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grownUp

Confessions of the World's Worst Dater

HER 7 SECRETS TO FINALLY FINDING LOVE AFTER 40!



Bobbi Palmer

The Dating and Relationship Coach for Women over 40

**Confessions of the World's Worst Dater
Her 7 Secrets for Finally Finding Love After 40**

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Foreword

You're probably pretty darn happy. But if you're here reading this, I'm betting that you know that there is something important missing.

I came upon that realization pretty late in my life. I finally realized – no, I finally admitted – that, although I had a great job, close friends, and nice things...I was missing the happiness that comes from a meaningful, loving relationship with a good man.

I found that happiness, and I want you to find it. This isn't the giddy happiness that comes from a momentary flash of something wonderful happening to you. You know...when you land a great client, find the perfect pair of shoes, or find out that your oldest friend is coming to visit. I mean the kind of happiness that comes when you feel like you've created the full life you've dreamed of. The happiness that calms you, and lets you breathe. The one that creates that subtle smile that people can see in your eyes.

For me, that extraordinary life had to include the love of a man. I wanted a relationship that made me feel valued, safe, and loved unconditionally. I wanted a life with deep affection, friendship, humor, and true intimacy.

I have that life now. Anyone who knows me will tell you that I have that smile in my eyes. But I didn't always. Like you, for many years I lived what I considered a very nice life. I had a flourishing career, lots of stuff, travel and entertainment, and a circle of friends that I loved and cherished more than I can express.

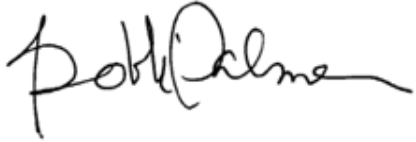
But, like you, I always had a wish – sometimes a secret wish –to connect with the man who would become my partner in every sense of the word. When I was in my 40's I learned that I was being dishonest with myself. In ways I finally came to understand, I was deceiving myself into believing that I was making the best effort possible to realize my dream of finding this man. I wasn't.

You've heard the term "Dream Man." You've probably even used it when talking about what you were after. Maybe over the years you have toned it down to make it more "realistic"; maybe now he's your "partner" or "companion."

I'm here to say that you can fulfill your dream. Whatever you call it and whatever shape it takes, wherever you are in your life, you can complete your circle by finding the man of your dreams. And guess what? You are closer than you think.

I spent many years learning and growing so I could fulfill my life's truest wish. I hope you let me share what I've learned so you can get closer to fulfilling yours.

With my love and support,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbi Palmer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Bobbi Palmer



47 and Finally Found It

I was married for the first time at 47. By that time, I had dated for over 30 years. I know...it's an amazingly long time, isn't it? But at the risk of sounding like one of those women I used to love to hate, my marriage is the best thing in my life. I feel like it's the luscious topping on what was my already tasty cake.

Every single day I've been with my husband I've been kissed and told that I'm loved. I'm married to a genuinely kind and patient man. He gives love in such an open, unconditional, and infinite way that I feel completely safe in returning it freely and without limitation. He is smart and mature and responsible, but can also be utterly goofy, and we laugh together a lot.

The Meeting

Larry and I met online. Two weeks after we met, he flew to Kansas for a day to see his granddaughter perform in her school play. That was my first sign that this was a man I could love and trust. Larry's a devoted father, and he's given me the gift of being in the lives of his two adult kids and four beautiful grandchildren. (Since I never had children, this is just another part of my dream coming true.)

I think it's important that you know how I feel when I'm with him. Because how you feel about **yourself** is the ultimate evidence of whether you chose a man who is good for you. Simply put, when I'm with my husband, I like myself. He knows, and loves, the real me – complexities, bad habits, emotional freak-outs and all. When I'm with him, I feel like I'm delightful, beautiful, and brilliant. (He uses those words, and I believe him.) He shows me so much faith and respect that he helps me trust myself when I'm struggling to do so. When we're together, I feel safe and accepted because I know I have absolute permission to be who I am; including the soft and feminine me that I hid for so many years out of (what I thought was) self-protection.

I've achieved a lot in my life. I've supported myself since I was 18 with an ever-growing and increasingly successful career. I've built a circle of tremendous and loyal friends, I've worked hard to maintain good relationships with my high-maintenance and very challenging family, and I have lots of fine possessions.

But honestly, the greatest pride in my life is that I became a woman who learned how to attract, and deserve, such a fine man who makes me so happy.

I want you to have the same thing in your life. You deserve it.

The Journey

How did I get here? I started “officially” dating when I was about 17. At least, I thought it was dating then, but to be blunt, it was really just having sex in the hopes that boys would like me.

As the years wore on (and on and on), I had some good times with some nice men. But my experience overall was tinged with pain, disappointment, frustration, a little self-loathing, and frequent loneliness. As my friends married and re-married, I started to feel not just the loneliness, but like I was a failure. I felt ashamed and unworthy. After all, everyone else was finding someone to love them. If I wasn't, it must be something wrong with me.

I teetered between “what's wrong with me” and “what's wrong with them” for years. I came to believe that men just didn't appreciate accomplished, intelligent, strong women like me. They felt threatened and couldn't handle the challenge. I knew that as a fact. Oh, and I also knew that those superficial beasts had no use for women who weren't 5'10 blonds with legs “up to there.” (I was so far from being that woman.)

And I can't leave out the “who needs a man anyway?” years. I had complete freedom, lovely friends, a good career, and a nice home. I volunteered my time for meaningful causes, traveled to wonderful places, and was able to buy pretty much whatever I wanted. I had a good life. Who needed a man to screw it up, right?

The years dragged on, and even though I went through all of these gyrations, I still kept going out and trying to find “the One.” It truly was my deepest most secret wish. And although I took “hiatus” times, I never really gave up my search.

I met men through friends, posted personal ads in the local papers (that sure ages me!), speed-dated, video dated, participated in community charities and political causes, and went online...a lot. I looked for men everywhere.

I had one night stands. I had hundreds of first dates. I had numerous affairs. I also had a couple longer-term relationships. But nothing that made me feel secure or special for any length of time. In all those years, I never found that special man.

My Epiphanies

“The truth shall set you free. But first, it shall piss you off.”
— Gloria Steinem

Over the course of a year or so...reading...experiencing new things...going to seminars...and in therapy, I had an epiphany...then another...and another. (I hope you have the chance to see a great therapist like I did. A good therapist and/or a good coach will change your life.)

Epiphany #1: I wanted to be loved by a man.

I was able to say, clearly and without reservation, that having the right man in my life would make it better. Being loved by a man, experiencing intimacy and affection, would fill an emptiness in my life.

No more offhand comments about men screwing up my life. No more statements about not needing or wanting a man. Yes...I was happy without one. But the right man would bring me fulfillment that I've never known, and that I've always dreamed of. I wanted it.

Epiphany #2: Fear was steering my ship.

During all those years when I was saying “I want to find love!” deep down I really didn't. Why? Because I was too afraid. I was afraid of being hurt, being rejected, being wrong - you name it.

So I erected what I call my “Wall of I-Dare-You.” You know what I mean: I dare you to not like me. I dare you to disappoint me. I dare you to reject me before I reject you. I dare you to make me need you or depend on you. I dare you to be too nice to me (because that would just prove some ulterior motive).

In my attempt to “protect” myself, no man ever saw the real me, and I tested them every step of the way. I thought that kept me safe.

Epiphany #3: It was *all* about me.

Here's the hardest thing my sadistic therapist helped me see: my problem didn't have much to do with men. The problem was with me. I didn't like or trust myself.

I had made so many bad moves and stupid decisions over the years, that I (maybe subconsciously) questioned myself constantly. I turned it around on the men I met, but really it was about me. I was embarrassed about making those bad choices and silly mistakes – especially since I did it over and over. But instead of changing and reaching out for help, I just kept doing the same thing, somehow blaming others and expecting them to change.

When I realized it was about me, and allowed myself to get past caring that this meant I had been “wrong”, the best part came: I understood that meant I could fix it. So, I did.

