answered in one word. The second question of each pair is engaging on the other hand, inviting your conversation partner to launch into a longer response, potentially giving you more bits of information you can hold onto, in order to keep the conversation going.

After a dozen-or-so substantial messages between each other, it's time to pull the trigger. Yes, that quickly. We're not there for idle chit chat. Some people talk for days, even weeks without ever seeing each other. The online dating platform is a tool to organize your first date; nothing more, nothing less.

If the other person tells you they want to talk a bit more before making any arrangements, fine. Give it another dozen-or-so substantial messages, then try again. If they shut you down again, that's it. They're looking for a conversation partner, not a date.

You pulling the trigger will involve inviting the other party out for a **coffee date**. Why a coffee date? It should be obvious by now: because you haven't seen each other in real life yet; you are complete strangers. The coffee date will be your opportunity to size up the other person in real life; making sure their real-life appearance matches that of their pictures, and finding out if there is a spark between the two of you.

Schedule the coffee date 2-3 days in advance. No need to do the 4-7 days routine, since there isn't any anticipation to build, as the two of you haven't yet seen each other in real life.

Do not ask for their phone number on the dating site. You'll do that at the end of the coffee date if things went well, and you can imagine dating that person long-term. Once you have their number at the end of the coffee date, you go back to the regular routine of waiting 4-5 days to call them, and making dates 4-7 days out.

If it turns out during the coffee date that future dates are a no-go for you, e.g. they reveal some sort of red flag or deal breaker right off the bat, or if they look nothing like their pictures (in a bad way), just finish the date like you would, but you won't ask for their phone number in the end. Why would you? It's not going anywhere. After that you delete / unmatch them in the dating app, and look for someone new instead.

Deflecting awkward questions

During dating, but especially online dating, the other person might throw awkward, overly serious questions at you too early on. The way to deal with them is to deflect with humor. The idea is that you're still strangers, and the other person has no business getting that serious yet. Overly serious questions include things like:

"How many others are you talking to on <the dating site / app>?"

"How many others are you seeing right now?"

"Are you looking for a long term relationship?"

"How many relationships have you had so far?"

Once again, the other person has no business asking you such personal questions that early on. You will therefore playfully deflect their questions using humor:

"How many others are you talking to on <the dating site / app>?"

"I lost count after six hundred."

"How many others are you seeing right now?"

"I had fifty dates last week. It was a slow week."

"Are you looking for a long term relationship?"

"I plan on proposing to you on the first date."

"How many relationships have you had so far?"

"Today, or until now in total?"

Some people might object, saying that such overly personal questions are completely legitimate, even if asked very early on. Whatever happened to "just let it happen", or "just go with the flow without expectations". No, it's *not okay* to start digging that early on. Both of you should save overly personal questions for much, much later, if you insist on asking them to begin with.

If you deflect overly personal questions with humor, it's possible the other person will get mad at your responses. If that's the case, **good**. You found out early on that they are rigid, humorless, entitled, and generally toxic. "How dare this complete stranger not confide in me their intimate details at my request, after having known each other for 2 entire hours? The bastard!"

If you encounter such a situation, there's your chance to cut things off at your earliest convenience, thereby dodging a bullet. Think of it this way: if they get so upset at you playfully telling them not to pry so early on, what else do they have in store for you? Trust me, you don't want to find out. Delete their contact, and make sure to never see them again. Alternatively, if you're cruel enough, you can help match them up with someone you despise.

Exotic scenarios

Whether online or in real life, you'll come across situations that are exotic, i.e. something more complicated than both of you being single, alone and available. Below are some common scenarios with my added commentary and advice.

They have a child.

Consider in advance if you're okay with that. If things get serious, you WILL have to adopt the child, treating them as your own. Are you ready for that scenario? Make sure you do some introspection before dating a single parent with a small child.

"Single" with breakup in progress.

The only appropriate response here is "Call me when it's done, then we'll go out!" You don't want an angry boyfriend or girlfriend showing up to your house with a gun. In the dating scene you should look for as clean of a deal as possible, to avoid stress, drama, and the occasional death threat.

"Single" with divorce in progress.

The only appropriate response here is "Call me when it's finalized, then we'll go out!" You don't want an angry spouse showing up to your house with a gun.

Living with an ex by choice.

That's what I call Crazytown. Under no circumstances should you touch that. There are forces at work there beyond your ken, and you do not want to involve yourself in such a deal. Don't say you haven't been warned.

Sex worker, polyamorous, and so on.

There is nothing wrong with either, but chances are you aren't equipped socially and emotionally to deal with any of those situations. Dating a sex worker, a polyamorous person, or

anything in that ballpark requires excellent knowledge of yourself, a rock-solid ego, and prodigious levels of emotional maturity and stability. If this isn't you, don't bother. Keep it simple, and go for *regular* single people instead.

Major differences in wealth and attainment.

Q**:** "The person interested in me has eight PhDs, is a millionaire, traces their lineage back to a noble family dating back to 500 BC, and they just won their sixth Nobel prize. I work as a plumber. Should I go for it?"

A: "Yes. It doesn't matter if the other person has superior wealth, status or attainment. Them being interested in you romantically is all that matters. If they like you, but wouldn't touch you because they view you as a lowlife, guess what: they're a horrible person and you want nothing to do with them. It's okay to feel insecure in this situation; such a status difference can be intimidating. Just don't be visibly uncomfortable / insecure. Play it cool, treat them like fellow, equal human beings."

Q: "I have eight PhDs, am a millionaire, trace my lineage back to a noble family dating back to 500 BC, and I just won my sixth Nobel prize. The person I want to ask out works as a plumber. Should I go for it?"

A: "Yes. Once again, the only thing that matters is that you're interested in each other romantically. In this case however, don't tell them you're wealthy and/or highly accomplished right at the beginning. Leave that for later, as you want to make sure the other person is with you for *you,* not your wealth or status. You also don't want to make them uncomfortable by flaunting the difference between the two of you."

The first date

We have finally arrived to the vaunted first date. We have gone over so much, yet we are just getting started. To recap, so far:

- You've met people online or face to face,
- You called and set a date properly, and
- You're now waiting for the date to come.

To reiterate, the point of dating is to find a long-term romantic companion. Some of you might insist that you only want to do one night stands, but know this: everyone is against commitment until they meet someone they really like. When that happens, that whole "I just want to do one night stands" routine is suddenly out the window, go figure.

Dates are opportunities to get to know each other better; it's a bonding experience. As you get more familiar and comfortable with each other, hopefully your feelings will also deepen; that is, if none of you is turning the other person off with something.

Dates are also used to recognize and filter out problems before it's too late, as in: "I do". They are an opportunity to catch issues and deal breakers in time, before locking yourself down into a commitment you shouldn't enter. All in all, dates are there to find out whether the two of you are a good match for each other.

