

A close-up photograph of a man and a woman in a romantic embrace. The woman, on the left, has long, wavy reddish-brown hair and is wearing a dark green top. The man, on the right, has dark, curly hair and a light beard, wearing a blue denim shirt. They are both smiling and looking at each other, with their foreheads nearly touching. The background is a solid dark grey.

LISA SHIELD'S

**GETTING
EMOTIONALLY
NAKED**

The Secret to Attracting True Love

INTRO DUCTION

Every human comes into this world naked and afraid. You pop out of your mother like the world's most disgusting toaster strudel and scream your head off for at least a minute. Or, if you're like me, you are completely silent and just stare at everyone until they get afraid and give you a tiny pinch to make you start yelling. Though it is a miracle, the birth itself is loud and messy, and, in its first moments, life is too bright and cold and nothing like the tepid jacuzzi of the womb. You have every right to be scared and maybe a little angry.

Unfortunately, some of us never really stop being scared and maybe a little angry. We walk around life and approach romance fearfully, constantly afraid to open up, worried we may be reduced to nakedness. Being naked in front of a group of people is a common nightmare, and psychologists link these types of dreams indelibly to our daytime emotions. But what is it about "nakedness" that is so scary? Nakedness is vulnerability. Without our clothes and carefully curated facades, we are still as helpless as babies.

People might judge us, and people might reject us. We think to ourselves, "It's one thing if they don't like my outfit, or my house, or my super sweet tricked-out Land Rover, but what if they don't like me?" It's a fate almost worse than death. And it is the constant fear we all walk around with every single day

I challenge you to turn this idea on its head, or rather, to look at the other side of this same coin: nakedness is also confidence. If you're in love, you have to get naked if you want to have sexy times. For a more chaste example, if you subscribe to the Hebrew Bible, Adam and Eve, the original "couple goals," the founding Mama and Pops of humanity, were completely stark naked all the time,

waving their junk right smack in the face of the Lord Almighty "but they were not ashamed" (Genesis 2). Why? Because they didn't even have a concept for it! That's why where they lived was paradise! No shame! No judgment! Just cute animals and plentiful crops and one delicious-looking apple that would bring the downfall of all humankind! What could go wrong? But back to our current state as fearful organisms scrabbling around on a big blue marble, trying to find someone to hold us: to hold us close, to open to someone emotionally, you must be confident in who you are.



If you are courageous, then allowing someone a peek at the soft underbelly of your heart or the under-toned biceps of your mind is not scary. It's liberating.

My journey to finding my husband inspired me to develop this philosophy towards romance. After coming out of an unhappy relationship, I felt lost. I'm sure if you're coming out of a long-term relationship, you can relate. When you dedicate years of your life to someone, and then you realize it's the wrong fit, it's like your having your life's tapestry pulled apart. It's like you built a house on a rotten foundation, and it all tumbles down a hill. So I, now emotionally homeless, took stock of my surroundings, internal and external, and realized I wanted to find true love more than anything. I had to dig deep within myself to figure out how I had gotten to where I was, what I really wanted, and how to pursue it.

Those are three essential and distinct steps that many people ignore when searching for love. I realized I wanted the kind of unconditional love so often associated with spiritual practice. The love that says, "I take you exactly as you are right now." The love that doesn't just rock your world on Saturdays but makes you breakfast on Sundays. The love that thinks you're beautiful not because of how you look but because of who you are.

I'm here to tell you that unconditional love is achievable, you are loveable, and love is everywhere. But it is up to you to do the complex and sometimes truly uncomfortable work of getting prepared to receive it. What I found through my journey was that the key was getting "emotionally naked." It was the key that opened the door to everything else. If you feel like your life tapestry was stripped away from you, here is a chance to take control of your nakedness and be willing to change. Today, thanks to the hard work I did, I have been in a loving marriage for over two decades, and I feel more secure, happy, and confident in myself than I ever have before.

it took me years to find this way of thinking and I am passionate about sharing it with you. This e-book will attempt to give you the starter tools needed to successfully date by stripping down, opening up, and truly finding a partner you with whom you can live an authentic, fulfilling, and naked life.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1	
 PART ONE: SHEDDING YOUR ARMOR		
My Dating Story.....	4	
Vulnerability as Virtue	7	
Confronting Your “Frenemy”.....	9	
The Attribution Fallacy.....	11	
 PART TWO: THE ANATOMY OF A DATE		
Desirability: Be a Smart Hunter	13	
Body Language	15	
Following Through and Following Up	17	
Conducting a Date Post-Mortem	19	
 PART THREE: NAKED INTIMACY		
Share Your Head Before Your Bed	20	
Mutual Self-Disclosure	21	
Having Needs, Not Being Needy	24	
Communication as a Garden	26	
 CONCLUSION		28



PART ONE: *SHEDDING YOUR ARMOR*

My Dating Story

As children, we all develop a dream or model idea of who we want to be. People are constantly reminding us that we are just little saplings, tiny people not somehow separate from the "real world," dreams not yet realized:

"You're just like your father."
"You're going to do great things."
"You've got your mother's smile."
"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

We learn to answer that last question pretty early on with an earnestness hindered only by an adorable lack of realism. Some of us aspire to be astronaut-elephant-ballerinas, and some are more the lawyer-unicorn-the-color-blue or tiger-king-Spiderman types. We learn these models from the people around us, our fictional heroes and teachers. But we know them foremost and initially from one source: our parents.

Unfortunately, when it comes to love, many of us do not have an excellent romantic role model, a tiger-king-Spi-derman of love that we can aspire to. I was one of those people. My parents absolutely hated each other. The negative energy radiating off their relationship could've cooked popcorn. It was a nuclear reactor of bad feelings and regret, and I, just a child, was left to deal with the fallout.

But nothing that toxic could last, and so it didn't. My dad left my mother for another woman, and they finally divorced when I was ten. It tore my mother apart, and she told me as much. "Never let a man do to you what your father did to me," she said. Other gems of parental advice included, when it comes to men, "When they're hard, they're soft. When they're soft, they're hard." Thanks, mom. I was left with these sage words as my only real guidelines after she passed away from breast cancer when I was 15- years-old.

Obviously, I did not have an excellent example in my own family life for a loving, long-lasting relationship, so I latched onto the first man who seriously showed interest in me at the ripe old age of 21. It was a huge mistake, and I barely knew who I was, let alone who I would become.

We met in a photography school in Santa Barbara and, when I moved to Italy to shoot fashion, he followed me there. Art school! Italy! Travel! Devotion! At first, our romance had all the ingredients of a John Hughes romance movie.

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When I left him thirteen years later, I saw the truth: he was a pathological liar who manipulated others and me out of our money. Unfortunately, he wasn't the only one who had issues. I had clung to him for dear life and ignored countless red flags because I was afraid to leave him. I worried that I might never find another partner, and I would end up growing old alone.

