

INTERNET DATING BY DESIGN

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL ONLINE EXPERIENCES

By

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Contents

Preface

Part 1 - First Things First

Chapter 1- Mirror Images

Chapter 2- Learning to Love Yourself

Chapter 3- Communication 101

Part 2 - The Basic Elements

Chapter 4- Being Single is Not a Negative

Chapter 5- Dating Pitfalls

Chapter 6- How Ready Are You for a Commitment

Chapter 7- Your Ideal Partner

Chapter 8- Relationship Success by Design

Part 3 - The Online Experience

Chapter 9- High Tech Dating Realities

Chapter 10- Communicating Online

Chapter 11-The Online Interview

Chapter 12- Marketing Yourself Online

Chapter 13- Your Profile and Online Environment

Chapter 14- Long Distance Romance

Chapter 15- Love & Sex in Cyberspace

Chapter 16- Dating & Cyber Safety Rules

In Closing

Resources

About Judy Spain Barton

Preface

Extraordinary adventures await us in cyberspace. Through the marvels of technology and an Internet connection, we are able to experience phenomenal events and realize our greatest fantasies. The latest in technological advances offer us limitless opportunities filled with enrichment, enchantment and wonder. Whatever we imagine, we can do. We are able to travel the world, and find unimaginable pleasures in this new wonderland in cyber space. Yes, the *world* is our playground. Exciting happenings can reveal themselves with every click of a button.

Friendships, dating and relationships have taken new meaning. There is no longer a need for the local bar scene and packaging yourself in elaborate wrappings for the night out of show and tell. You can meet, greet and entertain a diverse community of friends and lovers worldwide, without having to leave your comfy recliner. Without even as much as a tube of lipstick or the benefit of the latest fashions, you can meet your soul mate, fall in love and yes, you can even share an intimate encounter online. (Yep, sex) All unfathomable not too many years ago.

The online experience provides unlimited possibilities for gaining lifelong friendships and meeting that ideal partner or soul mate you have been searching your whole life to find. It allows dreams to become reality. Life altering events can occur by simply touching a couple of buttons on your keypad. We are rewarded with such gifts as enlightenment, culture, diversity and transformation. Inhibitions and restrictions are no longer a hindrance.

The freedom to be you in an online format holds great merit and greater opportunity. Everything you have ever dreamed of is now available for you to explore. There are endless possibilities for growth and rebirth.

In the pages that follow, we will address the critical components needed to successfully achieve your Internet dating goals, as well as gain positive effects for your life in general. Included will be the relative aspects of human nature, as well as relationship considerations. Each of these elements will hold an advantage in your online pursuit of success and happiness. It will become important to approach your search and explorations holistically. Leaving one component to chance could prove costly and provoke negative experiences. If you are well prepared, aware and ready to face the possibilities, you are likely to find true happiness and maybe even bliss.

It will be important to know the person you are presenting to the world through your online profiles, before making a formal debut. You will need to know you, who you are looking for and your relationship goals. It is to your advantage to have a true working knowledge of the realities that come with dating in this format. It will help to know how to deal with the online experience before attempting it. Feeling overwhelmed and frustrated can easily put a damper on your adventures.

Dating in any format comes with both good and bad realities. No matter their beginning, relationships take hard work and effort to build and flourish. The online experience can offer many more positives to that end than the stereotypical dating regimes. It will require some changes in how you communicate, however. Establishing a relationship through the written word will present some challenges, but having those skills will offer positive affects in every aspect of your life. These modifications in communication can have a positive impact in the ability to strengthen relationships and encourage bonds.

Communication through a computer will be less inhibitive, but will pose a need to hone the skills used for expressing yourself in writing. The written word allows more freedom to say the things you may find difficult to relay in person. However, it puts you at a higher risk of being misinterpreted. It requires paying closer attention to what is being said, as well as what is implied. Your intuition and the ability to clearly state yourself via the written word are key in this dating medium.

Communicating through email or Instant Messaging (IM) leaves room for misunderstandings or misconceptions and requires serious attention to clarity. The positive aspect comes in the ability to think about your responses before you write them. It is not always possible in an in-person date setting to contemplate each word in your conversation. How often have you found yourself wishing you could take back a statement or comment you made in haste? The Internet is of great benefit in that area.

For some, online dating offers the social interactions they would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. Those with substantial career demands, single parents and the very shy are not able to leave home at will to frequent the usual meeting venues. All benefit from this dating format. However, it can be complicated, frustrating and even a bit scary. Negatives do exist, but can easily be remedied or contained with proper knowledge and planning. The positives, in any case, will far outweigh the negatives.

Meeting new people in this format offers you the opportunity to learn from a diverse community and gain new perspectives from outside your own confinements. The knowledge and growth that come from these experiences will bring immeasurable rewards. Moreover, it allows the opportunity to learn more about you. Although the possibilities of finding the negative realities of life are ever present, the positive experiences will offer growth and wisdom. Ultimately, your adventures will be what you allow them to be. Your efforts will reflect the willingness to enjoy all that life has to offer.

One offering, which many tend to overlook in their quest to find that perfect partner, may cause them to miss one of life's greatest gifts. Friendships are a basic part of our essentials package and should be included as part of your search for prince charming or the princess of your dreams. Friends are a valuable asset and beginning your journey there would offer the greatest rewards. Being open to all possibilities and carrying the proper attitude will increase your life experiences, as well as the chance for success in your online quest.

The friend you meet just might hold the key to finding your ideal partner or soul mate. The internet allows us to explore and discover all things. It is worthwhile to make full use of your time and efforts.

A journey into self is the necessary first step in your online ventures. It is imperative to discover who you really are and what you hope to gain from your experience, *before* you begin to offer that information to others. In order to accurately portray yourself and not mislead any prospective partner or friend, you must have the correct facts and responses to give. It will also become a vital component if you wish to accomplish your goals. Misrepresentations and alter egos comprise the bulk of most all negative issues involving the online dating experience.

Marketing yourself is the most critical aspect of your online ventures. It will seem an effortless task when compared to the weekly or nightly ritual of adorning yourself in preparation for the standard dating venues. The online dating profile allows you to be creative in your presentation of you. It is much easier to let go, and be yourself while in a comfortable and unrestricted environment. It is also easier to push the delete button to rid yourself of unwanted suitors or inappropriate prospects. It is difficult to deal with the embarrassment of trying to tolerate unwanted advances for the night or ditch the unsuitable bores in a face-to-face situation.

Any dating experience can come with a host of negatives and obstacles, which can sour the ventures. They all can pose risks and provoke a need to be cautious and aware of your protocol and surroundings. There are important dating and cyber safety rules, which must be adhered to and are addressed in Chapter 16. Choosing a partner in this format comes with drawbacks, which you may have to consider. For instance, no matter how much effort and love are put forth, long distance relationships are difficult to maintain over time. Choosing a partner who is nearby or one willing to relocate would naturally be the preferred choice.

Pitfalls and traps exist which ensnare many thousands of victims each day on every dating website. One, which holds the most significance, is the love trap. It is far too easy to *fall in love* with the fantasy you create in your mind, of the person on the other end of your online conversations. Sadly, the realities, when confronted in person, will most often be much different from our dreams and leave room for frustrations and even heartbreak. So yes, there are negatives and cautions, however the journey is sweet and offers tremendous rewards.

Prepare well and expect to find success. Negatives can be avoided and minimized. A sense of humor does come in handy for the odd and unexpected. If your mind is closed and centered on a single purpose, your experiences will be limited and the chances for frustration will be high. Shutting out possibilities greatly diminishes the opportunity to experience all that is available to you. The full pleasures will come with an open mind that is ready to explore all avenues and experience new adventures.

Part 1

First Things First

Before beginning your journey, it is vital for you to be aware of who you are and what you hope to gain from your online dating ventures. Offering information, you are not sure of and which others will perceive as fact, will lead to misinterpretations, misunderstandings and failed relationship attempts. Being able to state clearly the essence of you in an online profile requires that you have full knowledge and a complete understanding of the person you will be representing. You will need to know the facts about you.

You will need to ask yourself a few important questions before you begin your journey. Are you in touch with the person you see in the mirror each day? Have you spent time building a relationship with you? Are you emotionally self-sufficient? Do you hold a clear vision of your future? Are you living a life of your own design or following a script set for you by outside influences? It will become important to know the answers to these questions and many more like them. This information will be important in any dating format and required knowledge if you hope to be involved in a successful long-term relationship.

Being aware of your requirements, needs, wants and desires are the necessary components of knowing you.

Those facts will become critical in knowing what you hope to gain from your relationships.

Having the correct answers to give potential friends or partners will better insure success. You will need to be aware of your limits and boundaries, have them firmly set and in good working order for your debut. Keep in mind that whatever effort it takes to know all of these facts will be of great benefit past your dating and relationship experiences.

Learning to love and appreciate you for who you are and *aren't*, is essential in the dating process and in your relationships. Any past issues, which might hinder your success, will need to be put in proper order *before* you begin your journey. The past does affect your present and future, and will determine your dating and relationship success. Carrying old baggage from former relationships or childhood experiences will only produce a succession of dysfunctional relationships and a continuous flow of unhappy events.

Enduring and satisfying relationships demand the efforts of two well-balanced and emotionally self-sufficient partners, who are committed to making it happen. It is important to know what you have to offer as a partner and equally essential to have a well-defined design of the friend or partner you seek. It is vital that you start out with a clearly illustrated plan and know exactly who it is you are looking for. Will you be seeking a life partner, soul mate, a friend with benefits or just friends? Having all of the basics set in place will save time and energy and you will be well prepared when the email and inquiries begins to flow.

When you feel you have found your ideal partner, you will need to have the appropriate skills necessary to achieve the success you are hoping to find. Having well-honed communication skills, intuition, confidence, and insight will all be valuable assets. First meetings, even those in a written format, leave lasting impressions. How well you are able to articulate your essence in writing becomes the key to getting attention and in gaining what you want. Being a good listener and talking so that others will listen, will take you far.

It is a process. Proper preparation and planning will increase your chances of success and minimize your risk of disappointment. Starting at the beginning rather than the middle will minimize the possibility of repeating old patterns and will create more rewarding experiences. Whether your ventures are online or in person, the same rules apply. A haphazard approach will bring haphazard results.

Robert's Quest

Meeting Robert was a thrill for us all. He was quite the personality and added humor to our class. We met when I first began teaching Internet dating classes at a local college. He is the ideal of the tall, dark, handsome man women dream about. Robert is 40ish, with a warm engaging smile, clearly an astute man and a perfectionist. He had come to the class on a mission. Robert was ready to find the 'woman of his dreams'. He had taken great pains to define and describe in great detail who she would be. He had written of her shoe size, hair texture and the fine detailing of her physical presence. He had determined her disposition and personal beliefs. Robert knew exactly what he wanted and had come to my class to find out how to get it.

The profile of his prospective partner was an incredible design. Robert had fashioned the complete and perfect woman. Her qualities were well thought out and the list of specifics was quite extensive. His efforts were great, however a bit unrealistic. Perfection does not exist and he wasn't the type to settle for something to avoid having nothing. I asked Robert if I could read *his* profile. I wanted to see if it came close to a match for his requirements for a partner. Much to my surprise, he did not have one prepared. That was his reason for taking the class. He needed help explaining himself.

A red flag signal was sent and flashing ever so brightly in my mind.

I had to wonder if Robert expected me to help him figure out who he was or if he just needed help with formatting and appropriate word usage. I decided to ask some questions, which might give me a clue regarding his intent. “What role is the woman of your dreams to play in your life? Will her role be that of soul mate, friend with benefits?” His answer was, “I don't really know”. Okay let's try another route. “What makes you tick and tingle?” He looked puzzled so I explained the question. “What makes your heart sing and makes you want to get out of bed each day?” His answer was once again, “I don't really know.” My worst fears were confirmed. Robert was there to find out who he was. He did not have enough information to write a profile about himself or to answer any questions, which might be posed by a potential partner or friend.

My class was designed to help with every aspect of online dating. Determining the student's identity was not part of the course description, nor could it be done in a two-hour class. Robert's plight came to light at the beginning of the class, so there was time for me to at least give him the basics of how to go about doing these things on his own. He needed to do this himself. No one else could make those determinations for him. He clearly had a lot of work to do before he would be ready to begin his search.

Most all negative attention given to online dating, stems from the millions of people like Robert who go on the Internet in search of their ideal partner. They have no idea who they are and far too many do not know what it is they are looking for. Their perception of online dating is then distorted by their own lack of knowledge and preparation.

Unfortunately, millions of those millions take center stage, ready to perform, without first discovering their talents. Their experiences are marred and they end up frustrated and disappointed with the process. Information gathering is an important first step, which cannot be ignored.

The beginning is where you must start. What type of personality will you display in your profile? Will it be a well-defined persona, a façade, or the real you? Who will your partner be? What assets do you have to bring to a relationship? Are you truly ready for a commitment? What is your favorite color? Even the simple questions and answers are important. They all hold relevance in your explanation of you. Know the answers *before* you are asked the questions so as not to give the wrong impression or deceive by guessing. Let's begin at the beginning.

Chapter 1

Mirror Images

The wicked queen of ‘Snow White’ fame was a faithful advocate of routine self-assessment, through mirror imaging. Verifying her status and worth with the mirror did render a distinct advantage in her situation. Having the wise man as her reflection to give advice and direction was truly an asset. Although her reasons were sinister in nature, the basic concept of routine self-appraisal was a prudent notion. Periodically questioning our status and realities can offer an exemplary education and insight, if we are open to the experience

You should begin your quest by examining the basics. Do you really know who you are? Do you display a *true* vision of who you are or simply a distorted perception of the reality; a facade? Are you aware of what you want, need and require? Where is your current path taking you? Knowing the answers to these questions and many more like them is vital to achieving your goals and fulfilling your destiny. If there is doubt, then it is time to reach inside, connect to the inner self and discover your truths. Unfortunately, you are left without the benefit of the sage in the mirror to offer advice and motivation. The inspiration must come from your own determination and desire to live your dreams.

Too often, we keep our dreams and fantasies locked away, hidden from view.

We hide them in a safe place within the dark recesses of our minds, afraid to let them venture out into our real world. What we do not realize is how those secret desires affect us emotionally and physically or how they hinder our ability to make effective choices and decisions. We tend to live within the confines of societal dictates and our decisions and paths are influenced by the opinions of family and friends. Unfortunately, this gives others the power to affect your truths and realities. The good news is you do not have to. There is a way to live a more fulfilling and productive life and realize your dreams. The answers lie within you. The way and means are open to you.

The journey into your inner self is not always easy or uncomplicated, but is necessary in defining goals, living a more satisfying and rewarding life. The discovery of self must come from within, without restrictions, inhibitions or tainted by outside influences. It requires examining values and visions, and learning to say no. It means never settling for less than what you really want and involves experimenting and taking risks. You must hold your own power and reclaim possession of your life experiences and happiness. The image you see in the final analysis will reflect the strength and confidence you gain, and offer a clear vision of your life's design.

To gain a clear vision of the person you see in the mirror each day, you must get in touch with the deepest part of your being. It is there you will discover your true realities and are able to connect with the wisdom and counsel of your own inner voice.

Before beginning your adventures in the vast realm of cyberspace, a journey into the inner depths of you is needed in preparation for the ideal partner or soul mate you hope to find. You will need to determine if you can offer yourself as an asset in a relationship or if you would pose a liability. It will be important to consider your direction, purpose and the benefits you hope to gain from your experiences. In order to make those determinations, you must first explore your inner self and discover *you*.