I was determined to improve this part of my life, and I figured the way to do that was to learn more about men and about myself. I continued therapy, worked with coaches, read books, went to seminars, dated different types of men, talked honestly, tested my beliefs, and continued some serious self reflection.

Making these changes isn't unlike when you want to change careers or learn a new skill; you commit to learning and growing. You do what you need to do to improve the situation.

What I learned is pretty simple:

- Men are different than us. Unless we accept that, learn about the differences, and celebrate them, we will never share truly honest and fulfilling relationships.
- Many men are looking for intelligent, accomplished women to make their life partner. But that's not enough. Men also want their partner and lover to be open, genuine, and able to both give and receive.
- I was a fantastic woman. I didn't have to be perfect to be loved. My many life experiences and achievements well-prepared me for making good choices and finding my lifetime love. I just had to start applying these strengths to my search for a mate.

The Reward

Within six months of what I consider the culmination of this work, I met Larry. We married 6 months after we met, and at the time of this writing, we've been married 3 ½ years.

I can honestly say that this is the happiest time in my life. Not just because I have this fabulous man who loves me, but because I have become the woman who deserves this fabulous man who loves me.

When I think how lucky I am to have found my husband – and I do so every day – I remind myself that I earned it. I am worthy of him. This fine man wouldn't have accepted anything less than a confident, compassionate, affectionate woman who is fearless in her ability to love and capable of sustaining a grownup relationship.

My Gift to You

My entire adult life has been about helping adults learn so that they can enrich and improve their lives. I spent 25 years thriving - and loving - designing, delivering, and managing all kinds of training programs, teaching all kinds of business and life skills.

Now I teach women how to date like grownups. What does that mean? It means knowing and loving yourself, and making good choices. It means dating with confidence, compassion, awareness, and grace. Because when you date this way, you can enjoy the journey that ultimately leads to meaningful and fulfilling love. (Talk about helping women enrich their lives!)

Here's the first thing I learned about teaching adults: start with what they already know. That's because adults have so much knowledge, skill, and life experience, that if you start there, you only need to fill in gaps to get them to where they want to be.

So think of this book as your Love Putty. We're going to fill gaps you might have in your knowledge and skills around your search for your special man.

You already know and do so many things amazingly well. Let's look at many of the things you've mastered in your life. And then let's make sure you are using those gifts to create a successful path to finding your mate.

I know I say these are my 7 secrets. But the real truth is that these are 7 things you probably already know. Deep down, you probably already feel and do these 7 things. It's the idea of applying them to your search for love that may seem novel and surprising. When you take these 7 things and consciously apply them to your entire life, you will confidently and happily meet your mate:

1. You Are Kind to Others, and to Yourself
2. You Know Yourself
3. You Like and Respect Yourself
4. You've Lived and Learned
5. You Know What You Want and How to Get It
6. You've Slain Dragons
7. You Know Love Matters

By shining a light on what you already know and do, and talking about how to apply it to dating and the pursuit of a meaningful and lasting relationship, you will realize that you are closer to fulfilling your dreams than you may think. And where there may be opportunities to learn and grow, I'm going to give you the path to get there.



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It's Really Not About the Size of Your Thighs

***“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength,
while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”***

— Lao Tzu

When I used to meet men, my first mission was to make it clear to them that I had a very full life and was doing just fine on my own. I thought it was important for them to “know who I was.” After all, I was an independent woman and I was not going to give up or change anything for any man! If he was the man for me, he would appreciate my strength and the real me...then we could move forward.

With this approach, I had more first dates than Macy's had sales. And I was absolutely 100% certain it was because of the size of my thighs.

Seriously, that's how I rationalized why I never got asked out on second dates. I told myself it was because those shallow, superficial men were all looking for a hot bombshell who wouldn't be too much work. They just wanted her to be great to look at, flirty, and sexy. They couldn't handle a woman like me who wanted to have meaningful discussion and insisted on being respected.

This was a story I truly believed, and it protected me from the truth for many years. I actually waved it as some sort of proud banner: I'm too smart for those men! But the reality was that I was sabotaging every date I went on. I was ruining the chance of a second date, and therefore any chance at a relationship...and it was all about me.

A typical first date for me went something like this:

Nice guy: *Hi. Nice to meet you.*

Me: *You too. Excuse my being frantic. I rushed here from work. It's so crazy there! Lot's to do.*

Nice guy: *Oh, what do you do?*

Me: *I'm a consultant. Right now I'm managing an international training project. We're developing an learning program that teaches people how to use proprietary technology. I've been doing it a long time; the last several years as an independent consultant. I work mostly in the foreign automotive field, but I've also managed large projects in the health care and mortgage industries. I really love it. I work a lot but I'm lucky to have such a great job and career. How about you?*

Nice guy: *Oh, I'm a _____ (fill in the blank).*

Me: *That's interesting! I read an article... My opinion is...What do you think?*

Get the picture? Was I hot or what???

After quite some time and a lot of self-discovery, I eventually came to understand that what those men heard every time I droned on was:

Hey!!! Mr. Man!!! I don't need you!!!!

Here's what else I learned: men want to feel needed. Just like us, men feel good when someone relies on them. In fact, they require it.

Here's one of the most brilliant questions my therapist put to me: if you had a friend who never needed you, who never asked for help or advice or support...would you want that friendship?

Think about it: helping each other – being there for each other – is an integral part of any good relationship. And being able to help people is part of being able to feel good about yourself, right?

I learned that needing a man doesn't make you needy; at least, not in that negative I'm-such-a-loser kind of way. Relying on someone else and letting them see your "weaknesses" or "flaws" actually takes courage. It takes more courage than doing it all alone.

Over the years, I learned to let myself fully open up and rely on my women friends, and I finally realized I could do the same with men. And, like women, most men met me with kindness and generosity.

It's About Your Head and Your Heart

The hardest part of dating is not that there aren't good men out there, that you're unlucky in love, or that men only care about looks. Your biggest challenges are what's in your head and what's in your heart. Your willingness to learn, to improve, to take risks, to have courage, to trust yourself and be yourself...this is what determines whether you'll find your match – or at least have fun searching for him.

Like me, maybe you've had bad experiences that support your negative thoughts, and feelings of fatefulness, and fear. You also probably have a long list of things you tell yourself about men – and about yourself – that keeps you from showing your authentic self when you date.

We all create ways to protect and shield ourselves from the inevitable hurt and disappointment that comes with putting ourselves out there and daring to be hopeful.

But it's those shields – the ones you've constructed to protect yourself – that are creating exactly what you're trying to prevent. They are keeping you from being who you really are! You are a caring, intelligent, independent, feminine woman and you should be sharing your real self. Because the man you're secretly wishing for wants that woman. He wants you just as you are.

Find Yourself Then Find Your Man

There's a reason we call it "find the man of your dreams" not "wait for the man of your dreams." Finding the man of your dreams is about YOU; being the best you can be, knowing what you want, and having the courage to go get it. It's about being self aware, and throwing out old attitudes and behaviors that are holding you back. It's about acting like the grownup that you are.

You've snagged a great job, afforded nice things, taken care of loved ones, and built a loving circle of friends. You are a successful adult with hard earned pride. The things that have so filled your life up to now probably didn't come easy. You've likely had to educate yourself, work hard, develop skills, practice patience, and find support. And on your way to all of these accomplishments, you've

no doubt fallen and gotten back up countless times.

It's because of this that you are closer than you think to finding love while thriving in the process. You are doing so many things in your life today that set you up as the woman you need to be to attract the man you deserve. But maybe, just maybe, you're not applying what you know and how you feel to your dating life.

Do you know the old joke about the fortune cookie? When you read the fortune, always add "in bed" to the end. It makes for some good giggles. "You are a friend people can rely on...in bed." "You will soon travel to far away lands...in bed." You know that one, don't you?

Well this is about doing what you're doing today, but...with men. "I am setting goals and doing what I need to do to achieve them...with men." "I like and respect myself...with men." "I am strong and self-deserving...with men." You get the point.

You may not be able to look at yourself and say that you are all together all the time. Who is? But I know that you can say that you've done well, and you've taken good care of yourself and others. I know that you've learned to accept others' foibles and so-called weaknesses.

