



Finding Happiness with or without a Partner

A Guide to Dating, Marriage & Divorce

by Jonathan Lockwood Huie

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The writings of Jonathan Lockwood Huie are taken from his life experiences and are his opinions. Nothing contained herein is a substitute for medical advice. Mr. Huie strongly urges his readers who face chronic emotional or physical challenges to seek the direction and guidance of professionals skilled in their specific field of need.

Jonathan Lockwood Huie, author of [100 Secrets for Living a Life You Love](#), and co-author of [Simply An Inspired Life](#), is known as "The Philosopher of Happiness." Mr. Huie writes the popular [Daily Inspiration - Daily Quote](#) which is available on-line at <http://www.jlhuie.com> and via free email subscription.

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Introduction

Welcome to this collection of articles on relationships and happiness. Each article stands on its own. Enjoy.

Visit <http://www.jlhuie.com> to sign-up for my *Daily Inspiration – Daily Quote* to receive inspirational quotes and my insights on living a happy life regardless of
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www.jonathanlockwoodhuie.com/books to learn more about my other books, including the book I co-authored with Mary

Anne Radmacher

*Simply An Inspired Life: Consciously Choosing
Unbounded Happiness in Good Times and Bad*

You are welcome to email me at jlh@jhuie.com I read all email, and respond when my schedule permits.

Thank you for sharing with me this journey we call Life,
Jonathan Lockwood Huie

How to Know When "Mister Right" is Mister Wrong

- 7 Keys to a Great Relationship

You are in love. Your hormones are surging, so you know this must be "the one." Besides, you are lonely and you want someone to hold you and make you feel cherished - now. "Mister Right" is saying all the things you want to hear. He says he adores you and wants you forever. STOP! Review this list of what it takes for a relationship to stay great over the years.

7 Keys to a Great Relationship

You are Self-Reliant. "Neediness" is no basis for a relationship. If you feel that you "need" him, or that you "need" to be in relationship, STOP! You are not ready for this or any other relationship. Do some personal work on yourself first. It isn't fair to him or to yourself to merge your lives before you love and respect yourself.

He is Self-Reliant. If he "needs" you, RUN. Choose someone who is already happy with himself and his life. While being "needed" may stroke your ego now, just fast forward a few months. Visualize him clinging to you and being jealous whenever you want a night with the girls. Moreover, if he is a person who is not satisfied with his life now, know that you are NOT the "magic pill" that will keep him happy over the years. Choose a happy and self-reliant man who views you as the magnificent frosting on the cake of his already wonderful life.

He Respects you and respects women in general. Disrespect is fatal to a relationship - both disrespect for you and

disrespect in general. If he is EVER sarcastic or demeaning to you, end it now - even if it only happens once and he apologizes profusely. If he shows disrespect now while he is courting you, I guarantee it will get worse over time. A particular caution is to avoid men who have a general disrespect for women as a group. These are hopeless relationship candidates. You are NOT an exception; if your prospective partner disrespects those of your gender, he will NOT respect you - however fervently he promises that you are different. If he says something like, "Most women are bitches, but you are different; you are special," RUN, run fast, run far, never look back. Choose a man who demonstrates respect toward himself, toward you, and toward everyone else.

He is Gentle. Hopefully it is obvious that if he EVER raises a hand to you or threatens, leave instantly - and stop in at your local police station. Don't ask for an apology; don't say anything; just get away.

You are not "Rescuing" or Pitying him. If you are looking for a forlorn puppy, try your local animal shelter. If you are looking for a charitable cause, volunteer at the food bank. But, if you are looking for a life partner, make sure that his acting helpless is not part of his appeal to you. If he can't match his socks without your help, or hasn't cooked himself a healthy meal in weeks, or says he doesn't have any friends, Run. Your job is to co-create a great life with your partner - not to "fix" him.

You like his Friends and Family. His friends and family are crucial to the success of your relationship. If you haven't met them yet, do it now - don't wait another minute. His friends and family are his life. Whatever he says, he won't give them up for you; it's not in his nature. If he is tied to his mother's

apron strings, you want to know that today. If you dislike his friends now, you will hate them later. Choose a man who brings great friends and family to your relationship.

You accept him EXACTLY as he is and promise never to try to change him. He is practically perfect except he drinks too much, or smokes, or swears, or spends too much time with his friends, or does something else that really bugs you. Get REAL. He isn't going to change! He may promise to change in order to woo you. He may really feel committed to changing. But it isn't going to happen. Respect him, love him, and accept him EXACTLY as he is today, or break it off, and find someone you respect and accept exactly as they are today.

Most of the Dating Advice You Have Read is Dead Wrong

Guys are supposed to act confident, buy flowers, tell jokes. Gals are told to hang on his every word, flirt, be coy. Baloney! Why be a pretend you - an imitation you - instead of a real you? As Judy Garland said, "Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else."

Why are you dating? If you are dating because you like to go on first dates, then fine - just play the actor or actress - and enjoy an evening of make believe. However, if you are dating because you want someone in your life longer term, stop the play-acting and be yourself.

The role-playing is completely counterproductive for two reasons. First, suppose that you are successful in impressing and attracting your date with your antics. What happens later when you let your guard down and revert to being yourself? You will be unmasked as not being the person your date was attracted to, and revealed as a phony beside.

The even more unfortunate situation occurs when your date is not attracted to your contrived persona, but would have loved the real you. What a huge loss to be on a date with the man or woman of your dreams and never even recognize them or have them recognize you because each of you were so busy play-acting.