Location

As I've said before, the ideal location for the first few dates are restaurants, the best places for those fateful first encounters for multiple reasons.

First off, the two of you are sitting in front of each other, which is conducive for having a conversation while maintaining eye contact. Compare that to sitting in a cinema, and silently ogling at the big screen next to each other.

Second, restaurants are generally calm places. There are no loud noises, no people screaming, no flashing lights, nothing that could distract the two of you from each other.

Additionally, having a meal together has the added benefit of you being able to shovel food into your mouth if you're not sure what to say next.

I recommend you scout out locations in advance, before taking a date there. Visit some restaurants alone or with friends, try their meals, get a feel for the vibe of each place. Look for distractions: is there loud music playing? Are the walls covered with screens aimed at the guests? Is the clientele decent? Are the personnel friendly? In each restaurant you visit, pick out the best spot: a table in a calm and quiet location, without any screens pointed either of you, and otherwise with as few distractions as possible. Write down the name of the restaurant, and the numbers of the best tables if they have one; or just memorize them. Once you call them to reserve a table for your date, you'll know exactly which one to request.

If I were you, depending on where you live, I would check out at least half a dozen restaurants. If half of those are good enough, you'll have three options to pick from right off the bat.

Do not take your date to the same restaurant twice in a row. Try to switch things up to keep things interesting! In an ideal world, you should have at least 5-6 places to juggle. Of course, taking someone to a given restaurant doesn't mean you can't ever take them there again. You can cycle through a few more, and then return to the same one later.

I'd like to additionally stress that the location of your first few dates should be *proper* restaurants. A type of place where you can sit down, and have a full meal in 2-3 hours. Do not take your dates to the corner buffet, or to the street kebab vendor; unless these are literally your only option, and / or where you live it's socially accepted to do so.

Oh, and one last thing, if it wasn't clear already: **always reserve a table in advance**. You do not want to find out on the spot that they don't have any free tables left. Therefore, call the restaurant immediately after setting the date on the phone.

Broken date

When discussing your first date, we inevitably have to cover the concept of a broken date. If you thought it's going to be smooth sailing from now on, you were gravely mistaken. The worst of it is yet to come. Thankfully, I am here to guide you through it all.

A broken date is an indirect rejection. It will inevitably happen to you, and that's okay. Some people are non-confrontational, and can't say no to your face. This is also okay. You are not entitled to a direct, black-and-white answer from a complete stranger. You haven't signed a contract with them about it.

A broken date is the ultimate expression of disinterest, of indifference towards you. As far as you're concerned, a broken date is an instant deal breaker. If anyone pulls this on you, that's the last time they've seen you or heard from you. Period.

A date is broken whenever the other person fails to show up to a date, fails to communicate this *on their own* beforehand, and neglects to offer a reschedule.

Perhaps the most obvious type of broken dates is the no-show. It's the most straightforward scenario. They knew the time, date and place. You were there, they weren't. No

messages, no calls from them letting you know the reason for their absence. This means only one thing: they aren't interested. They just couldn't say no to your face, and hoped you'd get the hint and bug off. That's exactly what you're going to do. Don't seethe over it, it's their loss for missing out on you.

A date is also considered broken if they call you or message you shortly before the date, saying they can't make it, AND they do not offer you an alternative without you prompting. It means they aren't interested in you, plain and simple. Think about it: by breaking the date, giving you short notice on it, and not offering to reschedule, they are potentially risking not hearing from you ever again. They risk that because they don't care, because they are not interested in you. Plain and simple.

On the other hand, if they fail to show up for a date, and come back to you some time later, apologizing profusely and suggesting a new time and place for you to meet, swearing on their mother's grave that they will be there this time, that's okay. Close, but okay. They committed a faux pas, but they also seem eager to correct it, because they don't want to lose you. They are clearly interested in you, and you shouldn't play hardball with them on this. Reschedule the date, and pretend like nothing happened.

Indulge me for a moment, and let me repeat the iron rule of broken dates:

IF THEY BREAK A DATE WITHOUT A COUNTEROFFER, IT'S OVER.

You will not contact them again. You will not invite them on another date. You will delete their number, and go look for someone who is actually interested in you.

"But why?" You might ask. "This feels unnecessarily heavy-handed. What if they had to break the date because their quadriplegic grandma spontaneously combusted? And as they were

telling you that they can't make it, their dog exploded, and in the confusion they simply forgot to counteroffer."

Yeah, right. If they liked you, they would at least promise to get back to you with a counteroffer: "I'm so sorry, my quadriplegic grandma spontaneously combusted, and we have to sweep up the ashes and arrange the funera-" ***BOOM*** "Oh no, Fifi! I can't talk right now, my dog just exploded! I'll call you next week and we'll arrange a new date, is that alright?"

What if they break the date without a counteroffer, so you write them off, but then they come back at you in a few days, asking if you want to go out?

Don't get fooled. If they liked you, they'd have accepted your offer when you first asked them, or at least they'd have told you to please get back to them in a few days, because they have too much going on at the moment. If they reject you without a counteroffer, but then suddenly come back to you some days later, that just means the person they *actually like* canceled on them, so they moved on to plan B, namely: you.

What's wrong with being someone's plan B? Well, being the plan B means they don't actually like you; they just want a warm body to entertain them for a night or two, or they're just desperate after getting rejected, and / or want to pump up their bruised ego. Either way, they now have a hole in their schedule, and you'll be the disposable filler. Meanwhile, they could absolutely go out with you parallel to the other person (not at the same time, obviously), as long as there isn't any exclusivity involved.

Here's a hot tip from me to you: do not settle for being anyone's plan B, ever. If someone is ready to drop you just like that, they don't deserve your time and attention. Plus they'll drop you again once another person they actually like comes along.

I'd like to linger on this just a little more, since I get that this is a contentious issue. Let's look at the most charitable scenario possible:

What if the other person broke the date without a counteroffer because they entered an exclusive relationship with someone else, but that someone dumped them after a few days, and now they're back on the market, so they're coming back to you, a person they were also attracted to?

The above would be a perfectly legitimate situation, in which case yes, you should go out with them. However, if that was the case, **they'd let you know**. You'd hear something like: "Hey, sorry for breaking that date last time, but someone else I've been dating asked me to be exclusive and I accepted, but we fell apart immediately, and now I'm single again. Would you like to go out?"

If you hear something like that, it's fine to go out with them. Don't count on it though, we're bordering science fiction at this point.

If what I've described above really happened to the person above, they just **didn't tell you** when coming back to you, well then what the hell did they expect? This of course does not happen. If they suddenly come back to you without explanation after breaking a date, they're just bored or messing around.