Granted, you're not perfect; you have room to grow. But I'm guessing that by this time in your life you've learned to accept that, and you still love yourself.

So this is where we start...with your kindness.



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Secret #1: You Are Kind to Others, and to Yourself

Kindness: Showing tenderness or goodness; disposed to do good and confer happiness; averse to hurting or paining; benevolent; gracious.

Your road to love has to include a heaping portion of kindness. I'm not just talking about good manners like saying "thank you" when your car door is opened, or refraining from telling a man the negative things you really think of him. I'm talking about the loving kindness you've developed with life experience and the wisdom that comes with it.

The generosity you show your friends and family needs to be extended to men. Attention, acceptance, compassion, empathy; these are kindnesses you freely give day-to-day, but may not be giving so freely when you're emailing the guy you met online or meeting a man for coffee.

And as you date and search for love, the ultimate kindness you can show is compassion for yourself.

When you're willing to understand and forgive yourself, and to give the gift of loving kindness to the men you meet, your dating life and pursuit of love will take on far brighter tones of enjoyment and success.

It's About More Than What Our Parents Taught Us

There are fundamental beliefs and social skills we learn about being humane and respectful of others. We learn a lot of these when we're young. When someone falls down in front of you, you help them get up.

As a grownup, kindness and other qualities evolve and take new shape. Now that we're older, the way we feel and express kindness takes on new and more sophisticated forms.

I would loosely describe my shift this way: not only am I "disposed to do good," I actively work on "conferring happiness."

Over the years, after taking my own knocks, having my own feelings hurt, and experiencing the fallout of some of my not-so-nice behavior, I've changed. Being a nice person who helps people feel good about themselves is a priority in my life. I've learned to take time to consider individuals' needs, abilities, and feelings; both in business and with friends and family. I am gentler, and more patient.

This means that I judge others less harshly. I give them the benefit of the doubt, and allow them to be human. I give second chances.

These shifts came about because I consciously decided at certain points in my life to become a kinder person. I chose to learn new ways to express and give kindness.

I'm sure you can think of 100 things you do to be kind to others, both in the most basic ways and in more mature and thoughtful ways. And you most likely grant your kindness to most anyone you meet.

By now, I hope you know that the ultimate kindness is to yourself. For most of us, it takes a lot of life experience to be able to accept yourself and believe that you don't have to be perfect to be a good or lovable person. At this point in your life, I hope that, like me, you're offering yourself the tenderness and acceptance that you deserve.

Kindness...with Men

Without mutual kindness, there is no potential for developing a significant relationship of any kind. Don't you agree? But it's sometimes difficult for us to extend the same kindness to the men we date that we do to our friends or our family.

You've likely had past experiences that have shaped your beliefs and created a lack of trust or respect for men; especially those you date. You may have been harshly judged, stood up, dumped, or lied to in the past. Or maybe your challenge is trusting and honoring yourself, and you project that onto the men you meet and date.

I need you to put that aside; not because it's unimportant, but because it's moot in this conversation. Why? Because the men you meet deserve your kindness regardless of your previous experiences, beliefs and feelings you bring with you.

The kindness that you show to others – compassion, acceptance, forgiveness, and open-mindedness – should also be given to the men you meet and date.

Is it difficult to leave your preconceived notions and fears behind you when you meet or are getting to know someone new? Yes. There are a lot of emotions involved and your self-esteem is at stake. But you've developed the skills that allow you to forgo momentary feelings and treat people with kindness and respect. You've learned how to resist making assumptions, jumping to conclusions, or behaving negatively in response to a particular situation.

You need to do this with men. They deserve it. And without doing this it's likely you won't develop significant relationships of any kind.

The Four Commandments of Kindness to Men

1. Hold your judgments.

Quick judgments are often in response to a lot of things that have nothing to do with the man sitting in front of you. You would want him to judge you based solely on what he sees in you; not what he saw in the last three women he dated. You owe him the same kindness.

That means when you meet a man who has a job, a haircut, stature, or a sense of humor that you “instantly” don't like, stop! and take time to see him as a complete person. Show him the same initial acceptance and generosity that you would show an acquaintance or the woman you meet at a business mixer. Doing this not only shows kindness, but it makes your chances of meeting a fantastic man far greater.

This was a huge epiphany for my client Diana. I worked with her on this our first couple sessions. She saw her propensity to judge very quickly (out of self-defense, by the way) and she vowed to “go out with compassion” and not judge men so quickly. This caused an instant change in her experience. With this awareness, and a little practiced self-talk, she suddenly saw many men who were possible suitors. That's only because she gave them a second chance when one thing

about them bugged her. Funny how if you can get past the way a man dresses or uses his fork, you often end up seeing a nice guy who might be okay to spend some time with.

2. Be empathetic.

Empathy isn't just about relating to someone, it's about being willing and able to consider what they want and need – outside of what you want and need. When they say “put yourself in their shoes,” it means look at it from their perspective – not yours. To do this, you need to do the work to understand how men think and feel differently than we do.

A great example of this is something I hear constantly from my clients. It's a first date, and the man asks her to pick a place to go for dinner. She's irritated, and I hear: “I want a real man who will take charge” or “He can't be that interested if he's not willing to plan our first date.” She's decided he's a putz, and the poor man has very little chance of recovery.

Are there men who do this because they are lazy or unimaginative? Yes. But they most often do it because they like you and want to please you. A smart man figures that the best way to please a woman is to take her somewhere she likes. It's that simple. From his perspective, he's doing a caring thing that proves his interest in you. And when you judge that negatively, trust me, these guys scratch their heads and just don't get why it's a strike against them.

In this case, empathy would mean forgoing the knee-jerk reaction (which is all about you) and trying to understand the man's motives. To do that successfully, you need to be willing and able. Reading this book is a good beginning, but it's very possible you'll have to invest more time in learning about how men think and feel. Unless you have a good understanding of this, no matter your intent, you just won't be able to successfully extend this kindness.

3. Online dating is still dating.

If you're dating online – or as my friend calls it, “meeting online” – all the rules of kindness still apply. Just because you are sitting behind a computer, or you have men queued up, there's no reason to forgo the niceties.

Take this story recently shared by my friend Jan. Jan's been doing online dating for some time. A man emailed her recently and the content of the email was merely a copy-and-paste of his profile. Jan instantly took offense, thinking he was being lazy and should have taken the time to send a personalized email. So she shot back an email asking him if he “even knew what he was doing?”

I know where she was coming from: she was burnt out and frustrated that she hadn't met a special man yet. But that was unkind, and lacked empathy. She knew that after she clicked “send” – but it was too late. When she re-read his profile, she found that it was his second day

online. Ouch! Imagine how he felt after receiving her brusque email. Do you think her lack of kindness affected this man's confidence going forward? I think it absolutely did.

And maybe, just maybe he was a nice guy she would have had some fun with. Maybe she could have learned something from him, or he would have been the perfect guy to introduce to another single friend. She'll never know.

Just like in other areas of your life, when you jump to what I call "bad behavior" out of fear, frustration, or disappointment, you risk missing an opportunity or losing something you already have.

Ask anyone who has known me more than a few years, and they'll tell you that I know this story oh too well. My fears and insecurities expressed themselves as sarcasm and impatience. Not quite the attributes of a successful dater. (Or successful friend for that matter.) I had to learn to pay attention to the signs, which for me meant feeling hurt or unappreciated. Once I recognized the feeling, I practiced the "count to 10" method. It goes like this:

1. Feel bad.
2. Put a name on the feeling.
3. Count to 10 while assessing the situation.
4. Take action (if necessary).

By forgoing quick reaction, more times than not I avoided bad behavior. I usually realized that the ickiness was about my feelings of being less-than; that the person in front of me meant absolutely no harm. Not only does this help me avoid hurting someone's feelings, it most often eliminates my bad feelings.

So learn to step back and count to 10 before you click that send key; and in all aspects of your life.

4. Be kind to yourself.

When you really go for it and put yourself out there, you may act a certain way, have certain feelings, or make decisions that you later feel bad about or regret. Show yourself the kindness you deserve by giving yourself second chances and allowing for mistakes.

