

No singular style for singles

5 authors share advice on finding a mate or date

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Combine a growing cadre of chick-lit books and television shows such as "Sex and the City," "Friends" and "The Bachelorette" with the diminished demographic odds of women finding men to marry after age 35, according to Census Bureau statistics, and what do you have--besides a lot of anxiety about dating?

A burgeoning list of how-to-date books, which remove spontaneity and romance in choosing a mate and replace them with more analytical strategies that some can relate to better.

One author pegs the search to reeling in a big fish while you let the small, inconsequential minnows get away. Another equates looking for the perfect mate to landing the perfect job, after you've bounced back from several rejections. And still another compares the process to turning yourself into the most desired brand, with the best packaging and widest distribution, so you, rather than some other product, get pulled off the shelf.

The authors' credentials are just as diverse as what they recommend, with expertise based on their own forays in the dating world, their work as dating coaches and their classroom instruction at Harvard Business School. Here, five authors share their advice.

Q. Why did you write your book, and what's your status?

Liz H. Kelly -- I was laid off from the dot-boms in Los Angeles and decided to turn a negative into a positive by going after my life dream to write a dating book. In high school, I was referred to as "Dr. Liz" because of my ability to give dating advice, but my professional background is in corporate training, marketing, communications and sales presentations. I'm now a dating coach. I've been divorced five years but am dating someone seriously whom I met through a matchmaking service. We're talking "future."

Jennifer Worick -- I wrote it because it's a mystery to know how to interpret men's signals. So many women think dating and a relationship will just happen, but you improve your odds if you have an idea of how to approach it strategically. I'm dating, but

had been in a long-term, long-distance relationship. I'm a freelance writer and editor.

Steve Nakamoto -- I wanted to know the answers and use my experience as a personal development and former Dale Carnegie instructor. I have a serious girlfriend and marriage is possible. We met at a dinner singles club.

Steven Sacks -- I wanted to use my own experience because at times I've been single or in a relationship and found dating a constant struggle. I'm a relationship expert who coaches over the phone and in person. I'm now seriously involved.

Rachel Greenwald -- I'm married, have three children and got my MBA at Harvard. For me it was Census data that heralded a crisis. There are 28 million single women over age 35 and only 18 million single men over 35 [according to the 2000 U.S. Census]. Women of all ages complain that it's so hard to meet someone.

Q. What does your book offer that others don't?

Liz -- I advise women to approach dating like a job hunt; a lot of skills are the same. You have to be patient, persistent, not act desperate because guys can sense when you give off needy vibes. You also can't fix a guy. It's better just to say "Next." And, you have to market yourself for the first date.

Jennifer -- I encourage trying lots of avenues. Dating takes time and energy but I want to take away the intimidation and fear by suggesting ways such as speed dating, meeting through friends. I take the tone of one girlfriend giving advice to another. I also have quizzes to help you determine which part of the book will help you most based on your dating habits and personality. You might prefer bars to Internet dating.

Steve N. -- I suggest that men are like fish and women have to catch them. Some men are easy to catch but you may want to throw them back. The big elusive ones that you may want to keep require specialized knowledge. You also have to let go of the big fish tales of your past because they get in the way of your present and future happiness. And you can spook men away early--like fish--by doing the wrong thing like finishing his sentences.

Steven S. -- I give advice based on thousands of hours of my thinking about dating and my business background. You may be instantly attracted based on chemistry, personality or physical attraction but you need to know you're compatible over time. You have to be analytical.

Rachel -- I've taken what I learned about psychology as an undergrad at Wellesley College and the marketing techniques I learned at business school and applied them to dating. I take women through 15 steps. One of the first is to create a personal brand that makes you stand out such as an "international charming architect." You also need a mentor to bounce ideas off and occasionally need to recharge in the same way that marketers reintroduce products as "new and improved."

Q. But these approaches seem so cold and goal-oriented. Shouldn't finding love be romantic?

Liz -- Yes, but to find Mr. Right you need a combination of getting to know someone, which takes fun and research. I had the goal to be married by age 30 and was, but I compromised a lot and got divorced. You don't want to marry the wrong person.