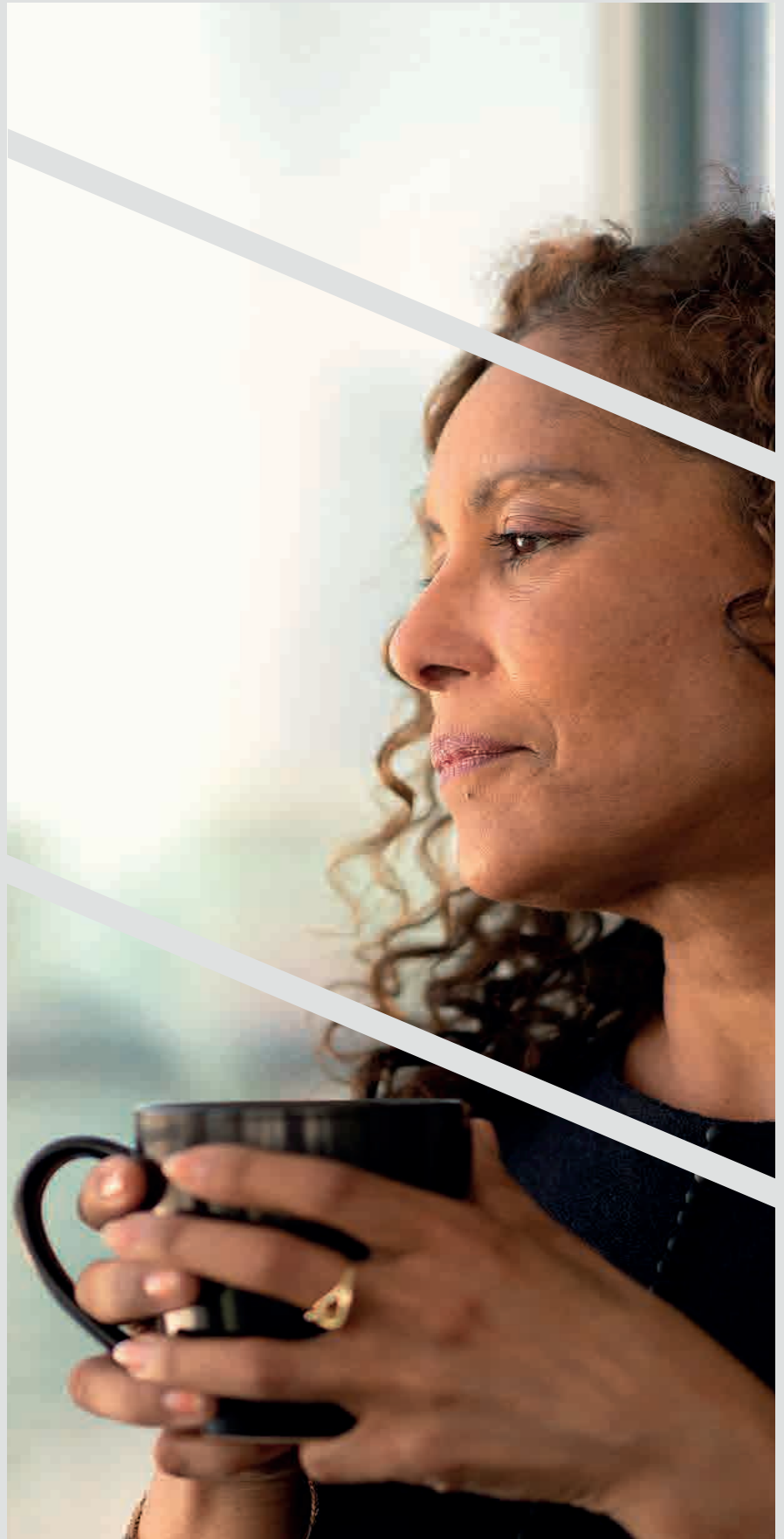
I felt like I was being held captive by an inner voice that ranged from a whisper of doubt to a wail of desperation anytime I tried to pull my head above water. So, even though I was talented and had moved from Los Angeles to Milan, Italy, to become a fashion photographer, the editors sensed my fear and I was given very few assignments.

I don't know what finally caused me to hit rock bottom and see that my life was going nowhere. Perhaps it was the tiny book I found called *The Laws of Success* by Paramahansa Yogananda that got me thinking about my life from a more spiritual perspective. Or, maybe I just got sick and tired of listening to my own excuses for why I wasn't going anywhere in life.

What happened next continues to amaze me. I retreated to the darkroom and, for three months, I printed black-and-white images and processed my life. Alone in the dark, I listened to my thoughts for the first time and finally heard how I had been playing the victim and blaming others for my lack of success. I also realized that I was very close to becoming a narcissist like my father. In those three months of soul-searching, I had so many epiphanies that the only way to describe what I experienced was to say I had a spiritual awakening.

Two weeks later, during another argument about money, I realized that we were having the identical fight we'd been having for thirteen miserable years. I stopped mid-sentence and said, "I can't do this anymore." When I boarded a plane two days later headed from Milan to New York, our phone line was disconnected for non-payment, and the rent was six months overdue.

I got divorced and committed myself wholeheartedly for nearly a decade to the work of selfimprovement and gaining self-awareness. After years of poorly thought-out decisions, it was the best decision I ever made. I went to classes, 12-Step meetings, therapy, and spiritual studies, ending up with a Master's in spiritual psychology.



I did all of this work, hoping it would ultimately help me attract a wonderful man who would share his life with me. But after immersing myself in the personal growth world for six years, I still wasn't attracting quality men. Then, I realized that learning to love and value myself was only the first half of the journey. I didn't need to spend more years on a therapist's couch or do another personal growth course hoping to figure out why I was still single; what I needed was to date and apply all I had learned from my selfgrowth work to attract a life partner.

After 96 first dates, hundreds of emails (this was before texting), and seeing the insides of more Starbucks than I care to remember, I finally found the man who would become my husband, the Guardian of My Soul, Benjamin Shield. I had never felt the way I did when he first looked into my eyes and have now come to understand that this is what it feels like to be in the presence of an emotionally naked man.

Emotional, not physical nakedness, is the foundation for lasting love. Most of us long for someone to know our deepest selves, but we are terrified to take down the fortresses we've built around our hearts. So, we try to use things like alcohol and sex to do the job for us, and we wind up becoming lovers before we are even friends.

Unfortunately, the only person who can take down the walls around your heart is you, and that is what this e-book will show you how to do.

My husband and I have used the same approach outlined in this e-book to create a relationship that only grows richer and more fulfilling over time. We've been together for decades and never fought. Of course, we occasionally disagree, but we care more about the relationship and each other than our need to be right.

This is not how it was in our previous marriages. Both of us argued and fought with our exes. I can't speak for Benjamin, but I vowed to take a different approach this time. Instead of just going out on dates and telling myself, "It's just a numbers game," I set an intention to use dating as a spiritual path and allow my issues and blocks to come to the surface to be healed. In this way, I knew I could let go of as much of my emotional baggage as possible and not carry it into my next relationship.



Contrary to what many therapists tell you, two people do not always come together in a romantic partnership to process old wounds. We can learn how to take responsibility for our emotional triggers and stop projecting blame on our partners.

By getting emotionally naked through my process, you do all the hard work before getting into the relationship so that you can have a peaceful, playful partnership that will last a lifetime.



Vulnerability as Virtue

What are some qualities you value in a person? Not just romantically (we'll come back to that), but generally? Kindness? Bravery? Honesty? Patience? I want you to take a second to write some of them down. Think about it like you are an omnipotent God creating the ideal person or, if you like cartoons, a "Professor" making the "Powerpuff Girls" (FYI: That ingredient list would include "sugar, spice, everything nice, and CHEMICAL X").