You need to know the facts about you in order to relay that information to a perspective partner. You must also set limits and boundaries and most importantly, be able to say no. Knowledge and confidence will offer the focus needed to gain an accurate view of what you really want. It will also give an honest assessment of what you have to offer as a partner. Self-assessment is the necessary first leg of your journey.

Unfortunately, most people travel through life, living each day by rote. They are unaware of their *true* identity and where they are headed in their life's journey. Some of them merely read life as a script, living as a part of someone else's dream, rather than creating their own design. Many of them do not hold a clear vision of the future due to barriers and walls, which distort their view. Living a satisfying and productive life requires that you connect with your inner essence and are comfortable with your discoveries.

The journey into self will demand effort and the ability to accept your own honesty.

It will require strength, revisiting bad memories and reliving painful experiences. It is important to clear out the storage from the past that might be creating a cluttered and weighty present. Liken it to cleaning out the attic and getting rid of the junk you have accumulated through the years. When that is accomplished, you can begin the necessary process of redefining your past, giving back and throwing away what does not belong to you, and reinventing your future. Only then will you be able to write your life script according to your own unique design. Yes, it is a lot of work but the rewards are immeasurable and a necessary component of successful relationships.

There is freedom and inner peace in releasing the unnecessary baggage from the past and the inhibitions that chain you to your fears. It will require tearing down the walls and barriers that were put in place, over many years, to protect you from the harshness and pain of life. It is vital that you understand your limits, set boundaries and are able to express your needs and desires with clarity, confidence and conviction. Being able to say, “No, I won’t accept that.” is empowering and necessary.

It is also important to become aware of and in tune to the positive and negative energies of your body, mind, spirit and soul. You must search for *your* answers. You need to know what makes you tick and tingle; what motivates you to get out of bed each day and what makes your spirit soar. You should know why you harbor guilt, shame or tolerate other’s making decisions on your behalf. Only you know the answers and you alone possess the power to make changes.

Some of the answers and solutions we seek can only be found in the deep, dark places within. They are the gardens we have planted with our secrets. We have hidden and locked them behind walls so that no one can gain access; not even ourselves. We fear judgments and reprisals if our realities were exposed. However, our fears of being wrong, different and crazy or having our realities discovered could prove to be unwarranted. We might find that the truths we unearth will, in fact, be the key to the freedom we seek. Dare to explore. Water the seedlings planted throughout your life and watch in amazement as brilliant blossoms emerge.

Your goal in this journey will be to get a proper introduction to the real you and become emotionally self-sufficient. In the end, there should be no need for the approval of others in the decisions you make or the paths you choose. It will require letting go and allowing your unconscious powers to influence your conscious decisions. You will need to open yourself up to the voices of your inner guide and listen for assistance and direction. Because we tend to operate solely from that place in the surface conscious, we often feel as if we are being directed by outside forces. At times, we may feel we have little control over the events in our lives and lose our objective. We suffer because we are not able to completely grasp our true needs and aspirations.

Your journey will teach you to believe in your capabilities and utilize your powerful inner resources. It will allow you to become aware and in tune to the internal elements that are available to you.

Your inner voice will provide strength for your journey and guidance to your ultimate destination. You will gain the certainty and peace that comes with aligning your conscious will with your inner purpose. Your path will become more rewarding as you see clearly how to integrate the scattered elements of your life, define your goals and fulfill your destiny.

The effort you invest will decrease stress levels, keep your confidence high and create the success you deserve. Those mirror images will bring smiles. If you become awakened and aware, it is then easier to turn away the ‘junk’ and maintain your focus. You are not likely to fall into the traps and pitfalls that life can present and will have the inner strength to give life to your dreams.

Greatness can only be achieved when we provide an environment for greatness to grow.

Successful relationships require great effort and hold great responsibilities. Part of that responsibility is in knowing yourself and being content with you. It means giving your share to maintain the integrity and strength of the relationship and ensuing bonds. That will better insure lasting relationships. Success and happiness await.

How Well Do You Really Know You?

Knowing you and having a healthy, well-balanced relationship with the inner self is a vital first step in seeking a partner and in being a partner in a relationship .The journey into the inner depths of you is needed to become aware of your true requirements, needs, wants and desires. Describing yourself in an online dating profile will warrant a thorough self-assessment.

It is your responsibility, as a potential partner, to know your assets and any liabilities. You should have a clear vision of your future and be aware of your potential contributions. Getting to know you and being comfortable with what you find, makes you a valuable asset in every aspect of life. Being in touch with your truths and realities will allow you to clearly state yourself in your profile. It will help avoid misunderstandings, misinterpretations and better insure responses from those most closely suited to you.

Below are just a few of the questions relevant to self-awareness. There are many other avenues to explore and much more to discover about you. Having this information will help promote a more satisfying, rewarding future and provide for successful relationship ventures. Know the facts before you begin your search for a compatible partner. Set limits and boundaries before you get started. Have the courage and conviction to say 'No'. The confidence that comes with your efforts will be life altering.

It will ease the annoyances that can accompany the internet dating process and will simplify the sorting procedure. Knowledge is power and creates success

1-Who are you?

A-Is the person you present to others the real you or merely a façade? How much of you is hidden behind a mask? Are you afraid to be the real you? Why?

B-Are you content with your life and relationships? Do you envision yourself living a different life? If so, why aren't you?

C-What makes you happy? Are there things you really want but feel you cannot have? Why? Can you change it? How?

D-What benefits can you offer a partner? Do you have baggage and come with burdens you would expect your partner to carry? Would you be a liability?

2-What is it you want from life and your relationships?

A-What do the visions of your future hold? Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?

B-Are there barriers or inhibitions that prevent you from being where you want to be? Are you held captive by your past? Is there a plan in place to correct that?

C-What changes do you need in your life? How would you make it happen?

D- Is there a design of your ideal partner? What important qualities would he/she possess? Are your dreams and expectations based in reality?

3-Are you aware of your requirements and needs?

A-Requirements and needs are very different. A need is negotiable a requirement is not. Can you clearly define each? What do you require and need to be happy, healthy and content?

B-Are you able to easily and openly express your requirements, needs, wants and desires to others?

C-Have you set your limits and boundaries? Do you know the things, which are flexible and those, which are not?

D- Can you clearly state your position with regard to solvable and unsolvable issues? Would you bend to the will of outside influences in that regard or be firm concerning your requirements?

4- Are you emotionally and spiritually healthy?

A-Are you emotionally self-sufficient? Do you depend on the voice of others in making decisions regarding your life and in choosing your path?

B-Do you have leftover issues from your childhood or past relationships that affect how you perform or react to situations in your life today?

C-Do you need the approval of others for your feelings? When considering your life and relationships, do you feel sad or have regrets? Can you move past those hindering emotions?

D-Are you able to express your emotions and feelings?

E-Are you aware of your spirituality? Are you comfortable with your spiritual essence?

5-Other important issues

A-Do family and friends alter the dreams and expectations in your life and relationships? Would you allow your partner those same privileges? Could you take that power back?

B-Have you made the right career choices or is there something more for you?

C-Do you find yourself settling for things in your life to avoid having nothing?

D-What is your idea of a healthy relationship?

These are but a few of the questions to ask yourself. The answers should come from within, and without the consideration of any outside influences. They should be honest and based on your own values, requirements and lifestyle. Start by asking yourself the important questions, such as what you are passionate about. What really matters and if things aren't right, why aren't you changing it? Focus on your goals; be determined to get what you want. You can accomplish anything in life you set your mind to. Don't limit your dreams and ideals to wishes. Make them happen. It only takes the desire and one step forward at a time to achieve the desired results. The reality is that you *can* do it. The question is, do you really want to?

If a question should provoke thought of another, take the time to make note of it or deal with it so it is not forgotten. Questioning is how we discover our truths.

Chapter 2

Learning to Love Yourself

The foundation of self-love and positive esteem is based in a true belief in yourself. It involves having faith and confidence in your qualities and capabilities. It requires trusting your intuition, judgment and choices. Loving yourself also commands a healthy respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation of the benefits of your limitations. It also requires an honest, holistic perspective and positive affirmation with regard to your realities and goals. Believing it is possible to live your dreams and trusting in your ability to make it happen are the key elements in getting there.

Attitude is everything. What you affirm as real, the mind interprets as reality. Therefore, speaking in the positive means the mind will think positively and create positive happenings. If you think yourself an achiever, you then set the stage for achievement. More importantly, how you see yourself is ultimately, how others will see you. Your aura carries the energies of your thoughts and feelings, with both the past and present represented. That projection of you touches everyone you meet. They are privy to your inner being and the energies represented. If you think yourself a victim of life and your environment, others will see you in that light as well. Feeling confident, self-assured and capable, allows those vibrations to radiate that sense of self to others.

It is also important to appreciate your limitations, quirks and flaws.

We cannot all be good at everything and most of us would not really want to be. Perfect is an illusion, which does not really exist! Whatever you aren't or can't be, is OK. That becomes a positive for someone else. Drawing stick figures is an art form and singing on pitch is over rated. Be proud of your assets and give no thought to the talents you don't have. Your gifts as they are, are plenty enough. There is truth in the notion that power exists in positive thinking. A positive attitude not only presents an alluring aura, but also helps bring about inner peace and freedom.

Visualizing and actualizing your dreams and aspirations creates energy, power and promotes strength of conviction. It provokes determination and keeps you focused in positive thought. Focusing on your assets and potential will motivate and inspire a call to action. However, if a plan to act is set in motion and happens to misfire, you learn from the experience, modify it and try again. The modification process often involves re-evaluating requirements and changing expectations. If goals are set too high or expectations overwhelming, then achieving success will appear as an impossible feat. That leaves you at high risk of failure. Starting at the beginning with the basics in place diminishes the risks. If you attempt to begin in the middle or the end, you will miss valuable pieces needed to complete the puzzle.

Striving to achieve goals should never be attempted in one, all-encompassing, swift step. Setting one attainable goal at a time, taking one small step at a time will help facilitate accomplishments. Dividing the main goal into segments of smaller goals lessens the chance of becoming frustrated and overwhelmed.

Think in terms of what there is to do rather than placing your concentrations on the things, which are left undone. Allow yourself the benefit of patience and offer rewards for a job well done. We all need that pat on the back and praise as motivation to keep moving forward. Something as simple as a banana split on Sunday for a fabulous week brings a sense of accomplishment and stimulates forward movement.

Rewarding yourself for each accomplishment along the way gives positive strokes and offers a greater probability of realizing the desired results. It is also a good idea to have a plan B, which offers a safety net that prevents a fall to the bottom. It is easier to maintain confidence and recover from a slight drop to the middle. Whatever might be in your way or would cause a fall needs to be dealt with and put in its proper place. Giving up is not on the list of options. Modification and compromise, without settling, becomes the order of the day.

Unresolved issues from the past can create obstacles in the present and future. They are usually the root cause of a fall. When Aunt Mary made the statement, “People like us never amount to anything”; it was simply an open expression of her frustration with her own station in life. It was not a mandate pertaining to your personal future. Use it as inspiration and determination to succeed. Keep in mind that who you are is fabulous and will always be good enough.

Whether your goals involve relationships, career or emotional self-sufficiency, it is imperative to deal with past pain, trauma, guilt and losses. Give misplaced guilt and anger back to their rightful owner and put away the unrealistic expectations. Whatever it might take for you to mentally wash away those things you needlessly carry for others, should be done. It might help to symbolically bury that part of your past in a shallow grave in the back yard. Putting your feelings on paper also helps give back those negatives you carry around for others. Even if you never deliver it, the act of writing it down helps your mind see it as a closed issue. If you think it so, your mind will see it gone

Pain can be transformed into an incredible power, which will motivate and push you to achieve your goals. Fear can create determination, strength and will. There is a positive to be found in every negative. These two steps alone can offer the empowerment and confidence needed to realize your capabilities and access your strengths. They will help you see that you can accomplish anything you desire and are determined to do. The key is not to allow outside influences to affect your decisions and choices. Your script should be your own.

Putting your plans and strategies on paper will help you visualize your goals. Writing allows you to see it, to see your dreams as reality. Not only does it provide an outlet for feelings, a way to release pain and a marvelous way to see inside you, it also provides a realistic vision of your dreams and aspirations. Reading your own words can be an awakening for the soul.

It can present a portrait of your values and visions that you may not have noticed you carry. It enables you to see who you are and will aid in maintaining positive self-esteem. Keeping a journal of the good things you accomplish each day. Give rewards for the self-discipline you showed by sticking to your diet, how good you made others feel, how well your account presentation went at work. They will all contribute to a positive self-image. Make a written list of your many gifts and capabilities, as you perceive them. Ignore the voice of others who see you from their perspective. The flow of positive affirmations will help you visualize your own self-worth.

Talking to friends about your dreams of the future often helps you see them more clearly. Verbalizing your plans and strategies can help you see any flaws or will provoke thought about how you might make improvements. Changing your language to reflect a positive outlook will prove beneficial as well. ‘I think I can’ changed to ‘I will’ affirms that reality in the mind. The words “I can’t” will summon self-doubt and hold you back. Consider that phrase dirty and disgusting and one you shouldn’t utter. Do not offer the mind an out clause or an opportunity to be in control. The mind will follow your instructions. You are at the helm and know what is best for you.

Living life to your own specifications inspires great things. Designing your own life script and choosing your own path is the only way you will get what *you* want from life.

Outside influences can prove damaging and often hinder the process of attaining goals and realizing dreams. Only you know what is right for you and you are not compelled to live your life according to the dictates of others. The titles of family and friends do not come with special permissions or the power to control your life. They have permission to offer support for your decisions and the power to give love and inspiration.

It is okay to be you without the approval of anyone other than you. Choose your own path, expand your limits, and explore all of the possibilities life has to offer, on your own terms. Live life rather than be content to exist in it. Avoid living according to someone else's script. Be willing to explore, discover and take risks. Experience all that is available to you. To achieve greatness you have to give it space to grow.

Afford yourself the same luxuries you offer the ones you love. Affection, praise, pampering, nurturing, patience, forgiveness and compromise are just a few of the ways we show our love and devotion. You are a loved one. You deserve those things as well. Allow yourself to be loved by you. Neglect breeds discontentment and can only offer a dark and lonely void, which ultimately no one can fill but you.

Having a healthy respect for yourself and loving the person you are, will exude the confidence that accompanies it.

It will be a valuable asset as you begin your travels through cyberspace. You will present the right vibes, which will aide in attracting the ideal partner or friend.

Strategies for life

1- Personal

- *Take care of you first
- *Only you have the power to ‘fix’ you
- *Don’t be afraid to experiment & expand your limits
- *Eliminate internal and external influences and blockers
- *Learn to be comfortable with you

2 Financial & Legal Matters

- *Assess and address outstanding financial and/or legal commitments and responsibilities, which might be creating a hindrance
- *Set all banking, investments and/or property related affairs in order
- *Avoid any financial commitments, which would tax your budget or create stress
- *Freelance part time for extra money if needed
- *Take care of legal issues that can create stress for you and a potential partner

3 Work & Career

- *Be sure you are in the right job for you and are happy going to work each day

*Consider a change in career if you aren't happy.

*Seek further education. Check grants and student loans for assistance.

*Use lunch hours and sick days or days off to interview for better jobs. You can send resumes out online 24/7

*Start your own business. It isn't as difficult or costly as you might think.