Jennifer -- That may be but there are so many people out there who keep missing each other and don't know how to connect. Part of the reason is that conversation has gone by the wayside. People go to a gym and don't talk. They have to learn how to communicate. I include a lot of conversation starters such as what you order at a bar.

Steve N. -- People do the best they can with their resources but unfortunately most don't have enough. Books offer this or that so they don't keep doing the same things.

Steven S.-- So many people expect that when they meet someone they'll know, but that rarely happens. Relationships need to develop over time. People may be good at meeting and marrying but divorce statistics show they're not good at choosing the right person to begin a relationship with. That's why you want romance but have to be analytical. Physical attraction isn't enough.

Q. Why do women--and men--have problems dating?

Liz-- Many have unrealistic expectations. I tell them what's most important is the person's attitude: Can they compromise? Be a positive cheerleader for you? Get you through life? Those things are more important than whether someone plays golf or is 6 feet tall. What if their financial situation changes and they can't play golf?

Rachel--So many fail to follow my step No. 4--to expand their market. They need to cast a wider net. They've decided on the type they're looking for and go into a crowded room and only look for men wearing a red shirt but if they looked for someone wearing a black shirt they'd probably find more possibilities. I tell them how to expand their market but not compromise. They can still find love, but it may come in a different package.

Q. What's the best way to meet? So many people talk about meeting in a supermarket by the lettuce area?

Liz -- There's not one way, but the Internet offers the biggest way to boost numbers. I tell women to try multiple dating sites, singles events. In the meantime, if they meet someone in the grocery store, great.

Steve N. -- Anywhere, where people's guards are down--at work, through friends, neighbors, an activity you're passionate about. Get out of the narrow environment where they work and live.

Steven S.-- Online and speed dating where you meet a lot more people at once.

Q. What have you found to be the most fun part of dating--and worst?

Rachel -- The excitement of sudden popularity. If you put a reasonable photo up on a dating site, you'll get a lot of responses. The worst part is rejection. You have to endure a lot--men who don't call back, who pursue you, then break off the relationship.

Liz -- Expanding your network. A lot of dates turned into friendships or business relationships. The worst part is the deceptions and disappointments. You show up and the person doesn't look like they presented themselves online or your friends set you up and gave you the wrong impression. One guy e-mailed me 10 times, confirmed a dinner that morning but stood me up.

Jennifer -- The anticipation that you might like a guy and someone new to kiss, but the worst part, too, is a first date when you're nervous or worried that he'll like you and you won't like him.

Steve N. -- When you feel someone starts to like you and you find someone who's not impressed with you at first but then you sweep them off their feet. The worst part is hurting someone.

Steven S. -- Getting to know so many interesting people. You need real-life experience to date smarter. The worst part is that it's time consuming and you go on blind dates where you know right away after 10 minutes it's not right but you made a dinner date.

Q. How do you know when he or she is the one and to stop dating others?

Liz -- You trust your gut instincts. When it's right, you'll know it. Communication is there and feelings are genuine.

Jennifer -- A gut instinct, you feel natural, tingle, and don't stop shaving your legs.

Steve N. -- When that someone starts to like you.

Steven S. -- When you know you're compatible in four areas--physical attraction, chemistry, love and personality.

Rachel -- You draw up a list after you're serious with only three attributes that your future husband must have, and the person has all three.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rachel Greenwald, 39, Denver, "Find a Husband After 35: Using What I Learned at Harvard Business School"

(Ballantine, \$22.95)

Liz H. Kelly, 41, Santa Monica, Calif.

"SMART Man Hunting--How to Get Out There, Get Dates, and Get Mr. Right!"
(iUniverse Star, \$14.95)

Steve Nakamoto, 50, Huntington Beach, Calif.

"Men Are Like Fish: What Every Woman Needs to Know About Catching a Man"

(Java Books, \$14.95)

Steven Sacks, 35, Durham, N.C.

"The Mate Map: The Right Tool for Choosing the Right Mate" (self-published, \$24.95)

Jennifer Worick, 35, Philadelphia

"Get Your Dating Game On: A Field Guide to Playing for Kicks or for Keeps"

(Laurel Glen, \$9.95)

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