For you, what are the ideal characteristics of a human being? Here are some more examples:

- Respect
- Humility
- Faith
- Integrity
- Excellence
- Ambition
- Compassion
- Humor
- Wisdom
- Wi-fi (Just kidding, just kidding. Wi-fi is a given.)

Some of those words are similar but mean slightly different things to different people. Some of them you may value more than others. If you want, try to rank them. Again, in general, not just a romantic sense. Now, I want you to look at that list and add one more in big letters:

V

VULNERABILITY

Now, I know what you're thinking: "I'm not sure about that! That doesn't sound good!" And you're right. "Vulnerable" as defined by Merriam-Webster has a decidedly negative connotation:

1. "Capable of being physically or emotionally wounded" (Yikes!)
2. "Open to attack or damage; assailable" (Dumb!)
3. "Liable to increased penalties but entitled to increased bonuses after winning a game in contract bridge" (...Um. Okay.)

But for our purposes, I want to reclaim vulnerability as a virtue and redefine it as “the desire to get emotionally naked.”

To explain, I like to draw a parallel between vulnerability as a virtue and patience or humility as a virtue. Patience is good. Patience allows you to be a good teacher and a good friend. It allows you to listen. It allows you to hold on through tough situations. But it can be interpreted negatively. Patience does not mean you let life pass you by. It does not mean you are not active in your decisions or fail to correct your mistakes. Patience is not complacency.

Humility is good. Humility allows you to stay grounded despite success and recognize a need in others without being apathetic or threatened. Humility does not mean you let people walk all over you, and it does not mean that you cannot appreciate your own abilities. Humility is not insecurity.

Vulnerability is good, and it means you can expose your authentic self to people and receive love in return. It means you are secure enough in yourself that you don't need impenetrable walls. It makes you a great friend and an even better lover and partner. But it does not mean you're needy, emotional, or easily wounded.

Vulnerability is not frailty or fragility.

Most people have no concept of this type of emotional nakedness. They hide their feelings, wants, and needs and yet wonder why they go unfulfilled. They even hide those desires from themselves by not taking the time to reflect. They approach every date as a potential disappointment, not a potential opportunity for growth and learning. Every decision is either over-thought (see the following section, “Confronting Your Frenemy”) or under-thought and fueled by rage, resentment, or fear.

Getting emotionally naked will take time and not necessarily be painless. You will make mistakes, but mistake-making is the stuff of truly living. If nothing is ever going wrong, something isn't right. To get scientific, in evolutionary biology, any organism that is not growing or changing is defined by one word: dead. So embrace the growth! Embrace vulnerability! When you adopt the idea of vulnerability as not a flaw but as a virtue, as a thing you desire for yourself and others, you are on your way to being emotionally naked.

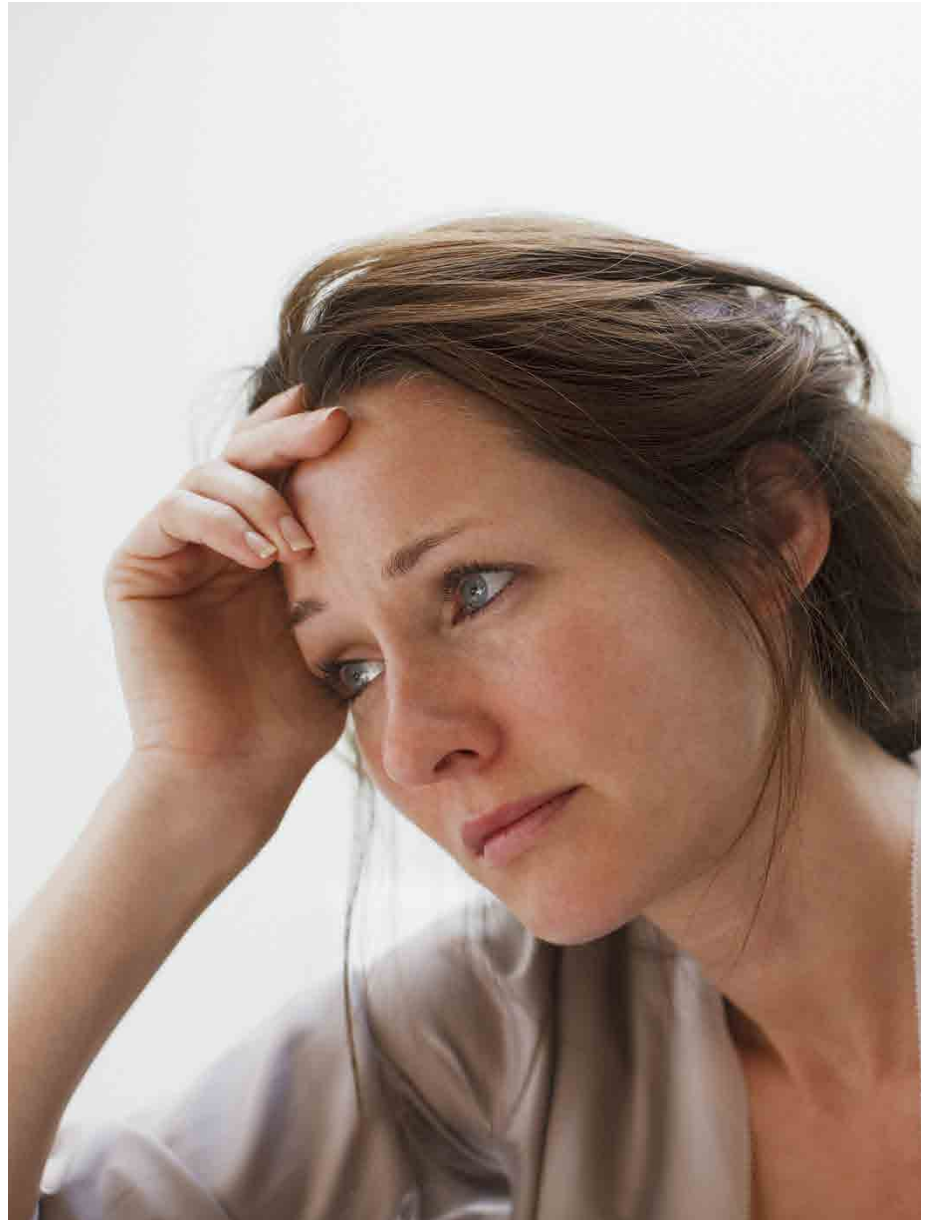
Confronting Your “Frenemy”

OK, now you're ready to put yourself out there and look for some loving. Yay! But where do you go? What do you do? You have an idea: you'll make an online dating profile! That's easy! Or is it? I mean, you have to join the site. Which site or app? Match? Bumble? Tinder? Uh...not sure. And then you'd have to pick some pictures. Ugh, you look horrible in every photo! And what do you say in the biography portion? What if you make the profile and nobody responds? What if only creeps respond? What a disaster! No, no, better not make a dating profile. Maybe go to a bar? Yikes, a single person by themselves at a bar looking for a date? How cliché! No, no, better not do that. Maybe go somewhere else? A club? The library? Church? The dog park?

