Evan had asked everyone if they would be willing to listen to his new relationship concept. All members of the party agreed and sat anxiously at the poker table, awaiting his presentation.

“Thank you all for allowing me to share my idea with you. This concept is innovative, and I am open to receiving feedback. I have considered many of the pros and cons, and I’m confident I can address any concerns that may arise. I just ask one favor. Let me lay the entire plan out first before we open it up for discussion. Does that work for everybody?”

Everyone in the group nodded in agreement.

“Okay, great! As you know, since my divorce, I have found little success in seeking a romantic relationship. At first, I thought it was just a matter of time. Then I blamed my lack of success on my distaste for dating. Then I speculated I wasn’t meeting the right women. After my date last night, I realize the women weren’t the problem either. I’ve met several nice women, including last night’s date. The problem was me.

“Then I had an epiphany! I understood the nature of my problem. The problem is I know any relationship I start is going to end in a breakup. I already found the love of my life. I can’t even begin to imagine ever finding another.

“Unfortunately, that relationship is over. I think for the first time I’ve accepted the fact Sarah and I will never be together again. I see no point in starting a loveless relationship that’s going to deteriorate into an eventual breakup.

“Since finding true love again was off the table, I was in a bit of a conundrum. I asked myself, ‘How can I have a successful relationship, knowing it will never be true love and ultimately fail?’ Then this idea came to me.

“It’s not a perfect solution, but the pros far outweigh the cons. I began to think about how relationships work. Especially if I counted high school, I would estimate well over 90% of all relationships end in a breakup. Of the remaining 10%, I guestimate in half of those situations, at least one partner is not happy in the relationship. They stay together for convenience, finances, children, etc.

“That leaves 5% that might be considered healthy relationships. At least by my standards. Of that 5%, how many of those long-term relationships are anywhere near their energetic peak? I would venture to say less than 1%.

“Almost every romantic relationship I’ve been in, or I have seen, peaks sometime during the first year. This is true of even healthy relationships. Relationships that start great can often deteriorate to good, good to poor, poor to disastrous.

“Couples begin to take each other for granted. They start to argue more. They are no longer as excited to see each other every day. Their sex life and other forms of intimacy decrease, sometimes dramatically.

“I think I inherently but unconsciously understood this since my divorce. What’s the point of starting a relationship that has an over 95% chance of either being unhealthy or ending? That’s what’s been holding me back. Under even the best circumstances, any relationship has almost zero chance of being better than it was in the first year. So, without further delay, here is my solution.”

Evan took a moment to take a drink and survey his audience. He saw five different people had five different expressions. It was clear to Evan that Liz was struggling to repress her feelings. Guido was the only one smiling. The others looked confused or neutral.

“Now that I realize I’m not going to find a permanent relationship again, I can approach dating from a whole new angle. Instead of looking for unattainable true love, I will seek a woman I feel a connection with and someone I can enjoy a healthy relationship with.

“Knowing the relationship would ultimately end or become unhealthy, I had to pick a timeframe I thought would work best. I decided on one year. One year is enough time to get to know someone and enjoy all those great ‘firsts!’

“The first year is when the first kiss happens, the first time a couple makes love, the first time at a favorite restaurant, maybe even a first vacation. It’s enough time for those things to be enjoyed repeatedly before becoming old hat, and It’s a time when annoying habits are still considered cute. There are even more benefits than that.

“The only con is the breakup. But that breakup is going to happen at some point anyway. Why not plan the breakup ahead of time? Why not terminate the relationship when it’s at its peak – before it begins to disintegrate?

“I know the breakup will be painful. But I’d rather have a Band-Aid pulled off all at once than suffer through a slow trickle of pain when pulled off slowly. You’re probably wanting to know if the woman will be aware of what’s happening.

“I thought a lot about that. You all know I am firmly against lying. But I think I can maintain this type of relationship without having to tell any lies. I simply won’t disclose the full truth. I know that’s lame, but I’m desperate.

“I believe many women would embrace a relationship like this if they were honest with themselves. But I’m realistic. If I start telling women I wanted to be with them for a year before dumping them, they’ll think I’m crazy. I wouldn’t worry so much about that if it weren’t for the reputation of my foundation.

“To compensate for the deception and the inevitable pain caused by the breakup, I will spend the entire year being ‘the world’s best boyfriend.’ I’ll be attentive, nurturing, supportive, and work to give them whatever they need to feel fulfilled. Well, that’s my plan in a nutshell!”