As you already know, there can be some difficult times during your search for love. Like other times in your life when you're working toward a better future and achieving positive change, you have to allow yourself room to learn and improve. Every new man you speak with, every date, every email...it all takes courage. Just keep this in mind, and remember that there is a learning experience in every single effort you make.

Not showing yourself the understanding and kindness you deserve simply sabotages your efforts, or even worse, paralyzes you. I have these two tips:

1. Be your best cheerleader and,
2. Build a support squad.

Harsh self judgments are most often your insecure 18 year old talking to you. Tell her to just stop! Have those needed conversations with yourself about how much you have overcome and achieved in your life, how much you know and can do, and what a deserving and remarkable woman you are. Remind yourself that, as an accomplished and independent woman, you are not defined by one act or what one man thinks of you.

And always have friends to call on when you need a little support. They want to be there for you. And don't look to those friends that respond with the requisite "yah, he's a jerk" every time you have a bad experience. Your real friends – the ones that are wise and grownup enough to see you and see men as good people trying to connect with one another – will also point out when you are in need of a positive shift or a good smack upside the head. (Sorry...is that too harsh?) But truly, a good friend will support you with both honesty and kindness. (If you want the ultimate support, ask your friend to read this book so you're on the same page here.) If you don't have these types of friends, seek the support of family, a therapist, or a coach like me.

Exercise

Ask yourself these questions.

- How do I show kindness to the women I meet and know?
- Am I fair and open-minded in my judgment of men?
- What beliefs or feelings do I have that may be making it harder to show kindness to men?
- Do I let any of my own insecurities or previous bad experiences affect how I feel about men I meet and date?
- Am I willing and able to show empathy for men? Is there more I need to do or learn?
- Which of my friends will offer me the best possible support – compassion and honesty – through this process?

Action

1. Commit to approaching your next 3 dates with the initial acceptance, open-mindedness, and generosity you would show a new woman you meet.
2. Learn more about how men think and feel by buying a book, taking a seminar, or talking to a male friend. You can even ask your dates questions! They would thrill in the fact that you're interested in their experiences and opinions.
3. Devise a way to spot your bad behavior. For instance: if sarcasm is often your defense, commit to paying special attention when telling a "joke" or trying to elicit a laugh. That should hoist a red flag and raise your consciousness of what you are saying and why. Once you recognize it, decide how you will avoid a negative reaction.



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Secret #2: You Know Yourself

Self-Awareness: Conscious knowledge; awareness of oneself, including one's traits, feelings, and behaviors.

Several years ago I was fired. Not from one job, but from 2 jobs in a row. I was forced to stop and take stock. I had to look at myself and ultimately acknowledge that I had to change, or my financial future was bleak.

I learned some hard lessons, but the process of consciously assessing my motivators, fears, weaknesses, and strengths was worth it. Not only did I realize what I had to change, I also realized what was extraordinary and good about me.

I'm sure you've had similar experiences in your life, when you became aware of the need to change to make your future brighter. When these opportunities present themselves (and they are opportunities) great things happen. You further your career, improve your relationships, lose weight, break up with toxic boyfriends, and stop self-sabotaging or addictive behavior.

None of these positive shifts in life happen without honest and sometimes painful introspection, followed by a commitment to shift some beliefs or behaviors. You are able and willing to do this

because you are intelligent, insightful, and optimistic about the ultimate outcome.

You may need to consciously remind yourself to have that honest awareness with respect to your relationships with men. The fact that you are here reading this proves that you are willing to take a look at yourself, and then make positive changes.

Self-Awareness...with Men

As intelligent and accomplished women, when an aspect of our life is consistently disappointing us, we stop and take notice. At some point, if positive change doesn't come, we consider where we have responsibility and the power to make it better. Then we take action.

For some reason, taking that authentic look at ourselves seems more daunting when it's in relation to our search for love. This makes sense. There's a lot at stake.

Searching for your "soul mate" is a highly emotional part of your life that is inextricably tied to your sense of self and self-love. Compared to careers or even relationships with your girlfriends, the boundaries of romantic love cut much closer to your deepest hopes and fears.

The Four Commandments of Self-Awareness with Men

1. Always start with what you love about yourself.

Self-awareness when dating is not just about finding opportunities to improve. It's immensely important that your introspection includes seeing and honoring the qualities and gifts that make you a good woman who deserves a good man.

One of the exercises I eventually learned was this: before I met or talked to any new man, awareness of my positive attributes was in my consciousness. To avoid my tendency to put up walls to protect myself, I stayed grounded in the idea that I didn't have to build those walls; that I was an intelligent, strong, and loving woman who had no reason to be anything but authentic with men. That it was okay to be imperfect. In fact, it was an attractive part of being a human being.

The consciousness of this was something I had to learn, and I reverted back to my insecurities and fears at times. But I did learn it. Had I not, I would never have attracted my spectacular husband who was looking for a confident and secure woman to share his life with.

2. If it's about you, then excellent! You can change it.

This isn't about blame or whether men or women are the biggest failures or jerks in dating.

Let it go. This is about finding your lifetime companion. The best outcome here is that you find that your traits, feelings, or behaviors are standing between you and love. That means that it's entirely within your control to make your life better.

This is something we learn as grownups, right? That you can't change others, you can only change yourself. As the accomplished and independent woman that you are, you no doubt have successfully made positive self-improvements in other areas of your life. You know how to do this. You just have to be willing to do it in your relationships with men.

When my clients let themselves see past all their "men are this, men are that" stuff, and they realize it's almost all about them, it creates instant shifts. It's like a new found feeling of power. And we definitely need that feeling of control as we make our way through the inevitable challenges of dating and searching for a good man to be our life partner.

3. Let go of your secrets.

If, when you imagine yourself with a fabulous man who adores you, you feel the longing of being loved and lusted for, then say your wish for it out loud. Call it putting it out to the universe or to some higher being, or just admitting it to yourself. But you must say what you want before you can get it. This was a turning point in my life.

I met "Patty" last year and as I told her about my story her eyes welled up with tears. She was 66 years old and hadn't dated or been in any intimate relationship for many years. She had convinced herself that she was "done." But my story brought out her deepest wish – something she had been holding back for years.

I helped Patty get online. (That's right! At 66 years old!) Within 6 weeks, she met a wonderful man who adores her. They are planning travels far and wide, and he makes her happy in a way she hasn't been in years. She is experiencing intimacy she hasn't had for years, which is helping her feel strong and beautiful. She admitted her secret wish, and it seems to have come true.

Will this be the man she marries? That's yet to be written. But it's clear that her willingness to state this wish for herself opened her up to meeting him. If it's not him, it will be another. But now she has the prospect of this wish coming true. When it was a secret, there was no chance – no hope – at all.

4. Honesty is the best policy.

Even for the most strong and straightforward person, being completely honest about yourself can be challenging and sometimes painful. It can also be difficult to show your authentic self to men, especially those who have not yet earned your trust.

But consider this: if you don't give it a chance – if you don't even try – you most certainly will never fulfill your truest dreams.

I challenge you to take a very close look at why this part of your life is so difficult. Why is it so hard to look directly at yourself in relation to men? And why is it so hard to put your real self out there when dating and meeting new men?

So often women's fear (and loathing!) is tied directly to childish experiences and beliefs that are simply no longer true. What I mean is this: when you were a teenager it's likely that you felt your worth was tied directly to whether you were popular, especially with the boys. As you got older, if you are like me, you held on to that belief at some fundamental level.

Be honest. No matter how much you accomplish; no matter how loving and generous of a friend you are; no matter how sincerely you believe yourself to be an interesting and good person...is there always a "yah, but" that somehow diminishes all that in some way? And is it because you haven't yet found a loving mate?

Get to the truth of this. Get help if you need it. It wasn't fun, but I thank my therapist for forcing me to look at myself and my behavior with men. Also, for teaching me that men – mature and worthy men – want and expect confidence and authenticity. To have these, you have to truly believe your worth and be willing...no, happy...to share yourself with others, even men.