No, no, no. None of it is right. Maybe ask your friends? Ugh, what if they think you're desperate? Or needy? Or what if they all secretly think you're too unattractive to find love? What if they all secretly pity you??? Oh, secret-pity is the worst! No, no. Can't do that. You know what? You should just stay home. That's safe. Wrap yourself in a cocoon of blankets and only poke your head out to eat or cry. That's the safe choice. It's what you deserve. It's the only choice. It's your fate. Woe is you! All that italicized nonsense you just read above? That is what I like to call your “Frenemy.” Frenemy is the voice in your head that constantly questions your pursuit of what you want. It continually invents scenarios in which things go wrong. Often, this voice is a combination of real people (or maybe even one specific

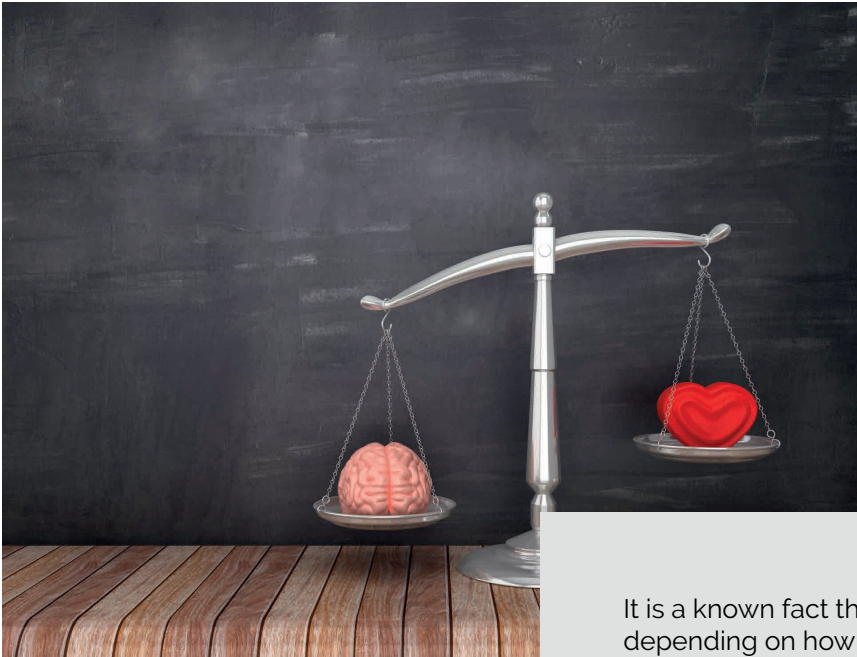
person). It's your hypercritical mom, over-dramatic best friend, or abusive ex. They're in your head, doubting you, pressuring you to build emotional walls, telling you you're not good-looking, smart, successful, or loveable enough. To date successfully, you have to confront your Frenemy. I encourage my clients to give that voice a name. You can take inspiration from anywhere and give yours one too. Maybe Frenemy is “Susan,” inspired by that mean lady in Accounts Receivable or from the PTA meeting, with her detached tone and judgmental eye. Perhaps it's “Lieutenant Luke,” militant in his critiques, unyielding and devastating. Maybe it's “Crystal,” with her perfect life, always on her high horse, reminding you that you should be doing better.

That you'll be rejected outright? That you'll never find love? Or, that you will find love, but the person will lie to you or mislead you? What exactly is that fear? Who exactly is Frenemy to you? Reflecting on this is key to overcoming the mental obstacles in your way. Another thing this will help you do is to understand some of your real-life relationships in a more comprehensive way. Some of us have true frenemies, friends we keep around even though they don't seem to care for us or actively hurt us. Understanding that internal voice will not only help you recognize toxic relationships but also the loving ones you undoubtedly have. Dating can be emotionally taxing, and so it's essential to realize the excellent relationships that already exist in your life: friends, family, etc. **Remember: you are lovable and there are people who love you, right now, just as you are.** My philosophy very much has a spiritual underpinning, and in Zen Buddhism, there is a concept of "beginner's mind." Thinking back to us all being born, naked and



afraid, what allows us to grow and overcome our initial fear is our openness and curiosity. Your Frenemy will try to convince you that it is an expert at finding love, but what it really wants is for you to avoid rejection or change. And if that voice was an expert at finding love, you'd have it by now! Your curiosity and openness have to overcome your Frenemy's constant doubts. The power of the human brain is that it is simultaneously limitless and limited by its own self. The

mind is a prison of its own making, and Frenemy is the prison warden. Make a prison break! Escape! Or, at the very least, get out on parole for good behavior! You do not have to let that voice rule your life. Once you accept its purpose but recognize it as the flawed voice that it is, you can move past fear and on to love.



The Attribution Fallacy

Imagine this: you go on a date. It seems to go well. You laugh over a plate of mozzarella sticks. You chuckle through tales from your childhood over a round of drinks. You whisper sweet nothings late into the night. And then...crickets. You don't hear from him again! What gives? What is the world coming to? What cruel god would allow such things to happen to one of its beloved creations?

You try to think of what could have gone wrong. Options include:

- A) You're a worthless, disgusting worm, and the date secretly hated you the whole time. Why do you even bother? Your mom was right!
- B) That date is a worthless, disgusting worm who led you on because they are Satan's spawn and deserve all the worst that life has to offer. Their mom was right!
- C) Literally anything else. The person got busy. They thought you weren't interested. You gave them the wrong number. Etc.
- D) All of the above. Everything is awful. You. Them. EVERYTHING.

It is a known fact that we often go straight for options (A) or (B) depending on how our self-esteem is feeling that day. But you know what's most likely? (C)!

Time to bust open your social psychology textbooks because this fatal flaw has a name: the fundamental attribution error (FAE) or attribution fallacy. Coined by psychologist Lee Ross based on experiments done in the late 1960s, this mind-trick can be summed up like this: we believe too much that every little thing a person does reflects who they inherently are. In the original experiment, subjects were asked to read positive and negative articles written about Fidel Castro, and they were told that the writers of the articles picked which side to take. Then, they were asked to rate how they thought the writers personally felt about Castro. Naturally, they rated the writers who wrote positively about him as having better opinions of him and vice versa.

However, in the next task, they were told that the writers had been assigned which side, positive or negative, to take when writing the article via coin toss. The result? The subjects still thought writers who wrote positively must personally have better opinions about Castro and vice versa. These results have been replicated many times over the years. Even when we know there are

Outside factors that contribute to our actions and outcomes, we look at behavior or results at face value, especially when dealing with people, we don't know well. We are uncharitable. We make snap judgments. We write people off, and sometimes we even write off ourselves. We ignore clear signals that something else is causing someone's behavior and jump straight to good/evil summations. Everything is black and white. Someone is wrong, and the other person is right, and that's it. You do it all the time and don't even realize it. Someone cuts you off in traffic? What a linsert swear word of choice here!! You've got plenty of colorful curses for them, even though they honestly just might not have seen you and probably aren't some horrendous monster. A potential date isn't a monster because they forgot to text back. You are not a worthless worm because you got ghosted. This flawed way of thinking drives many a potential relationship straight into the ground or suffocates it in its crib before it can grow.



When you're considering your romantic history, ask two questions:

1) Am I being charitable to my former/current partner?