Another important subset of broken dates is the "call back to verify". Sometimes the other person will ask *you* to call shortly before the date, just to *verify* that the date is still on. If you ever get this from someone, you're most likely looking at a broken date. The reason they're asking you to call and verify is so they can cancel on you with whatever excuse they can come up with at that moment, or just ignore your call altogether. Either way, you will not be having a date with them.

This game is a favorite among non-confrontational people. They didn't have the courage to reject you in person, or later on the phone when making the date, so out comes the "call back to verify" routine. That way they get to reject you in the safest way possible: using a neutral excuse of "sorry, something came up", via the safety of the telephone.

If someone asks you to call and verify before the date, just tell them you have the date, time and place noted down well, and that whenever you make a commitment you stick to it, therefore they need not worry. If the other person genuinely wants to make sure the date is on, they will show up even if you don't call to verify. If they're just looking to blow you off, they won't show up even if you do.

I understand that broken dates are difficult to accept. The person you like not reciprocating your feelings is a difficult pill to swallow. The date, the two of you being together, feels so close, yet so far away. All they did was not show up to one measly date, what's the harm, right? No. Try to think with a cool head, free of emotions, however hard that might be. Consider the following: if a person you were attracted to asked you out on a date, you'd skip/reschedule anything up to your grandma's funeral to be there. Period.

If the other person is not willing to do that, if they don't show up, give no explanations or apologies, don't counteroffer, and don't try to somehow remedy the situation, they aren't interested in you. The sooner you realize this, the better.

The actual date (finally)

Dozens of pages in, we have finally made it to the actual first big date. Incredible. You met someone you liked and asked for the phone number. They gave it to you. You called 4-5 days later. They remembered who you are, and sounded enthusiastic to talk to you. You

scheduled a date 4-7 days in advance, and after a bit of back-and-forth the two of you agreed to meet on a definite day, at a definite time, at a definite place. Shockingly, they actually showed up. You usher them inside the restaurant you previously scouted with your friends, and sit down at their best table which you've previously noted down, and specifically requested when you reserved. Now what?

Not so fast! There are more details to discuss, such as you showing up a good 10-15 minutes before the agreed time. Do not be late. If you will be late due to unforeseen issues, send them a text message to let them know, so they know what's going on. In any case, always give yourself a time cushion. Have a plan B in case your planned method of getting there doesn't work out.

Conversely, if the other person is late, wait patiently for 15 minutes. If they are still a no-show, and you received no calls or messages from them, send them a text message saying that you are at the meeting spot, waiting for them. If they don't show up in the next 15 minutes, which is 30 minutes in total now, congratulations, you've been ghosted. The other person would need to come back with one hell of an excuse and an apology to fix that. Chances are they won't though. In that case delete their number and look for someone new.

For the dates that do show up, wait for them exactly at the location you've specified. Not one corner up or down, not on the other side of the area. *Exactly there*. They shouldn't have to search for you. The location you've specified should be obvious, or you should have given them enough details to find it easily. Telling them to meet on Main Square is one thing. If Main Square is the size of a football field however, you should specify at which part you intend to meet exactly. You get the idea.

Once you meet the other person at the location, smile, say hi, and go to the restaurant right away. Don't stroll around with them needlessly; you're there for the date, not a sightseeing trip.

Once inside the restaurant, take your seats at the table. No need to pull the seat out for them; we're big on equality over here, plus some people might find it condescending and / or anachronistic. As previously discussed, the restaurant should be a calm place with few to no distractions, where you can focus on each other.

Be polite to the service personnel, and see if your date does the same. If they're rude to the staff, that's a huge red flag. One for which I would potentially consider not inviting them out again, depending on the severity.

Order your drinks and meals. Let your date order for themselves. Do not order alcohol for yourself, and definitely don't get tipsy. It's a very bad look, as you'll give the impression of a casual alcoholic. If they order alcohol and invite you to do the same, do it. Don't drink more than 1 or 2 alcoholic drinks however. If they ask if you want a third, just tell them you're good, and go for something non-alcoholic. If *they* are the ones getting sloshed, that's a red flag, and a dealbreaker for me personally. It's the first date, and they're already getting wasted? Come on.

Behave yourself

Yes, we're doing this. Here are some basics to make sure we're on the same page:

- Don't interrupt the other person when they're talking.
- Don't talk with your mouth full.
- Don't put your finger into your mouth, nostril or ear.
- Don't swear.
- Don't brag about your accomplishments.

- Don’t be rude to the staff.

Order food you can easily eat, without getting yourself dirty. Slobbering on a plate of BBQ ribs with greasy fingers in front of your date will not earn you any stars. Being disgusting won’t make them like you more, quite the opposite in fact.

Try eating food at the other person’s pace. If you inhale your plate in 2 minutes, and your date is a slow eater, guess what: you’ll be staring at them chewing for half an hour, in silence. That’s peak awkwardness, and once again doesn’t help your chances. If you follow each other’s pace at eating, you can have a comfortable conversation between bites. One person asks a question, and eats a bit while the other person responds, and vice versa.

Keeping the conversation going

For some people, maintaining a conversation for 2-3 hours is second nature. For others, the idea alone causes them to break a cold sweat. If you’re part of the former, good for you! If you’re part of the latter, don’t fret! I’ll give you some useful pointers to survive the evening and look good in front of your date, all at the same time!

If you’re the hypersocial chatterbox type, simply make sure you don’t overwhelm, intimidate, and / or bull over the other person. Make sure they can get a word in, and actually listen to what they say. The conversation should be a dynamic back-and-forth, not a monologue. If your date is the introverted, quiet type however, feel free to fill the air with your chatter; just make sure your date follows along, and is interested in what you’re saying.

If you aren’t a particularly social person, the secret to maintaining a conversation for a long time is to let the other person do most of the talking. We love talking about ourselves, and we like those who listen to what we say. Therefore, if you aren’t the chatty type, indulge the other person and let *them* fill the air instead. In this case, your first and foremost task will be to

ask engaging questions, and let the other person go on as long as possible. If something they say jumps out at you, you can and should follow up with additional, engaging questions, keeping your date talking for another 10 minutes or so. All the while you can just sit there in silence, listening, nodding along thoughtfully.

Your other "job" will be to listen and try to memorize what they said, at least some of the main points, so you can circle back to them later. A great way to score points with someone is to memorize something they said, and bring it back up later in connection to something else they said. It's a very nice touch, and everyone will appreciate it. Even if it's not completely genuine, i.e. you're deliberately making an effort, it's still cute and refreshing that you're trying in the first place.

Here's a basic structure of a date conversation where you let them do the talking:

You: "So you said you played volleyball?"

Them: "Yeah, back in high school! With my friend, Brandon!"

"What did you like best about it?"