What to do:

1. Clear the air. Before your first date, or on your first date at the latest, announce that you are going to relax and be yourself, and invite your date to be himself or herself as well. Some dates won't know what to make of that invitation, but

the person you really want in your life will respond with gratitude, and will also relax.

If you are using an on-line dating service, be sure that your profile reflects the real you - without any puffery or distortion of your true qualities. Be proud of who you are, and share your true self. Have the "clear the air" conversation before you meet in person.

2. Choose relaxed places for your first few dates. There are environments that foster play-acting, and there are those that support each of you in being yourself. Choose the latter.

3. Ask for feedback. Dating is often a time for playing the guessing game as well as the play-acting game. Don't guess, ask how your date is feeling, what they want to do or not do. Give your date the same consideration as you would give a good friend.

4. Just remember to relax and be yourself. You will enjoy your date more - and you will create an opening for a wonderful long-term relationship with someone who likes the real you.

How to Avoid Falling in Love with Love

Falling in love with love has been the subject of parody from the time of ancient Greece, to Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, to the present. The 1938 Rodgers and Hart show tune describes falling in love with love as "falling for make-believe" and "playing the fool."

Do real life people actually fall in love with the idea of being in love? Unfortunately, it is actually quite common. Someone wants desperately to have the husband or wife of their dreams. They visualize the vine-covered cottage with the white picket fence. They choose the colors for the nursery. They design all the aspects of their married life. So what happens when mister or miss "Right" offers a brief smile?

Just as in the comedies, a person who is in love with the idea of love sees prospective partners through the lens of idealism. The reaction is, "This must be the one. They are so perfect - the match of my dreams." Is that person they just met a perfect match? It's unlikely their friends think so. So what happened? That person with the cute smile was not much more than a mirror for the hopes and dreams of the one in love with love.

If the relationship proceeds in spite of the warnings of friends and family, a grand crash awaits later. The idealism and vision of a perfect marriage explodes into a firestorm as soon as it becomes clear that the prospective partner was far from matching the idealized image.

Might you be in love with love? Might you be dating someone

who is more in love with the idea of love than in love with you? Consider these questions about yourself and the person you are dating.

Before you met, did you have a clear image of who you wanted to marry? Perhaps you knew that you wanted to find a partner who is loving, kind, responsible, likes kids, isn't possessive or domineering, doesn't smoke or do drugs, and holds compatible beliefs about religion. It is important to have established standards such as those on which to evaluate a prospective mate. However if your image of the person you want to marry is highly visual or sensual, you may be in love with the idea of love.

Does your image sound like, "My husband is going to be six feet, with black wavy hair, no hair on his chest, big hands. We're going to have three children, and my husband is going to be the little league coach and boy scout leader for the boys." Or, "I'm going to marry a petite blond with big firm breasts. My wife is always going to wear a dress, and she is never going to work after the kids are born." Those sorts of images don't provide any room to marry a real person. No one could ever live up to those fantasies, and a relationship based on such fixed images is bound to crash.

While the preceding paragraph presents an exaggerated picture of falling in love with love, just tone it down until it matches what you have observed in a few of your friends. Then ask whether either you or the person you are dating has any tendency toward being in love with a fixed image of how a partner should be.

Great relationships begin with two people who are each self confident and who come to each other with the openness to

see and accept the other as a unique and wonderful person. If there is true love and an alignment of fundamental values, choose to join your life with your new partner and vow never to criticize their nature - the essence that makes them uniquely themselves.

Powerful Flirting Tips From an Unlikely Source - *Apply These 13 Product Marketing Secrets To Your Dating*

What do product marketing, advertising and sales techniques have to do with your dating success? A lot more than you might guess.

Learn and apply these techniques to gain dating success:

1. Work from a plan, rather than just tactics. Be clear what you want and how you intend to get it before you begin.
2. Know your customer, your audience, your market. You are just shooting in the dark if you haven't determined who you are targeting. Be very clear exactly what sort of person you want to attract before you start advertising yourself.
3. Understand that people buy for selfish reasons. No one in their right mind is going to date you out of compassion. They will date you (buy your product) because they want something that you (your product) offer.
4. Determine your prospective customer's needs, and meet those needs. Pain avoidance is a much stronger motivation than pleasure seeking. People are more strongly driven by fear and need than by a quest for greater happiness. Identify and target your prospective partner's needs rather than his or her wants. Loneliness and insecurity are examples of needs that you can focus on meeting.
5. Create a powerful brand image that conveys a clear concise

message. Think about Nike as an example. Nike's image is not sneakers, shoes, or even running shoes - Nike's image is healthy active engaging people in action. Apply this principle to your own "brand." What images and ideas do you want people to associate with you? Craft your own image, and live into it.

6. Be unique - don't copy your competitors - don't compare yourself to your competitors. While it is extremely common for low quality advertisers to declare their product cheaper, faster, sexier than their competition, the most successful companies (and daters) just pretend they don't even have competition - and in a sense, they don't. Again, think Nike. To the extent that they are selling an image rather than shoes, they truly aren't in competition with shoe companies. How are you uniquely special? Be proud of your unique qualities.

7. Believe in your product, don't fake enthusiasm. If you don't believe in yourself, how can you expect anyone else to believe in you?

8. Love your customer, not your product - make their life better. If they feel loved and well served, they will buy your product.

9. Offer a free sample or trial but don't give away the store.

10. Build on "yes." Start with a small "yes," and move to bigger ones. "Yes, I'll be your friend," comes before and leads into a bigger "yes," and a yet bigger "yes."