4 Social Network

Personal interests

*Build a solid and supportive network of friends and family.

*Set a schedule for individual private time and space

*Learn to assert your needs, wants and desires to others

*Learn to say NO

*Address how to manage conflict with children, family & friends

Family matters

*If there are family issues--.deal with them

*Remember that you aren't here to please your family, we each have our own destiny...please yourself first.

*Deal with your past issues ...It will affect your achievements and relationships

*Seek counseling or coaching if needed

Children

*Children ALWAYS come first

*Seek counseling or coaching for any problems you cannot resolve on your own.

Friends

*Friend does not equal right....take advice for what it is. You have to do what is best for you and you are the only one who can determine what that is. Advice is free and you get what you pay for.

*Live your life for you.

*Develop a healthy social network.

*Meet people with like interests at interest related gatherings

Relationship Essentials

*Be aware of the pitfalls of dating and their solutions

*Practice dating safety

*Make wise and effective choices

*Plan for successful relationship ventures

*Seek counseling or coaching for relationship issues you cannot resolve on your own.

5 Mental & Physical Health

Health

*Address any and all medical needs and concerns.(See local listing for affordable healthcare)

*Be aware of how they affect your life and relationships now and in the future.

*Practice safe sex

*If you are sexually active it is wise to be checked regularly for STDs.

Emotional Issues

*Are your goals and expectations based in a reality that is comfortable for you?

*Deal with any issues you may have. You won't be free until you do.

*Seek counseling or coaching. Baggage is destructive

*Be sure you have a positive outlook on life and with regard to others.

*Give attention to your spiritual needs

Chapter 3

Communication 101—First Meetings Leave Lasting Impressions

Our communication skills are our greatest gift, talent and responsibility. They offer key first impressions and hold a lasting impact. What we say and how we say it, become representative of who we are, as our character, qualities and flaws display themselves in verbal exchange. A few minutes of conversation are usually enough for us to be assessed, stereotyped and cataloged. If our impression is lacking or perceived as a negative, the listener will be inclined to tune us out and have little regard for any further conversation.

Many people believe that communicating as the speaker gives us status and control, when in fact, it is the listener who is in control and empowered. While talking, we are involved in self and our own concepts and images. That limits our vision and scope of learning. The listener gains insight, valuable information and counsel as the speaker provokes thoughts and ideas. Being the listener, allows us to control the direction of the conversation through questioning. Listening is the more valuable asset and holds the power.

No matter our position, communication comes with responsibilities and holds great power. Being courteous and conscientious as the listener and speaker is important to successful communication in every aspect of life. We have all experienced the frustration of being interrupted while trying to convey our thoughts.

Monopolizing the conversation does not afford us any rank or power. That type of demonstrative demand for attention merely serves to present a poor image and discourage a desire for further communication. Conversations are meant to be a dialogue rather than a monologue.

There is no cure for the common word. Once spoken, they are imprinted in an indelible substance on our ‘Who’s who’ card. Words are commanding tools and can become powerful weapons. They cannot be retracted or erased, and if used inappropriately can damage the speakers credibility or wound and scar a listener. Presentation then becomes the critical aspect of communication. *How* we say, what we say is the key to positive, productive and successful results. Our words should create interest, encourage enthusiasm, stimulate or motivate. They should promote a call to action rather than provoke a reaction. Carefully choosing the words that best express our thoughts will offer a positive flow and end result.

Our ability to communicate well is our greatest asset. It is vital in conveying our wants and needs and when used wisely and appropriately, it is the key to success in any venue. A lack of regard or misuse can create a gross liability. It is to our benefit to keep our skills fine-tuned and functioning well so that we do not leave behind a negative impression or worse, warrant a loss of respect and trust.

Following a few simple procedures can make the difference in our communication success.

1- Listen with intent and curiosity

2- Listen from a neutral place without walls and blockers, which will distort the incoming information

3- Ask questions for clarity

4- Be courteous and conscientious in your communications. Patience is a virtue and an asset.

5- Show support and understanding by relaying to the speaker that he is being heard and his concerns, fears and needs are valid

6- Use the power that comes with your skills wisely and fairly

7- Never close doors or avenues of opportunity and compromise

8- Listen to hear, rather than to respond.

Being the Listener

Being a good listener holds responsibility as well as power. As listeners, we are partially liable for the outcome of all our communications and are held accountable for our conduct. Our commitment to that end can make the difference in our level of success. Many promote speaking as the more significant role in communication. Listening actually takes the greater skill and lends itself to privilege. A good listener is always learning and gaining insight. His powers of perception are broadened. Being the listener offers knowledge, and knowledge is power.

A receptive listening attitude helps promote favorable communication. Our body language alone can set a negative or positive tone. People who are talking have something to say and to them, it is important. If we listen with interest and intent, we validate that importance while gaining the trust of the speaker. Asking questions for clarity and understanding give credibility to both the listener and the speaker. Questions also allow us to control the conversation by directing or redirecting its path. Paying close attention to the spoken, as well as the unspoken words increases our awareness.

It is important to ascertain what the speaker wants us to gain from the conversation. We need to understand what he is asking of us personally and determine any *real* or unspoken issue. Issues are most often concerns, fears and/or needs that have not been addressed or met.

By definition, they demand an escalated level of importance. Our concentration becomes vital for the understanding and sorting processes. Listening through our own thoughts would limit vital insight and possibly distort the speaker's intent. The speaker's body language has a tale to tell and speaks volumes. Attention to the details is imperative.

We sometimes listen with blockers in place. Any walls or barriers in the way detract from our ability to hear what is really being said. It leaves room to misinterpret intent. Those blockers or walls make it difficult for words and intent to penetrate. If we listen from a place of judgment, we immediately strike out words due to prejudice or fear. To avoid any pain they might cause, we put on defensive armor so the words will not break through to our softer, more vulnerable self. Communication is then tainted and becomes ineffectual.

Since we all perceive life from a separate place, our understanding may hold a different meaning than the speaker's intent. Misunderstanding can prompt us to construct walls, which create a breach in context and affect the end result. The same issues can occur more frequently in a written conversation. The speaker and listener become the writer and reader and all the rules still apply. Written communication adds a greater risk of distortion due to the lack of body language and voice tone to aid in the interpretation process. It becomes even more imperative to clarify and pay attention.

As it is with verbal communication, the greatest benefit is given to the reader (listener).

The advantages are equal, but because the written word can become confused in the translation process, there is more opportunity for misinterpretation. Online listening requires sharper skills, but will offer more positive benefits in the 'getting to know you' process. IM (instant messaging) is the most affective format for seeker assessments and creating first impressions. It is more closely related to a normal, in person conversation. E-mail is the slow route and can promote distance and disinterest. For some however, it works well.

A good listener or reader will do so with an open, clear mind and from a place of neutrality. Maintaining sound listening etiquette will provide positive results no matter the format. Our role as the listener is not to be taken for granted, nor should it be done haphazardly. We should listen to *hear* the message rather than to react or respond to it. Listening shows a want of feeling, of caring and will warrant a show of trust and respect. The speaker needs to know that you are paying attention and that their message has meaning.

How to Talk So People Will Listen

Our ability to communicate well as the speaker is a major asset. It presents as our most challenging, consequential and influential responsibility. While it is true that the listener holds an advantage, the speaker has the power to create change and alter lives. The speaker sets the tone for the conversation and empowers the listener. He can create an atmosphere of love or hate, panic or calm and holds the authority to destroy or enhance. It is truly a commanding position.

Presentation is the most critical aspect of any communication. How we present the information holds more importance than the content. Our words need to accurately relay information and encourage listening. They should promote a positive response rather than provoke a negative reaction. These skills are often a major factor in our business associations and in our quest to reach the top of the corporate ladder. They can determine the status of our relationships and hold the key to their success or failure.

Being a conscientious speaker will have a major impact on the outcome. Some abuse the rights and authority that come with our liberal voice. Words are often used as weapons and cause harm or as a tool for control. The freedom to say what is on your mind, without fear of reprisals, is a great gift protected by law. That stands as a clear indicator of its value and importance in our society. However, it does not come with the right to emotionally harm the listener nor obligate them in any form.

Enticing the listener to maintain focus is the primary goal. It requires recognizing their rights and considering your intent.

Monopolizing the conversation will not offer any particular power and will not encourage others to heed your words. It merely shows the speaker as needy or self-imposing and will divert the listener's attention. Interactive conversation and respect will provoke positive results. The voice of authority also carries little weight and often shows a lack of respect for the listener. It can tear away the credibility of the speaker as well. Inspire rather than provoke Making a request will take you farther than giving an order. Conversations render positive responses if they are non-threatening and do not offer a demeaning tone. Word choice and tone count.

Our past often plays a role in our present communication. All too often, our speaking and listening roles are affected by past experiences. It will inevitably affect how we express ourselves and can set the tone without any intent. How we react or respond to any situation will often have no direct bearing on the present matter. Because the mind carries old tapes from our past on file, the door is open for leftover negative feelings to influence our choice of words and veil how we interpret them. Dealing with past issues will help eliminate this pattern of behavior. Using a direct approach, keeping the conversation relative to the present can be of great benefit. Showing sincere intent and having respect for your listener will give your words the power you would want them to carry.

When confronting difficult issues it helps to personalize your presentation by using *I* in place of you to begin the dialogue. This helps avoid giving the impression that your statements are meant to be a personal attack and would require the listener to don defensive shields. When faced with a confrontational dialogue, we begin immediately building barriers and walls or adorn protective armor. Subtle is well received in any arena. A whisper holds a greater vantage than an unrestrained call for attention. We are more apt to solicit a positive response by proposing a request rather than making a complaint. Complaints state a negative and are likely to provoke an unsatisfactory reaction. Requests seek to improve or gain constructive resolution and are usually met with positive acknowledgment.

Selecting a suitable format can help alleviate unpleasant consequences and avoid activating defense mechanisms in the listener. Choosing the most appropriate and effective method is not always an easy task, but can make the difference in how our concepts are received and processed. Simple modifications in posture and tone can bring about considerable changes in atmosphere. Carefully choosing the words that best express our thoughts, steering clear of words, which might offend cultural or environmental sensitivities and avoiding confrontational language and tone, will render the positive flow and outcome we desire.

Those same aspects will be important in your written communications. It is not what you say but *how* you say it. It means getting the words right and avoiding the use of words that will create a negative air.

Using emoticons will help with enhancing your meaning. If the speaker/writer creates misunderstandings, it can shut down communication completely. If an occasion arises for venting, warn your listener so they can listen and not have to prepare for an attack.

Use the power of your voice wisely, sincerely, with accuracy and respect, and people will listen. Speaking is a privilege, listening a necessity. Both hold power and the two in combination create many gifts or can become your worst enemy. Say what you mean and mean what you say or don't say it. Stand by your word, make it count and respect and trust will be your rewards.

Part 2

The Basic Elements

Congratulations! You have completed those necessary first steps. You are now ready to begin your fabulous adventures. However, there are a few things, which need your attention in preparation. Knowing yourself is a grand accomplishment, but there are a few hints and tips in the following chapters regarding the basic elements of dating and relationships, which also need to be addressed. This information will help in gaining a proper perspective and will prepare you for a successful journey, once your search is done` .

Planning and strategies help avoid the traps and pitfalls, which can create a cycle of dating woes and failed relationships. Dating presents many challenges and relationships require dedication and hard work to endure. Pitfalls and traps exist, which can ensnare even those who are aware of their presence. Being clever and alert offers no guarantees. It is too easy to be caught up in ‘the moment’ and forget yourself. You may then find yourself repeating behaviors you thought were put to rest. Those days of bad dating experiences once again become the norm and relationship failure is a predictable event. Knowing what to look for can help avoid the pitfalls.

Success is not easy to achieve if your thoughts and feelings are focused on how desperate you feel to find a partner. Being single holds many positives if you are open to them.

Understanding and reminding yourself of that will allow you to search without panic or anxiety as your guide. Accepting that single is a good place to be alleviates a lot of frustration and dissolution. There is no shame or guilt associated with a choice to remain single. Be proud of who you are and of flying solo. This time spent without a partner is perfect for self-discovery, exploration, experimentation and growth. It can offer nothing but positives. It will allow you to be a tremendous asset to your partner when you are ready for a commitment.

Proper planning and having strategies in place will also help you in determining your needs and requirements and in setting your limits and boundaries. Acquiring knowledge and preparing well, will enable you to be more keenly aware of what you seek in an ideal partner. More importantly, you will be aware of what you have to offer as an individual in a relationship. If you decide that you will be dating with intent and are seeking a long-term relationship, there are plans and strategies that will help make it work. You will first need to know if you are truly ready for that type of commitment. Wanting it is different from actually being able to do it.

Successful relationships require planning and dedication, as well as the skills and knowledge necessary to share yourself with another. Giving of yourself sounds easy enough, people do it every day. It is not always the simple process it appears to be. Often, it is only after we agree to commit the realization of a mistake comes to light. Know the facts before you say yes. Whatever time and effort you are willing to give to this aspect of your dating and relationship experiences will equal what you get back in positive rewards.

The getting to know you process, the journey into self, planning, strategies and focus are the basic elements. It makes the idea of relationships sound tedious, and like a lot of unnecessary work. Although it may rationalize a lack of commitment, holding that attitude contributes to the escalated number of divorces and relationship failure. While the work component is vital, understanding, an open mind and a willingness to explore, experiment and discover are necessary accompaniments. With dedication and a lack of restraints, you cannot lose.

The Love-in

Juliana and Scott met on an Internet dating site, fell in love and were destined to live a fairytale life. After spending three glorious months as a couple, in an exclusive relationship they felt content and happy in life. Juliana is a paralegal in a flourishing law firm and Scott is a successful engineer. Both are emotionally self-sufficient, own their own homes and are financially sound. They had each taken the time to build a strong and healthy social network of family and friends to complement their accomplishments. The only thing either of them lacked was a loving, long-term commitment with that special someone.

From day one, they were a couple. Everything felt *right*, and they went where their feelings took them. They would text during the day, spend their evenings chatting online, on the telephone, and interjected the occasional overnight tryst. Saturdays were spent taking care of the business they had not attended to during the week. The nights were reserved for love. They relished the time spent sipping wine and sharing their sexual energies as the fire was crackling in the fireplace. As a couple, they were thriving in the magic they had created

Sunday activities were well thought out and plans made according to the many interests they had in common. Both enjoy winter sports and cycling and when they had time on the weekends would enjoy flirting with nature on a mountain bike trail or sailing down the ski slopes. The ideal couple had achieved their ideal life.

The next weekend was a four-day holiday and they decided to spend it together at Juliana's home. Scott was focused on the incredible sexual possibilities. Juliana had thoughts of sharing that time as a *real* couple. They both thought of the blissful time they would share, with no distractions and no breaks for the business end of life. This would be the time to spend exploring their relationship and bonding in love. It would be blissful.

Things went well that first night. The atmosphere was relaxed and the air filled with love and sensuality. They made love well into the morning and drifted off to sleep knowing they now had it all. Life couldn't get any better than this. Juliana woke up the next morning full of energy and ready to go for a hike in the mountains. Scott was still reeling from the activities of the night and much preferred more of the same instead of a rigorous hike. Their night had invigorated Juliana, but had zapped Scott's usual vigor. They compromised and spent the afternoon in the park walking and holding hands; making plans for the future.