<They go on about it for 10 minutes.>

"Wow, that sounds cool! I wish I played volleyball! How would you sell it to a person like me, who has never played it before?"

<They go on for another 10 minutes.>

"Now I really want to try volleyball! Does your friend, Brandon, still play?"

Here are some other, important considerations when conversing with your date:

Avoid self-deprecating humor.

I understand it sounds funny, cute and self-aware in your mind, but in real life self-deprecating humor makes you look like an insecure loser to people who don't know you. Otherwise it's annoying for literally everyone, so don't engage in it.

Avoid talking about your future together.

Do not be telling the other person on the first date about getting exclusive, meeting your parents, getting married, having children, and so on. It makes you look like a desperate, lonely loser at best, or an unhinged schizo at worst.

Avoid oversharing about yourself.

Let your date dig for information, it's more exciting that way. You shouldn't hide anything necessarily (except your wealth if you're loaded), but don't be puking up all your fears and insecurities, all the embarrassing things you've done in the past, and so on. Why would you tell your first date anything that puts you in a bad light? You're there to sell yourself, not to confess your sins.

Don't neglect or overdo humor.

If you're a born comedian, don't let your jokes dominate the whole evening. It's a date, not a comedy night. If you're the opposite of a born comedian, choke out at least 2-3 jokes per date. Keep the humor clean and safe, avoiding the edgy stuff. You do not have a good idea of the other person's sensibilities. A joke you might find innocuous might come across as deeply offensive to them.

Don't brag.

Even if you're a billionaire philanthropist with six PhDs and the world's largest Picasso collection, keep it to yourself. Nobody likes people who brag about their property, wealth or accomplishments. Let your date find out bit by bit, through the natural flow of the conversation.

Don't throw your accomplishments at your date out of thin air. If they ask you about the thing you're most proud of however, feel free to talk about the ones dearest to you.

Avoid negative subjects.

This is another no-brainer, yet many people fall apart here. Do not bring up things that would ruin the mood of the evening, such as news of people dying, war, accidents, and so on. Keep it light and positive all the time. Keep the serious stuff to your friends for the time being. If they bring up negative stuff, gently steer the conversation back towards positive things. You're there to have a fun and light-hearted gettogether, not to count corpses.

Ending the date

The date should ideally last for 1,5-2 hours, maximum 3. Once you finish your meal, and feel like you had a good bit of fun and light-hearted conversation where both of you got to know the other a bit better, it's time to end the date.

If the conversation is going super well, most people would want to keep it going as long as possible. This is a mistake; you don't want to wait until things fall flat. The safest, best option is to end on a high note, which will leave both of you wanting more, i.e. both of you will look forward to the second date even more.

Conversely, if the conversation falls flat 90 minutes in, and just won't recover no matter what, it's time to cut your losses and end the date.

To end the date, just wait for a lull in the conversation, ideally when a topic has been exhausted. If the conversation is flat, you need not worry about that. At that point, just throw in "I had a nice time." The other person will catch the drift (hopefully), and say the same (also hopefully).

At that point, you should gesture for the waiter and pay the bill. If tipping is customary, do tip even if you oppose the practice, otherwise you'll come across as cheap, which is often a turnoff. As the host, you're the one covering the expenses. If your date insists on pitching in, politely decline. Tell them that according to your rule, the host pays. This is also an indirect invitation for them to invite *you* out! If they insist on paying so much, there's their opportunity.

If they repeatedly keep insisting to pitch in, it might be a bad sign: it's possible they don't want to owe you anything, because they aren't interested (also this was the last time you ever saw them).

After everything is paid and done, leave the venue together. Escort them back to their place of departure:

- If by public transit, to their transit stop.
- If by bike, to their bike.
- If you drove them, you drive them back home, **NO DETOURS.**

Seriously, how would you feel if your first date said they'd drive you home, but then suddenly took a turn and started driving you somewhere else? If that happens to you, consider jumping out at the first red light and calling the police.

Once you take them to their transit stop, bike or house, you will say goodbye with a kiss. This is an excellent gauge of their interest in you. If you get a kiss on the mouth, they're interested in you. If you get a kiss on the cheek, congratulations on becoming their super-mega best friend. If you get a kiss on the cheek, they aren't interested, and you'll never invite them out again.

Kissing is completely appropriate after the first date. It's not too early; both of you are adult enough to know you're there for a romantic meeting, so kissing is definitely on the table.

Though it might be a terrifying moment if you're inexperienced, it's actually quite simple:

- Both of you are standing at the stop / their bike / their doorstep.
- You say: "I had a nice time".
- They say: "Sure, me too," or they stay quiet.
- You lean in to kiss *their mouth.* Your arms are hanging next to you, no pawing your date.
- You kiss for 1-2 seconds, keeping it dry, no tongue, no slobbering, then pull away.
- You wish them a good night and **leave.**

Yes, leave. You were there to date them and get to know them better, not to have a one night stand. If it works out between the two of you, as in: you enter an exclusive relationship, you'll have more opportunities for sex than you can handle, so don't rush it. If you managed to get through the first date without any major hiccups, i.e. you didn't make an ass out of yourself, be content with your accomplishments and don't push your luck.

Especially if you're a guy dating a girl, you'll *really* set yourself apart by not trying to dive through their front door right after the first date. As a rule of thumb, the more conventionally attractive they are, the more horny idiots are after them non-stop. Don't be one of those. If you take it easy and don't try to have sex right away, you'll be like a shining beacon above the swamp of horny idiots, and the other person will like you even more for it.

After the first date

So the two of you kissed, said goodbye, and parted ways after a successful date. Congratulations, that's how you do it! Now what?

"How about a nice text message, thanking them for the nice . . ." **NO.** You will not contact them for any reason between dates, other than to set up a new date, which you'll do in 4-5 days. Until then, no messaging! Let both of you relive the moments of the date, in peace, on your own! Do not butt in with desperate messages, *just to confirm* that the other person *did* have fun. If they kissed you on your mouth at the end, they did. End of story. Now be patient, and invite them on the next date in 4-5 days.

If *they* reach out to you on the other hand, telling you how they had a nice time, that's great! It means they're definitely interested in you. Should you get a message like that, respond with something nice and positive:

"Hey, I just wanted to let you know I had a nice time! I hope you made it home safe!"

"Thank you, I had a nice time too! I did, thanks for asking! Have a nice rest of the evening!"

Following this exchange, as I mentioned, you'll go back to the 4-5 days routine. You do this because you want to be at least a bit challenging. Compare your patient, laid-back approach to those losers who blow up your date's phone the next day.