- a. What are all the outside factors that could have contributed to their behavior? Where were/are they in life?

What else was/is contributing to their unhappiness?

- b. How would I react to similar outside stressors? Is there empathy I could be missing?

2) Am I being charitable to myself?

- a. What sort of person was I in the relationship? What outside factors made that relationship hard to be in?

(Sickness, job dissatisfaction, immaturity, family issues, etc.)

- b. Have I dealt with those outside factors? Am I ready to move forward? (Remember: it is not a weakness if you're not quite ready yet! Maybe you still have work to do! That's okay! Be kind to yourself! Give yourself time!)

The lesson here is to always take a step back and truly consider all the reasonings behind your and others' behavior (the "Date Post-Mortem" section in Part 2 goes more into tips about how to do just that).



PART TWO: *THE ANATOMY OF A DATE*

Desirability: Be a Smart Hunter

Now, let's move from internal work to external work. To do this, I will use the analogy of a fisherman (or genderless fisherperson, however you like). We've talked about vulnerability as a virtue, but when it comes to going on dates, the mechanics of dating, you need to approach them with a reciprocally desirable mindset and clear intent.

Earlier, I had you list some desirable characteristics in a person. Look back at that list. How many of those qualities do you possess? Are you being pickier, less compassionate, with other people than you are with yourself?

An example I often see with my clients: "Lily" goes on a date. It goes well, but it's not amazing. She doesn't feel strongly about it and comes to me for advice. She has all these characteristics in her mind that he didn't quite meet. Lily says her date was boring. Is Lily that entertaining? Did she open up opportunities for fun or humor or shut them down?

Lily says he's not as successful as she would like. Is she

exactly where she wants to be in her own career? Did he seem ambitious despite any setbacks?

You have to stop focusing on finding your ideal person and become your ideal person. Opposites attract but desired and undesirable never mix. If you think about it, this should actually be exciting. So much of dating feels out of your control, but if you put yourself in the right position, the right mindset, searching for the right things, it's damn near impossible to fail.

This is where I'd like you to think of yourself as a hunter. If you want to catch a fish, you can't wade out into the water in business attire and yell "I WANT FISH!" at the water. If you want to hunt birds, you don't sit in your driveway with binoculars wondering why they don't show up. It doesn't make sense, and it won't work. You also can't just dress up in the rubber waders, grab a fishing rod, go out into the water, and expect fish to come to jump into your bucket. You can't just

grab a gun and go wandering into a place you hear goose like to hang out. You have to be a hunter! Learn the craft! Get the right bait or traps! Catch a couple of wrong ones and learn from them! It takes more work, but it's almost impossible to come home empty-handed if you practice this approach.

There's the old saying that goes, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." A client of mine had a pastor in her church who took it further.

"You want to be blessed, but you run from the doors opened to you! You want a God-fearing man, but you're looking for him in the late-night club!" he'd yell to the congregation. We want a desirable mate, but we don't want to become more desirable or look in desirable places. We want someone who has reflected on themselves, but we don't want to do that work ourselves.

Figure out what you're hunting for and where to find it. If you want a bird, you don't go into the forest with a fishing rod. If you want fish, don't wade into the waters with a hunting rifle. You have to have a clear intent. If you're not sure if you wish to a fish or a bird, it's going to be pretty impossible to learn the right craft and get the right equipment.

With that in mind, here are some practical questions to think about:

-Are you a fisherman in the forest? Are you looking for the right person in the wrong place? Do you want someone who is exactly where he wants to be in his career? Did he seem ambitious despite any setbacks?

--Do you want someone who wants children, but you are not open to someone who may already have them? Really reflect on your pursuit.

-Are you a person you would want in your life? Would you date you?

-On the date, are you open to letting someone surprise you? Are you truly looking for the best in someone, or picking out their flaws? Are you asking as many questions as they are?

-Are you taking time after each date to reflect and also to congratulate yourself on being open and taking the risk? Do that! It's important.

Desirability is a two-way street and you are the city planner. I've seen it time and time again with my clients: when they start reflecting more and judging less, when they become the right person instead of just looking for one, they can easily catch a fish, fly, bird, or whatever type of partner they want. You can take the reins of your dating life. You realize you have more power than you think!

Body Language

Even after we overcome all the mental blocks to asking someone out, being on a first date can be nerve-wracking in itself. You try to figure out what to say, what to wear, and how to speak. And sometimes, you focus both internally and externally on the wrong things. By that, I mean, not only do we not realize the signals we're putting out, but we wrongly attribute the signals we get from other people.

In my studies of neuro-linguistic programming and client coaching, I've realized there are three parts to communication:

- The exact words you say
- The tone/speed of your voice
- Body language (our focus for now)

The next section will touch more on the

first two, but we'll focus on body language for now because there are very actionable tips that can be helpful when on a date.

My "emotionally naked" philosophy links the mind, heart, and body into one unit with parts that feed off of and work with each other. And sometimes, we don't realize what we're communicating with our physicality, even unconsciously. It becomes a feedback loop: we say we're open emotionally, but we don't look like it, and the person we're interested in picks up on that, so we reflect it back and so on and so on until both people have their walls up.

Here are some body language tips with a basis in social science and my own

experience with clients:

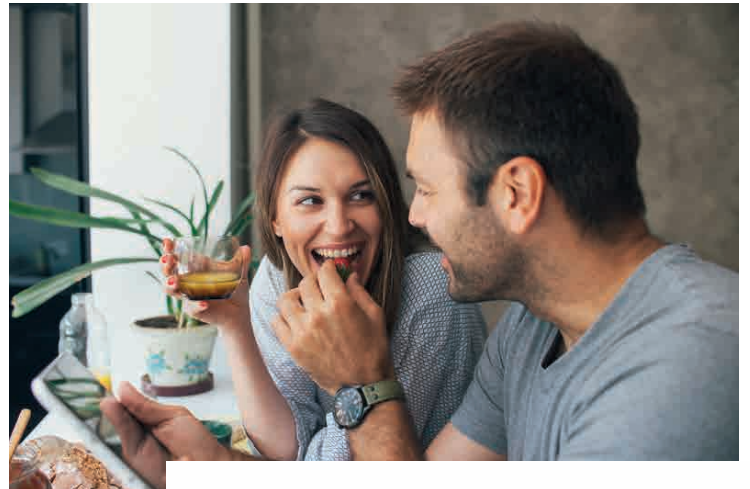
- Smile. We often don't see how our neutral "listening" face can seem harsh or dismissive. Also, studies show that people who are asked to smile while saying even awful things have a more positive perception of them than people who aren't. Smiling in itself releases endorphins. The human mind/body is fantastic! So, give it a try.

- Touch. I'm not saying feel the person up the moment you meet them. I mean the intimate kind of touch that is appropriate for first date. Especially for women, a simple touch on the shoulder can work wonders to show interest. There's a reason why small gestures that are not inherently erotic, like holding hands, mean so much. Sometimes a simple touch, fixing a piece of hair, tapping a knee, can open the door up to more intimacy and clearly communicate that you are interested. Psychologically, fixing someone's hair, ordering a drink, any "charitable" act triggers reciprocal emotions in the other person. Think about a time when you've dropped something and had someone pick it up, open a door for you, or hold the elevator. If that person wanted to ask you out after that, you'd be way more likely to say yes regardless of how they looked. And not just out of guilt. Out of a sense they might be a caring individual.