11. Save price for last, but never forget that this is a sale, not a give-away. Remember to focus on the "close."

12. Use multiple channels to deliver your message. Don't rely solely on just face-to-face contact, or even on just word-of-mouth. Teaming with supportive friends can make the project easier and more pleasant. Also consider on-line dating and other resources. You don't have to do this alone.

13. Patience - persistence - perseverance. Stay in action, never give up. Sales of any kind is hard work. Selling yourself is no easier. They will come, they will stay. Believe in yourself and in your mission.

Never become so absorbed in chasing someone that you forget to maintain your standards. Don't catch someone you don't really want. Someone who is lonely and insecure is an easy catch, but are you sure you really want them?

7 Secrets of Happy Couples

Why do some couples stay happy together for a lifetime, while others are in conflict almost from the beginning?

Part of the answer is compatibility - making the initial choice of a partner with whom you share common values. Equally much, however, depends upon the choices each partner chooses to make during the relationship. Here are seven choices made by happy couples:

1. Trust: Suspicion and jealousy are the death knell of any relationship. If the other is going to cheat or otherwise dishonor the relationship, suspicion and jealousy will not prevent it, and such a relationship is fatally flawed in any case. Unwarranted suspicion and jealousy create misery in a surprising number of relationships. If you want to live happily, trust your partner completely. If they dishonor your trust, deal with the situation then. In the meanwhile, you will have been happy.

2. Open Communication: Tell the truth, tell the whole truth. If you didn't want to share your whole life with your partner, why are you together? If you make a mistake, admit it. If you have doubts, talk about them. Secrets and lies kill a relationship. With truth and openness anything is possible. Even if something is unforgivable, it is better to deal with it quickly.

3. Honoring the other's point-of-view: People disagree, couples disagree. Understanding that the two partners in a couple remain individuals is crucial to a happy relationship.

Why would you expect that you and your partner should agree on everything? Honor that one of you is a Republican and the other a Democrat. Honor that one of you is a vegetarian and the other loves a great steak.

4. Self-Confidence: Co-dependence is another frequent cause of failed relationships. Happy couples know that they don't need each other. Each partner is a completely whole and valid individual who has entered into a voluntary partnership. Neither "owns" the other, nor "can't live without" the other. Each has their own interests and friends, as well as having mutual interests and friends.

5. Generosity: Greed and selfishness kill relationships. True love is generous in spirit. Mostly, generosity is not about material things, although that is also important. To have a happy relationship, be generous of your time, your love, and your attention.

6. Forgiveness: Resentments and thoughts of revenge and vengeance have no place in a happy relationship. Happy couples forgive each other completely for everything the other has ever done or failed to do - no exceptions.

7. Gratitude: Happy couples are continuously grateful for each other. Every day there are a myriad of reasons to be grateful for your partner. Find those reasons each day, and thank your partner every day.



The #1 Secret of Great Relationships

Behind all the issues that separate an ordinary relationship from a great one, is one common factor. Behind all the truly helpful advice on improving your life together, there lies one key to a great relationship.

Many different kinds of problems can cause a relationship to fall apart. Physical or emotional abuse, addictions, cheating, jealousy, and neediness are just a few of the issues that can destroy a relationship. But once the many potentially disastrous problems have been avoided, what have you got? Perhaps a relationship that qualifies only as "pretty good." But what creates a really great relationship?

At the beginning, we are in relationship because we are attracted to the other person - we think they are sexy, smart,

funny, whatever it is that we find appealing. But very quickly, the focus of the relationship turns to whether we feel appreciated. If we don't feel appreciated, we don't feel loved.

It is common for those entering into a relationship to hold an idealized image of how a perfect partner is supposed to act. Perhaps a man is supposed to open car doors. Perhaps a woman is supposed to wear a certain kind of underwear. The internal dialog goes something like this, "Jim (or Sally) is a wonderful person and loves me. After we're together, he will change because he loves me so much. He will stop wanting to hang out with his friends, watch football games, whatever." How can anyone feel appreciated when their loved one is wishing or hoping for them to change.

The greatest roadblock to a great relationship is trying to force a partner to change through bribes or threats. This classic human tendency is lampooned in the long-running off-Broadway musical comedy "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change." It's funny to watch other people go through the cycle of searching for the perfect mate, believing they have found that person, and then gradually attempting to remold the supposedly perfect partner. Unfortunately, in real life, this pattern is a cause of immense suffering.

I Love You Just the Way You Are

The number one secret of a great relationship is accepting our partner EXACTLY as they are. We cause ourselves untold misery whenever we believe our loved ones to be imperfect and try to change them.

To create a great relationship, say and mean, "I love you just

the way you are." No pretense. No hoping for change. No thought that it used to be better, or might get better. Follow through by living into that sentiment every day.

Falling into the trap of thinking, "I wish you were different" or "Please change." is no way to show your love. Happiness lies in this number one rule of great relationships: Love and accept your partner exactly the way they are.

Forgiveness and Acceptance

- Keys to a Great Marriage

If you have lived in the same home for years, you probably have a lot of stuff stored away. However neatly packed, anything you haven't put to good use for more than a year is probably a burden rather than a blessing. In a similar way, you likely have old stuff tucked away in the corners of your marriage. It is wonderful to dust off your great memories to reminisce and enjoy, but what about the old resentments and perceived affronts?