During those 4-5 days your date isn't sure what's going on. How come you haven't called yet? They discuss it with their friends, they have it on their mind constantly; they have *you* on their mind constantly! Day 1: nothing. Day 2: nothing! Day 3: still nothing! What on Earth is going on? Frustration is building; the *good* kind! Finally, on day 4 their phone lights up with your name and number. Their heart jumps as they scramble to pick it up, struggling to compose

themselves for the call. Compare this to all those boring losers who blew up their phone the next day! The difference is night and day.

Bottom line: always wait 4-5 days to call as long as you aren't exclusive yet. However, if they reach out to you unprompted during that time, you **forget the 4-5 days**, and invite them out on a date right then and there, unless they do so first. If they reach out to you unprompted during the 4-5 day period, whether via phone or text, your conversation will end with either one of you setting a date, and the other person accepting.

"But what if they didn't call or text to invite you out on a date? What if they just wanted to politely inquire about how you are?" It doesn't matter. They reached out unprompted; that's all you care about. They are coming at you, and you are going to take the opportunity.

Imagine being a salesman, and a previous customer wanders into your store. Even if they do not specifically request to once again buy what you're selling, you will still assume that they're there to do just that, and make them another offer. In 99% of cases you'll get an easy sale right on the spot. After all, why else would they come back to you, if not for wanting to buy what you're selling? The same goes for dating: if someone comes back at you, they usually want more of you. Use this situation to your advantage.

Conversely, you will not reach out to them for any reason other than to set the next date. You will obviously cushion that with a few minutes of pleasant smalltalk, but you reaching out to them should ideally always end with a date set.

To reiterate, the phone is for setting dates **only**, not chit chatting. That's what dates are for.

What if they reach out to you *again* after you've already set the date, just for some idle chit chat? First off, that's a great sign. They want to talk to you, they want to hear your voice.

They are definitely interested in you! However, as I've said above, chit chatting should be reserved for dates only. For that reason, you'll gently communicate this idea to them:

"Wow, that sounds interesting! Can't wait to hear all about it on our date!"

Eventually (hopefully sooner than later) they'll catch on to the fact that you prefer to have such conversations face-to-face on dates. Once they do, great: all the more motivation for them to invite *you* out.

Why do I insist so much on chatting only on dates? **Because romantic feelings cannot develop over the phone. They can only develop when the two of you are getting to know each other face-to-face, also known as "bonding".**

Additionally, as I've mentioned before, you do not want to exhaust conversation topics. You'll want to go in there equipped with enough topics to keep things going for at least 2-3 hours. If you discuss everything via text or phone in advance, what's there to talk about on the date?

The next couple of dates

As you rack up more and more dates with someone, you can do things other than just having dinner. As you get more and more comfortable with being around each other, from the 4th-5th date on feel free to mix things up a little. Take them to a bowling alley, a pool hall, go hiking together, visit a museum; reasonable activities like that.

If you're into extreme stuff, like rafting, ultramarathons or bungee jumping, please reserve those ideas to when you're exclusive. You're there to entertain your date, not to terrify or exhaust them.

Up until the 4th-5th date however, I recommend you stick to restaurants. To recap, those are a safe, calm and controlled environment, helping to reduce your already significant stress load. Additionally, restaurants are ideal places to have conversations, which is what you're there to do.

Imagine getting turned off

So far we've been talking about you not turning off your date. The reverse can also happen however: people aren't perfect, and your date might as well say or do something that rubs you the wrong way, that *turns you off*.

If the turnoff is minor, i.e. they have some annoying habit but are otherwise great, you should be fine; given that it's not a dealbreaker for you. Just keep in mind that annoyances stack up over time, and can cause resentment. If you think you can deal with a given annoyance, so be it. If not, then we're looking at a dealbreaker.

If you detect a dealbreaker, i.e. an issue you just can't get over, the relationship is over before it even begins. Don't even try to work around it, to ignore or rationalize it: dealbreakers are corrosive to any relationship, and will cause resentment in you at a shocking rate.

If the dealbreaker comes out during a date, don't just storm out of the restaurant. Avoid drama and conflict. Pretend like everything is okay, and use the date as a chance to practice your smalltalk and social skills. Finish the date as you would (minus the kiss, obviously), then **never contact them again.** You barely know each other, you owe nothing to one another at this point.

If they call or text you, just tell them that a former longtime partner of yours came back into your life, and you decided to give it another go. This line is great, because it's virtually unassailable. There is no arguing against it, as a former longtime partner obviously takes priority

over a recent date (even if completely made up). Yes, this is a white lie, but you don't want drama, arguments or worse with a person you barely know.

Imagine if you were completely honest with the other person, listing all the things about them that turned you off. Besides making them feel horrible, they might just get aggressive with you: "How dare you, am I not good enough for you?", or even start pleading: "Oh, I promise I'll do better, let's try again, I'll change!" Needless to say, you want none of that. You want to end things with a swift, clean cut.

Sex

As I've written before, you do not try to force your way into your date's bedroom after the first date. Nor should you do so after the second. Ideally you should wait with sex until you're in an exclusive relationship, which usually comes between date #7 and #10. More on this later.

Think of it this way: if you get sweaty palms just from trying to keep the conversation going for 2-3 hours, early sex will be more stressful than enjoyable. Having sex with someone you're already familiar with carries additional benefits, such as knowing each others' comfort zones, and knowing how to better communicate your wants and needs.

Hot tip: If you're so desperate for sex that you can't wait that long, hire a sex worker.

I get that sex is great and all, but it also carries significant risks initially. Lots of things can go wrong, especially if you're inexperienced:

- Condoms can break.
- Birth control pills might not do their job.

- Performance anxiety can cause you and/or your partner to go flacid, providing for embarrassment.
- STDs are a risk (with people you barely know).

In addition to the above, there are more awkward details involved, such as who comes first, the two of you having different preferences and paces, and so on.

An aspect of sex on dates I rarely see discussed is dealing with people changing personalities during sex. I'm not talking about bipolarity; I'm talking about you or the other person letting it all out during sex, by dropping the barriers and composure. A person who is calm, quiet and reserved during dates can turn out to be an absolute freak in bed (in the good sense, hopefully), which might be shocking to you, in extreme cases even traumatic. You're essentially getting a crash course in your date's personality, which usually isn't a good thing. You want to get to know their quirks gradually, not all at once.

On the other hand, if you yourself believe in not having sex till you're exclusive, you do not have to state this explicitly at any point. If your date invites you into their home after a date, just politely decline. Say you have stuff to do tomorrow. If they ask you point blank why you don't want to have sex, just tell them what you think: that it should be reserved for exclusivity. With this, you're also telling them to become your exclusive romantic partner. How neat is that?

Surviving the relationship

As you continue to date and get to know each other, you'll start liking each other more and more. That's the hope, anyway. After half a dozen or so dates, ideally both of you should already be toying with the idea of exclusivity.