-Open your body up physically. This is a little less obvious, but try to face that person on a date fully. Turn your body to be open to them. This produces a sort of evolutionary response that goes back to vulnerability. In the same way your dog will let you rub its belly but won't let a stranger, you fully facing the person you're on a date with and being open to them signifies trust.

-Mimic the other person's body language. This is something we do naturally with our friends; in the same way, we adopt their speech patterns, but it can be a subtle trick if you're feeling uncomfortable about showing you're engaged on a date. Do they have their legs crossed? Cross your legs. Hand on the hip? Try it. This is tricky because you don't want to look like you're mocking them, but we do this mimicry naturally with people we trust and like. Next time you're out with friends, notice how if one does something, like sit a certain way or move in the room, slowly others in the group might do it as well, unconsciously. The human mind/body is impressive, again!

These are just some general body language tips. The overall idea that should come through is that we naturally express our emotions physically, and taking control of that is crucial. In fact, you already have control over it; you just don't realize its importance. With my help, we can fine-tune all the skills we all naturally bring to the table to focus on your specific goal.



Following Through and Following Up

I have thousands of client stories where I could analyze mistakes they've made, but I'd like to share one of my own for this section. Before I met my husband and was still just figuring out this whole dating game, one of my very first "first dates" in fact, I met a man on a dating website and made plans to travel his way for brunch. He was attractive and charming. We had decent conversations via text. I was very excited.

But with that excitement eventually came two tons of nerves. The closer the date came, the more I metabolized all of that positive opportunistic energy into rabid fear. I got scared. I woke up on the morning of the date with two of the coldest feet on this side of the Arctic Circle. I paced around my bedroom, avoiding getting ready. Knowing I had to leave soon even to make it on time, I called him in a panic to confirm, but he didn't answer because he was in the shower, you know, preparing for the date we were supposed to have. By the time he called back, it far was too late for me to make it on time. I sighed, oddly relieved. I rambled when we got on the phone, making up some lame excuse. I offered to leave home right then, but he said that wouldn't work because he had plans later in the day. Okay. He would call to reschedule. Bye. Click.

But then he called back. He called back to say he wouldn't be calling again. He wasn't mean about it. He said I seemed like a lovely woman, but this wasn't going to work. He could tell I was scared, and he didn't want to start a relationship with someone still reckoning with their emotions. Though I was taken aback, I appreciated his honesty!

This is all to say: follow-through is essential. You may think that you're doing an excellent job of dating despite your fear, playing some shell game with it instead of dealing with it, but you are not. Your fearfulness in dating is apparent, unattractive, and never more on display than when you cancel or fail to follow through on plans.

Here are some tips on how to up your follow-through game:

1. Reward yourself for keeping plans. Put that date on your Google Calendar and clear your schedule or do whatever you have to do to get yourself in the right headspace before and after that date. Then, as a reward for facing your fear, ignoring your chilly feet, and getting out there like a grown-up, plan something fun or relaxing. Dating is hard. Dates don't always go well. But you did it anyway! Treat yourself!



Don't play time games. Some clients have an elaborate algorithm they've developed to determine who should contact who first and when. "Wait one day, divide by the number of texts, find the least common date-nominator, carry the five, add on 5 minutes for every date you've gone on..." This is not the time to practice pre-calculus! So what if they took two hours to text you back? Doesn't mean you need to wait two or whatever your weird made-up algorithm says! Just text back as soon as you can, like the functional adult you are. And don't take it personally if there's some time between texts. Remember that old attribution fallacy: they're not a bad person who you could never have children with just because they waited a day to respond to the hilarious meme you sent them.

Just as important is turning date #1 into date(s) 2+. To that, you have to be willing to reach out first and follow up after that initial meeting. We're all afraid of seeming needy, but if you like the person, make it clear! After a successful date, shoot them a text to let them know how much fun you had and that you'd like to see them again. But don't end it there! Actively suggest some times/dates that you're free and something you'd like to do.

*"Still thinking about how much I had last night.
Drinks on Saturday?"*

"Just saw that new horror movie is opening this weekend. I'm down if you promise you'll hold my hand."

*"Had so much fun kicking your butt in bowling.
Maybe round two is darts at my favorite bar on Thursday? You might just have a chance."*

***Keep it light and actionable,
meaning the message
requires them to make it
clear to you whether or not
they want to keep seeing
you. Put the ball firmly in
their court. No guesswork,
no fuss. And no matter what
happens, you can walk away
knowing you made your
intentions known, which is
all anyone can ask.***



Conducting a Date Post-Mortem

When most people date, each individual date is like spinning a wheel where one slice has a fun, sexy prize and 99 others have some sort of emotional peril behind them, a genuine "Wheel of Misfortune." It's a fruitless game. You don't really learn anything. It's all up to chance. You just deal with the outcome and try to spin again. It all gets very exhausting very quickly. Even when you do luck out and win a prize, you definitely never want to go back to spinning the wheel. Ever. But when we're dating emotionally naked, each date is a fun experiment, an opportunity, and never a disappointment. We're scientists in a lab just tinkering around, looking forward to any results because all experiments, successful or not, give us valuable data that we can use going forward. **So no matter what happens on the date, we can use it to better ourselves.** Dating this way, you can't lose. That is unless you fail to collect your data. That is why it's crucial to analyze your dates or conduct a date postmortem. So every time you go out with someone, open your little mental or physical lab book and do the following:

1

Rate the Date. How did it go overall? You can develop your own rating system, but getting a sense of an intangible overall rating is an excellent first step. If this person was a restaurant on Yelp, would you recommend them to a friend? You can be broad at this point because the next steps will be trying to tie down all those intangibles into actual events that happened or that you wanted to happen.

2

Partner Analysis. Think back to your rating. What things did your partner do to contribute to that rating? What did they say? What did they not say? More importantly, how did it make you feel?

3

Self Analysis. Again, back to your overall rating. Did you come in with the expectations that the date would be a 10/10, and it was only a 5/10? Maybe you assumed the opposite. What did you do on the date? How did the other person react? Were there any miscommunications?

As your dating coach I can lead through these steps on each date and ensure we're not losing valuable insight.

4

Draw Conclusions. What lessons can you learn from this date? Do you want to see this person again?



PART THREE

NAKED

INTIMACY

Share Your Head Before Your Bed

We've talked about getting naked emotionally, but we also need to talk about getting naked physically. It's no secret: everybody wants to have fantastic sex. We're animals, after all. Sex consumes our media, from advertisements to art. Cosmopolitan Magazine has always got at least 100 tips on how women can do weird stuff with holes they've never even thought about before. We love having great sex. We want to feel that incredible primal attraction to our partner. We want someone we can't wait to get home to every day. We want someone who makes our blood pump in the best possible way, and we want to be able to sustain that feeling throughout our relationship. We all so desperately want it, but few of us are getting it. Or, we get it, and it slips away with time. Hands down, the best way to sustain a passionate physical connection is by getting emotionally naked first. During sex, the female bonding hormone, oxytocin, is activated, making it both a physical and emotional experience. When you are both on the same page emotionally, the sex is not only more erotic and fulfilling, but it is also sustainable. There is absolutely nothing wrong with having casual sex. **But it is a losing wager to bet that casual sex will turn into love.**

It usually doesn't and isn't a smart way to approach sex if you're looking for something long-term. Too often, women who are hooking up with someone casually think that one day he'll just wake up and say "Oh my gosh...that's my wife!" It doesn't happen that way. It's not at all a flaw of yours if you can't convert that steamy hook-up into a boyfriend. It's just not practical. Sex for the sake of sex is just that, nothing more. Turning it into a long-term relationship is like trying to put an eggshell back together. Is it possible? Sure. Is it probable? No. Just ask Humpty Dumpty. Start sharing your emotions first and the great sex will follow. Don't rush it. If you have a habit of jumping into the sack before you know someone's last name, knock it off! **My general advice is to wait 8-10 dates before sex.** That'll give you enough time to know if this is someone who is more than just a decent lay. Use your big head, not your little one, and you'll be better off in the long run.