Exercise

Write a list (List #1) of what you like and love about yourself. Include everything from having great design taste, to being brilliant, to being a compassionate and loyal friend. Ask your friends and family to help.

Now, write a list (List #2) of any beliefs, traits, or behaviors you would like to shift in your life in relation to dating and your search for love. (Remember, this is all about YOU and what you can change.) Ask your friends and family to help.

If you have a secret wish about dating and your search for love – something you haven't expressed openly in the recent past – write it down.

Action

1. Take List#1 and pin it to your wall or refrigerator or bathroom mirror. Keep it out as a reminder. If you have to, give it a glance before you go to online, to a party, or on dates. (Seriously, I did this and it works.)
2. Take List #2, and write at least one action you can take to help you make each shift you identified. This can include buying a book, signing up for a seminar, getting advice from friends, seeking help of a therapist, or simply taking a long walk to consider it and start working toward a solution.
3. Call a friend you identified as one who is able to give you the support you need, and read her or him your secret wish. Then, tell them how they can support you in making your wish come true.
4. I especially encourage you to ask women in happily married or committed relationships. Give them permission to be honest, and listen. These ladies know something that you don't.



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Secret #3: You Like and Respect Yourself

Respect: To regard with special attention; to regard as worthy of consideration; hence, to care for.

Self-Respect: Regard for one's character; laudable self-esteem.

Among the many things I did to get to a place where I was ready to meet my husband, developing real self-love and respect was perhaps the most important, and the most difficult. I know it's cliché, but you won't find the true and adult love that you crave until you know – I mean truly know – that you deserve it.

This is about more than just being able to describe what's fabulous and special about you. For years, I was able to rattle off a list of my great qualities while droning on about not being able to find a good man who appreciated me. But that was simply an intellectual exercise. Until I believed in my heart that I was “worthy of consideration” by a good man who loved and adored me, I never found one.

The Evolution of Our Self-Respect

Some women seem to genuinely like and respect themselves from the time they are very young. For many of us, including me, genuine self-respect developed over years. For me it came in phases.

My first sense of feeling self-worth came relative to my friendships and relationships with family. Once I realized that I deserved to be with trusted people who contributed to my life, I started placing boundaries and eliminating associations that I considered off-balance or toxic. My relationships then became far deeper, and more meaningful.

Next, I learned to respect myself in relation to my career. I knew my contribution was exceptional, and I felt worthy of a certain level of recognition and compensation. I elevated in position and pay.

Eventually I realized that the qualities that made me worthy of love and respect in other parts of my life applied just as appropriately to my worthiness with men.

I learned that I was judging myself based on old beliefs, and on my perceptions of what I thought men wanted and what I thought they thought about me. I wasn't judging based on what I valued and admired about myself. Or, for that matter, what others in my life valued and admired about me.

With that understanding, I went out into the world of dating with new found self-respect and self-love, and I found the love of the most divine man.

Self-Respect...with Men

Dating can be intense from the outset. We tend to quickly distort things out of emotion. Being grounded in liking yourself and respecting yourself is essential not just to finding a good relationship with a good man, but to enjoying the journey along the way. If you don't highly value yourself, you tend to make bad choices and your feelings are constantly at risk of being hurt. When you do value yourself, you tend to be treated the way you expect, and get what you expect.

My struggle was about defining my success by how many men "chose" me. It became a cycle:

- I didn't feel quite worthy of being loved for who I was, so I made bad choices in men.
- I wasn't treated with kindness or respect, and wasn't given what I needed by those men.
- I blamed myself. (Sometimes with the veil of blaming them, but deep down I believed it was me.)
- I felt like a failure in finding love, which made me feel less worthy.
- Off I went to make the next bad choice.

This cycle of making bad choices is the single most consistent challenge I see in my clients and my friends. After all, it's only natural to repeat what you know – even if it doesn't work – until you know something else.

Like the other areas of my life, with some self-kindness, self-awareness, and self improvement, I understood that I deserved the love of a caring and generous man. And like in the other areas of my life, once I learned this and believed it, I found what I deserved.

“...to regard as worthy of special consideration; hence, to care for.”

The Four Commandments of Self-Respect with Men

1. Measure by your yardstick, not theirs.

I can joke here about how men tend to fudge on measurements. But, seriously, you must judge your worth based on your feelings and what you value. When you do, and you feel your true worth, you will find a man who brings you what you want and need. You won't let yourself settle for less.

I have an exercise I do with my clients that digs deep into their strengths and character. I ask them to take a true and serious look at themselves. With very very few exceptions, they like what they see. As I talked about in an earlier chapter, being perfect is not expected. And we should never hold ourselves to an impossible standard.

Sometimes that impossible standard takes the shape of us measuring ourselves based on what we think men want. And when we aren't that woman (flirty, simple-minded, leggy, superficial, subservient, etc.) we feel less-than. Even though that's certainly not who we want to be, nor should be. Now...follow me here:

- If you currently have negative opinions of men;
- If you are less than educated about how men really think and feel;
- Then what you think you need to be because you think that's what men want...is wrong!

Real men – adult men – want YOU! They want intelligence and depth and independence. Once you realize this, and change your “measurement” you will see that you more than measure up.

2. Do the work.

This doesn't come easy for many women. Take the time, and devote the attention to getting in touch with how you feel about yourself and how you are approaching your search.

You need to be clear about what you want and need in a man and in a relationship. Then, take an honest look and determine, by your standards, if you've put yourself in a position to get what you deserve. Do you believe what you need to believe, know what you need to know, act how you need to act? Are you making the choices and doing what you need to do to find that man? If the answer is "no," take stock and then take action.

3. It's not about whether they like you.

Many women approach meeting a man by asking "I wonder if he likes me?" And end up getting stuck there. That is the wrong question. The questions to ask are "Do I like him? Do I feel good when I'm with him?" If the answer is "no" then it doesn't matter if he isn't going to choose you. If he isn't a man that you want to get to know and be with, his impression of you holds little meaning.

This is one of the most freeing things I learned, and one of the very first things I pass on to my clients and my friends. I shared that with a new client recently, and she reacted the same way I did; it was like a light bulb went on. Believing this is the step that opens you up to being able to focus on what's good for you and getting what you deserve.

4. Stay vigilant, learn, but enjoy the ride.

Especially at the beginning of what I called my "journey of dating like a grownup", I needed regular check-ins with myself about how I was feeling and the choices I was making. I also looked back at each of my experiences to find opportunities to learn.

This self-awareness and openness to discovery is absolutely necessary as you date and search for love. The key is balancing that with being able to be in the moment and have some fun.

Here's what I tell my clients: Do the work and get grounded in respecting and feeling good about yourself. Realize that no one is anywhere near perfect, and human beings accept – even appreciate – people who are vulnerable and imperfect. Then go out and date.

It's not to say that you'll feel 100% fabulous all the time, but that will be okay. When you trust yourself and make good choices, you'll find that you can relax and enjoy your date, or phone call, or even the email you're writing the guy you met online. You'll be able to focus on where you are and who you're trying to connect with rather than fighting with his opinions, your self criticism, and walls you put up for self-protection.

Exercise

Answer these questions:

When I meet a man, what are my initial thoughts? Do I try to determine his opinion of me or interest in me, or do I first focus on how I feel about him?

Looking back at your last several dates and/or relationships, can you identify times when you accepted disrespectful treatment or didn't get what you truly deserved?

Now, write a list of attributes you must have and expect in man, and how you expect to be treated in a relationship. (Focus clearly on must-haves, not nice-to-haves.)

Action

1. Go back to your list of what you like and love about yourself. Look at that list next to the one describing what you want in a man and a relationship. What do you see? You may very likely see how deserving you are of what you want.
2. Do you see some areas for clarity, change, or self improvement? (These are all great things to know!) Based on what you've learned:
 - Write an attribution that reminds you of your worth
 - Write three things you can do to get closer to finding the man you deserve
3. Post your list of what you are looking for next to your list of what you love about yourself.



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Secret #4: You've Lived and Learned

Wisdom: The quality of being wise; knowledge, and the capacity to make due use of it; knowledge of the best ends and the best means; discernment and judgment; discretion; skill.