Forgiveness is essential to a great marriage. The longer you have lived together, the more important it is that you not accumulate resentments that tempt you to call upon them in times of disagreement. Make a vow to keep disagreements limited to the current issue. Avoid sentences that begin, "You always ..." or "You never ..." such as "You never remember my birthday." If something happened long ago, forgive and forget. Even if it happened yesterday, consider granting forgiveness for your own sake as well as your partner's. Forgiveness is especially a blessing upon the person doing the forgiving.

Let today be the day you do an emotional housecleaning of your marriage. Gather up all your old emotional baggage and put it out with the trash. Unlike your grandmother's wedding dress, your leftover emotions are of no value to anyone. Better yet, hold a fire ceremony, either alone or with your loved one. Write each past injury on a small slip of paper and release your attachment to that emotion as you feed the paper to the cleansing fire.

What could be even better than forgiving your partner? For forgiveness to be needed, there must have been a perceived offense that triggered feelings of resentment and anger, but imagine never getting angry or resentful in the first place. Suppose you simply accepted all your partner's actions. In the presence of acceptance, there can never be resentment or anger, and therefore no need for forgiveness.

Your reaction is likely to be, "But he did something bad. She wronged me. It's his fault. She made me angry." Hmmmm... Can someone really MAKE me angry? I don't think so. We get angry when someone acts in a way that conflicts with how we prefer that they behave - nothing more.

Should you accept your partner's behavior? If their actions are violent or threatening, certainly not. If you feel endangered or even just generally unhappy with your marriage, consider ending it. But in the context of a generally happy marriage, accepting your partner exactly as they are is a recipe for creating an even stronger and happier connection.

Consider being more acceptive of your partner's behaviors. It is unlikely that they are intentionally aggravating you. Almost always, they are just doing what they think they should do. Try setting aside your own rules for how they should behave, and adopt a live-and-let-live attitude. Your marriage will become stronger and happier if you do.

Six Ways to End Bickering Over Money

One of the most common causes of arguments between couples is disagreements over money, mostly about how it should be spent, or not spent. Arguments over money generally fall into two general areas, differences in fundamental attitudes, and bickering over day to day details.

Sometimes the biggest arguments occur over the smallest issues - a \$4 latte or whether store coupons are worth the effort. Bickering over the details can be virtually eliminated by agreeing on some budgeting guidelines and responsibilities in advance. The challenge to establishing such a framework is that the conversation about setting the rules is likely to trigger argument about fundamental attitudes toward money. This is not all bad, however, in that the sooner underlying beliefs are revealed and discussed, the sooner real progress can be made toward understanding and acceptance.

To eliminate arguing over details:

1. Set up a monthly discretionary budget for each spouse which includes all personal expenses including individual meals and snacks, clothes, personal grooming, hobbies, and gifts. Agree that the other partner will have no cause to question purchases made with this money.
2. Choose one spouse to be responsible for each area of purchasing. For example, have one person do all the grocery shopping. Try reversing roles occasionally. Usually, it reduces friction to assign a duty to the spouse with the stronger beliefs about that area of finances. If someone is committed to coupon clipping, let them do the grocery shopping.

3. Whenever you find yourself having an argument about money, write down the specific issue, seek to understand the underlying disagreement in overall beliefs about money, and schedule a conversation to discuss that broad area. For example, if you find that you are arguing over whether to take out a home equity line of credit to remodel your kitchen, the fundamental beliefs at stake might include each spouse's attitude toward debt, beliefs about the home as an investment, levels of confidence in future income generation, degrees of risk aversion, and the fraction of available resources each spouse is willing to direct toward the home. While a discussion of whether to remodel the kitchen might become contentious and never reach resolution, each of the fundamental belief areas, taken separately, could be the subject of its own focused and less contentious conversation that is much more likely to reach mutual understanding and agreement or compromise.

To control arguing over fundamental attitudes toward money:

1. Establish a budget. For some couples, a very detailed and strict budget with many categories works best. For others, general guidelines with frequent special circumstances work better. Begin your discussion of creating a budget by agreeing on how flexible you choose for your budget to be. Then work on the categories and the monthly amounts.

2. Seek to understand your key beliefs about money, especially in those areas in which you hold differing beliefs. In such a discussion, attempt to focus on stating your own beliefs clearly and on understanding your partner's beliefs. Avoid saying anything negative about your partner's beliefs until you have written down a statement of both spouses' points of

view. Then continue to refrain from being negative or argumentative.

3. Seek ways to honor your partner's beliefs without abandoning your own. If one of you believes, "If we've got the money, we should spend it," and the other cautions, "We need to put aside a large fund for a rainy day," it is going to take considerable restraint to avoid frequent conflict. In a situation such as that, your only hope for success lies in reaching a compromise at the fundamental level, and then considering each detail decision only in the light of the overall compromise agreement. For example, you believe you should save 10% of your income, your spouse believes in credit card debt, and you have reached a compromise agreement to neither save nor borrow. Now the question arises whether you can afford a vacation. To be true to your high-level compromise and to avoid argument, you must both consider the vacation question only in the context of the compromise budget, and not allow your feelings toward that budget to weigh in.

Especially if you have fundamentally differing views toward money, focus on your love for each other and on your desire to honor your partner whenever you feel your temper begin to rise. Look at the big picture, and ask whether this issue is simply a detail of a larger difference in attitude toward money, and whether that larger difference is amenable to compromise.

The "Spousal We" and 6 Other Ways to Leave Your Lover (tongue-in-cheek)

You really want to end your relationship, but you don't have the courage to say so directly. What to do? Here is a tongue-in-cheek list of ways to force your partner to make the break first.