1

Keep it positive

Mutual Self-Disclosure

I want to open this section with a story of a client we'll call "Gina." Gina went on a date with a man and attempted to be as open as possible. Any question he asked, she answered honestly and fully. He asked her probing personal questions and she was not afraid to bare her scars. Gina used the conversation as an opportunity to reflect on some of the more sordid parts of her life history (and unless you're Mother Teresa, all our histories are sordid if you look at them closely enough. In fact, Teresa herself was not without scandal, the quality of her medical care once being described as "haphazard" by a prestigious journal in Calcutta. In short, nobody's perfect).

But back to our girl Gina, trying her best to be courageous, accessible, and unafraid on her date. She puts herself on the line and then, after being so expressive and truthful, found her date

completely unwilling to do the same! He wouldn't open himself up to her. He was not willing to share his history as she had just done. She walked away feeling used, emotionally empty and, frankly, very much violated.

Approaching vulnerability as a virtue is important, but as much as you can be the right person, at the right time, seeking the right things, the other party has to meet you half-way. You, being someone who is probably more self-aware of your own wants than most people dating, have to be on the look-out for people who are not willing to get on your level. Being "emotionally naked" is nothing if not mutual. Your date has to value vulnerability as well.

Mutual self-disclosure is psychologically proven to be crucial to romance. "Getting To Know You" is not just a song in the musical

There are a couple ways to avoid ending up like poor Gina:

Focus on the lesson you learned or the insight you gained from any setback/negative experience in your history that you describe. Disclosure shouldn't be just a list of complaints or woes. You're a person fully engaged in the process of dating, fully engaged in self-reflection, and so show that to your potential partner. A question like "*Why did your last relationship end?*" can be answered with something that truly shows your maturity and ability to move on, despite how crappy that last relationship might have been. "*We were not inherently compatible and I realize that now*" or "*We learned a lot from each other but it's better we're not together. I've learned a lot from that relationship. What about you, What kind of relationship are you looking for?*" You want to communicate that you are past it, can reflect on it without being bitter, and are ready for something new. Also, if you can, redirect the answer so that it makes them also disclosure in a similar way.

2

Spare the gory details

If you're being open, remind yourself that this isn't your best friend. Some details are extraneous. Being open isn't sharing every deep detail of everything that's happened to you. Be sparing with your details unless they have specific imperative relevance to your journey and you can fit them within a larger, positive framework.

3

Don't gossip

Talking about a bunch of people sans context with someone you are just getting to know can be seen as just pure gossip. Be smart about revealing only things that are necessary to your personal story and only revealing those things to the right people. You don't want to be perceived as someone who is just collecting others' stories in confidence to later spill to the next person who buys you a drink. And you don't know if this person deserves even the tiniest bit of your confidence, so err on the side of being more private. This leads to our final, most important point:

4

When in doubt, lean back

If you feel like you're revealing more than the other person is revealing, then lean back and stop sharing. Trust your instinct and push for whatever disclosure you do to be mutual. If it's not, then opt out of the situation. If you've followed the advice thus far, there should be plenty of opportunity for the other person to present their own responses, to reveal themselves a little bit. If they're not willing to be mutual in their self-disclosure, then you might have to let that person go as a potential partner.

Several psychological studies have linked positive mutual disclosure and attraction. In fact, this type of social exchange is key to a dynamic, successful relationship. But certain factors can make this type of interaction difficult. One good way to think about encouraging that conversation is to avoid shallowness in all respects, shallowness of thought and shallowness of action. Materialism, pettiness, superficial complaints all communicate shallowness of thought. Lack of empathy, disrespect of physical space, and rude things like yelling at waitstaff all communicate shallowness of action. Communicate through your words and actions that you are trustworthy and caring and people will naturally open up to you.

Frenemy ultimately fears ending up like Gina, but with the right tools you don't ever have to get there. Frenemy tells you it's the worst-case scenario, but truly the worst-case is ending up alone because you're afraid to open up. Re-take control

from Frenemy by telling yourself that mutual self-disclosure is vital and clearly laying out in your head before a date which topics might be triggering or distressing to you. Maybe there are truly some things you'd only want to discuss after a certain amount of time. As your dating coach, I can help you figure out where to draw that line, when to lean back, and when to lay it all out there for the right person.

Disclosure can be a funnel, starting superficially and spirally inwards like a happy water slide, or it can be a slippery downward slope that leaves you feeling like Gina did. There's a balance in the conversation(s) of self-disclosure that helps move things forward in a satisfying way. In a one-on-one session, I can help further advise you on how to find that balance.

Having Needs, Not Being Needy

All of us are human beings, which means we have needs. Food. Water. Shelter. Netflix. Reasonable dental insurance. The basics. We also have social needs. We need to feel heard. We need to feel connected to others and that connection grounds us in our environment. With social support, we feel safer to explore and more comfortable with change. Lack of social interaction is one of the leading causes of depression. Poor social skills can ruin relationships or cause them not to exist in the first place. Human society all developed around this core tenet: **we need each other.**

I start off saying the obvious because it suddenly somehow becomes non-obvious when dating if you were to ask my clients. Let's take the story of my client "Katie." Katie goes on a date. He's handsome, whip smart, and has a killer smile. He invites her to a nice restaurant. They have fun conversation. He asks her out again. And...she says no thanks.

"Why? What went wrong?" I ask her. "Everything was perfect, but he kept correcting my English. I found it condescending and annoying."

"Well, did you say something about it?" I ask.

Crickets.

Tumbleweeds.

The sound of the ocean.

No! Of course she didn't! She couldn't just ask him to stop correcting her! She didn't know him that well! She didn't want to seem uptight!