Later, they decided on dinner in a romantic Italian restaurant and a movie to complement the activities of day. However, the thought of going home after the movie did not excite Juliana. She was still carrying an intense energy and needed an appropriate venue to release it. She suggested to Scott that they go to a local club, have a few drinks and do a little dancing. Still trying to catch up with the day, Scott was not thrilled but agreed to go.

After a vigorous workout on the dance floor, they returned home, had a glass of wine, got comfortable in their favorite spot, made blissful love and fell asleep in each other's arms.

The next morning while Juliana was standing over the hot stove, fixing their breakfast, she was struck with a sense of dissolution, doubt and pangs of anxiety. It was an awakening. She began to question her actions as well as her motives for this venture into reality. Is this what she really wanted, settling in and settling down? Juliana was not sure she was comfortable with her visions of married life and began to panic. She found herself wishing Scott would go home and tried to think of a way out of the rest of the weekend. It was at that moment she realized that a relationship commitment of that type would require compromise and even sacrifice. She liked what they had. Happily dating was a good place.

Juliana discovered she was clearly not ready for the duties that accompanied a marriage commitment. She was not ready to give up her present lifestyle and freedoms. It wasn't that she didn't love Scott; she simply was not prepared to 'take care of him'. Juliana was not content with the idea of fixing her man meals and spending her days catering to his needs. The few days a week they shared were plenty for her. Scott liked the thought of a marriage scenario and enjoyed being the center of her attention. They would each have to compromise and problem solve to have the type of relationship they thought they were ready for.

Blinded by lust and the feelings of new love Juliana thought this was what she wanted. She was clearly not ready regardless of how glorious the thought. She still had too much life to live and was not ready to settle down or settle in. She discussed her feelings with Scott and they were able to save the rest of the weekend. Juliana and Scott agreed to remain happily dating and see where it would lead. Two years later, they are still happily dating. Whether that is a positive or negative is for them to determine. However, had they not wisely chosen this path, they might be happily divorced. Their weekend of love provoked positive.

Chapter 4

Being Single Is Not A Negative

Society tends to lend itself to the idea that being single is somehow a negative. The single person is most often assumed to be a lonely, miserable soul. Most people see them as unhappy beings who warrant pity and in need of match making considerations. However, in reality, most singles are content, well-balanced and sated individuals possessing many positive attributes. The strength, confidence and independence the single life brings, enhances rather than detracts and presents the single person with a tremendous advantage. It makes a positive statement about the person they are.

Being single allows us to venture into self-exploration and discovery without the benefit of outside influences to alter the outcome. Living alone affords us the opportunity to know who we are and be comfortable being alone with ourselves. The security we gain from the growth, self-reliance and autonomy allows us to be a valuable asset in every aspect of life. We possess a greater beneficial effect, which we can bring to our social interactions and relationships.

As singles, we are among the elite and empowered. We have the freedom to experiment and grow into ourselves. The more knowledgeable we become, the more we have to offer. The security and independence that come with being single helps prevent our being a burden or a liability in our relationships. We are better prepared for success in all of our endeavors.

Our time as singles allows us to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to experience success in whatever ventures we attempt. Single equates to positive.

In every class I held on the subject of ‘Living single and loving it”, I have been able to show the benefits of the single life. However, all of my students consistently question the one issue they see as a problem. How do singles cope with the lack of a sex life? I have to chuckle, and frankly tell them that living without sex is not a requisite for anyone who is single. The fact is that singles do not have to live without sex and normally do not. The idea that a single’s life is void of fantastic sexual experiences is a myth. If you are well educated on the subject of sex and willing to explore and experiment, there are no limitations or loss of sexual pleasure.

Sex is no longer taboo and not limited to male assertion to experience the pleasures. There is an increase in the number of women who have found their assertive voice and are quite willing to see that their sexual needs are met. Thanks to the efforts of pioneering women such as Betty Dodson who wrote “Sex For One: The Joy of Self-loving”, self-pleasuring is no longer a taboo subject and offers extremely rewarding and fulfilling sexual experiences. A little fantasy and creative play and voila. (Partners optional) Our sexual needs and seeking to satisfy them, is all quite natural, normal and essential, even as a single.

The marvels of modern technology have enhanced our sexual experiences whether we live as a single or a couple.

Both men and women can experience fabulous sex that was unfathomable twenty years ago. The concept of ‘friends with benefits’ is the new relationship and is fulfilling the needs of singles of all ages quite adequately. The acceptance of ‘recreational dating’ and the unconventional gives singles a definite advantage in having a satisfying sex life. The stereotypical relationship is no longer *required* to fulfill their needs. Singles have many options and alternatives and are definitely not living without sex.

The Internet experience must include the sexual component. Yes, it happens, people are enjoying satisfying online sex, and it is meeting a need. Chapter 15 addresses in detail the nature of the cybersex experience and gives the positives and negatives of long distance sex. Chapter 16 offers important safety information regarding cam sharing and the serious consequences that exist. Our time alone allows us to create rewarding and successful ventures as long as we remember the cautions.

Once you have figured out all of the details and have addressed the sexual components, you can see that life as a single is truly a positive experience. The more you know about yourself and the more self-sufficient you become, the more fulfilling and rewarding your life will be. Your level of self-awareness and the ability to clearly state yourself will enable your relationships to flourish.

Keep in mind when you begin your search that a relationship should enhance who you are rather than be *all* you are. That is the most important lesson you can learn. Single equates to positive in any context. Enjoy your time being single. Be proud.

Strategies For Singles

Below is a list of strategies to help singles experience success and have a more rewarding and productive future.

*Know that it is OK to be single. Be confident and proud in your status

*Take this ‘alone’ time to discover who you really are and what you want

*Set goals and dating strategies that align with your lifestyle and situation, not someone else’s

*Gather the information and tools necessary to achieve your goals

*Develop a healthy network of family and friends.

*Date and explore new ideas and designs. Don't be afraid to step outside the box or get rid of the boxes that restrict you

*Don't be a victim of your own insecurities. Believe in you and trust yourself.

*Learn to be your own best friend & advocate

*Own your own power. No one should have the right or power to determine your life choices or direct your path but you.

*Learn to love yourself. It will make it easier for others to do the same.

*Learn to say NO and assert your requirements, needs, wants and desires to others. If it doesn't feel right for you...don't do it simply to meet the expectations of others!

*Never, settle for less than what you really want. Settling breeds discontent.

*Learn to take healthy risks.... "Feel The Fear & Do It Anyway" by Susan Jeffers is necessary reading for everyone

*Seek balance in all things

*Take charge of your future success.

*Make a conscious effort to live your dreams. Make it a priority.

*Life is what you make it. Put your efforts into making it exactly what you want it to be,

*Always, practice safe sex. Get testing regularly if you are sexually active with more than one partner.

*Single should never equate to desperate. Take your time and make good choices with intent

Chapter 5

Dating Pitfalls & Solutions

Do you find you are frustrated, cycling through the same dating rituals without positive effects? Are you caught in the same old traps and left to question why your relationships do not bring contentment? It is time to analyze your approach, values, offerings, and implement a more effective plan of action and strategies. Changing your present protocols will provoke the change you need to warrant the results you hope to find.

Wisdom and understanding are necessary to get what you want. It takes time and patience to acquire knowledge and then be able to interpret the information. You will need to have a design in mind of what you are looking for in a perspective partner. This journey also requires that you assess your own traits and qualities with honesty. Be ready to state your needs with clarity and your expectations with confidence. Most importantly, you will need to learn how to make effective choices that are based in reality rather than in wishes, hopes and dreams. These are but a few of the necessities that can help break the cycle of dating woes and dysfunctional relationships. Success will come to you when you are prepared to meet it.

Below are some of the more common dating pitfalls and suggestions for alleviating them.

Being aware and prepared will help create new behavior patterns and direct your focus where it really needs to be to get what you want. You will find your decision-making capabilities will improve and your choices and designs will be based in reality. Knowledge and attention to detail will promote good decisions made with intent.

Sales & Marketing

Whether it be out on the town or sitting in front of your computer, it is important to keep your thoughts and behaviors based in your own reality. Selling yourself with attractive packaging and presentation offers a high risk of disappointment and relationship failure. The cover should always appropriately represent the material inside. It's ok to be you without any frills and fancy wrapping.

Solution: Keep it real -You will attract compatible people if they know who you *really* are.

Masking the truth merely prolongs the crash; it cannot stop it.

While Supplies Last

Many people believe there is a limited supply of possible partners. They feel as if they must rush and take the first promising offer. It becomes a matter of having to take what they can get in order to avoid having nothing. Settling is never a positive solution. Don't search in desperation.

Solution: Define your first choice and never settle for less. Learn to say no and make effective choices based on your true requirements, wants, and needs. Accepting less means you get less and live in discontent.

Compatibility

We often assume that if we have fun with someone, get along well or the sex is good, that we are compatible for a long-term relationship. What that really means is that there is potential for friendship, an affair or a happy ending. It does not automatically equate to a lasting commitment. Assuming otherwise can be a costly mistake offering little past frustration and the possibility of ruining a great friendship.

Solution: Clearly define your relationship requirements and goals. Don't change those goals to please a pretty face or sexy body. Do not try to convert a recreational relationship or friendship into a committed one. Take the time to evaluate and validate its ability to actually work. Never settle.

Fantasy vs. Reality

Expecting your ideal partner to magically appear and presuming you can live happily ever after, is a fantasy. Without intentionally making good choices and decisions and without effort, reality can be a cold hard smack in the face. The reality is that successful, long-term relationships take preparation, fortitude and dedication. It is easy to create a fantasy through the computer of the person on the other end. Have contact, in person meetings before letting your heart and head get carried away in a fairytale.

Solution: Leave the magic and fairytale endings behind. You have to actively seek your ideal partner. Not every frog will render a hidden prince. Take personal responsibility for your relationship choices and outcome.

The Mating Game

Mates, soul mates and playmates are each notably different. Mates are comfortable, playmates are fun and soul mates share our essence. Mistaking one for the other can only render frustration and unhappy endings.

Solution: When you are ready for a commitment, validate and test the relationship. Determine compatibility and make decisions based on the facts rather than on hopes, dreams or assumptions. Take the time to plan a successful venture and negotiate issues, which could ultimately create discontentment and unhappiness.

Lust or Love

Sex is sex and love is love. If we are lucky, we can have them both at the same time. They do not automatically equate to one in the same, however. Confusing a state of physical or sexual attraction, with love can be detrimental. Relationships based in sex or sexual feelings are doomed for failure when the magic in the potion begins to fade

Solution: Take the time to test and confirm the realities. What is real and tangible beyond the sex? Are there sustainable qualities that would support a long-term relationship? A friend with benefits might be a comparable solution

Love Conquers All

There are some who have the unrealistic expectation that a partner or relationship can offer a solution to or alleviate their problems, fears and pain.

Those issues live within us and only we can fix them. It would be unfair to ask a partner to take on that responsibility and would set the relationship up to fail. Each of us has limits.

Solution: Resolve issues prior to seeking a committed relationship. Being well balanced and emotionally self-sufficient makes you a more valuable asset and increases your chances for success. Love really cannot do it all and neither can your partner.

Dependencies

We are each responsible for fulfilling our own needs and creating our own happiness. That is a tall order for a partner to fill and can be a heavy burden. *Needing* someone poses a beautiful sentiment in the context of romance; however, being needy presents as emotional instabilities and provokes relationship failure

Solution: Deal with any dependency issues you may have and beware of potential partners who are dependent or needy. Relationships are supposed to enhance who we are not be all we are.

The ‘I’m Wonderful Syndrome’

Ego issues can offer damaging effects. Being ‘wonderful’ by way of personal perception or overestimating your self-worth holds limited advantages. Love and happiness are earned rather than owed to us. Egos can appear as sexy and mask as confidence. They can actually cause harm to the self-esteem of another and ruin relationships.

Solution: Regular and honest self-appraisal is a wise practice. Taking responsibility for your life experiences and relationships is essential to living a healthy and productive life. It makes all the difference in dating and relationship success. Promoting equality and respect will take you far.

Friendship vs Relationship

Not everyone we meet is or should be a potential partner. Lifelong friends are not the same as a life partner and mistaking the two can be costly. Analyze, test and be absolutely sure before possibly destroying a beautiful friendship.

Solution: Learn to sort and separate the different types of relationships and love. Realize that it is healthy to have a network of friends of both genders. Accept friends readily and scrutinize relationship possibilities carefully.

Those are a few of the traps, which can make for difficult dating ventures and relationships. Allow others to experience you, as you are and avoid the drama of exposure when it can do the most harm. Avoid anyone who thinks you need fixing or need to change. Be real and true to yourself always.

Chapter 6

How Ready Are You For a Commitment?

Consider what type of relationship best suits you before you begin your Internet adventures. That assessment will help alleviate mistakes, which might hurt everyone involved. If you are in search of a long-term commitment, it is wise to ask a few questions concerning your readiness for such an arrangement. Preparation and planning will help avoid a succession of dysfunctional or failed relationships.

Many of us desire a long term committed relationship. It is a society norm and most of us want someone with whom we can share our lives. However, wanting it and being able to obtain and sustain that type of commitment are different. Sometimes our desires are out of the realm of possibilities. Maybe we are not sure of what we want or there may be serious issues that require attention first. To avoid frustration and drama, you will need to evaluate your assets as a partner. Clean up any messes that might send a potential prospect running in the other direction. Ask a lot of why questions of yourself and answer them in earnest. Why do I want to be in a relationship? What is there that might get in my way or turn away a potential partner?

Entering into a relationship carrying baggage from the past or past relationships is one sure way to sabotage its success before it begins. Expecting your partner to bear those burdens is unthinkable.

It would not be in their best interest or yours to distress the relationship with negatives from the start. You may find a potential partner who will claim they can handle it. Once confronted with the realities, it becomes too taxing and they eventually have to call it quits.

Relationships take a lot of work and come with responsibilities. Assess your capabilities to meet that end and see what you might discover. Answer the questions below honestly and objectively. The results will offer a better perspective of your situation and help assess how prepared you are for the responsibilities that accompany being a partner in a relationship. Any problem areas or unresolved issues would have to be addressed *before* you commit.

1- Is your knowledge of the basics intact?

*Have you discovered your true self?

*Are you satisfied with the results of your self-assessment?

*Is there a need for change? Can you realistically make those changes?

*Have you recently gotten in touch with your inner guide?

2- Do you know exactly what you want?

*What are your personal and relationship dreams & goals?

*Can you characterize your ideal partner?

*Have you clearly defined what you have to offer as a partner in a relationship?

*Can you describe what a day in a relationship would be like? Is it based in reality?

3- What are your requirements and needs?

*Are you aware of what you truly need and require to be content and happy in your life and relationships?

*Do you know your limits and boundaries?

*Can you clearly state your needs and requirements to others?

*Are you able to say No?

4- Is your life all you would like it be?

*Do you hold a clear vision of your future?

*Is your life rewarding & fulfilling? What is missing?

*Are your choices and decisions influenced by others?

*Do you believe that you can live your dreams?

5- Are there outside influences in your life that would strain a relationship?

*Would career, children, family and/or friends restrict or stress your relationship commitment?

*Are you able to prioritize and balance your responsibilities and social life?

*Are you impulsive? Do you make decisions in haste?

*Are you prepared for the unexpected events life might send your way?

*Could you handle the disapproval of others? Possibly your partner's family or friends?

6- Do you have unresolved financial or legal matters?