1. Use the "Spousal We": "We need to remember to take out the garbage." "Didn't we make a fool of ourself at the party last night." Deft use of the "spousal we" can be like the final twist on a death jab. The other items on this list are like sharp knives, but the "spousal we" really finishes the job with a flourish.

2. Use guilt: Be clear that "guilt" is a verb. It is a weapon that can be used very effectively on your partner. Make sure that they always know how "wrong" they are, and how "unfair" their every action is. Their very existence is wrong and unfair.

3. Use sarcasm: Sarcasm works so well it's almost unfair - sort of like a cluster bomb. "Well, I see we are still watching TV." Triple whammy - guilt, sarcasm, and the spousal we. Great work.

4. Make an endless "honey do" list: It is important to emphasize how "fair" you are being. List everything you contribute to the relationship - pad the list as much as you can. Then just ask your other to do "one little thing." Make sure that it's not a one time task that can be accomplished and forgotten. No - the "one little thing" must be something that needs to be done frequently, so you can nag just as frequently. "We need to remember to..." should become your favorite phrase. Next week - or tomorrow - add another "one

little thing" to the list. Never ever let anything be finished and taken off the list.

5. Act jealous: When you take on acting jealous, it is important to become very angry. This isn't teasing or flirting, this is irrational anger. Make sure that you express your anger randomly. Just pick some very ordinary person in some very ordinary situation as the catalyst, and then let your rage fly at your other. Say you just came out of a restaurant, and you are driving home. "Weren't we just something in there. I saw how you looked at that waitress/waiter. You practically had them undressed with your eyes. I was SO embarrassed. You should be SO ashamed. ..." You get the idea. REALLY lay it out. Your partner is just despicable. Make sure they get the message.

6. Have concealed expectations: If this sounds like concealed weapons, you got the idea, because expectations are powerful weapons in the relationship battle. It's important never to let your other know how they "should" behave until after the fact. Then you can say "we should have known that I only like pink roses." "How could we not come home early on a day I'm feeling depressed?" "It's my birthday, and we get me socks?"

7. Go shopping: This one is a double barreled shotgun. You get to aggravate your partner into leaving, and you get some stuff to take with you. You could just run up the credit card yourself, but you can punish your partner even better by "guilting" them into doing the buying - and then you can criticize them for spending too much - without offering to take back what they bought you, of course.

Congratulations. You will be living alone in no time.

Is Your Relationship In Danger?

Take This 10 Question Quiz To Find Out

You have the occasional argument. Sometimes you feel frustrated, and you have that uneasy sense that everything is not as it should be. Is your relationship in trouble? The answer may not be obvious. Take this quiz to measure the overall state of your relationship and highlight the trouble spots.

1. When you have an argument, is it about a specific issue, or is it about your partner's character? A specific issue would be, "You forgot to take out the garbage last night," while "you never remember anything," is a generalized character assassination.
2. Do you have more conflict or less conflict when the two of you get time alone together? Do a "date night" or a few days away renew your relationship, or create more stress?
3. Is there physical violence in your relationship? Have you come close to physical violence? Are there threats of physical violence?
4. How often does the thought that you would rather be with someone else pass through your mind?
5. Take one minute to write a list of what you like and what you dislike about your partner. How many "likes" and how many "dislikes" are on your list?

6. Do you seriously question your partner's faithfulness?
7. Do you have arguments about sex?
8. In times of emergency or grief - such as when a relative becomes ill or dies, do you and your partner pull together?
9. If you could turn the clock back to the day you first met your partner, would you choose a different direction for your life?
10. If you won the lottery, would you be overjoyed to share the blessing with your partner, or would you wish it were all yours?

Physical violence or threats are the biggest danger signs for your relationship and for your personal safety. If they are present, get professional help TODAY.

The following are all danger signs for your relationship. If several are present, your relationship is in real trouble:

- character assassination
- fantasizing often about being with someone else
- not having ready access to a list of your partner's great qualities
- doubts of faithfulness
- serious sexual incompatibility
- lack of mutual support in times of crisis
- a feeling of being stuck or obligated by the relationship

Question #2 offers hope that your relationship may be much sounder than it appears. Conflict in your relationship may be primarily a reflection of the stress in your individual lives.

Often, partners redirect frustration and anger about unrelated events toward each other. For example, your boss yelled at you, and you yell at your partner. This unconscious redirection is a behavior that can be overcome through conscious attention, and is not a reflection on the overall quality of your relationship. If you and your partner are loving and supportive toward each other in relatively stress-free situations, you likely have a basis for working through your other issues.

Alcoholism in a Relationship - When to Stay, When to Leave

"Alcoholic" is one of those words that raises high emotions. We tend to think of an alcoholic as someone who is violent, dangerous, and self destructive. We may also visualize an alcoholic as being selfish and not caring about anyone but themselves. Sometimes those stereotypes are appropriate, but often they aren't.

By definition, an alcoholic is someone addicted to consuming alcohol, but how they behave when intoxicated, and the extent of their addiction vary widely. In addition, the word alcoholic is often used as a condemnation of someone who drinks more than their spouse would prefer.

So when can a loving spouse reasonably remain with an alcoholic, and when is it time to leave?

With one huge difference, the criteria for deciding the future of your relationship are the same whether your spouse is alcoholic or not:

1. If your spouse is physically violent or threatens physical violence, you must leave now - today. This is true whether your partner is drinking or just angry. It doesn't matter if they promise they will never hurt you again. It doesn't even matter if they promise to get help for their addiction. Violence or threats are cause to leave right now and seek safety.
2. If you feel safe and you are happy in your relationship, you have no cause to leave. Even if your spouse drinks too much

for their own good, and even if they are unwilling to address their addiction, accept them as they are, love them, and don't pester them with demands to change their behavior. Of course you stand ready to support a decision on their part to get help in defeating their addiction, but you can't live their life for them.