Not only are you intelligent, you are damned smart. You've had a ton of life experience, learned a lot, made many choices, and lived through significant shifts in your life. By now you've probably discovered that there are plenty of opportunities to get it right, and you trust yourself to figure out how.

I think of knowledge and judgment as our foundation. Without them, our emotions take over, and when we're led entirely by our feelings rather than our rational thoughts, good decisions are hard to make. This wisdom of ours, like the 6 other things discussed here, can be difficult to apply consistently to our romantic life where emotions can run so high.

We Know It and We Use It

As the definition says, wisdom isn't just about knowing something, it's about making good use of

that knowledge. That shows up in our lives in so many ways. Our ability and willingness to learn, take responsibility for our actions, prioritize what's important, grow from our mistakes, and make good choices; these are all aspects of applying the vast knowledge we collect over the years. It's our wisdom that guides us through our process of self-awareness and the discovery of our self-respect.

The distinction the Dalai Lama makes between pleasure and happiness is especially valuable. To paraphrase, he talks about not making choices based on what feels good, but rather based on what is good for you. When I read that, it occurred to me that this defined the wisdom of making adult decisions versus childish ones. As a benchmark, this gives me a great deal of guidance in my life.

Wisdom...with Men

Wisdom means thinking rationally, being willing to learn and grow, and then applying what you've learned to improve your life experience. When we do, positive results come.

Being able to learn hard facts or new behaviors in order to create a fulfilling love life is no different. Wisdom in dating means things like recognizing that the same behavior delivers the same results. It means paying attention to whether you are dating the same type of man and, if doing so, preventing yourself from meeting a man who you feel good being with.

Wisdom in dating also means something that seems so hard for us: making decisions based on both what we think and what we feel. When we do, we can consciously make choices and objectively observe results. That's a huge part of what leads to success in dating.

The Four Commandments of Wisdom with Men

1. Try to think, and then feel.

As women, we often have an emotion, and then act. Men tend to have an emotion, think, and then act. I'm not recommending that you act like a man. But since this is our nature, I recommend that you make some conscious effort to combat an immediate reaction to a feeling.

My client Peggy is only one of many who had a recent example of this. She liked this man, but because he didn't call when expected she started to feel he was no longer interested. She felt rejected, and her feelings were hurt. When he called the next day, she was standoffish and somewhat cold to him; she was protecting herself from feeling worse.

Her reaction started a spiral that very likely was the beginning of the end of this promising relationship. Had Peggy stopped and considered not only the many reasons he may not be calling, but that it wasn't wise to assume and react, she may still be dating him.

2. Pleasure is good, but above all choose happiness.

Yes, I'm referring to sex and intimacy. If your true desire is to find a man with whom you can share a lasting and fulfilling relationship, focus on what will bring you ultimate happiness, and then behave accordingly. It is all about making informed and thoughtful choices.

Sex too soon can ruin what could be a lovely and mature relationship. It can also attach you to a man who isn't worthy of your adoration.

Unlike other coaches and experts, I can't give a hard and fast rule here. I just don't think one applies. Whether it's best to be intimate on your third date, or in your third month of dating, depends on many factors.

What I will tell you is that as a self-aware, self-respecting, wise woman, keeping your eye on your ultimate goal, and not giving in to momentary satisfaction will guide you to good decisions. Any decision you make should be based on the belief that it will bring you happiness, even at the cost of momentary pleasure.

3. Practice makes perfect.

Two things are critical here: 1) you will make mistakes, and 2) use each experience to help you get closer to your goal of finding love.

Just like in the other areas of your life, success in dating and finding a mate involves learning new things and trial and error. Be kind to yourself and don't judge yourself harshly. Then, act like the wise grownup that you are by finding a lesson in every email, phone call, date, or weekend away.

This isn't just about seeing what you could do better, but about celebrating what you enjoyed and did well. Doing this means every experience brings you closer to your dream.

4. Intuition has its place, but not necessarily a reliable one.

Call it your internal voice, sixth sense, or subconscious thought, some women do experience effective and meaningful intuitive moments. I wouldn't disregard them; they can be useful in clarifying feelings or sensing danger.

I caution you not to mistake quick judgment with intuition. When you tell yourself "I just didn't get a good feeling from him" or "he's just not my type", you need to stop and consider where that

is coming from. Is it a response to your insecurity or preconceived notions? Maybe a previous experience with a different person? Are you showing this man the kindness he deserves? If you give in to these reactions without interjecting conscious thought, you will make the mistake so many women make: walking away from many a good man.

I can't express my advice on this any clearer than the author Minna Antrim does here:

"Intuition is truly a feminine quality, but women should not mistake rash conclusions for this gift."

Exercise:

Think of a time in your life when you overcame your emotions (fear, lack-of-esteem, weariness) and through personal strength, will and intellect achieved something meaningful.

Think of your last few dates and/or relationships. Was there an instance when you may have let your emotions override your intellect? What was the outcome? Given the same situation, how might you respond differently?

Action

1. Over the next two weeks, when you have interactions with men – any men – pay attention to the role your emotions play versus your rational thought. Write down your observations.
2. Talk to someone you trust about your observations and how they might be affecting your ability to enjoy dating, and eventually find your mate.



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Secret #5: You Know What You Want and How to Get It

Desire: To require; to demand; to claim; to long for; to wish for earnestly; to covet. Stresses the strength of feeling and often implies strong intention or aim.

One of my father's favorite sayings is "it's a good thing to want." I used to think that was his sarcastic way of brushing off my wishes and dreams as a child. Now I understand that he meant it literally.

It's our desire for things that propels us to achieve. It's why we have a good job or career, good friends, and comfort in our lives. It's even why we spend the day at the park, get our nails done, go on great trips, or go out for a good steak dinner. We want something; we go get it.

For me, when it came to finding my life partner, the space between the desire and the achievement seemed monumental. There were so many things in my life that I had "conquered" but I just couldn't figure this one out.

Desire Leads to Achievement

The great thing about being an adult is that not only do we know what we want, we generally know how to get it. We may not have everything we've wished for like that zillion dollar house or the Ozzie and Harriett family, but we do have many things we've strived for in life.

In fact, with maturity comes the clarity of what we genuinely and realistically want. That house and family may be things we've determined lacked priority or are out of our control, so we no longer go after them.

Conversely, there are things we think we don't want that we ultimately realize we do. That was true of my desire to be married. For a long time (into my 30s), I was convinced that marriage wasn't something I wanted in my life. (Thank goodness I finally admitted that it was something I badly wanted.)

There are many things – big and small – that we decide we want and we eventually get, solely through our efforts and actions. Finding ways to get what we want can involve some difficulty and hard work. It can require a lot of creativity, resilience, risk, compassion, and humility. We do this in so many areas of our lives, and the payoff is always worth it. Even if we don't get our desired result, we know we tried our best.

Desire...with Men

How many times have you said "I want to meet a fantastic man/the love of my life/my life partner" and then ended the sentence with "but I don't know how" or "but I'm unlucky in love" or "but my man just isn't out there."

If you hear yourself saying these things, regardless of whether you are dating or not, I believe that you have essentially given up. You are quashing your true desire. And without this earnest wish, your chance of achieving it is greatly diminished. When you tell the Universe that you really don't want it or believe you can get it, I believe it hears and responds.

When you want something – really want it –you do what you need to do to get it. When you decide - or even act like – it's unattainable, you stop trying. When you consciously or subconsciously give up, it shows up as either passively waiting for a man to appear, or self-sabotaging behavior. (You may not see it this way; you may just see it as consistent bad results.)

I did this myself, and I see so many women do it. This is about self-protection and fear. It's as we talked about earlier when we discussed self-awareness: if your wish is to find a special man who

makes you feel loved and valued, then say it out loud.

Remember, this was my epiphany #1. It's big! Once I truly acknowledged I wanted it – and said it out loud – the scale tipped from fear to desire – and I set out to claim it.

The Four Commandments of Desire with Men

1. Be honest and go for it.

Some things are just too important to let get away. Finding lasting love is one of those things. Forgo your fear, overcome your disappointment, and let yourself feel the need and desire to connect with a man who loves and adores you.