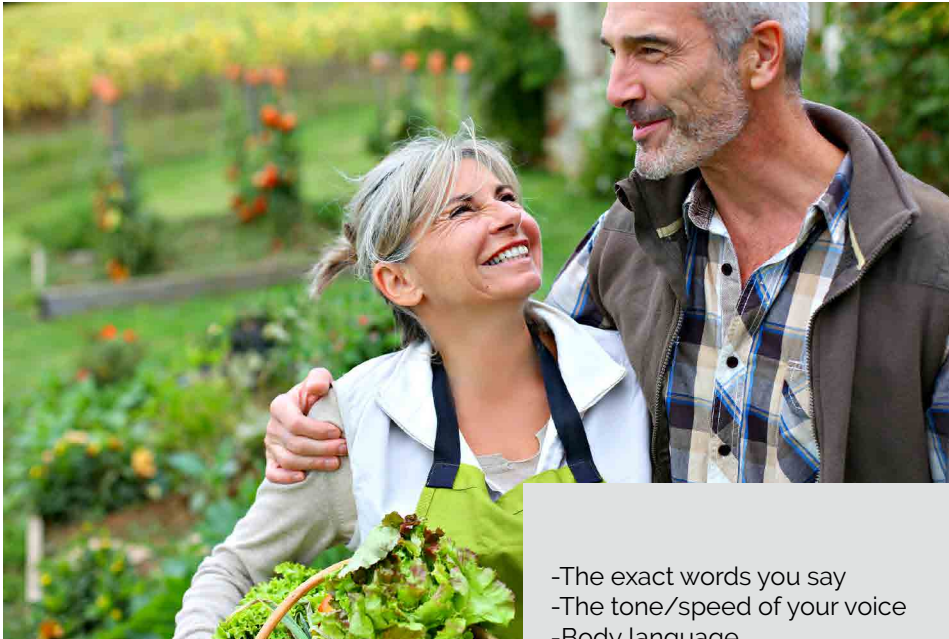
Another client ditched a guy because he had an annoying habit of interrupting. My client "Michael" didn't like a woman's constant complaining about her job. "Paula" told me her date was always egregiously late. And "Josephine" thought her date seemed bored all the time, his eyes listlessly looking around and hands fidgeting constantly. She assumed he must not be interested or she must be doing something wrong.

What all of these stories have in common is that none of these clients said anything about relatively minor communication errors because they didn't want to seem uptight, stuck-up, or, worst of all, needy. Everybody wants to come off as chill, aloof, casual, and down-for-whatever as possible. It seems like an appealing attitude to have.

Secrecy seems sexy. In fact, one of my friends once said she always tried to talk on dates like she had a "sexy secret." I thought it sounded more like a toddler who smoked five packs of Newport Lights a day and probably should go make an appointment with some kind of pediatric lung specialist, but she wasn't my client. I generally don't advise "Smoker Baby Voice" as an effective dating strategy.

We all have our (hopefully more subtle) ways that we try to communicate our aloofness. "Nothing bothers us!" we tell ourselves, "We are super cool and nobody and nothing can get to us!" We want to be the mysterious stranger at the bar, sunglasses on low, too sexy to care, too alluring to be bothered. But, really think about this attitude. It's counterintuitive. We want to show that somebody can get to us, emotionally, romantically! The truth is, we all have needs. And the most important thing to remember is that there is no need to suffer in silence.

Having needs doesn't make you needy, it makes you a human. But there is a fine line between asking for what you need and constantly complaining about what you want, the true definition of neediness. It's all in how you communicate your desires. Remember that saying I mentioned: "you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar"? There are ways to communicate your requests or suggestions, whatever they may be, in a way that is sweet and easy to swallow instead of harsh or whiny. This final section will give you some practical tips on how to do just that.



Communication as a Garden

All of this talk about talking could seem silly. Communicating should be easy right? Open mouth. Say words, probably in English, hopefully in a complete sentence. We do it all the time! Maybe add a smile for flair or a little wink. Done, done, and done. Then the other person does exactly what you say and BOOM! Relationship problem solved! Romance achieved! Love everlasting!

But, as we all know it's never that simple, especially if we have something critical to say. In the section on "Body Language," I listed three components to communication:

- The exact words you say
- The tone/speed of your voice
- Body language

We're now going to focus on those first two parts using the analogy of a garden. Using an emotionally naked mindset, we will begin to cultivate understanding and by conversing in the nude will yield us a mighty harvest of love and respect.

Step One:

Tilling and Fertilizing

I know I said earlier you were a hunter, but now we're going herbivore. You're a gardener. And the first ingredient in every garden is the foundation, the soil. Begin by saying something kind. "I've been loving getting to know you..." "You're a really amazing person..." Okay, now we've tilled the soil, softened it up. Next, you say "AND" not "BUT." "But" is a negative that will wipe out all the goodwill you built up with opening in a compliment. It makes the compliment seem insincere, which is

the opposite of what we want. We want to fertilize the soil, not poison it by making the person defensive. Remember and repeat: "AND" not "BUT!"

Okay, now we've set the stage with the soil, so let's plant some seeds or ideas in the person's mind. If we go back to "Katie," whose date was correcting her English, we could say "You're a really amazing person AND I found it a little off-putting when you were correcting my English on our date." Use "I" statements as much as possible, meaning try to talk not just about the action, but foremost how that person's action made you feel. Approach the offending action like it was an honest mistake, which it undoubtedly was. Don't play the blame game, just plant the seeds of change with kindness and clarity. Make it clear what you would like to see them do in the future.

Step Two:

Tilling and Fertilizing

Now, you may have to wait. While someone may immediately address the concern, they might need time to think about it or ask questions. People are not instantaneous robots. They need time to absorb information and process it. Let the seed grow. Maybe come back to the subject on your next date or some days later. Don't sit in the garden, over-watering and drowning the other person's thoughts and emotions.

Step Three:

Tilling and Fertilizing

If you've done it right, within a short period, the seeds will have grown and the other person will be equipped to address your concern. You can bring it back up in a neutral way: "Given any thought to what we talked about before?" Then, just sit back and listen. You can't force someone to think the way you do, so don't try. You'd be surprised how much you can learn about someone by how they respond to criticism and how much can learn about yourself. If you have a disagreement, badgering the other person isn't going to change their mind.

So often these conversations go awry because we rush to judgment and we jump to conclusions. We act like the other person is purposefully trying to hurt us before we get the full story. It's important that we view disagreements first as misunderstandings. This goes back to that idea of good faith and compassion. Don't assume the other person wants to make you upset and give them the benefit of the doubt that they would like to fix it if possible. A professional coach like myself can help you come to terms on whether this misunderstanding truly is a deal-breaker or a minor flaw.

Conclusion



Now that you understand my philosophy a bit more, I urge you to work with me one-on-one to take that understanding to the next level. My techniques can be adopted by anyone and yield romantic results. I want to use my years of experience as a coach to help you as I have so many clients. But by reading this, you understand what I'm going to need from you: a commitment to the process and a real ethos of self-reflection. Trust me, I understand how hard that can be. But I've done it, and I know you can. **Love is everywhere. The journey is just about tapping into it.**

As a dating coach, I can help you turn your single life into a period of growth instead of unending frustration. My coaching both helps you do the necessary self-reflection needed to date and helps you review your dates so that you take away lessons from each one. I can help you create a better dating profile, spice up your texting life, and keep you motivated through the inevitable pitfalls and bad experiences. Together, we can find you the right mate for life.

As a relationship coach, I can help couples achieve better communication and intimacy by unlearning bad habits and harmful internal scripts inherited from childhood. When you have a partner but would like to improve your relationship, the process has to start with good faith and an outsider's perspective can often help a couple remember what they love and respect about each other.

We all are born into the world naked and afraid. Ideally, you should leave the world physically clothed, emotionally naked, and without any fear. With my help and your own continual commitment to the dating process, the journey of romance with all of its obstacles, your life can get there.