3. If you are seriously unhappy because of any aspect of your relationship, consider leaving your partner. Whether the cause of your suffering is your spouse's addiction, philandering, angry outbursts, demeaning attitude toward you, or any other cause, it is your responsibility to take care of yourself.

The one exception to the general rule of maximizing your own well-being occurs when your partner makes a voluntary commitment to treatment for addiction and continuously follows up on that commitment. As long as you feel safe and you continue to see commitment and improvement, hold on. If your partner's progress turns to frequent backsliding, end the battle and take care of yourself by getting out of the relationship if you are suffering.

If children are involved in your decision, understand that their best interest is not well served by living with an addictive or hostile parent.

Don't Stay in a Broken Marriage "For the Children"

If you are clear that you are miserable in your relationship, don't procrastinate on getting a divorce "for the sake of the children." While some experts would argue that having one parent move out of the home increases the stress on young children, consider the likelihood that the benefit of no longer seeing Mommy and Daddy fighting far outweighs any negative effects.

The premise for the remainder of this article is that you have already explored all avenues for rebuilding an empowering relationship with your spouse - you have talked, you have had counseling, you have contemplated your future.

Having determined that a happy relationship is no longer possible, you are considering remaining in your unhappy marriage "for the sake of the children." Don't do it. Here's why:

1. While growing up with two happy parents who love each other is probably the ideal nurturing environment for children, living with one happy parent is far better than living with two people who are unhappy and hate each other.
2. However noble your intentions, you are not going to be able to fake happiness for long. Your children will recognize your unhappiness almost at once, and that will cause them great suffering.
3. While you and your spouse may make an agreement never

to argue or treat each other badly in front of the children, you will not be able to keep such an agreement. You will exchange icy stares, unkind words, and sarcasm - if not worse - in spite of your resolve and idealism.

4. Your own well-being does matter, don't discount the importance of your own happiness. Martyrdom is highly over-rated. There is no special place in heaven for those who suffer for no good reason. Don't let guilt - which is also highly over-rated - cause you to make a decision that will certainly cause misery for both yourself and your children.

5. It is your decision - and you are responsible only to yourself in making this decision. Don't be bullied by your partner, parents, relatives, friends, or church. They may have some so-called "moral" position, but the only important factors to consider in making this decision are your children's well-being and your own.

Your Marriage is in Trouble - Is a Trial Separation the Way to Go? 10 Reasons Why and Why Not

Your relationship has gotten so bad that you are talking about divorce - when you are talking at all. Should you consider a trial separation? Why and why not.

A trial separation is a huge step to take - an acknowledgment that your marriage is on the brink of collapse - a public statement of your situation that can no longer be hidden from your children, family, and friends. Choosing to live apart for a time is not an action to be undertaken lightly - but neither is divorce.

When a trial separation is probably a poor choice:

1. You are both sure that you want the marriage to work and are committed to making changes to create a better relationship. If you are not actively considering divorce, don't consider a trial separation either - regardless of your day-to-day conflicts.
2. One or both of you are sure that you want a divorce. A workable trial separation requires both parties to be in civil communication, and to agree that there is some possibility for the future of the relationship. If either your partner or you knows they want a divorce, a "trial separation" would be a painful farce.
3. Something unacceptable has occurred in your relationship. Physical violence or threats of violence are always unacceptable. You may or may not also consider adultery or other behaviors unacceptable.

4. One or both of you intends to date or have sex with someone else during the "trial separation" period. If either of you desires to be intimate outside the relationship, just get the divorce and be done with it.

5. Either of you is sure that the other is 100% to blame for your difficulties. Reconciliation - whether through a trial separation or otherwise - requires YOU to change. If you are unwilling to consider making changes, file for divorce now.

A trial separation is likely to produce a good outcome when you and your partner agree that either reconciliation or divorce are possible and acceptable outcomes of your current difficulties. Both of you understand that the purpose of a trial separation is to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion about the viability of your marriage.

A trial separation has NOT failed if you both end up amicably agreeing to divorce. A trial separation is a time to weigh both options - without attachment to either.

The benefits of a trial separation are the opportunity to:

1. Eliminate co-dependence. Spending time away from your partner, provides each of you with the space to develop self-assurance and minimize neediness.
2. Develop self-responsibility. When there is no one else to blame, life looks different, and provides an opening to become more aware and responsible.
3. Explore new interests. Develop new hobbies. Join affinity groups. Try a photography group or a book club.
4. Experience a relatively stress-free cooling-off period and gain a more detached perspective.

5. Minimize the stress on your young children. While some experts would argue that having one parent move out of the home increases the stress on children, I believe that the benefit of no longer seeing Mommy and Daddy fighting far outweighs any negative effects.

If you do opt for a trial separation, it is important to:

1. Deepen your support system. Share yourself even more deeply with those who know and love you.
2. Become more introspective about your situation. Keep a daily journal. Consider what you like about yourself and your life. Consider what you would like to change about yourself, as well as your relationship.

Should You Try to Get Your Ex Back? When to Rekindle the Romance and When to Walk Away

- 10 Questions You Need to Ask

They left. You're lonely, and they look pretty good right now. Should you attempt to rekindle the romance? Let's look at when to try and when to walk away. Ask yourself these 10 questions.

