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Loving During Lent

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Most people who are looking for love would be wise to cast a wide net. It's a good idea to look beyond your own religion — if religion isn't on your deal-breaker list (if you don't have one, grab a pencil!)



But that means you may be spending this spring celebrating a different religious holiday with your new boyfriend.

It's important to know how to behave when you're with someone who has a **different religion** than you do, as well as how to behave around his family in order to make the relationship work.

The big three tenets to remember are:

1. Tolerance of differences
2. Compromise
3. Flexibility

Never...

- Criticize another religion

If you don't agree with the practice of taking communion, kneeling in worship or saying prayers, then don't do it.

Be quiet about it and allow other people to practice their religion as they normally do.

- Disrespect another religion

Some places of worship have a dress code that is designed to show respect. It will usually involve covering parts of your body – from a bare midriff to your bare arms.

If you're visiting a place of worship you've never visited before, don't wear jeans or ratty sandals. **Dress up a little** in a conservative way.

- Consider another person's reticence to join in your holiday as rejection of your faith

Be tolerant if your date is not ready to dive into your religion with gusto. It takes time for some people to adjust.

Don't expect people to have the same ability to adjust and embrace new things and vice versa.

Be prepared for them to want to celebrate the cultural differences quicker than the religious differences.

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“The more prepared you are, the less likely a fight will harm your relationship.”

If you are the one in a couple who is uncomfortable, figure out where your boundaries are by asking yourself exactly what you are OK doing and what you are not OK doing.

Respect your own journey. Take baby steps when exploring something new that feels a little odd at first.

Easter, Passover, Lent and other spring holidays celebrated by couples who have different faiths can be a great audition arena for going the distance.

If you're engaged, or [considering engagement](#) and marriage, celebration of Lent or Easter when it's not the holiday or religion you grew up with is a great way to test the waters for a wedding.

In fact, it's a great time to gently broach, or re-broach, the conversations that include:

1. The wedding

Will you have a wedding conducted by one or more religious figures, representing both yours and his faith?

Will you do something completely out of the box, like choose a religion neither of you belongs to but both admire? Or will you have a nonreligious ceremony performed by a justice of the peace?

2. Having and raising children

Ask the hard, specific questions, like whether or not you will have a circumcision ceremony if you have a boy and one of you is Jewish, if you will have the child baptized or christened and how often you want the child to go to church or religious school – if at all.

You will save yourself a lot of time and energy by doing this now.

If things get heated, don't panic. Do [seek counseling from a professional](#) or a member of the clergy.

3. The rest of the family

How will you handle those members of the families who may object to your marrying or dating someone outside of your faith? How will you handle a relative who is prejudiced?

The more prepared you are, the less likely a family fight will harm your relationship.

Photo source: [wikimedia.org](#)

Nicknamed "the new millennium's Dear Abby" by the media, April Masini writes the critically-acclaimed [Ask April](#) advice column and answers reader questions on her free advice forum. Author of four books, including "Date Out Of Your League" and "Think and Date Like a Man," April has been interviewed for more than 2,700 articles, opinion pieces and radio and television shows.



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