2. Put it out there.

In life, getting what you want often involves making it known that you want it. In dating, that means letting men know when you are interested. I can't tell you how many times I've seen women lose opportunities to get to know nice men because they didn't put out the "I'm interested" vibe.

The idea that men want to hunt creates all kinds of assumptions and forces all kinds of behavior. Yes, many men want some challenge and are turned off by women who fawn over them; especially right off. But most men, especially mature and confident men, need to feel they have a chance with you before they really go for it. No one likes rejection. And these men don't want to waste their time chasing something they can't catch.

When you're interested, let him know. Laugh at his jokes, tell him that you enjoy his company, or that he's much better looking than his picture. Best yet, simply tell him you'd like to see him again.

You shouldn't feel any fear around this. It's a great kindness to men. Worst case, if it's not reciprocated, you'll get over it and you will have helped him feel good about himself. (Believe me, you'll get past the minor rejection. See the next chapter about fortitude.) Best case, he'll feel safe and welcome and go for it. He might end up being the hot man you spend your life with.

3. Doing the same thing you are doing now won't work.

As you know, most things don't just come to us. Otherwise, Mr. I Love You would be knocking on your door right now. The fact that you're reading this tells me that this is challenging to you. Achieving difficult goals like this requires planning and overt effort.

Take what you've learned in this book, do the exercises and action steps; then create a game

plan. It may be taking classes and reading books and blogs; calling the man who got away; asking friends to set you up; or making an appointment with a coach or therapist. But doing the same thing you are doing now won't change anything. It will simply render the same result.

4. Take courageous action.

Having the awareness is only the beginning. Then you need to act on it to actually effect change and get what you want. As you do with other areas of your life, clearly define and vigorously pursue your goals of dating happily and finding your mate. This takes courage!!

Acknowledging that this is missing in your life, and that you really want it, can be incredibly scary and difficult. I lived it, and I don't take it lightly. But the payoff is remarkable and, I believe, among the most wonderful things you can do for yourself in your lifetime. Because of this, there is a lot of room for disappointment and emotional upheaval. No matter, you want it; you should go for it.

Exercise

What is something in your life that you wanted and worked hard to get? What steps did you take? Did you have to learn something new or do something differently? Did you have to give up anything? Was it worth it?

If you haven't already, write down your secret wish about dating and your search for love.

Action

- 1 If you haven't already, share your secret wish with a trusted friend.
2. The next two times you meet a man that you like and want to proceed with, let him know. Say something simple, yet direct, like "it was nice meeting you. I hope to see you again." Or "I'm looking forward to seeing you/talking again."



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Secret #6: You've Slain Dragons

Fortitude: Strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage.

What are your fears around dating and looking for your mate? Contrast those to other challenges and disappointments in your life. Are you still so afraid that it's worth not searching?

Any woman past her 18th birthday has overcome some painful obstacles. After that it doesn't get any easier, right? In my life, it wasn't until my mid 40s that I felt I had made my way through the really tough challenges. I'm sure there are more to come. But I can make my way through whatever comes at me.

The point is that we overcome. And coming out the other side always brings something positive. (I believe in silver linings!)

You Can Always Get Back Up

There are a lot of attitudes and skills we use to successfully get through life's challenges.

Among them:

- Optimism
- Humor
- Realism
- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Prayer
- Patience
- Self-awareness
- Self-respect
- Shifts in beliefs and goals
- Support from friends
- Relativity
- Creativity
- Humility
- Sheer will
- Persistence
- Perspective
- Reasoning

Depending on the circumstance, we figure it out. We do what we need to do, and then move forward.

Fortitude...with Men

Being rejected by a man is the least of your problems. The emotional intensity we feel around dating and mating can create such vulnerability and discomfort that it seems ominous, or at least like something we want to avoid. This was my experience, and I don't think I'm alone. But like so many other things in our lives, there's not much that can keep us down. When we direct our mind and heart to something difficult, we end up doing it.

Part of fortitude is not giving up before you figure out how to get what you need. Part of wisdom is figuring out what you need before you give up. If you've been dating for some time and you haven't been having fun or found your special man, my wish for you is that you find the strength of mind and courage not to give up before you figure it out.

The Four Commandments of Fortitude with Men

1. Don't talk yourself out of it.

Not only do you want this and deserve it, you have the wherewithal to get it. Stick with it.

We all experience rejection, confusion, self-doubt, and fears of all kinds when we actively pursue love. If you're going to use self-talk (which is something I'm an expert at), use it to your advantage. Nix the "this is useless, I will never find anyone, I'm better off alone" talk. Replace it with the "I usually get what I want, I deserve a great man, I know how to do this, I will figure this out" talk.

2. If nothing else, it's about learning and growing.

There are very few experiences that warrant a decision to stop looking for love. Save those, every conversation, email, or date you have will be able to teach you something new about yourself or men. Like anything else you do, the more you learn, the better you get. In the worst case, you may not find your lifetime partner, but you'll have a lovely and fun time looking.

You have to actively look for these moments. If he responded positively to you, why do you think he did that? If you expected him to call but he didn't, what does that teach you about him or about yourself? (Remember, if he doesn't call it's just about him; not about all men.) Did you make good decisions? Were you authentic? Did you practice kindness to him and yourself? Looking at it from this perspective will keep the focus on positive forward movement.

3. Perspective, perspective, perspective.

Being rejected by a man or feeling like you've somehow ruined an opportunity for connection with a great guy is a minor obstacle compared to what you've risen above in your life. You have an otherwise full and satisfying life that you've worked hard to achieve. Joyful dating and finding love is the icing on the cake.

If you have trouble remembering this, at least remember Commandment #2. There are no bad dates or wasted chances. Everything you do in your search for love brings you closer to finding it.

4. Keep your eyes on the prize.

Whether your goal is to find everlasting love, or to simply enjoy dating and find a companion, keep focused and try to shut out all the other noise. Like anything that is truly precious and meaningful in your life, you can do the work to get to the goal.

Exercise/Action

Here is my list of attitudes and skills we use to successfully get through life's challenges.

Which of these are ones that will serve you as you make your way through the dating world? Which can you improve upon, or call upon anew? Write your list on another sheet of paper and post it in a place you can see it on a daily basis...or at least when you talk to new men or go out on dates. Remind yourself of your huge ability to overcome disappointment on the way to getting those most important things in your life.

- Optimism
- Humor
- Realism
- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Prayer
- Patience
- Self-awareness
- Self-respect
- Shifts in beliefs and goals
- Support from friends
- Relativity
- Creativity
- Humility
- Sheer will
- Persistence
- Perspective
- Reasoning



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Secret #7: You Know Love Matters

Love: Unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another; strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; attraction based on sexual desire.

You may have a great career, nice shoes, photos from the great trips you've taken, and awards and accolades, but you know that it's your loyal and loving relationships that really count.

While this is a given for most people, I have to confess that it wasn't until quite later in my life that I admitted this to myself. From the time I was in my late teens, I felt incredible pride in the fact that I was independent and didn't need anyone financially, spiritually, or emotionally. That included family and friends. They were nice to have...but I didn't neeeeed them.

I held on to that for an awfully long time, and it kept me sufficiently "safe." By not relying on anyone or letting anyone get close to me, I couldn't be hurt, taken advantage of, or told how to live my life.

It was relatively painless letting go of this with my female friends. Trusting them and sharing my authentic self became easy once I realized the spectacular nature of those loving friendships.

Women are beyond doubt the most nurturing and soulful of beings.

With men it was harder, but as I told you in my story earlier, I finally learned how to open myself up to wish for and be able to accept the love of a good man. That was most definitely the icing on my cake.

Love Matters...with Men

If you're anything like me, I'll bet you can't imagine a life without your girlfriends. And, if you related to my epiphanies (and possibly have even had one of your own since starting this book), now you can admit to feeling the same about not having a man in your life. You want him! It's important to you! I'm hopeful we're on the same page.

The thing about realizing something as huge as this is that with it comes a true test of your courage. I know it's not an easy and painless goal to reach. Being in a love relationship with a man presents the same challenge to trust as your friendships do.