When to just walk away:

1. Are you're lonely - perhaps desperately so? Just because you want someone in your life doesn't mean that someone has to be your Ex. Coming to any relationship with an attitude of need virtually eliminates any chance for the relationship to succeed - especially a second-time relationship.
2. Are you driven by needing sex? Needing sex is an even worse basis for being together than needing companionship. Being needy just won't work. Find someone else.
3. Are you trying to regain the lifestyle? Money, house, car, even access to your Ex's friends are no basis for being together. Gather your courage and start over with someone else.
4. Are you overly depressed? If you are down on yourself, you become unable to see all the other joyful possibilities for your life - all the other wonderful potential partners just waiting for a happy positive you to ask them for a date.

5. Do you believe that your relationship broke up mostly because of what your Ex did wrong? Hoping for your Ex to change is no basis for restarting your connection.

If you answered Yes to ANY of the above five questions, you do NOT have a sound basis to consider getting back together. Now, consider whether you are ready for ANY relationship. Perhaps now is the time to join a support group or get professional counseling.

When to try to rekindle the romance:

1. Do you really Love your Ex? Are you sure that what you are feeling is not desperation, lust, jealousy, or depression?

2. Do you 100% forgive your Ex for EVERYTHING they ever did or failed to do?

3. Are you sure that your personal emotional state is stable?

4. Do you understand what went wrong? Can you see a path for YOU to make 100% of the changes needed for the relationship to work?

5. Have you made a sincere commitment to yourself to make real changes in your behavior? Something failed to work before. You must not base any attempt for reconciliation on a belief that your Ex will change. Real change must happen, and that real change is up to you. Are you truly willing to make that change?

If you answered Yes to ALL five of these questions, you are ready to make a sincere attempt to reconnect with your Ex.

Trying to Get Your Ex Back?

A Look at the 10 Best and Worst Ways to Rekindle the Romance

They left. You're lonely, and they look pretty good right now. Should you even attempt to rekindle the romance? What are the best and worst ways to rebuild your connection?

First, be very sure that your own emotional state is stable enough to share your life with someone else - either your Ex or another partner.

Second, confirm to yourself that you understand what went wrong before, and that you are committed to making real changes in your personal behavior.

Finally, if you feel ready to try to restart your relationship, let's look at what works and what doesn't.

The Worst:

1. Beg: It won't work, and you lose your self-respect in the process.
2. Manipulate, Pretend, Fake: If you do succeed in your deception, you have then created a much bigger mess - an expectation on the part of your Ex that you will continue to behave as you pretend you will. False promises may get his or her attention, but they will backfire as soon as you become unable or unwilling to continue them and lapse back into your natural behaviors. If your Ex doesn't enjoy being around the real you, accept that conclusion, and move on to someone who will love you the way you really are.

3. Tease, Flirt, Seduce: These are also temporary come-on's that will backfire as soon as you revert to being yourself.

4. Bribe: Do you really want to buy a relationship? Besides, it won't work for long

5. Promise You'll Change: If the promise is fake, see #2. If the promise is sincere, know that you will be unable to maintain any resolution for change that you take-on to please someone else. Real change to your core habits and behaviors can only come when you want the change for yourself. For example, you can't succeed in ending a smoking habit to please someone else. You can only end a habit if you do it for yourself.

The Best:

1. Be Honest: There is great power in the truth. People respond favorably to honesty. Moreover, you no longer have to try to remember which lie you told last. Of all people in the world, your Ex probably knows you best. He or she can recognize even the smallest lie. Be completely truthful.

2. Be Open, Communicate, Tell All: Tell not only the truth, but the whole truth.

3. Forgive (silently): A resentful person is an ugly person who is no fun to be around. Choose to give up all your resentments toward your Ex. Forgive him or her completely. Do NOT say to them, "I forgive you." That would only cause an argument and resentment on their part. Take the time to be quietly by yourself - relax - forgive your Ex silently and completely for everything that they ever did or failed to do that angered or upset you.

4. Be Thankful: Write a list of everything that you appreciate about your Ex. Contemplate the list and internalize all the

good qualities that you love. Then meet with your Ex and tell them what you appreciate about them. Be sincere - no faking or flattery.

5. Be Sincerely Cheerful and Kind: Be the kind of person you would want to be around. Grumpy and self-centered people don't win friends, new lovers, or get their Ex back.

I wish you best fortune in your sincere loving journey toward rebuilding your relationship.

Beyond the Grief of Divorce

- 7 Steps Toward New Beginnings

If you have been divorced, you know it hurts - especially if your marriage had lasted many years. Whatever the circumstances of your relationship, and whatever the nature of its ending, there is always grief and regret - perhaps regret over the ending or perhaps regret over not ending the relationship sooner - or perhaps both. How to move past the grief and regret? No matter how painful, divorce, like all endings, opens the door to new beginnings. Let's examine several.

- 1. Get support:** Don't be embarrassed to ask friends for support. Join a divorce support group. Join a more general women's or men's group like ManKind Project and share your story.
- 2. Reconsider your obligations:** In reality, you have NO obligations. There is nothing you ever have to do, because everything you do or don't do is always a choice. Be especially clear that you don't owe anyone an explanation or justification for any of your actions - ever.
- 3. Simplify your life:** There is nothing that you really NEED to have. Material possessions seldom bring joy. Consider eliminating whatever you haven't used in a year, and minimizing new purchases - not based on economy, but on your choice for leading a simple unencumbered life.
- 4. Try something new:** What have you been wanting to do, but couldn't find the time or commitment to begin? Perhaps

yoga, qigong, stretching, walking, a new spiritual class, a book discussion group, ballroom dancing.