*Would they negatively affect a potential partner?

*Should those issues be resolved before you begin your search?

*Would you disclose legal issues to your partner after they have been resolved?

7- Are there health related issues or concerns?

*Does your physical or mental health alter or interfere with your life and relationship goals?

*How would they affect a potential partner?

*Are you emotionally self-sufficient?

8- Do you hold a healthy respect for all people?

*Do you harbor any anger or animosity towards the opposite sex that may live deep within?

*Do you carry past relationship issues that have not been resolved?

*If gay, lesbian or transgender, do you have issues with family, friends, co-workers or others that would need to be resolved before you begin your search?

*Are you prepared for the possibility that you may find yourself attracted to someone your family and friends might not approve of? How would you handle such a scenario?

*How would those you care for deal with your attraction to someone of another race, from a foreign country or of the same sex perhaps?

*How would you deal with an attraction to someone who is out of your comfort zone?

9- Do you have effective communication and social skills?

*Are you able to assert your needs?

*Are you able to say 'No'?

*Do you have a positive outlook and attitude in regards to life and relationships?

*Do you get along well with others?

*Are you approachable?

*Do you prefer being alone to attending social events?

*Are you able to openly express your feelings to others?

10- Do you have appropriate relationship skills?

*Do you have a working knowledge and understanding of the type of relationship you seek?

*Are you prepared for dedicated sexual intimacy?

*Would you be an asset in your relationship or pose a liability?

*Can you show your feelings physically?

*Are you open to compromise?

*Are you able to deal with anger and negative emotion in an appropriate manner?

Successful relationships take commitment, effort, fortitude, dedication, planning and good communication skills. Planning for success will command success.

Chapter 7

Your Ideal Partner

Designing an image of the ideal partner is not as easy as one might assume. Keeping that design based in reality can be even more of a challenge. It is not quite as simple as asking for a tall, dark, handsome stranger, with a sweet disposition. Asking for generics will get you the generic version. It takes serious thought, soul searching and effort to compose the specifics and detail necessary to complete the portrait. It will be a complex mixture, formulated from many unique and intricate elements and will propose a long list of wants, needs, desires and requirements. Liken it to building a puzzle from many pieces, with each piece representing a specific component of your distinct design. Once the portrait is complete, it should reveal a clear, unrestricted and realistic final image of your ideal partner.

Your thoughts and mental images will not be enough to bring the partner of your dreams. You will need to know *exactly* who and what you are searching for. Random searches tend to promote desperate choices. Do not hesitate however, to expand your boundaries to include those who may not quite fit within your comfort zone. Do not be afraid of searching various age groups, different lifestyles. Dare to take risks. You just might find a gem. Without the attempt, you could miss a fabulous friendship or your soul mate.

It is important to keep in mind that an ideal partner is meant to share your life, not *be* your life.

Your partner will enhance and contribute to your contentment, but cannot be held accountable for your happiness. That commitment is reserved for you. Attainable expectations are necessary to be fair and in achieving goals. The knight in shining armor and the princess from your favorite childhood fairytale do not really exist. They are merely the perfect dream that is not likely to magically appear by wishing it so. Expectations of that sort will only lead to a never-ending search and many disillusioning relationship attempts. Your partner will either be the ideal or not. Dreaming and wishing will not make it happen nor will appropriating change to make it so.

Even though the fairytale images cannot be your reality, you must never settle for less than what you want and need. Settling for something in order to avoid having nothing is never a viable option. Settling cannot take away the feelings of emptiness and the voids do not disappear. They are simply masked by the time and efforts spent in trying to make pieces fit where they do not go. You end up with the same endless searches and the cycle of failed relationships. It truly is to your benefit to hold out for what you really want. Being single really is not so bad.

Setting individual and relationship goals is an essential part of the process. Setting your limits and boundaries is a vital component to finding the ideal partner. You must also be able to express them clearly and openly to others before you begin your journey. Without these things in place, you can find yourself overwhelmed or being run over by a strong, relentless suitor or a pair of beautiful green eyes.

Another important thought to keep in mind is that who you are will always be good enough. There is never a cause or need to accept or settle for anything other than what is right for you. Portraying yourself as something you are not, holding back the essentials of you in order to have someone or please another, will merely lead you on an off road excursion into unhappiness and discontentment. Relationships with those components usually provoke incidences of cheating and/or in failure.

Expressing the intricate details of your ideal partner in an online dating format is not any easier than explaining the essence of you in a hundred words or less. Using the average clichés in your description will provoke average responses. Everyone will claim to be sincere, honest, humorous and romantic. Challenge their claims. Find out just how funny they really are. This is the time to test your creativity and provoke the extraordinary. Make your interview time count.

The use of humor is always a positive in your online profiles and chats. It is acceptable and preferable to the mundane. Humor will encourage people to let their guard down and sets a more relaxed tone. This will enable you to get more spontaneous and honest responses. That openness will allow you to determine how close your suitor really is to what you want. Humor incites the mind and creates a pleasant environment for gathering information.

Make a checklist of your visions and designs for Mr. or Ms. Right. Keep a copy next to your computer for reference.

The questions below are designed to provoke thought regarding that process. However, they merely scratch the surface on their own merit and only address generic needs. Your list of questions should be detailed and personalized to suit you. Your requirements, needs and wants should be specifically addressed and be within the confines of your lifestyle, limits and boundaries.

- 1- What personality type would make you happy for years to come and not just satisfy for the short term?
- 2- What special talents would your ideal partner possess?
- 3- What physical characteristics would excite you?
- 4- What type of career would he/she have chosen to be compatible with your life goals and aspirations?
- 5- What would sex be like with your ideal partner? What sexual personality would he/she possess?
- 6- What would leisure time be like? How would you spend free time, alone and together?
- 7- Would he/she want children? Would you be able to accept someone who already has children?
- 8- What would be the ideal life and relationship goals?
- 9- Would he/she be religious or spiritual or would it matter?
- 10- Do close family ties matter?
- 11- Would your family and friends approve? If they didn't, could you deal with their disapproval or loss?

12- What would it feel like in each other's arms? Does a strong hug or soft hug permeate your being more intensely?

13-Does being romantic matter to you? Would it be a prerequisite?

14-Is physical affection important or necessary for your well-being?

15-Is living in the city or suburbia important to you?

16-Does he/she like to cook?

17-Would he/she need to have good domestic skills?

18-Would he/she be able to handle your need for space and time alone?

19-Could he/she deal with the time you need to spend with friends?

20-Would you have to always come first?

If there are issues and differences in your design and someone you are attracted to, you might ask yourself about compromise. Are the problems solvable or unsolvable? Are they deal breakers?

It is time to create your design!

Chapter 8

Relationship Success by Design

Four Steps to Relationship Success

Step 1- The Search

The most important aspect in the search for your ideal partner or soul mate is making sure you are in the right frame of mind. Don't look when you are depressed or feeling lonely, and definitely not if you perceive yourself a desperate single. It is imperative that you are acutely focused on your goals and not in a needy state of mind. You should have also completed a thorough self-assessment and an unrestricted analysis of your search criteria. Giving attention to the details will help in avoiding mistakes.

Seeking someone with closely aligned life and relationship goals will better insure success. Your search should also be focused in the appropriate direction and in the correct format. Choosing settings, which offer the opportunity to meet those whose interests mirror your own, is a good place to start. This can be done online as well as with in person meetings.

Organizational functions or activity-based programs will provide an established common interest and lessen the need to fumble for conversation topics. It is also a safe meeting environment for your first in-person date.

Local single's gatherings, pet shows, sporting events, hobby related activities and other social functions can open many windows of opportunity. Remember to include finding friendships as part of your search.

When we seek the same types of partners we have always had, in the same venues and with the same mindset, we get the same results. The cycle of unsatisfactory relationships continues. A new direction and focus as well as a positive outlook, will offer greater advantages for a productive and rewarding experience. Do not hesitate to step outside the box. If there are time constraints and a sense of desperation, decisions will be made for the wrong reasons and failure is the likely result. Your search should be born in patience, with the formalities tended to. You will then be ready to meet success.

Step 2- The Sorting Process

Most often, enough information can be gained within the first five minutes of conversation to determine where the new acquaintance might best fit in your life, if at all. Not everyone you meet will be a potential partner; however, a friend is always a grand asset. Not all friends are candidates for the role as your ideal partner and being able to separate the two is vital. The love we share with friends is different from the love we have for our partner and we have to be able to recognize that difference.

Neither desperation nor an enchanting conversation should get in the way of the sorting process. It is always important to pay close attention to statements that raise questions, doubts or send up “red flags”. In some cases, it is best not to ask many questions. Normal conversation will render a great deal of information without being intrusive. Unwittingly, people offer up pieces of themselves and give clues that tell of their truths and realities while chatting. Your well-honed listening skills will offer an invaluable advantage in this regard. As the listener, you will be able to sort and separate with ease. Listening and giving attention to key words will help you make the appropriate determinations.

That first interview or chat is the most important. The information gathering portion can be tedious but, once you have decided it would be worth engaging in further conversation, you are able to relax and begin the getting to know you process. Keep in mind it is also important to maintain a clear vision of your ideals and set goals. It will enable you to maintain focus and make good choices and decisions regarding where that person might best fit in your life. You will be better qualified to weed out the junk and categorize with greater accuracy.

Fear and uncertainty can be detected even in instant messaging. Any sense of desperation or being overzealous will put you off track and impair your judgment. It will give your prospective partner the upper hand. You will need time to adjust to the process, but it soon becomes second nature. You will be able to read people easily and avoid spending time with those who are inappropriate matches for you.

However, it is absolutely okay to continue a conversation with someone even though you know the person will not be a good fit in your life. There is no need to turn down a pleasant chat if you are enjoying the topic of discussion. We learn something from everyone we meet, so it would not be a wasted venture. You might learn something or you may simply enjoy the evening in conversation. It is acceptable to spend quality time without expectations.

Sorting is fairly simple. There is no need to stress over this process. You will know exactly what to do when the opportunity presents itself. Don't avoid this step however, and don't get distracted by those things which appear to be too good to be true as they usually are. Stay focused on your ultimate goal and you will do fine.

Step 3- The Analysis

Information gathering and a close analysis of the results will help determine if a prospective partner can meet your requirements, wants, needs and desires. Since requirements are usually deal breakers, it is important to address all of them in detail. Asking the right questions, listening with intent to the responses, and remaining true to your visions and goals help avoid making the wrong choices. The details are important. Meekly skimming over a few important questions does not offer much in the way of an accurate assessment. Open ended and detailed questions provoke thought. First responses give the best picture.

Questions, which require a yes or no answer, will offer little information. There is not much to share and there is no opportunity to get the precise detail needed to make accurate assessments. Do not be afraid to ask the hard questions. Why waste time dating for months only to discover you have made a mistake. Be assertive in your quest to get to the truth.

We have all felt the embarrassment that comes with displaying our inner selves in question and answer sessions. Talking online eases that risk. You have time to think about your answers before typing them or you may discover as you type that you have misstated yourself and can rewrite. Moving past those anxieties and using a direct approach is a more positive solution. Add a little shock value to your questions. Give them something to think about. You will find it will weigh in your favor.

Your Information gathering does not have to come in the way of a formal interviewing session. It can be obtained through normal discussion over the telephone, by e-mail, over coffee, or while taking a walk. It is important however, to get all of the necessary information *before* considering commitment and getting involved. You are worth the time and effort it takes to have the right answers.

Step 4- The Final Exam

Test and verify the information you have collected about your prospective partner.

It is important to gain the experience as well as knowledge and obtain proof that your requirements will be met. Words mean little without the actions to back them up. If your partner tells you that he/she has no temper issues; test it and see what happens when buttons are pushed. Anything and everything that is important to you or is a requirement should be tried and put to the test. If it turns out badly, better to know now than later.

It is easy to become caught up in the feelings of an infatuation or lust and forget those things, which are important in long lasting relationships. No one in the beginning of a relationship wants to consider any possibility of negatives. However, leaving out the “what ifs” and the “what happens when” issues can lead to discontentment or failed relationships. Appropriate preparations can avoid drama.

Your analysis should include both aspects of a possible relationship. It is not enough to find out whether or not your needs will be met. It is also vital to ensure that you will be able to meet your prospective partner’s needs. How disappointing it would be to make that discovery after you are involved. Relationships take two people committed, dedicated and eager to make it work. That means that the two need to be happy and content. Not being able to hold up your end leads to failure just as quickly as your unhappiness will. Making sure a relationship works before becoming exclusive is the wise choice. If all is well at this point, it would be a good time for more in depth planning for the future.

Relationship Planning Guide

Proper planning will better insure a deeply committed, long lasting relationship. A checklist of important issues and participation in pre-commitment negotiation will provide a realistic and accurate picture of your potential for relationship success. This does not have to be a formal event; however, all vital topics need to be addressed. It is imperative that you be honest and precise with your responses. Avoiding details or offering inaccurate information will render your time and effort worthless.

This open discussion planning is not meant to be an arena for upsets, but is designed to create understanding and avoid misconceptions that could eventually lead to relationship failure. The goal is to assist in strengthening bonds and building trust. A clearly defined design will better insure a successful relationship venture.

1- Prepare & Discuss a Relationship Checklist

A-List & clearly define requirements, needs, wants and desires with regard to individual, relationship & sexual interests. Yes, sex is a vital component in overall compatibility and needs to be included. Include your fantasies.

B-Set limits & boundaries with regard to those interests

C-Determine solvable and unsolvable issues

D-Determine areas of compromise

2- Set Relationship Goals

A- Define individual goals and visions as a partner in the relationship

B- Set relationship goals and visions, incorporating both partners' interests

3- Plan Conflict Management/Resolutions

A-Plan and prepare how to handle disagreements and upsets.

B-Address how to manage conflicts concerning children, family & friends

C- Couples who intend to live together would do well to discuss the issue of managing the household. Simple things such as who will do the dishes and take out the trash can cause upsets that could likely be avoided with pre-planning.

4- Clearly Define Financial Commitments

A-Address financial commitments and responsibilities (individual/joint)

B-Address any future bank accounts, investments and/or property purchases (individual/joint)

C- Discuss and plan for unforeseen events, which might affect your finances

5- Set Guidelines for External Influences

A-Set guidelines for the inclusion of friends and family, within the framework of a healthy relationship.

B-Schedule individual private time and space

C-Allow time for the boys and girls night out.

6- Address Special Needs & Specific Commitment Issues

- A- Discuss important commitment issues and potential deal breakers. Include guidelines for contact and relationships with those of the opposite sex.
- B- Address special needs or requests that would enhance the relationship
- C- Address any medical needs and concerns. Discuss how they might affect the relationship now and in the future
- D- Discuss the issue of online communication with friends (old & new).
- E- Is cheating really cheating if it is through the written word and not through physical contact?

7- Negotiations

- A- Summarize and finalize the results of your efforts in steps 1-6.
- B- Keep your wishes, wants, dreams, goals and expectations based in a reality that is comfortable and attainable for both partners. Include the possibility of renegotiation in the future.
- C- Are the differences and problems solvable?
- D- Are the unsolvable problems and differences deal breakers or is there a point of compromise?

8- The Benefit of a Contract &/or Ceremony

For some couples putting these results in contract form offers a way to solidify their commitment. It may also provide for a deeper sense of belonging.