There was a pause of deep silence. It seemed each person was waiting for someone else to respond first. Liz decided she would be the one.

“Evan, I love you. I know you’re feeling desperate and lonely. But there is no way I’m going to allow you to implement this ridiculous plan,” exclaimed Liz.

“Liz, I know it sounds ridiculous at first, but think about everything I said. What part of that did I get wrong?” asked Evan.

Liz replied, “The whole thing is wrong, Evan. Maybe the excitement of a relationship tends to dwindle over time. There’s nothing wrong with that. Relationships grow and evolve – people mature.”

Abe offered his thoughts. “Evan, I kept an open mind as I listened to everything you had to say. There is no denying there is much truth in your perspective. However, you are seeking to solve an unsolvable situation. Human beings are not designed to live at a continuous peak of high energy. No creature on earth is.”

Alicia added her feelings to the mix. “Abe is right, Evan. Life is full of ups and downs. Energy ebbs and flows. Maybe the energy of my relationship with Abe has changed, but the love and respect have grown. And you seem to have taken love out of the equation.”

“I understand everything you’re all saying. I would kill to have the relationship the couples in this room have. If I were with a woman I loved, I wouldn’t even consider this concept. But I’ve lost the love of my life. There is no other woman I want to spend the rest of my life with. At least with this plan, I can still have meaningful relationships. I agree with you, Abe. People are not designed to enjoy relationships at a peak level forever. That’s the whole point of this idea. I am confident, for a year, I can stay near peak energy,” replied Evan.

Liz piped in, “You are a wonderful, attractive young man. What makes you think it is so impossible to find love again?”

Evan was ready with his response. “Let me ask you a question, Liz. Are you ever going to fall in love with someone else besides Joe?”

“That’s not a fair question, Evan,” replied Liz.

“Okay, then let me ask Joe. Joe, is there any chance that you are ever going to be in love with anyone besides Liz?” asked Evan.

Joe immediately responded. “Of course not! She is the only woman I’ll ever love.”

“See Liz? That’s how I feel. Lightning rarely strikes twice in the same place. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life looking for something that so rarely happens.”

“With a 95% chance I’ll end up in an unhappy relationship, or alone, I’ll take my chances with a relationship that will be nearly perfect for a year. Even if I’m wrong, I won’t waste years of my life finding out I was with the wrong person. One year is my max pain.”

Liz turned to Guido and asked, “You have been strangely silent, Guido. What are your thoughts?”

Guido replied, “I think you’re overly worried about this, Liz. What Evan’s doing is only slightly different than what everybody does when they are dating. I would venture to say his way is far better for the women.”

Liz asked, “How so?”

“Think about how regular dating works. There is no guarantee the relationship is going to go anywhere. And whether Evan’s percentages are accurate or not, most people endure multiple breakups before finding ‘the one.’

“So, if Evan decided to stick with the traditional dating format, he is right. It would likely end in a breakup. But how many men guarantee a full year of being, as Evan says, ‘the world’s best boyfriend?’ The answer is none. Everyone in this room knows Evan is completely capable of offering that for a year. Liz, isn’t that true?”

“Yes, Guido, it’s true. But there would not be a guaranteed breakup in a normal dating scenario, even if it is 90% likely. At least there would be a chance. In Evan’s plan, the woman won’t know the truth,” replied Liz.

“I hate to break it to you. But there is minimal truth in the dating process. Come on, Liz. This is Evan we’re talking about here. You know as well as I do, he’s probably going to fall in love with the first girl he does this with, and the breakup will never happen. And if it does, he would’ve broken up with her in any dating scenario. All Evan’s doing is changing the way he looks at things so he can find a way to move forward. Look at him, Liz. Look how excited he is. When was the last time you saw him this hopeful about finding someone?”

Although Evan didn’t agree with everything Guido said, he recognized Guido was making some headway with a resistant Liz. So, he decided to run with it.

Evan said, “Yeah, Liz. If there is a chance I might find love again, isn’t this a better way than what I’ve been doing the last year? Either I’m going to find a woman I love and want to spend the rest of my life with, or I will have a wonderful relationship for a year that would end in a breakup even if I dated her more conventionally. Come on, sis. Back me on this. I really need your support.”

Evan could see his sister’s resolve weakening. So, he did what any little brother would do to get what he wants. He smiled adorably and begged. “Please, please, please, pretty please?”

Without saying a word, Liz got up from the table and went into another room.