5. **Learn and explore:** You are never too old for learning and discovery. Open your mind. Study something you always wanted to know about but that didn't seem necessary or practical - other cultures and times, comparative religion, whatever calls you.

6. **Volunteer:** Nothing works better for relieving self-pity than helping others who are worse off. Fill the time you would have spent feeling sorry for yourself by giving something of yourself to others.

7. **Get away:** If you can possibly afford it, take a trip with a group of compatible people - perhaps a spiritual journey. Also, ask what is tying you to the community where you currently reside. Now is a time to consider the question of where, and how, you really want to live.

Believe in yourself. You have free will. You, and only you, are responsible for your life.

Online Dating After Divorce **- *A Man's Guide to Seeking Women,*** ***Finding Love, Getting Married Again***

You say you are looking for your next long term relationship - this time a really great lifelong partnership - but you are horny and you want to get laid - soon. STOP! That attitude is NOT going to lead you to a great long term relationship. Bank the fires of lust long enough to search consciously for someone with whom you are truly compatible.

Before You Look For A Great Relationship:

Understand what went wrong the last time. Exactly the same things that went wrong last time WILL go wrong again, unless you analyze the issues and take specific steps to ensure that your next relationship is different. You will be bringing the same "you" to the relationship - unless you change. You will be attracted to the same kind of woman - unless you become more conscious in your choosing. You and your next partner will push each other's emotional "buttons" in the same ways - unless you examine your sensitivities. For example, if you tend to accumulate clutter, you need to find a woman who can live with your clutter, or you need to become neat - not say that you would do it for the right woman, but change today. Be **TOTALLY** honest with yourself about which of your needs were not met the last time, and which of your habits became intolerable to your previous wife.

Be sure you are ready. "Neediness" is no basis for a relationship. If you feel that you "need" a woman, or that you "need" to be in relationship, STOP! You are not ready to begin any relationship. Do some personal work on yourself

first. It isn't fair to a partner or to yourself to merge your lives before you love and respect yourself.

Double-check your motives. If you are just looking for sex, don't pretend to yourself that you want relationship. Be sure that you are looking for a fully-engaged give-and-take partnership with a strong teammate.

Make a Shopping List. If this sounds a little impersonal, good. BEFORE you start meeting women, make your list, and have a strong talk with yourself about not compromising on ANY of the crucial items on your list. Make a list of perhaps 5 "must have's" and 5 "can't stand's." Make sure that the really critical issues are covered.

Man Seeking Woman:

Look where the women are. Find a place where the ratio is strongly in your favor - a place with lots of available women who match your criteria for a long term partner.

Try on-line dating. You get to meet a lot of women quickly, and you learn some objective information before you meet in person. Consider the old story of the mother who insisted that her daughter only date millionaires. Her explanation was "If you meet enough millionaires, you will certainly fall in love with one of them." If you want someone to share your beliefs on religion, child rearing, sex and the other basics where differences greatly stress or fracture relationships, check out these issues before you even meet the woman. Don't let yourself get infatuated with someone who holds a fundamentally outlook on life. Prevent the suffering by never even meeting.

Choose an on-line dating service that does the matching. Be completely honest in filling out your profile. Remember that your objective is to get a great lifelong match rather than a quick date. Be patient. My favorite is eHarmony, but its concept has been copied by other sites. eHarmony is an amazing place, especially for a 40+ man who is sincere about wanting a long term relationship, as it attracts vast numbers of quality women. CAUTION, people can lie anywhere, and a few do, so never take anything at face value.

You have met someone, now what?

Slow Down! No sex until you have checked her out. Once you get sex, you are hooked. Keep your options open until you are sure.

Look at the quality of her current life. If her life is a mess, Run. You don't need a one-sided relationship with someone who is "helpless" and needs you to "fix" her. If she "needs" you, RUN. Look for a woman who is already happy with herself and her life. While being "needed" may stroke your ego now, just fast forward a few months. Visualize her clinging to you and being jealous whenever you want a night with the boys. Moreover, if she is a person who is not satisfied with her life now, know that you are NOT the "magic pill" that will keep her happy over the years. Look for a happy and self-reliant woman who views you as the magnificent frosting on the cake of her already wonderful life.

Check out her friends and family. Her friends and family are crucial to the success of your relationship. If you haven't met them yet, do it now - don't wait another minute. Her friends and family are her life. Whatever she says, she won't give

them up for you; it's not in her nature. If she is tied to her mother's apron strings, you want to know that today. If you dislike her friends now, you will hate them later. Choose a woman who brings great friends and family to your relationship.

Accept her EXACTLY as she is today and promise never to try to change her. She is practically perfect except she talks too much, or smokes, or does something else that really bugs you. Get REAL. She isn't going to change! She may promise to change in order to reel you in. She may really feel committed to changing. But it isn't going to happen. Respect her, love her, and accept her EXACTLY as she is today, or break it off, and find someone you respect and accept exactly as they are.

Afterword

I hope this collection of articles on relationships and happiness has been of value to you.

Visit <http://www.jlhuie.com> to sign-up for my *Daily Inspiration – Daily Quote* to receive inspirational quotes and my insights on living a happy life regardless of your circumstances.

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You are welcome to email me at jlh@jhuie.com I read all email, and respond when my schedule permits.

Thank you for sharing with me this journey we call Life,
Jonathan Lockwood Huie