

Modern Love - 10 Steps

Step One: Check your bags. Three little words but this can be a daunting task. I'm talking about the baggage you drag around from past relationships and past hurts. Many of these experiences cause us to play tapes in our heads "you're not good enough", "you're too fat, too thin", "you can't trust men", all leaving you feeling unworthy of love. I refer to these tapes as your Gremlin talking. If this is an area you relate to (see http://www.theurbanrack.com/coachescorner_archives.html#feb09) and we'll get you started on taming that nasty beast.

Step Two: Accept (I mean really accept) that online dating is simply the modern way to find love. The only person standing in judgement is YOU. The people who choose to give online dating a shot are strong, courageous and not waiting around for love to fall from the sky. And this isn't just my opinion. Of the thousands (kay, dozens) I asked "what do you think of people who use online dating services?" all of them said it was no big deal. So, if you truly accept that online dating is cool and you still won't give it a try...refer to Step One.

Step Three: Know your Values! I've talked about this before (See http://www.theurbanrack.com/coachescorner_archives.html#jan09) when learning to live a more fulfilling life but in the area of dating, it's critical. Values are what you must have in order to live an authentic life. These are the things you simply can't live without. And we're not talking about "he has to have a six pack" or "he can't be short" or if he uses a toothpick at dinner he's out (that can be changed. Trust me.). Values are things like family (does he want one?), religious views, helping others, integrity, humour, personal growth, or health. Remember that we are often tempted to shop for values that sound good. Be real. I suggest that you have your Top Five and use this as a filter when choosing dates. And don't hide your values. I'm not saying to get into a creationism vs evolution debate on your first date but before more time is invested you want to get the big stuff on the table.

Step Four: Create an Honest Profile. This topic hit a lot of nerves with the daters. Please, please, please use a picture that represents what you really look like. Not that one picture that was taken on some crazy angle that magically appears to have shaved 3 inches off your butt. If you're bald, flaunt it. If you're curvy, rock it. Surprises can be fun, but not here. It's also good to have a variety of pictures that tell a story of who you are (ie: not all party shots or all hiking shots). As for the written word, again honesty is the best policy, along with humour and for the sake of St.Valentine, please use spell check.

Step Five: Do the work. Finding the person to share your life with is serious stuff so give this the effort it deserves. If you are using one of the free online services like Plenty of Fish you may find yourself with dozens (maybe even hundreds) of possible dates. One dater suggested using a log book to keep track of the guys with a few quick notes beside their names. If you connect with someone online and you've decided to meet, try to book a date as soon as possible. Telling him how insanely busy your life is and that you will try to squeeze him in between The Bachelor night with the girls and Yoga doesn't really scream "love is a priority in my life."

Step Six: Be Yourself! I know, duh right? But how many times have you found yourself in a situation where you meet someone for the first time and then afterwards thought "I was such an idiot"? What, is it just me? If you find yourself acting weird just excuse yourself for a moment and re-group in the ladies room. You are also allowed to be honest and say "I'm sorry, I feel like I'm acting weird. Can we start over?" Being real is so refreshing.

Step Seven: Humour is your friend. Dating, relationships, boys...they're all supposed to be fun. Every single success story I've heard starts with "we laughed together". If you're too intense or unable to relax you will never reveal the beautiful, fun woman that you are. And if the date is a disaster, it becomes fabulous fodder for your next ladies night.

Step Eight: Learn to say NO thank you. Keep your eye on the prize. If you find yourself dating a guy that you can't see yourself with down the road...retreat, abort mission, get out! The awesome thing about this modern dating world is that most parties know the drill upfront. Nobody is into wasting time. Most people say they know for sure on the first date but if you had great conversation online with the guy and his profile and picture seemed perfect but the date was a bust I would suggest you give it another shot. Maybe he was just "being weird" (see step 6). And finally, please let him down gently. This may not be your Prince Charming but you don't want to break him for your single sisters out there. Oh, and if he says No to you? First of all, he's crazy! And secondly, do not let this be your excuse for throwing in the towel. It simply means *your fish is still in the sea.*

Step Nine: Is he the one? My favourite relationship movie quote ever was Jack Nicholson in "As Good as it Gets" when he said to Helen Hunt's character "you make me want to be a better man". Does this person make you want to be a better woman? Who **are you** with him? It's often hard to be objective in this area and you might want to enlist the help of someone in your life that you love and trust and has no agenda other than your happiness. It also helps if this person has experienced you as a little "less" than you truly are in past relationships. Of course you want to go through your Value Filters to make sure you will be on the same page down the road, you want to make sure he blinds you to all other men (other than George Clooney), and meet his friends and family. Who we choose to spend our time with speaks volumes.

Step Ten: Be in Love. You have passed Step Nine and now is the time to let yourself **fall**. I know this is easier said than done but you've checked your bags, you've chosen wisely, and your heart is full and ready to be shared. Giving half your heart so you can save the other half "just in case" he hurts you will only create what you fear the most. Remember why you started this journey. And if it doesn't work... dive back in with a better understanding of what you need and deserve and the faith that he is waiting for YOU.