IMPORTANT: if exclusivity is not your thing, meaning you just want to date without strings attached, make it clear during the first few dates. Let the other person know what they're getting into, so you don't waste their time.

Very often exclusivity "just happens". You're dating each other, grow closer and closer, until there is no question about it: you only want to see each other, and nobody else. For your sake though, it's better to seal the deal to avoid frustrating gray zones and misunderstandings.

If you're unsure when to bring up exclusivity, it's best to leave it to the other person. You can seal the deal once **they** start bringing up things, such as:

- They talk about you meeting their parents.
- They talk about you meeting their friends.
- They're asking where the two of you stand.

And other, similar subjects, generally understood to be "*couple things*". If your date does bring up any such topics, feel free to pull the trigger:

Them: "I was thinking you could come meet my parents / friends!"

You: "That's something couples do. Sounds like you want to be exclusive with me!"

"Well yeah!" / "I thought we already kinda were!"

"Guess what? We are then!"

Them: "So, uh, where do *we* stand?"

You: "Sounds like you want to become exclusive!"

"Well yeah!" / "I thought we already kinda were!"

"Guess what? We are then!"

Obviously this should only be done after you've had some dates together. If they bring up such things after the first date, just tell them you'd be more than happy to do so *later*. If this happens after the fifth or so however, and you feel like the time is right, feel free to go ahead in sealing the deal.

GROUND RULE: ONCE YOU BECOME EXCLUSIVE WITH SOMEONE, YOU DROP EVERYONE ELSE YOU'RE DATING. YOU WILL NOT SEE ANYONE ELSE ROMANTICALLY, ONLY YOUR NOW-EXCLUSIVE PARTNER.

If you're dating multiple others on the side at the time of becoming exclusive, you blow them all off. Depending on how many dates you've had with them you can either not contact them anymore, or tell them how you really enjoyed dating, but someone asked you to be exclusive and you accepted their offer. Nice and easy. Oh, and then don't contact them ever again.

That last point might sound a bit harsh, but how would you feel if your partner still chatted around casually with random people whom they dated in the past? Best to keep things clean and clear-cut.

Avoiding complacency

Once you're exclusive with someone, don't fall apart! Relationships need constant, and I mean *constant* maintenance in order to hold together. Basically both of you should continue doing the things that made you fall in love with each other in the first place.

I often see people who, after entering a relationship, adopt the attitude of "mission accomplished, I'm done," and stop making an effort. Thus a slow but steady corrosion effect takes hold of the relationship, which will only culminate in a breakup or divorce. Here are a few pointers as to how to prevent this from happening:

Do not stop dating.

Keep having casual, romantic fun together at least once every 2-3 weeks. You don't have to go to a restaurant or somewhere expensive; just spend fun, romantic, quality time together, allowing both of you to bond with each other.

Do not relax (too much).

Obviously you'll be more casual and relaxed around each other, but this does not mean you can just let it all hang out. If you were wearing blazers for dates and opening doors for them, once you're together, don't be walking around in your underwear all day, letting out large, loud burps as you scratch your armpit like a monkey. This might be fine around your friends and some of your relatives, but is a complete turnoff for your romantic partner. Feel free to relax, but don't fall apart!

Spare them of your annoying habits.

We all have them, but it's your (and their) responsibility to limit behavior that the other person finds annoying, at least when you're around each other. This includes things you wouldn't have done in front of them during the dating phase, or behaviors they asked you to limit. Conversely, they should limit behaviors that annoy you when they're around. You can and should communicate about this openly, but gently and tactfully in order not to hurt their feelings.

To sum up, just keep doing the things that made you fall in love with each other in the first place. The alternative is indifference, boredom, disillusionment, then breakup or divorce. Do

yourself a favor and avoid becoming complacent. Relationships aren't a permanent aura around you; they need to be maintained and protected from negative influences.

Meeting the parents

Once you become exclusive, you will inevitably meet your partner's parents, barring special circumstances. Meeting the parents entails them getting to see someone (you) who might potentially become part of the family one day. Therefore, behave appropriately.

When meeting the parents, you will:

- Dress up nicely.
- Bring a small gift (consult with your partner about it beforehand).
- Keep the mood positive.
- Behave like a person you'd want your children to bring home.

Of course not everything is sunshine and roses: the parents might just throw you a curveball, and you need to be ready for it. Here are some examples with proper responses included:

The parents bring up marriage: "Have the two of you thought of marriage already?"

Deflect with humor: "We have a priest on call just in case!"

The parents bring up their political views that are opposite to yours.

Deflect: "I see, that sounds interesting. I don't really follow politics that much, and can't really comment on these things."

Do not ever engage the parents in political debate! That's the easiest way of getting kicked out of the house.

The parents ask you about your accomplishments. Your partner and them each have six PhDs and an IQ of 400, and you flip burgers at a restaurant for a living.

Respond with honesty, but with a positive spin: “I work at X restaurant. It’s simple but fulfilling work, and the collective is great! I enjoy working there, and might even open my own business one day!”

If your job isn’t fulfilling at all, and you hate being there, frame it as a stepping stone, a source of income to get by on until you find something better.

Moving in together

Contrary to popular belief, living together is hard. You’ll be exposed to each other’s negative traits more often and for longer periods of time. You don’t just meet for a few hours every 1-2 weeks, fully dressed up and on your best behaviors. You’ll be together, in the same private space every single day.

Living together requires constant effort. If you let go of the steering wheel and relax completely, and start treating your romantic partner as little more than a roommate, it’s just a matter of time before the relationship implodes. Familiarity breeds indifference, resentment or both. Therefore, it is your job to not treat your partner in an overly familiar manner, like you would treat your best friend roommate.

Living together is like being pulled towards a black hole: you have to run your thrusters constantly to avoid getting sucked in. The bad news is, you’re permanently trapped in the black hole’s gravitational field. The good news is, it’s pretty easy to avoid it even with little effort.

To reiterate, your job is to avoid *becoming roommates*, getting cabin fever, and getting on each others’ nerves. For that, here are some things you should abide by:

Minimize annoyances.

Minimize your partner's exposure to your annoying habits; you should know what drives them nuts by then, so you should not do those things

Don't stop dating.

Being at home together and relaxing all day is fine, but once every 1-2 weeks have some quality time together to break the mold

Maintain a private space.

If both of you are home a lot (working from home, and so on), you should sometimes go somewhere else during the day, e.g. a cafe or a coworking space, to avoid being in each others' faces all day long.

Minimize negatives.

Minimize your partner's exposure to negative aspects of life: don't expose them to your morning breath, air the bathroom out after using the toilet, don't leave used hygiene products lying around, and so on.

Agree on chores.

Establish a routine in terms of who should do what around the home. Whose job is it to take out the trash, wash the dishes, vacuum clean, walk the dog, and so on? Have it all set out to avoid needless conflicts.

