

mxFlirt



It's tough out there as a single person, but don't sit at home moping like Bridget, go and have some fun with friends.

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?



Modern society is immersed in "makeover culture". We makeover our homes, our jobs and, it seems, our lovers. Surely there's a reality TV show in this somewhere ...

Falling in love. I'm talking about that goony, omnipotent, this-is-too-good-to-be-true, Big Bang Love.

In other words, dopamine.

The passageway from strangers to lovers is a surreal and often quicksilver process. It can be more intoxicating than anything else in the world. You know this.

Like INXS sang, "Two hearts collided and they could never tear us apart..." But in real life, there are a multitude of things that can demolish love with the speed of Paris Hilton's media sightings. And of all the possible love crushing devices, trying to change the person you're with is one of the greatest follies.

In friendship, we tend to accept each others' shortcomings, but when it comes to love, is anyone ever really happy with who they're with?

Aren't we always trying to remodel them into what we assume would make them better – more desirable to us?

Often we frame this in terms of their "bad habits". We try to convince our partner not to smoke. To exercise more. To drink less. Not to spend so much money. Not to go out with their mates so much, to go out more. To stop looking at porn. To change their job, to work less ... the list is endless. But, in every relationship, the list exists.

So the question begs to be asked: should we give up our bad habits for love? Should we – as Joaquin Phoenix did for Reese Witherspoon a la Johnny Cash in *Walk The Line*? But at what point does sacrifice mean martyrdom? And when does acquiescing

to your partner's wishes trespass on individual freedom to be who and what we are?

In most relationships there are subtle undercurrents of ultimatum. Over time, without even knowing it, we either rebel against our partners preferences or slowly conform to the type of person we think they want to be with. Our egos and our desires clash. And one person eventually seems like the winner.

From being the type of girl who was always out dancing on Saturday nights, we find ourselves at home, a DVD on, damning the dullness and confines the relationship has become. We live in an era beyond home improvement.

Sociologist Anthony Elliott (Flinders University) has described modern society as immersed in "makeover culture". We makeover our homes, our jobs and our bodies. And, it seems we're trying to makeover our lovers. Surely there's a reality TV show in this somewhere, *Partner Makeovers* or something like that.

The danger of love and coupling is that sometimes our own person becomes lost. And sometimes the bad habits we've given up for love are the very things that gave us spark.

The key to all this involves finding balance in adjusting your lifestyle and habits to the changing dynamic of the relationship without sublimating your own identity or having one partner's wishes dominate the other.

And in my book, nothing forced ever works in the long run.

– DR BELLA

BTW

Men out there frustrated by the lack of women they're meeting? Write in if you want to join Operation Good Woman. Or to share thoughts or ask questions, contact me at: dearbella@mxnet.com.au or www.drbella.com.au

SOLUTIONS FOR THE SINGLE-MINDED

As adults, the dating world can be such a challenge. This is especially true if you have come out of a long-term relationship and have not been in "the game" for quite a while.

There are many traps out there that you need to avoid. Avoiding the traps is an "inner game".

This is done by paying attention to your own thinking and emotions and being honest with yourself about what you're thinking and feeling.

Here are three of the most common traps, the signs and symptoms, and most importantly, what to do instead.

FAIRY-TALE TRAP

Remember all the fairy tales we heard and read as children? While most of them had good moral lessons to teach, they were still fairy tales.

Yet we handle so many of our relationships, especially love relationships, as if we believe fairy tales are real.

We expect our perfect ideal partner to just magically show up someday, without any effort on our part.

Here is how it's expressed by many singles:

"One day I just looked across the room, our eyes met, and I just knew he/she was the one!" Well, maybe

Single? Watch out, the dating world is full of traps. Marriage therapist **JEFF HERRING** looks at avoiding the bigger ones.

yes and maybe no.

Either way, after the glow of the "newness" of the relationship wears off, you still have to learn to live with another person – messy at it's best.

So many people get hurt this way.

Solution: You have to take responsibility for your own relationship choice and take an active role in finding a good match for yourself.

Don't just react to the people that choose you, as in "I'll like this person because they like me." Interview a lot of people for the position of your partner.

RESCUE TRAP

Many singles believe that if they can just meet the right person, then all of their emotional, financial, and other problems with living will be solved right away.

It's a trap, for one reason, because that is way too much pressure to put on anyone. In addition, this says you have little power to affect your own life.

This one leaves you feeling

desperate and needy. When problems multiply instead of disappear, the relationship is likely to fail.

Solution: First of all, there is a proverb that says, "Without a vision, the people perish." I believe this is true for relationships as well.

What is your vision for your relationship? One way to get started on your vision is to ask the question: "If I could write the screenplay, what would it look like?" Know your relationship will not exactly match the screenplay. Too many times we look for a custom tailored perfect fit in an off-the-rack world. This is just a question to get you started on creating your relationship vision.

The second thing you need to do is resolve your personal, emotional, financial and other life problems before you commit to a long-term relationship. You then stand a much greater chance of relationship success.

DATE-TO-MATE TRAP

Ever try to put a round peg in a square hole? This is one

of the dangers of the date-to-mate trap.

If you go out into the dating world with the goal that you must find a long-term relationship or even marriage, you set yourself up for trying to make something fit that does not, cannot, and will not fit.

People have entered into a marriage relationship knowing one wanted children and that the other was ambivalent at best about having children. The outcome is predictable, is it not? The couple eventually divorce over the issue.

Having children was a requirement for this person. A requirement is something you must have, and is non-negotiable. In this example, you cannot have half a child.

Solution: Be careful of becoming an instant couple, especially just to be with someone. Know what your requirements are in a long-term relationship, and settle for nothing less.

Taking this position scares many of the singles I coach because they believe it greatly reduces the number of available partners. While this is true, remember, it only takes one.

Date a bunch of different people without the pressure of the date-to-mate trap. This solution greatly increases your chances of actually finding the one.