Some couples are not ready for marriage, but find that an intimate ceremony designed and performed by the two of them, for each other, adds an intensity and intimacy we all crave when love is 'new'. For some there is a need to formalize their commitment

When planning, be sure to include all things, which are important to you and your partner. Discuss possibilities, which might be relevant in the future. Don't agree to terms which aren't comfortable for you, in the hope things will be fine. They won't be. Planning for your future is a serious, personal process and should be designed to your unique specifications. The formalities are tiresome, but you'll find them well worth the time invested.

Part 3

The Online Experience

The wonders of the world are now at your fingertips. Doors are waiting to be opened and infinite possibilities lie ahead . The hard work and effort you have put into preparation will now begin to pay off. You are ready to explore and experience marvelous new adventures. You will find your online experiences to be very different from the in person meetings you are accustomed to. Communication online will offer many positives, but does provide its share of negatives as well. You will find it easier to express yourself in an email or instant message, without the usual inhibitions. There is, however, a higher risk of misinterpretation and misunderstandings.

The written word requires that you state yourself clearly and be more aware of the conversation. Words often have different meaning to each individual so clarifying rather than assuming is the wise choice. Word usage becomes extremely important when interviewing prospective partners. Asking the right questions, provoking unscripted answers and the sorting process can be taxing as well as a challenge. The newbie may find it somewhat overwhelming and frustrating in the beginning. Once in the groove, it all becomes second nature and getting to where you want to be becomes a much simpler process.

Marketing yourself online, stating your essence in a paragraph is not an easy task. Some overstate their qualities and capabilities and are quite willing to misrepresent the facts.

There is nothing to gain from using tricks and lies to get a date. Those who use dating sites are average people just like you and are seeking the same positive end. However, far too many have unrealistic expectations and goals. Princes and princesses do not automatically come with the click of a button. The Internet provides no miracles. It is simply a high tech form of communication, a way to display you to the world, and allows you to meet others willing to do the same.

Your online dating profile will be the key element to successful ventures. Presenting you in all your splendor, for the world's approval and judgment, will be your greatest challenge and asset. It will provide that all-important first impression and should extend a compelling invitation. Your profile is a reflection of you and should clearly state who you are, and exactly what you seek. Being precise will help you avoid junk and bring more appropriate prospects. The efforts and detail you put into your profile are what you will get in return.

As with anything else in life, there are drawbacks and safety issues that need our constant attention. Being alert and cautious will help promote positive experiences. Displaying your personal information is *never* an acceptable practice. Unfortunately, precautions must be taken to protect you. Predators of every variety do exist and given the tools, they can cause you harm in the way of identity theft as well as the usual physical means. The same issues are true for in person dating as well. This is not specific to the Internet. Keep your personal information protected and you safe until you know there is cause to trust.

Another type of danger lurks online and poses an even greater risk than the evil predators. This pitfall presents itself when emotional involvement is introduced. The 'L' word flows easily and quickly in some online ventures. In the midst of the fantasies each party creates, are feelings that can mirror love. They can appear real, but may simply be a side effect of 'the moment'. However they are born, they can create issues and can prove to be frustrating and sometimes painful. Love and sex in cyber-space can be pleasurable and positive experiences, but it is often difficult or impossible to duplicate our online fantasies in 'real' life. It can leave you disappointed and disillusioned with the relationship that was born from a distance.

Feeling loved and having great sex do not require the human touch and can be experienced online. Millions fall victim every day. However, long distance romance holds its own brand of drama, which can offer negatives and will warrant serious consideration before getting involved. It is possible that your soul mate lives in a faraway land. Do not deny a grand experience because of distance, but do be careful and diligent in your choice to form serious bonds. Things are not always what they appear to be from a distance.

Over all, the online experience is incredible and lots of fun. There are many wonderful people to meet and much to learn. Every journey in life that brings positives will offer a few negatives to keep us on our toes, but in this case, the positives far outweigh any negatives. Open yourself up and enjoy the adventures.

Profile with a Smile

“Give them what they want and leave them wanting more”. That is the mindset needed to create the ideal profile. More than 80% of the students who attend my Internet Dating classes are there on a mission. They want their profile analyzed and rewritten so it will attract more attention. They all are seeking the wow factor, that one thing which will resonate brilliance for the majority and compel them to respond.

Maria was among that group of narrowly focused individuals. She claimed her profile was uninteresting and held no sparkle. She was right. That is true for far too many of online dating participants. They have skipped the important steps, in a hurry to get on with the dating. They have no answers for any questions, which might be asked or are desperate, and unhappy with their lives. They have no shiny baubles to dangle, which will attract attention. Most are left with the mundane aspects of their daily lives to represent their sparkle. It is difficult to compose brilliance when there is not any clear starting point.

Maria, like many others, started her journey without first taking the appropriate steps. She had no clear understanding of who she is and her aura presented an air of boredom and depression. Your aura becomes the sparkle in your writings. You first have to have the sparkle before you can offer it. If your energy is low or filled with desperation and despair, it will shine brightly in your writings. Start at the beginning, fix what is broken and gain the inner sparkle you want to portray.

Maria also felt that photos were intrusive and would create privacy issues. While there may be some truth in that statement, pictures do attract attention. The unfortunate reality is that those seeking partners online are intolerant of profiles, which have no photo attached. They usually skip over them. While pictures are not a necessity, they do contribute to getting attention and show a more open personality. It can also provide a way for the seeker to connect to your energies before you begin any conversation.

Profile requirements differ for men and women. Women should offer humor and bounce. The last thing anyone wants is someone who is bland, depressed or takes life too seriously. If you make someone smile or laugh with your writings, it is a positive. It will be what compels them to come back for more. After a hard day at work, the smile you offer will be greatly appreciated and they will be more likely to respond. Maria was having a difficult time with that aspect of her profile. She could only offer a serious tone due to her current emotional state. People will readily respond to the positive and ignore the negative. Serious equals negative. A picture attached that shows you in a fun activity or at least offering your brilliant smile will take you far.

Men too need to provide humor in their profiles. Add a puppy, a warm smile and you can easily capture hearts. Pictures can say a lot about who you are with few accompanying words. A profile picture of you holding a baby will present an endearing tone. A photo of you standing atop a snow-covered mountain on skis, will speak volumes regarding your personality and interests.

If you do not have the appropriate offerings for a profile, it is best to wait until you do.

Everyone you meet is able to get a sense of you from the energies emitted in your aura. They can feel the good and bad vibes and will address you accordingly. Those same energies or vibes will present themselves in your writing as well, with both positive and negative energies represented. It really is vital to know who you are, have a positive self-esteem and be able to present as an asset before you begin your search.

Maria now understands that you can't offer what you don't have. She has lots of work to do before she can begin the search for her ideal partner. Your profile holds great power and will work for you with just a little creativity and imagination. Create an inviting atmosphere, offer a winning smile and it is easy to get noticed. A sense of humor, confident energies and an open mind will create a magical presence, and keep your inbox filled with interested friends and potential partners.

Chapter 9

High Tech Dating Realities

Today's singles are discouraged with the traditional venues for meeting other singles. The bar scene no longer offers the glitter and glamor appeal it once held. The efforts required to find a partner or mate in that type of environment is often difficult and offers little past frustration. The new dating trend focuses on finding love and friendship through the vast resources available on the Internet. Our neighborhood playground has expanded to include the world. This high tech movement has proven to be a more efficient form of dating and social networking for a great majority of singles. Is it practical, safe and worth the effort? You be the judge.

As with anything in life, Internet dating holds both satisfying and disappointing experiences. Overall, it offers more benefits than negative experiences. The list of pros and cons is long and the journey as unique as the individuals who choose to take it. The good, the bad and the 'oh my goodness' all exist in one format and no two like experiences will offer the same results. Safety and privacy issues are always major concerns in any dating format and can pose serious risks. It becomes necessary to remain alert and aware of warning signs. Your attention to detail will become your greatest asset.

The experience for men will vastly differ from that of women. Expectations and standards, which are set in the 'normal' dating fashion, will most likely require modification.

They must now fit an entirely new design, which presents women as more assertive and open regarding their requirements, needs and desires. However, many of the out dated standards remain in place. Without much effort, women will find their inboxes filled with anxious suitors, eager and ready to please, at a moment's notice. Women face more challenges, but do enjoy the attention and have more opportunity to freely express themselves in this format.

While some do experience the more assertive female, most men often play a waiting game or must remain true to the dictates of society and retain the assertive role in their search for Ms. Right. Times have changed and the world is more open, however we are still held to tradition, unfortunately. Men will find an increase in their incoming mail, but need to be just as aware of safety issues as the women. The number of female predators is equal to that of men. They may have an accomplice to help them with a robbery and doing physical harm. Some prey on the sympathies of a man and seek money or a way out of a bad situation in another state or country. It can become extremely sordid and caution is required. That does not mean men cannot have fun. The majority of men find online dating the perfect format and enjoy their ventures.

Internet communication or the written word is much more difficult than expressive face-to-face interaction, but does offer its own set of positives. For the shy, it is a solution, which opens many new doors. For those who find that life demands limit their dating experiences, it offers greater opportunity for a more normal social life. Yes, the risk is higher for misinterpretation without the benefit of visible body language and the lack of voice tone.

However, it does allow for more unrestricted, open and stress free communication.

What we say and how we say it makes all the difference in our experiences, however listening or reading with intent becomes our most valuable communication skill. Paying attention to what others are saying, or not saying, can have a profound effect on the outcome. Our graduated online communication skills make it easier to weed out inappropriate candidates without the influences of the gorgeous smile or hypnotic eyes. We can make our assessments unaffected by the physical charms, from a more neutral position.

Minor disappointments and drawbacks exist, but can usually be resolved through modification and compromise. In reality, not every frog turns into a prince and not every click of a button will expose the brilliance of a fairytale princess. What we will find are average men and women seeking a lover and a friend. We all share a common desire to find love and happiness, friendship and good times. We are all eager to live a more productive and satisfying life. Those standards are the reason most people use this dating medium.

There are no guarantees that come with our online experiences; however, the journey into the unknown can prove to be quite exciting. The education offered and the depth of the connection will be greater and more intense. When the lifelong friend or soul mate appears, we will experience our realities and the journey will prove to be well worth the effort.

The Internet offers the opportunity to experience the world. The number of participants is staggering and the experience rewarding. We are able to have our dreams become reality. However, our true benefits will come in the form of the discoveries we make about life and our heightened sense of self. Take this opportunity to ‘show your stuff’. Let the world know you have come to explore and experience life.

Chapter 10

Communicating Online

Your Internet dating experiences will ultimately be determined by your ability to communicate through the written word. It is important to precisely promote your fabulous qualities and personality in this format, leaving little room for misinterpretation. Stating yourself clearly and setting the appropriate tone can be a challenge for even the savviest writers, however, you will find it easier than you might expect.

The right opening statement can be all you need to effectively tell who you are. That first line will make the difference and determine the level of interest for your readers. It should stand out, attraction attention, peak the reader's interest and provide a smile. Your communications should be carefully worded so as not to give the wrong impression. Honesty is key to success. How you offer yourself is what your potential partner or friend will expect in your in-person meetings. If they feel you have lied or misrepresented yourself, there can be no trust and there won't be any interest in further communications. Make it count and make it the truth.

The written word comes without the benefit of body language and voice tone to compliment the interpretation process. The lack of accompaniment can leave room for misinterpretation and misunderstandings. On the other hand, there is greater opportunity for an uninhibited, less restricted conversation.

In this format, we are spared the embarrassment and the anxieties that can occur when communicating in-person. Oddly enough, the negatives and positives tend to balance themselves out in the end.

Since we each define and perceive words differently, expressing ourselves in this context holds greater significance than in a face-to-face meeting. This form of communication demands a need for clarity, while offering an inviting ambiance. We are required to pay closer attention to our thoughts, how we express them and learn to read the voice of others with greater intent. There are positives to be gained and lessons to learn when communicating in this format. It allows us to become more aware of our conversations. We are able to learn more about our contacts as well as ourselves in the process. We learn to compensate for any disadvantages we face and accentuate the benefits.

The interjection of humor will add warmth and set an engaging tone for the ‘getting to know you’ conversations. Adding a smile to someone’s day creates a positive, long lasting impression. It creates a pleasant atmosphere that leaves them wanting more. If it is good the first time, they will want to come back. Save the serious notes for a more appropriate time, so as not to disturb the flow of good vibes.

Using Emoticons, which are provided by the messenger services, will help accentuate the written word in the expression of feelings and in setting tone.

Those cute little faces are not intended to replace conversation however, and used for that purpose are not conducive to productive communication. What they really portray is a lack of respect and interest. Your contact will be put off and will not likely want another conversation. Use them wisely and only as an enhancement.

If the plan is to build friendships and relationships from your Internet experiences, it will require clarity and absolute honesty. Any form of deceit or misrepresentation will eliminate the possibility of success. Some people find they can become their alter egos online. This too has its negatives and positives. If portraying your alter ego means that what you offer online vastly differs from reality, then it will provoke huge trust issues. It is best to state you as you are, without any grandiose displays and frills. Just be you, and that will always be enough.

It is imperative to be aware of others who may be misrepresenting themselves, either with intent or unintentionally. ‘Listening’ and interpreting with accuracy will be an even greater asset than your talents for self-expression. Interpretation determines success or failure in any form of communication. It is accentuated in the written form, however. In this medium, it is a vital component and a skill worth taking the time and effort to hone. Listening to the unspoken is as important and giving attention to what is being said. You will be thankful for this gift in all aspects of your life. It is a skill worth honing.

All of the same skills are required whether you choose to communicate through instant messaging, email or in a face to face meeting. Instant messaging offers a more real time conversation and speeds up the getting to know you processes. Reactions and responses in IM will more closely mirror those given in an in person conversation. Email offers the opportunity to contemplate responses with less reaction. It does drag out the process, but the result is usually well thought out information. In this case, IM will actually offer a more accurate overall picture. When you are ready to meet in person there is care to be taken and requires you have your finely tuned communication skills in tow.

Internet dating and online communication offer many positives. It is a marvelous way to build your social network. If you follow protocol and are aware of the safety issues, it can provide grand adventures and opportunities. If you stick to the rule of saying what you mean and mean what you say, there should be little room for misunderstanding. In any case, always remain true to yourself while paying close attention to insure others are doing the same.

Chapter 11

The Online Interview

The interview process plays a significant role in the online dating experience. It is a necessary step, which requires great attention and planning. This ‘getting to know you’ stage can be fun and interesting or it may prove to be quite frustrating. Proper strategies and a well-defined plan of action will help avoid the pitfalls and offer valuable information. Asking the right questions and being diligent in your interpretations will dictate the level of your success. Honing your intuitive, investigative and analytical skills can offer a distinct advantage.

The key in this process is in the design of the questions. Getting the information you feel is important requires strategy and forethought. You will gain greater insight and understanding using open-ended and unrestricted inquiries. Asking questions that warrant an explanation and insight is an invitation to share opinions and ideas. It will give an expanded view of who your contact *really* is. Questions, which call for a yes or no response, are restrictive and inhibiting. They limit the scope of the information you receive.

The questions you choose to ask should be phrased wisely and with intent. A question, which provokes thought or incites a reaction, is preferable to a direct question, which might limit the exposure of true feelings. If they have to reach deep inside for a correct response, you will get a more accurate view into the inner self.

Those seemingly ‘dumb’ questions everybody abhors, will actually offer in-depth information. Asking what color a person likes, or what music he/she prefers may seem a tad superficial and trivial, but the answers will give insight into their personality and character. Their responses speak to the type and level of energy they need and enjoy, and can brightly display their emotional condition. Questions of this sort aren’t as *dumb* as they might appear.

