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5 tips for singles who are ready to settle down

By Margot Carmichael Lester

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You've got the look. You've got the confidence. You're smart. You're funny... but despite all this, you still can't get a date. Why? Probably because you're waiting for love to find you. "Generally, we would rather be found than have to do all the searching ourselves," explains John Townsend, author of *Loving People: How To Love and Be Loved*. "There is less risk involved. But once we become comfortable learning to take initiative and introduce ourselves or make ourselves available to people we're attracted to, we understand that the risk isn't as scary as we once thought."

So it's time to turn around your mindset and start taking a proactive role in finding the love you want. Here are five expert tips to help you get started:

Tip #1: First, deal with any emotional baggage that could be holding you back. Instead of letting those feelings about your ex fester, manage them. "Reset your nervous system and give yourself the moment you need to stay out of your past," says Fred Luskin, author of *Forgive for Love: The Missing Ingredient for a Healthy and Lasting Relationship*. "Take two slow and deep breaths into and out of your belly, then picture something in your life that is safe and loving." The idea here is to reprogram yourself to focus on what's good in the present, not what hurt in the past, so you'll feel encouraged to get out there with renewed confidence.

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Tip #2: Have an open mind about what constitutes a dating deal-breaker and stick with a two-date minimum before moving on to the next prospect. "One of the most common dating mistakes is making snap judgments and not giving a good person another chance," notes Amy Schoen, a life coach and dating expert in the Washington, D.C. area and author of *Get It Right This Time: How to Find Your Ideal Romantic Relationship*. "We make assumptions that may not be true." Make a list of what really counts, and don't get caught up in the other details. What if the perfect person for you were five or even 10 years older than you'd always imagined? Would that be a deal-breaker to you? "Know what you really need in a relationship to be happy. Then, recognize good qualities in the person that match up with what you need," advises Schoen. Ask yourself where you can give a little and where you can't budge, and see if some new possibilities don't open up for you.

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Tip #3: Ask others to fix you up and go on as many dates as you can before committing to one person exclusively. “Too many singles are too eager to get into an exclusive relationship,” explains Kathy Stafford, author of *Relationship Remorse*. “If you limit yourself to just one person after only a couple of dates, you’re passing on a lot of opportunities to meet someone who might suit you better.” So whenever the opportunity presents itself for you to date several people at once, do so till one of them really seems like The One. We’re not saying to tell your dates that you are seeing each of them exclusively — there’s no need to mislead anyone! If asked, be honest about the fact that you are enjoying your dating days and meeting lots of new people.

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Tip #4: Try looking for potential dates online. “People think they’re open to meeting that special someone; that is, if they bump into someone at the grocery store, their best friend arranges a meeting or they happen to sit in the same pew at church, then it’s fate,” notes Los Angeles-based dating and relationships coach [Sally Landau](#). “C’mon! Even Martha Stewart is online now.” All you have to do next is find a site that appeals to you, complete a profile and then start reaching out. You’ll find yourself in contact with people who match your criteria regarding a life partner, but might not have otherwise met face-to-face. So go ahead — send a wink, send an email. Everyone knows someone who met their sweetie online these days.

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Tip #5: Change up your daily routine to discover new and interesting people who don't frequent your usual haunts. You’re not going to meet new people doing the same old things. “Going to new places and trying new things is more difficult than it sounds, so take baby steps,” says April Masini, author of *Date Out of Your League*. But do make an effort to change up your routine. You haven’t met someone at your favorite Starbucks, dry cleaner or grocery store yet, so it’s time to try something completely different. “Start by doing something easy, like having lunch alone in a restaurant or volunteering,” suggests Masini. See what happens from there; at worst, you may end up with a new friend or two. Develop your small-talk skills — chat with random people, whether you see anyone as a potential partner or not. It’s an important step in getting yourself to feel comfortable at being a bit more social in public — and it will pay off in the long run when it comes to dating, too.

Employing any of these strategies will help you take a more active role in getting Cupid’s attention. There’s nothing in the world wrong with taking a more strategic role in finding the love you want instead of just waiting for it to come looking for you!

Margot Carmichael Lester is a North Carolina-based freelance writer who met her husband online.

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