Handling conflicts

At some point the two of you *will* argue about something. One day both of you will find yourselves grumpy and annoyed, only for a disagreement to come crashing into the scene. Here I'm not talking about an intellectual discussion of your points of disagreement. I'm talking about

throwing down, about turning up the volume and going at each other verbally. If you find yourself in such a situation, here's something to keep in mind:

NEVER ESCALATE AN ARGUMENT.

Always work for de-escalation. Even if you "win" an argument, the other person will feel resentful about it. This is how humans work. I'm not saying you should roll over each time they disagree with you! All I'm saying is not to *escalate*. Remain as calm and polite as possible throughout the argument. Never be the one to start yelling. Show that you listened to and understood the other person's argument. If you still disagree, insist on your position, but do so politely. Do not be dismissive or smug; there is nothing more infuriating than that.

If you fundamentally disagree on something and none of you will budge, here's the magic phrase to end all arguments:

"We'll just agree to disagree about that."

Handling finances

Whether you like it or not, unless both of you are billionaires, money will play a central part in your relationships. As such, very often it is the primary source of conflict. Here are some tips how to mitigate that risk:

- Have a common bank account where both of you send a certain amount every month.
- Both of you should always stay informed regarding your finances.
- Agree on the amount of spending above which you should inform each other, and/or discuss beforehand.
- Keep track of income and expenses to avoid nasty surprises.

- In case of money problems, sit down together and discuss a plan to overcome issues, then abide by the plan!

If you feel your partner is irresponsible with their money, sit down and talk with them about it! Do not let resentment (and debt) build up. Instead, agree on a monthly spending limit which both of you will abide by.

How to save a sinking relationship

When stripped down to the barest of bones, relationship dynamics can be described thusly: if you do more things right than wrong, you'll be fine. If you do more things wrong than right, you'll be single. The same applies to your partner: if they do more things wrong than right, you'll end up dropping them. Below I'll be focusing on the former, but I'd encourage you to flip the scenario around in your head, to recognize warning signs of *you* getting turned off by your partner as well, not just the opposite.

All of us will find ourselves complacent at some point. There's no changing it, it's part of the human condition. However, you should recognize it in time! Most people (could) do so when they notice their partner acting *weird*. They tend to rationalize this: their partner must be having a rough period, work has piled up, it's the weather, their period, or the air pressure. Very often however it's none of the above. Rather, their partner is simply getting turned off in the relationship, which means an increasing buildup of resentment and/or indifference towards you. Here are some common signs of a partner getting turned off:

- They touch you less.
- They feel more distant, physically and mentally.
- They don't kiss you as often.

- They’re less affectionate towards you.
- They get irritated / annoyed at you more easily.
- They’re more prone to arguments with you.
- They’re less enthusiastic about having sex.

Of course all of the above can happen due to outside circumstances as well. If they come home every day completely exhausted, if they’re very stressed because of outside circumstances, or if they’re having any other issue unrelated to you, they can indeed behave in such ways. However, if that is the case, they *will* remain affectionate towards you no matter how bad things get. Think of it this way: even if you’re being worked to death, and your life is riddled with problems, you will still love your partner. In fact, you’d want to spend even more time with them, to keep your mind off your worries, and instead focus on someone you love. Affection exists *despite* problems, if said problems are not related to you. If your partner does become less affectionate towards you, it means the problem is with your relationship, a.k.a: you're in trouble.

There is a way to salvage a failing relationship to a point. Once the other person’s feelings penetrate a certain threshold, they will become completely disillusioned, and there won’t be a single thing you can do to fix things. If you recognize and counteract issues before crossing that line however, you have a chance of turning things around!

The same applies in reverse, when it’s your partner who’s turning *you* off. You have to recognize it, and counteract it before it’s too late.

Saving a sinking relationship - checklist:

- Are you spending enough romantic, quality time together once every 1-2 weeks?
- Are your dates’ quality the same as when you started dating?
- Do you expose them to your negative traits / habits too much?

- Are you arguing too much?
- Are you strolling around in your underwear all day in front of your partner, reeking like sweat?

Of course this list is far from exhaustive, but covers the most common issues couples tend to face. As you've made it this far in the book already, you should have a solid idea as to how relationships should work, enabling you to identify the problem. Once you do, apply the appropriate solution without delay! Depending on severity, you might be months, weeks, or even days before a breakup.

In terms of solutions, a good rule of thumb is going back to the basics. Behave more like during the dating phase. Spend a bit more time away from home, making yourself more scarce. Take your partner out on dates every week where you keep things positive and light. Avoid arguments like the plague, and be on your best behavior around them at all times.

In addition, if it's you who's being turned off, identify the things your partner does that turn you off. Feel free to have a conversation about this in a considerate manner. If your partner's negatives are not something they would change, consider how you can minimize your exposure to those negatives.

The bottom line is this: both of you should ideally strive to be like the person you were on the first few dates; even more so if you smell trouble.

Handling a breakup

As I've written above, once someone's feelings penetrate a certain threshold, they will become completely disillusioned, and there won't be a single thing anyone can do to fix things.

If this does happen to you, I feel sorry for you. Whether your partner falls out of love with you, or vice versa, there is only one thing left to do: ending things.

When you get dumped

Chances are this will happen to you at some point. Getting dumped feels horrible; as if a part of you is ripped out of your chest. The more intertwined your lives are, the longer the relationship lasted, the more difficult and complicated it'll be.

It bears repeating: when it's over, it's *over*. Once someone reaches the point of no return, where they're comfortable with letting you go, the two of you are done *forever*.

When the other person pulls the plug on you, *do not*:

- Fight them on it.
- Argue with them.
- Try to convince them otherwise.
- Cause a scene.

When the other person pulls the plug on you, *do:*

- Calmly acknowledge it.
- Agree to it (you have no choice).
- Discuss what happens to common property.
- Discuss who moves out (in case of living together).

At the end, one of you should move out, items should be exchanged, common bank accounts, money, subscriptions, and so on, must be sorted out. All ties must be severed. All loose ends must be tied up. Your goal is to exit the relationship as cleanly as possible, with as little drama as possible.

Once everything is said and done, you will never contact them again, simple as that. The two of you are finished for the rest of your lives. You will not try to go back to them months or years later. Conversely, you will not let them work their way back into your life. You only get one chance with each person per life.

Here's a hot tip, one of the best ones I have, that will spare you from a lot of emotional pain: The easiest way of getting over someone is by replacing them with someone new.

I repeat.

The easiest way of getting over someone is by replacing them with someone new.

Did your partner drop you after some months, a year or more together? I know it sucks. I know it hurts. Do meet with your friends and/or family for emotional support. Do talk about it with them. Do examine what went wrong. Do keep yourself composed and stable.