There is no such thing as a dumb question. Every question will warrant a response, which will offer insight and knowledge. Interpreting the responses you receive plays a major role in the interview process. Decoding their responses takes diligence and awakening your 6th sense. It requires the ability to read between the lines and demands trusting your intuition. The average conversation is about sharing information and determining compatibility. It is important however, to pay attention to key words and be on alert for red flag comments.

You will find that Internet dating can expose you to the many people in cyber space whose focus will be on sexual enticements. Having stated yourself well in your profile will alleviate some of these types. If your contact directs the conversation to this end, it is up to you to state your position directly and up front. If the conversation is *all* about sex then you have a good idea of what that contact is seeking. It might be wise to ask if that is all they have to offer and make your determination to continue the conversation based on their response. If your focus happens to be compatible, then the next step would be to implement safety procedures for a meet.

It is important to note that your interview questions will not only provide you with information about the contact, but will also be making a statement about who *you* are. Through your questions, you are exposing your own values, interests, visions and ethics. Your character, personality and vulnerabilities are also displayed for their assessment and scrutiny. Be aware of how much information you are willing to share. Ultimately, both parties will benefit from your efforts.

Sometimes the best interview strategy is not to ask any questions. Simply provide a relaxed atmosphere and during a comfortable chat session people unwittingly open up and spill all the beans. It is in our nature and listening becomes the better interview tactic. Some people will consider the lack of the question and answer session a lack of interest or intelligence. That attitude provides a great deal of information in itself. Hold your interviews in whatever way makes you most comfortable. Question or not, you will eventually get your answers.

The interview process takes thought and planning. It requires that you know what you want and what you have to offer before you begin. The efforts given in this regard and attention to detail will render a more productive and rewarding experience. Once you have been through the process a few times, it becomes second nature and you are able to rid yourself of inappropriate suitors quickly.

Asking the Right Questions

Below is a list of sample questions. Asking open-ended questions is always best. Do take the time to write your own, according to your specifications and designs. Carefully choose your words as it can offer up a multitude of responses or reactions and will provide you valuable information. Remember, there are no 'dumb' questions as each one enables you to learn.

1-What makes you tick and tingle?

Translated: What makes you want to get out of bed each day and what makes your heart sing? Put in the first context it opens many doors at once. Valuable information lies in which door the contact chooses. Research results show that 60% of the responses to this question will be sex related and the contact usually needs redirection. You are given an idea of what they have in mind or what they consider humor.

2-What kinds of music flows through your veins?

Taste in music offers great insight into personality, mindset and the energy required to keep up with the contact. Each genre offers its own energy and vibrations and that can be a key to what lives inside them. Use key words designed to incite an open-ended response. Most responses to this questions relate to music, however one responder focused on the words flow and veins and the answer was "I do not do drugs". It is interesting how we each perceive words differently.

3-What sports excite you?

Again, this is a question, which will provoke a multitude of responses based in key words.

And no, sex is not an official sport. The word excite tends to take the focus down a sexual path. It does display mindset and possibly intent. The one giving the answer may see it as humor. You have to decide, based on their other answers, what the true meaning might be.

4-What colors incite you?

A silly question? No it is not. Color offers insight into tone, mood, needs, character and personality. Each color offers a different energy and promotes a different reaction. Putting red and yellow together will incite hunger. The McDonalds Corporation chose those colors for that reason. Silly questions might also add insight into the level of patience and understanding your contact is capable of. You may be reprimanded for asking 'stupid' questions. but then that response provides some answers in its own right as well.

5-Are you married?

If the response is 'we are separated', the next question should be in regards to their living situation. How long have you been separated? Is there any chance for reconciliation? Those who are separated from their spouses pose an emotional risk. Note that if your contact has to pause the conversation often it might be worthwhile to push for clarity and truth. Pay attention for more red flag clues. This can be a really difficult issue in determining the truth and in weighing the risks of getting involved. Use caution.

6-Do you have children?

Ask ages, sexes and living arrangements. The answers will offer insight into possible expectations and stressors in a relationship. It can also offer information regarding your expected role.

7- What do you do in your leisure time?

Leisure time activities offer insight into lifestyle, personality and compatibility.

8-What do you do for a living?

Some are hesitant to answer this as it can question values and create an atmosphere of judgment and discrimination. It also sends up red flags for those who might have concerns of people whose main interest is in money rather than dating. If your contact is uncomfortable answering the question it is best left alone for a while. Let it sit and address it again later in the conversation. Career choices can state more about the person and their personality.

9-Are you physically affectionate?

Were your parents affectionate? Are you able to share your emotions and feelings with others? These questions might seem to propose little value, but actually hold a great deal of information. If you are in search of a loving, affectionate partner and he/she has not been raised to appreciate that quality, it could result in an unsolvable deal breaker.

It also speaks to the level of closeness that can realistically be achieved and the basis for such capabilities. It addresses current emotional issues as well.

10-Do you have pets?

This question addresses personality, level of patience, emotional needs and much more. It also alerts you to the possibility of issues with allergies. For some it can be a deal breaker. Snakes and other exotic pets could be a bit more than some can handle.

Sometimes not asking questions is the best course. A simple request for your contact to tell you about themselves will open the flood gates and you will get more information than you may have wanted. It is actually a great way to get started. When people have the chance to talk freely, without being confined to a specific question, they get comfortable and spill all the beans without thinking. No question may be the best approach. However, some will interpret the lack of questioning as a lack of interest or assume personality traits. Those assumptions also make a statement and provide answers to many unasked questions.

Chapter 12

Marketing You Online

Marketing yourself in an online dating format can present a challenge. We are complex, remarkably unique individuals and it is difficult to state effectively, the intricacies of our total being in a few short paragraphs. Since your profile is essentially your first meeting, it is important to give serious attention to this aspect of your online dating experience. Care must be given in choosing the appropriate words, and setting the right tone. How should the world view you? How will you tell the world how wonderful you are? Which of your assets will you promote? There are many aspects to consider before you begin writing.

Your online portrait should appropriately state who you are and clearly define what you seek. Your profile is you, and needs to reflect your glowing, positive qualities. The energies you emit through your writing will attract like energies. The tone you set in the first couple of lines will determine your success. Stating yourself with confidence and enthusiasm will entice the reader and precipitate that same type of positive attitude in response. Adding a bit of intrigue and mystery will provoke a desire to know more.

Your writing should be accurate, sincere and to the point. Any long-winded dissertation will merely prove to deter interest. The addition of humor will impart warmth and offer insight into your personality and spirit.

Creating a clever, whimsical introduction line that displays an engaging disposition will extend an approachable aura. The goal is to attract attention and promote you as being a valuable asset. Offering the reader a pleasant place to visit while adding a smile to their day is always a positive and will inspire a call to action

Be clear concerning your likes and dislikes, but do not limit yourself with labels. Use a no nonsense approach while offering a hint of your depth. Your statements should reflect exactly what you have to offer and what it is you are looking for, in short summary. Your profile need not display your life history or any negative aspects of your circumstances. Negatives are not attractive and showing your weaknesses places you in a vulnerable position from the start. Keep it real, effective and on the lighter side.

Your objective is to avoid misrepresenting yourself and creating an atmosphere for potential misunderstandings. Clearly stating your limits and boundaries will speak to your strength and character. (IE: Please do not respond if you are married, in town looking for a good time, live out of state, seeking cam sex or casual sex, etc). You can emphatically define those as an addendum rather than the foreword. Although it is important information to share, it is best to keep it separate from your list of endearing qualities and positive attributes. Be careful not to offer anything you cannot or are not willing to do in reality. Leave little room for interpretation.

Pictures will add to the number of responses and interest, but are not a necessity. Choosing to add a photograph to your profile should be based on your level of comfort and need for discretion. If your profile is well written and holds enough power, intrigue and mystery, it will command a response without a photo. Any picture you add should reflect the same qualities as your written word. A picture of a fairy, snow covered mountains or the moon can be used in place of your photo and will make a statement about you, without breaching your privacy.

Photos taken with babies and animals are attention getters and present an endearing disposition. Those types of pictures are especially great accents for male profiles. Far too many people display outdated pictures and misrepresent themselves in order to boost their contacts. That form of deceit may help to fill your email inbox, but will not help in reaching your ultimate goal. Your deceit will show you as one who cannot be trusted. That is not a way to win friends and influence people. It will close doors and burn bridges.

The Internet brings us in contact with the world and offers endless opportunities. That type of exposure does not come without risks, however. There are very specific rules for online dating and exposing yourself to the world through cyber space. Never attempt to sell what doesn't exist. When preparing your profile and in preparation for the online dating experience, it is wise to consider the risks and possible consequences of all your actions.

In that regard, it is imperative that you AVOID OFFERING ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION IN YOUR PROFILE. It is wise to use an alternate email address and Instant Messaging screen name for dating contacts. When you feel comfortable moving to a telephone meeting, it is best to give a cell number rather than your home phone number to better protect you. In this instance, never leave anything to chance and never assume. Great adventures lie ahead if you think things through thoroughly and have planned well.

Chapter 13

Your Profile and Online Environment

You must now decide what you want to say to the world and what type of aura you will present. Do you want your first impressions to give a warm inviting smile or offer a party atmosphere? Maybe you would prefer a small café environment, chatting over a cup of coffee. What could you say that would leave your readers intrigued and wanting to know more?

By now, you have made decisions regarding your needs and goals for your online experience. You know who you are and what you are looking for in a partner. Stating those facts to others through the written word can be a challenging endeavor. Even the most discerning writers may find the task of promoting themselves a difficult one. No matter who you are, it can be uncomfortable putting your essence and needs into words. After all, that information is personal and sharing it can bring a mixed bag of feelings to sort through. Even more difficult is the task of capturing your essence in writing, using few words; you, the short version.

Online readers like to have writings short and to the point, so your profile must reflect your desire to accommodate their needs. The long version of your life's story is not likely to warrant interest or create a craving to know more. It might attract someone who would take advantage of your vulnerabilities.

A little mystery in your first meeting notes will promote intrigue. The goal is to express yourself clearly and precisely in as few words as possible, while showing them how fabulous you are and why they should want to spend time with you.

Below are a few profile samples, written by the different types of people you might meet online. Aside from the difference in style, notice the difference in attitude, energy, personality and tone. Pay attention to what each of them is offering us. Do they offer warmth and humor? Is the profile inviting, intriguing, mysterious or boring? Which profile will limit possibilities? Maybe one will spark a great idea that suits your needs. Go into dating sites and search for that spark as well.

Give a close analysis of these profiles and feel the atmosphere they have created. Assess what each really says about that person. Which of them would provoke a want to learn more? Could you be caught up in their enthusiasm or would you be dragged down by the mundane? Notice that each has clearly stated their purpose, character, needs and personality in a paragraph or two. Please remember never to give out any personal information in your profile.

Sample Profiles

Each of the following sample profiles offers a different spirit and personality. Which type of profile would entice you to contact them?

About Me #1

Hello, I guess this is where I am supposed to tell you how wonderful I am. Okay, I'm wonderful! Not enough eh? OK, OK :). Music, writing, hockey, reading and laughter are but a few of my passions. I am an avid hockey fan, live and breathe music, love dragons, wizards & the renaissance. My children have raised me well and through their wisdom and patience, I am well rounded and well balanced. They did good! If you are interested in learning more, please feel free to leave a note here and I will respond as quickly as possible.

Thank you for stopping by and have a great day!

Sincerely, Ms. Wonderful

What I Seek

My interest is in finding my hero. He will be someone I can worship and adore for his strengths, weaknesses, courage and capabilities. He will appreciate the power and brilliance of the mind and understand the designs of intellectual stimulation. He will also hold an interest in being a partner in a long term, challenging, but fulfilling relationship.

As an offering for his efforts, he will be rewarded with absolute dedication and devotion. To avoid boredom he will be provided with a mix of personality, talent, a rather large streak of independence and at times, the playful brat.

** Please do not respond if you live out of state, are married or in town looking for a good time. I have no interest in online cam sex events, casual sex, or playmates.

About Me #2

Are you ready for fun? Life is for living. It is an excursion in discovery and wonder. It is too short to spend it in the trivial and the mundane. Grab your hat and ride the winds. If you like venturing into the unknown and are seeking all the infinite possibilities then let's talk. Bring your smile, a good bottle of wine and we can begin our journey.

What I Seek

Looking for a friend with benefits and maybe more. Just whatever feels good! I am not interested in existing in life, but want to share it with someone who wants to live it! Married men and one-night stands do not excite me so let's not and say we did.

About Me #3

Having what you really want and setting goals to achieve it will bring the happiness and inner peace you seek. Most of us miss the important things, the things that really count. I am a nurse, single parent and am dedicated to helping others.

I enjoy riding my bike, reading and writing poetry. I enjoy taking long walks, holding hands and talking about the things that matter. I am 5' 7" tall, blonde hair, (no wise cracks please) and have blue eyes. I am looking forward to meeting you.

What I Seek

I am looking for someone to be my warrior, protector, guardian angel and my best friend. I want someone to share the laughter, tears and moments of passion; someone who appreciates me for being me and who would never abuse the privileges of our friendship. I want someone whose touch could make me feel secure and safe. His best qualities would include honesty, humility, devotion, dependability, softness and humor. He would be affectionate, giving and appreciate the spirituality of the sexual experience. He would not take life too seriously.

About Me #4

Welcome. I am 34 and work in the banking industry. My passions are skiing and snowboarding. I have a live-in friend whose name is Alf. He is a border collie who shares my life and dreams. And occasionally my steak :). I enjoy a good glass of wine in front of the fire and a great sexual encounter. I am loving and compassionate, but have no interest in a relationship or other commitment.

What I Seek

I am interested in finding friends who share my love of the outdoors and winter sports.

I am seeking friends with benefits as I am not ready to settle down just yet. There are to be no strings attached and no commitments. Just friends enjoying one another. I enjoy deeply spiritual sex and am seeking someone with like interests. No quickies in a one night stand format.

If you are interested please write and we can talk more in IM.

Thanks for stopping by.

Your turn.

Your Profile Worksheet

Chapter 14

Long Distance Relationships

When it comes to deal breakers in relationship commitments, long distance is usually in the top five of the list. It also holds that same spot on the list of controversial relationship topics. Many argue that it holds impossible obstacles while others believe it is doable if the love is strong enough. Some couples try it and discover that it is simply too stressful and the relationship suffers. For others it provides the perfect format. In either case, it requires a creative mind, strong will and a deep abiding love.

We know the power of the mind can take us to fabulous places and offers pleasures we might not otherwise be able to experience. The mind supports our emotional, physical and spiritual needs for the short term, but is its magic powerful enough, when void of ‘normal’ physical contact, to sustain a relationship? Can it keep the bonds and connection strong and desire intact? Is it able to keep the necessary components of a relationship flowing consistently for long periods and allow it to flourish and grow?

The mind's power can give aid in curing disease and provide stamina to endure the harshest of physical and mental stresses. We know it is capable of creating incredible sexual happenings, without the benefit of the human touch. It can bring cravings and allows us to feel all that love has to offer.

Is it truly possible for the power of the mind to bridge distance issues between two lovers? How long would it be capable of sustaining this magic?