But the emotion of romantic love makes that challenge even more intense. The level of vulnerability you need to authentically connect with a man is definitely kicked up a notch, and it will take courage for you to allow yourself to be that exposed. Are you ready to go there?

Here's the thing: When you allow yourself to connect intimately with a man, the reward will be the love of a fantastically loving man who is right for you, and the great life you've created for yourself will be raised to a whole other level of amazing.

I know since you're here reading, you probably already believe that love does matter, and you are working toward finding and accepting the kind of love from a man that will allow you to feel vulnerable but safe.

The Four Commandments of Love...with a Man

1. You've got to play to win.

Here's the deal: if you don't truly decide that real, grownup love with a good man is what you want and need in your life, you won't find it. Without committing to the belief that it's important to you – important enough to look honestly at yourself, have the courage to change, and take a few hits to your feelings and ego – then you won't find it. You will continue to struggle without making the necessary shifts. You will keep repeating old behaviors and making the same choices.

So, if you're ready to take the risk and roll the dice (and it's always a risk, otherwise what's the value of the prize?), play with all your heart. Don't hold back.

I hate to use a baseball analogy, but here goes: if you don't swing the bat you'll never hit a home run.

2. You can (must!) let your guard down.

This probably feels counter-intuitive, especially at this point in your life. But remember what I said about intuition? I know that you've likely had some not-so-great dating experiences and relationships, and that relaxing your layer of protection is a somewhat frightening thought.

But doing what you've been doing – attempting to date while maintaining impenetrable boundaries, judging men and yourself harshly, refusing to take risks, expecting men to change while refusing to change yourself – continuing to do these things will feel much like banging your head against a wall: the wall isn't going to move, but your head will hurt more and more.

Any man you might consider potentially “the one” is not going to open himself up to a woman who is wearing an emotional chastity belt. And now that you've read this, you won't be able to say it's his fault for being “emotionally unavailable.” It will be yours. So, be brave and let the real you be seen...beautiful flaws and all.

3. Vulnerability is sexy

Survey after survey tells us that men want these two things from women: the ability to receive, and the willingness to be authentic. The idea of sharing time with a woman who is appreciative and also confident and brave enough to show her real self...that's what men want. Why wouldn't they? Add some of your smarts to that and the mature man of depth will delight in your full package.

Try it, and see how nice it is to have a man help you, give to you, share with you, compliment you, and offer you the most significant gift of his love and adoration. Once you experience it, you will never go back behind your wall of I Dare You or I Don't Need You.

4. [__ Fill in the blank __]

Finally, here is where I want you to create your own final commandment. What is the one last thing you promise to yourself? What guideline must you follow, concept must you believe, or change must you make to help you get closer to finding the love in life that you so deserve?

You can repeat something in the book that particularly resonated. You can find the one thing that may be the most difficult challenge, and call it out. Or, even better, what has come to your mind

about your life that I haven't talked about here? There is so much to know, learn, and experience; I couldn't possibly put it all in once place.

While we have so much in common, each of us has had our own journey with our own challenges. By doing the exercises and actions here I hope you've gotten clarity on where you are and where you want to be. What is your biggest challenge or need, and what commandment will you give yourself right here, right now, that will start you on your path to having fun dating on your way to finding long-lasting, meaningful love?



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17 More Things That Will Help You Finally Meet Your Grownup Man

In addition to the exercises and actions I've already given to you, here are 17 more things you can do to help you Confidently and Happily Meet Your Grownup Mate. (Because, let's face it: discos and bars are no longer options.)

- 1. Create a vision board** that represents your wishes and desires around dating and finding a mate. Don't limit it to being about your dream man; be sure to include images and descriptions of yourself, your experience, and your relationship.
- 2. Take items from your lists of what you love** about yourself and what you are looking for, put them on sticky notes, and then put them around your house.
- 3. Ask five friends to start looking** for appropriate men for you to date. Give them your list of must-haves to help them do a good job for you. If you haven't heard from them in two weeks, check back and remind them.

- 4. Ask your closest friends to list** the things they like and admire most about you. Gather these, and then be sure to celebrate yourself and your friendships.
- 5. After any substantial phone conversation or date,** take a few minutes to write down what you've learned about the man, yourself, or dating in general.
- 6. Make a list of three things** you want to know about a man by the end of a date. This isn't about interviewing him; it's about forcing yourself to pay attention to the individual sitting in front of you. Think eye color, what he likes to eat or drink, how many times smiled at you, whether he has good manners, or how he might have complimented you.
- 7. Ask your male friends to tell** you what they think women don't know about men, but should.
- 8. Ask your male friends to list** the 5 things women do on dates, online, or on the phone that drive men away.
- 9. Talk to the happily married couples** that you know about their courtship and the development of their relationship. Look for nuggets that will help you find love.
- 10. At least once a week tell someone new** that you trust that you are trying to find your dream man. Then, ask for ideas or advice. (Make sure you use what you already know and what you've learned here when you consider that advice.)
- 11. Call a man who "got away"** or that you have thought about seeing again. (It's okay if he's no longer available; worst case is that he'll be flattered and you can celebrate your courage.)
- 12. Date men who are different** than your usual "type." This is the only way you can fall out of old habits of selecting the same type of man. (If that type was good for you, I assume you wouldn't be reading this book.) When you start meeting this new type of man, practice kindness and self-awareness as you get to know them.
- 13. If you like him, but you don't feel chemistry,** go on a second, even third date. Remember that this initial feeling is often more about making quick judgments, not thinking rationally, and/or not practicing kindness.
- 14. Sign up for a seminar** and buy a book to help you learn about how men think and feel.
- 15. Go somewhere as someone's date.** A party, company picnic, or basketball game. Then, make sure he tells everyone that "you're terrific, but you're just buddies."

16. Try a free trial offer for a popular online dating site. If you're already online, get your profile and pictures updated by a professional.

17. Finally do the things you've been putting off that are good for you: seek out spiritual leaders, self-improvement opportunities, or charitable organizations. Sign up, go, and get involved. You've probably been wanting to do that for a long time anyway.



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Congratulations and Next Steps

I'm so glad you devoted some time to reading Confessions of the World's Worst Dater: Her 7 Secrets to Finally Finding Love After 40.

The commitment you've made and the work you've done throughout shows your true desire and willingness to learn, grow, and make shifts in your life that will lead you to the man and relationship that you dream of.

It took me a lot of years, a lot of work, and even a lot of dollars to arrive at the fulfilled life I lead today. During my journey I experienced some harsh personal pain, but that is far overshadowed by the pride, joy, and emotional safety I feel every day that I spend with my husband, my true love.

Ultimately, I learned that the only way to find a lasting and loving relationship is to become a smart, confident, and complete woman who merits the love of a good man. Not only did doing that lead me to my love, it led me to the work I was meant to do: helping other intelligent, thoughtful, accomplished women find their dreams and enjoy the journey along the way.

Since you are here, it's clear you acknowledge your personal role in creating the life you desire. You came here with an enormous amount of knowledge, life experience, and success. You've done a great deal of work by reading this book, doing the exercises, and planning to take action.

Imagine...being able to go out in the world filled with hope, feeling powerful and knowing that you will find a loving man to share your life.

I did this in my life, and you can too. It is NOT too late!

If you are ready...to take new, positive action, I am here to expertly and gently guide you on your journey. I offer many ways to help you Find Hope and Find Him.

If you are SERIOUS about wanting to bring love into your life, and READY to accept that you are responsible for your dating destiny...then I want to help you.

Go to www.DateLikeaGrownup.com to get my gifts and other powerful tools that have helped women across the globe, not just find a loving man, but find the yummy self-love that comes first!

Or, if you want to talk about how I can help you finally find that special man who will adore you

forever, simply email me at bobbip@DateLikeaGrownup.com. Let's talk about how I can help you bring a loving partner into your life.

You have my love, support and admiration for your effort and openness to creating the great life you deserve.

Be good to yourself in your search for love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small apostrophe after the first "i".

Bobbi Palmer

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Patti Palmer

The Dating and Relationship Coach for Women over 40

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