In the meantime, get back into the dating scene as soon as you can! Go to social outings, install a dating app, do the things I wrote about in the beginning. Meet people, ask for numbers, go on dates, have fun! Dating new people after a breakup is like a tidal wave of fresh, clean water to extinguish the smoldering ruins of your previous relationship, washing them away in the process. This is how you get over breakups, not by overeating and feeling sorry for yourself for a year. Occupy yourself with new dates, and that feeling of sorrow and emptiness will pass. I can promise you that.

If you've been dumped before, perhaps it happened to you out of the blue. For most people this is the standard course of events. That's because you did not pay attention to the warning signs. Now that you know what they are, now that you know what to look for and what to do, hopefully this will never happen to you ever again. At least that's the hope!

Here I'd like to additionally reflect on a common experience people have during a breakup. Consider the following scenario and tell me if it sounds familiar.

A partner of multiple years dumped you out of nowhere. You are shocked, hurt, panicked and confused. All those years of being together, down the drain in an instant. You feel like your life is over, your universe is blown apart. A day after the breakup, as you walk down the street alone, past bars and restaurants the two of you used to frequent, you wonder if you'll ever be able to get over your former partner. Suddenly you notice them, sitting together with someone else inside your (former) go-to restaurant. Not just sitting, *kissing*. You enter an emotional state akin to watching someone urinate on your mother's grave. How could they do this? Is nothing sacred anymore? Has the world gone insane?

Contrary to the belief of some, this is not because your ex is a psycho. In fact, if you paid attention while reading the previous chapters, you should be able to tell exactly what's going on.

It's not that your former partner is a psychopath. Rather, by the time they drop you, they'll have been contemplating the idea for months. You weren't doing something right, thus their resentment and indifference towards you grew. They became less and less emotionally attached to you. In the end, by the time they got to pulling the trigger, they no longer had any feelings towards you, i.e. they couldn't have cared less about you, or about hurting your feelings. They're not a psycho; they just had enough time to *be done with you* emotionally. Thus, when you see them with someone else two days after your breakup, it's not that they only needed two days to get over you; they've been getting over you gradually for months, possibly years before the actual breakup.

When you do the dumping

Dumping a romantic partner is an unfortunate event that can happen to anyone. In fact, if you follow the advice I've written out here, hopefully it'll be you doing the dumping if necessary. It's certainly better than getting dumped! Ending things is for both your sakes: you don't want to be with someone unfit for you, and you don't want anyone to waste their time with you if you know they're unfit for you.

Suppose you discover a dealbreaker about your partner. The issue is an absolute non-starter, rendering your relationship dead in the water in an instant. But how do you go about letting them go? It all depends on the circumstances, particularly the depth of your (soon-to-be former) relationship.

If you're not yet exclusive and only had 1-3 dates or so, you're strangers. You don't owe them anything, and vice versa. Just stop calling them and inviting them out on dates. If they reach out, tell them an old ex came back and you took them back. This is a white lie, protecting the other person from emotional harm, and you from unnecessary drama.

If you're not exclusive but had more than 3 dates, you owe them a phone call. You call them, apologize and tell them you've had fun together, but an old ex came back and you took them back.

If you're exclusive, you owe them an in-person sit-down and apology. I wouldn't show up with a list of things they did wrong, as I wouldn't want to be the cause of someone's suicide. Neither would you, I hope. If you want to let someone go as gently as humanly possible, which is something you *should* want, here's a line you can use:

"I don't know what happened. I feel like I cannot continue. I really enjoyed being together, but my feelings for you are just gone somehow. I need to get my head together. I'm sorry it's over."

Notice how you're not leaving any room for argument. You apologize and compliment at the same time, and say things the other person cannot fight. What possible objection could they raise against "my feelings are just gone"? None. That's the entire idea. The goal is to have the breakup done as cleanly and quickly as possible.

Even if you don't believe in ending a relationship with a gentle white lie, trust me, the alternative is far worse. If you point out the exact things they turned you off with, the response will either be two hours of teary-eyed promises about how they'll change, or the screaming match of your life.

By employing a gentle white lie, not only do you not leave room for the other person to fight you; you also don't leave room *for the other person to blame themselves*! By saying that your feelings "just disappeared", there is no culprit. There is no one to blame. It's like an unfortunate accident.

Some people might argue that telling the other person what they did wrong in a relationship is actually helpful, as the other person will be able to *improve* that way. This is a borderline insulting attitude to have towards anyone! If a person turns you off, that does not mean there is something wrong with them. It means there is something wrong with them *as far as you're concerned*. The things that turned you off might be completely irrelevant to the person they'll meet after you. Just because you perceive something negatively, doesn't mean everyone else will. Don't be self-centered, and skip the self-improvement course when breaking up with someone.

Once you give them the aforementioned talk, stick around for a good half an hour. If they get upset, curse you, rage at you, let them. You'll take their anger, frustration, desperation and insults with a stone face for half an hour. Once that's done, you're outta there for good. If they get violent however, like throwing stuff at you or trying to physically accost you, get outta there immediately, and never look back.

Discuss your parting (items, finances, apartment, etc.) sometime afterwards, when both of you calmed down a bit. This can be done via text or phone call. Once you've made arrangements: who gets what, handover date, and so on, you show up, take everything hopefully in one go, then disappear for good. At that point the relationship is over. Congratulations, or I'm sorry for you, depending on where you sit. Whatever the case may be, it's time to get back into the ring and start swinging!

Here are some additional helpful tips for a reasonably clean breakup:

- If you're living together, have a place lined up for yourself you can crash at right after pulling the plug.
- Do the breakup at a location from which they don't have to go anywhere afterwards. You do not want them wandering (especially driving) around in a heightened emotional state.
- If their friends or relatives question you about the breakup, tell them the same story you told your now-ex; they can't argue with that.

There you have it! You now know how to handle breakups the right way, no matter which end of the stick you find yourself on. If, after being subjected to all these arguments, you still insist on breaking up the *straight* way, I'd like to bring the following quote to your discerning attention:

"Here lies the body of William Jay, Who died maintaining his right of way – He was right, dead right, as he sped along, But he's just as dead as if he were wrong."

In conclusion

By internalizing what you have read on these pages, I trust I've given you a new understanding of relationships and their inner workings. You now know how to meet people, how to set dates, how to start and maintain a relationship, and how to handle a breakup the proper way.

Your social skills have been boosted; you know how to behave on dates, how to worm your way out of overly personal questions with style, and handle arguments like a pro. In short, you're ready for a fun, exciting and rewarding dating life, regardless of identity and preferences!

If you ever face doubt at any point of the dating process, feel free to revisit relevant chapters to refresh your knowledge.

Thank you for reading!

#