For the vast majority, long distance relationships come with issues that most cannot overcome. The relationship will usually end in failure due to the strain of trying to make it work when it can't. The success rate is low due simply to the dictates of human nature. Those who are in love want to share every aspect of their lives and need the benefit of the human touch. They also need to share interests and activities past the restrictive realm of cyberspace. Online relationships most often leave gaps, which create frustration in all of those areas. The negatives ultimately outweigh the positives and the constant flow of negatives stretches limits of tolerance and eventually weakens the bonds.

Distance controls many aspects of a relationship. It can provoke fabulous anticipation as well as dramatic distress. It determines the frequency of in person contact, provokes separation anxieties and causes physical stresses related to travel. The first hours of visits are tainted by the time needed to 'settle in' and recover from the trip. The non-traveling partner is eager and ready to go, but must anxiously wait for the other to catch up. The last hours are spent dealing with the drama of separation and having to let go. In either instance, there are frustrations and negatives. Even a couple of hours in drive time on a regular basis can strain a relationship and drain resources.

It is the sexual issues however, which most find intolerable. These issues present the toughest obstacles to overcome. We all have needs that cannot be ignored or suppressed without the risk of consequences. Sex is one of those basic essentials that when inappropriately attended to or left unfulfilled will erode even an indelible love. While cybersex can be quite exciting, erotic and satisfying, it's just not the same as having full body contact. The realities of being left to continually self-please and satisfy our own needs creates voids and leaves us to question our realities.

What rationale exists for having a partner with whom sharing is so limited and drastically out of balance? All of those issues promote distress and all lead to the same end; frustration and discontentment. A constant flow of unfavorable events and lack of fulfillment are not conducive to successful relationships and long distance romance holds more than its share of each. The inevitable happens as we are forced to question the sanity of it all and seriously consider its worth in the grand scheme of things.

As with any of the aspects of online dating and relationships, this too has its obvious advantages and disappointments. It also comes with compromises and options. One of the partners relocating is a viable option, but for some it holds disadvantages due to career and family issues. Relocating can also bring about the discovery of flaws in the relationship that were not obvious in the short encounters.

Those discoveries can prove to be costly for both. Being together online or for short weekend visits is not the same as the commitments of daily living. For every compromise and option, there are risks.

For many, however, a long distance romance works. It is an ideal design, which suits their lifestyle and adequately meets their needs. Some people need the space and enjoy the lack of the day-to-day routines that relationships demand. Many people have no interest in or time for a daily regime and are opposed to a live-in situation. They much prefer their role as the weekend lover or the once a month out of town visitor. They thrive on the freshness of the feelings brought by each encounter. It is exciting, rewarding and provides the perfect of all situations.

Long distance offers no guarantees. For some it works, but for most, it does not. Only you know what is right for you and what your needs and requirements are. The only way to know for sure is to test it. If you decide to try it, do it with full knowledge of the pros and cons and have all the questions sorted out. The answers will either prove its worth or prove to be a learning experience and an opportunity for growth.

Chapter 15

Love and Sex in Cyberspace

'Love and sex in cyberspace' states a great cover for a work of fiction, but what claim does it hold in the land of reality? Computerized sex and finding love in the vastness of cyberspace does offer a futuristic flair to our typical concepts of dating and relationships. It also brings new meaning to the notion of love at first sight and the demands of safe sex. This high tech form of intimacy does give cause to question the world's direction and focus.

The idea of falling in love with someone sight unseen seems a bit over the top. Stranger still is the concept of having sex without the benefit of in-person physical interaction. Is this new age phenomenon practical, real, fun or erotic? Can it actually hold substance and value? The answer is an emphatic Yes. Sex online holds great merit. For the many thousands who participate, it serves a purpose and they are quite satisfied with the results. Others claim it to be a joke that can in no way offer compensation for the 'real thing'.

In reality, the powerful magic of the mind can create incredible online sexual happenings. Imagination, inspiration and creativity can give life to almost anything. Cybersex combines all of those, in their truest form, to create erotic adventures. This method of sharing intimacy reinforces the fact that sex is born in the mind and lives there. For some, cybersex is the greatest happening since the birth of the Internet, while others see it as simply a means to an end.

Some find it lacks the substance and stimulation needed to indulge, or see it as merely an outlet for those with sexual *issues*.

What it does offer is a less inhibited and a more creative environment for sexual interactions. Centuries old traditions have burdened us for too long. Cybersex can take us away from the complacency and boredom that has created. Add a web cam for enhancement, visual stimulation, and the mind can do what it was designed to do. These experiences provoke a more deeply concentrated involvement resulting in an erotic sexual encounter. It provides a fabulous way for couples to stay connected and have the intimacy they long for, while apart. Distance issues are pushed aside and replaced with bonding. It truly is an amazing adventure.

This new mode of communication allows us to form and maintain relationships we might not otherwise experience. The introduction of feelings will change its course, however. It is easy, from a safe distance, to be caught up in the feelings and illusions your mind creates and become engaged in a ‘feeling’ of being in love. Your fantasies can take you anywhere and offer a marvelous state of bliss. That happily ever after state of mind will only take you so far. There is so much more involved and many other considerations for it to be deemed ‘love’. Sharing an online orgasm does not equate to love. It is simply the effects of your sexual high.

Being in love offers healthy affects to both the mind and body. However, falling in love with a dream can come with its share of ill effects. We manifest these negatives from our own fantasies.

Many of us tend to alter reality, create an illusion, and fall in love with the image we design. If we are lucky, our online dreams and fantasies become reality. Too often however, what we find in truth is nothing close to our original design. When faced with the realities, we become disillusioned and frustrated with our experiences. It is not practical to depend on your feelings and online aura connections unless they have been verified through in-person contact.

You will find that there are different connections and aura projections in each form of communication. There will be one for your online messages, a different one for your phone contact and still another for the in person meetings. One connection may be more intense than the other. Unfortunately, you may find the online connection to be more exciting than those found on the phone or in person. The level of 'chemistry' can be drastically different. It is wise not to put all of your promise into the online connections. Once you have tested your feelings in person you will have a better sense of what is real and what lives in fantasy.

High tech sex and love hold a balance of positives and negatives. For many thousands of people, the Internet offers positive, life changing opportunities. It can add dimension to normal communications and offer a less intimidating and non-threatening means of social interaction. Couples find it provides a way to stay connected and bonded while apart. Business trips hold new meaning. For those whose career limits their time to search for a life partner, the Internet is their solution. For single parents with family obligations, it offers relationship and social advantages that would not otherwise be available.

Cyber love and sex will be viewed and measured differently by everyone. As with any dating and relationship experience, it must be custom fit to the design of the individuals involved. There are obvious negatives such as communicating over long distances, the lack of human touch and the usual safety issues and concerns. Since web cams can pose greater risks in regards to privacy issues, there is a need for even greater caution.

Some will say that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages and in most cases that is correct. As with anything in life, determining its worth is dependent upon your individual choices and the paths you ultimately take. For the majority, love and sex in cyber space is a grand and glorious adventure. Enjoy!

Chapter 16

Dating & Cyber Safety Rules

Yes, the world is yours through cyber space and the opportunities are endless. With just a click of a button, you can explore each new door and live adventures you never dreamed possible. Unfortunately, you must face the reality that your travels will not come without risks, negatives and consequences. People will not always live up to your hopes and expectations or be everything they portray themselves to be. You have to remain vigilant and aware of the possibilities. Adhering to a few basic rules and helpful hints will provide a greater opportunity for safe and pleasant experiences.

Below is a list of the basic rules and precautions. This is not a complete listing, as the possible negatives will always equal the list of positive opportunities. You must learn to pay close attention to warning signs and hone our intuitive skills to compliment the obvious standards. Never ignore your intuition it will always be right. These same precautions also apply in traditional dating formats. Life is not always as simple as we would like it to be. There will always be those whose intentions are not honorable. Please do have fun and enjoy your adventures, but be mindful of the need for caution.

Please also note that men are just as vulnerable to harm, as are the women. Being manly doesn't prevent evil.

Be aware of your surroundings and perhaps not so eager to take to a bed while your date's partner lurks in the shadows waiting to do harm.

Online Dating Safety Precautions

*Don't give out your personal information online (address, phone, place of employment, names of relatives, etc.) until you are sure it is safe.

*It is imperative to be aware of age and sex when communicating online. Verify. Use web cam or ask for pictures. More than one picture is a good idea.

*Interview well and ask the right questions before meeting in person

*Use a step process for your online dating experiences. Take your time.

Step 1-IM or email chat

Step 2-phone conversation

Step 3-meet in public place

*If you are involved in any form of alternative lifestyle (BDSM, gay, lesbian, etc),

Know your perspective partner well before meeting and engaging in any activities.

*When meeting in person for the first time, park in lighted areas, close to a building or other well-populated areas

*Never leave a public place to be alone with someone you just met.

*Have a safety net in place for the first meetings alone. Give a friend or family member the information for where you will be and who you will be with. Have them call you at a certain time and have a code word in place to alert them that you are in trouble.

- *Be cautious about leaving your drink or food unattended on a first meeting
- *Watch mannerisms and body language for signs of potential problems before being alone
- *Safety rules apply to men as well as women. Men too are vulnerable and at risk
- *Use caution to prevent health risks. Use proper protection to avoid the risks of disease
- *Sexual experiences should adhere to the rules of safe, sane, consensual practices.
- *Be careful about sharing intimate photos online. Even cam sharing can offer still pictures for someone to share with others.

Helpful Hints, Warnings & Red Flags

- *Ask open-ended questions to provoke open conversation. You should be able to tell after 5 minutes of conversation if it is worth continuing to talk
- *Let people talk. Listen to pick up red flag comments or statements
- *Be careful of anyone who is too opinionated or quick tempered
- *Be leery of anyone who appears to be over zealous to meet and gets angry easily if you refuse.
- *Be leery of braggarts, it usually means they have little to brag about and might hurt you trying to prove how wonderful they are.
- *Don't let lust dictate rational thinking. Be alert and aware of your situation
- *Learn to be aware of aura vibes. Read the signs and heed warnings. Learn to use your 6th sense and intuition.
- *There is not a hidden prince in every frog. It is easy for people to misrepresent themselves online. Verify! Test all of the claims made and verify facts.

*Be aware of those who hesitate to move forward from online chat to in-person meetings. Some are content to maintain their relationships online or may be married

*Unfortunately, there are those who will try to use you as a means to an end. Some are desperately seeking to escape their harsh realities, and will use deceitful means to elicit your help. Use caution with foreign correspondence and requests for money.

***Note- Red flag comments and behaviors are those, which make you feel uncomfortable or offer a hint of malicious intent. They might come in the form of one key word that strikes a chord and brings a chill. Pay close attention to those things and clarify. Ask for more information or simply click the delete button.

In Closing

The basics in place, plans and strategies created, your Internet dating design is complete. You are prepared to meet success. When asked questions you now have the appropriate answers to give. You know what questions to ask, and the answers you will accept. You know your worth and know not to settle for anything less than you deserve. Despite where you came from, you have arrived at the portal of a new and exciting future. Your life's journey begins anew.

The journey you have taken through these writings has taught you about you, relationships, and dating and sex in cyberspace. Although it may seem like a lot of trouble to go through just to get a date or find a partner, it will serve you well in the end. You are prepared for the best and the worst that might come with sharing yourself with the world through the Internet. What you take away from this experience will promote growth and enhance your life.

Be mindful of the pitfalls that exist. They are ever present. It will be easy to be caught up in the moment and forget what you have accomplished, the confidence, independence and strength you have gained. Being caught off guard by a pretty face or a dominant personality can lead to a moment of weakness, which might have you revert back to unhealthy patterned behaviors. You will have to remind yourself how far you have come and that going backwards is not an option.

It will be important to remember the ground rules for safety. Don't give people the information they need to cause you harm. NEVER give out your personal information on the internet that could warrant ID theft, allow someone to cause you physical harm or create issues for you on the job. The majority of people you meet on the internet are looking for the same things as you, however there are those who have sinister thoughts and ideas and you need to be aware and alert. If your intuition catches a red flag and warns you, LISTEN.

The world waits with limitless opportunities. Your dreams and fantasies of life can now be realized, with just a click of a button. Make each adventure count. Dare to seek the impossible. Allow yourself to take risks and experience all that is available to you. Write your own life script according to your design, without filtering from outside influences. This is your time to shine. Your future is ready to find you.

Information & Resources

Recommended Reading

*The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

*Wishcraft by Barbara Sher

*Feel the fear and do it anyway by Susan Jeffers

*Who Are You? 101 Ways of Seeing Yourself by Malcolm Godwin

*You're Never Upset for the Reason You Think by Layne Cutright and Paul Cutright

*Conscious Dating by David Steele

*Marry Yourself First! by Ken Donaldson

*Tantric Sexuality for the Beginner by Richard Craze

*Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving by Betty Dodson

*The Multi-Orgasmic Man by Mantak Chia & Douglas Abrams

*The Multi-Orgasmic Woman: Discover Your Full Desire, Pleasure, and Vitality by Mantak Chia and Rachel Carlton Abrams

*The Multi-Orgasmic Couple by Mantak Chia, Maneewan Chia, Douglas Abrams, and Rachel Charlton Abrams

*The Complete Kama Sutra by Alain Danielou

*Nature's Aphrodisiacs by Nancy L. Nickell

Internet Resources

Personal

*Conscious Dating

888-268-4074

*Amazon.com

*Source School of Tantra

Tel: 1-888-6-TANTRA

(1-888-682-6872)

*Mental Health Assn.

1-800-273-TALK

www.nmha.org/

*Divorcenet.com

*Suicide Hotline

1-800-784-2433

suicidehotlines.com

*Mary T.Dziennik,CHt

Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist

303-790-1285

Social Networks

*Parents Without Partners

800-637-7974

www.parentswithoutpartners.org/

*Match.com

*Lavalife.com

*adultfriendfinder.com

*friendfinder.com

*alt.com

*meetup.com

*Responsiblesingles.net

*Plentyoffish.com

**Also check online for local singles groups, which usually offer events for meeting other singles with like interests.

Communication Resources

Instant Messaging Sources

*Yahoo Messenger

www.messenger.yahoo.com

*MSN Messenger

www.newmsnmessenger.com

*AOL/AIM Messenger

www.aim.com/download.adp

**All three of the major instant messaging services offer email accounts as well. Talking through instant messaging is easier and a more efficient form of communication than email. All of the IM services listed here are free, easy and quick to download. They do not have to be downloaded onto your computer to use them, but can be used as an online only service. Either format will allow you to communicate in more real time.

*Some of the dating sites offer their own internal IM services, which are usually free to members

About Judy Spain Barton



Judy Barton lives near Houston, Texas where she has a private coaching practice. She is a personal and professional coach and mediator. Judy is also an instructor, published author (*Little Feelings*-Prometheus Books, *Uncharted Passages* on Amazon Kindle and *It's All About Sex* on Amazon), published/award winning poet and Wedding Officiant.

Credits & Credentials

Life Coach (Specializing in dating, relationships and intimacy) *34yrs

Family & Workplace Mediator *6yrs

Nurse *25yrs

Published Author *15yrs

Colour Consultant *9yrs

Wedding Officiant *6yrs

Adult Education & Career Instructor *5yrs

Tarot Consultant *5yrs

(Judy's classes include: The Art of Internet Dating, Learning to love yourself, Living single and loving it, Become a Wedding Officiant, Spice up your sex life, Surviving adolescence for parents, It's all about sex.)

Member IAC and ATA

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