

happen

 because love doesn't come with instructions

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WHERE'S MY SPECIAL SOMEONE?



Do Cupid's arrows keep whizzing past you? Here's how to step up and help him target your heart.

By Margot Carmichael Lester

You've got the look. You've got the confidence. You're smart. You're funny. But you can't get a date. Why? Probably because you're waiting for love to find you. But the old "you gotta be in it to win it" attitude is oh so true.

"Generally, we would rather be found than have to find," explains John Townsend, author of *God Will Find A Way and Loving People: How To Love & Be Loved*. "There is less risk involved. But once we 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's how to get started:

Play the field

"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."

Your charge: If the opportunity presents itself to date several people at once, do so until one of them really seems like The One. We're not saying to have your dates believe you

What kind of relationship are you looking for?

- Marriage—I'm definitely looking for The One.
- I'd like a committed, serious relationship, but not marriage.
- I want someone to have fun with—I'm not ready to settle down.

Browse singles in your area.

I am a

seeking

between

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Go ahead—send a wink, send an email. Everyone knows a couple who met online.

are seeing them exclusively—there's no need to mislead anyone! If asked, be honest that you are enjoying your dating days and meeting new people.

Deal with it

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*.

Your charge: 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.

Go 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," notes Sally Landau, author of *Exercising Your Dating Muscle: A Smart Woman's Guide to Successful Dating*. "Come on! Even the Fuller Brush man is online now."

There's nothing in the world wrong with asking God to help you take a more strategic role in finding the love you want.

Your charge: Complete a profile and start reaching out. You'll find yourself in contact with people who match your criteria regarding a life partner, but whom you might not have otherwise ever met. So go ahead—send a wink, send an email. Everyone knows a couple who

met online.

Change your routine

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 usual haunts, so it's time to try something new!

Your charge: Start by doing something easy, like having lunch alone in a restaurant or volunteering. See what happens from there. Develop your chatting skills, whether or not you see the person you're talking to as a potential partner. It's an important step in getting comfortable at being more social—and it will pay off in the long run.

Have an open mind

"One of the most common dating mistakes is to make snap judgments and not give a good person a chance," notes Amy Schoen, a life coach and dating expert in the Washington, D.C., area. "We make assumptions that may not be true."

Your charge: 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. Make a list of what really counts, and don't get caught up in the other details. What if the perfect person for you happens to be five or 10 years older than you imagined? Would that be a deal-breaker to you? 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.

Employing any of these strategies will help you take a more active role in getting Cupid's attention. But if you want a little "insurance," seek help from a higher power. There's nothing in the world wrong with asking God to help you take a more strategic role in finding the love you want.

"Remember that God isn't just supportive of love, He *is* love—see I John 4:16," Townsend notes. "He designed you to be loved by Him and by others. Ask Him for guidance and help, and at the same time do your part to be a growing, available person."

Margot Carmichael Lester is a North Carolina-based freelance writer.

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