

2020

THE IT'S JUST LUNCH
GUIDE TO DATING



Chapter 9
**Specific Dating
Situations**

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SPECIFIC DATING SITUATIONS

Each of us has our own path to travel when it comes to finding success in dating. You may have some circumstances that make your dating life a bit challenging. Perhaps you're recently divorced and still trying to juggle your new parenting schedule. Or, maybe you've lost your husband or wife — and after much grieving, you're ready to move on. Possibly you have or have had a health problem that makes you a little nervous about dating.

Follow our advice and you can make dating under any of these specific circumstances more comfortable.

Dating After a Divorce

After going through a divorce, there are lots of things to think about before you begin to date again. From the It's Just Lunch clients we have worked with, here's what helps people succeed in dating after a divorce.

Being positive is really important. Before you go on a date, think of things you can talk about so you don't end up talking about your ex. (And that doesn't mean spending your entire dinner talking about your kids, either!) You can ask questions. You can talk about your job, what you love to do on weekends, a recent trip you took.

Every now and then we hear from a client that their date said negative things about their ex. No one wants to hear you talk trash about your former spouse. It makes them feel like you aren't ready to be dating yet and honestly, it's tacky. Expressing negativity, especially on a first date, implies that you are tangled up in a lot of drama.

Sure, your ex may have done some terrible things. But a date isn't a therapy session. You want to make a good first impression on your first date. You are both there because your past relationships didn't work, so focus on the present. However, there are some constructive ways to talk about your divorce.

Christine Hartman, a psychologist and author, has some advice:

-Very personal information — such as why the marriage failed and the nature of your relationship with your ex — should be saved for a later date when the two of you are more comfortable with each other. As Hartman puts it, “Your date wants to know about you, not your former marriage.”

-Don't go into too much detail. Focus on what you learned and how it made you a better person.” This decreases the chances of overwhelming your partner,” she says.

-Be neutral when speaking about your past partner. If you criticize your ex, you risk sounding petty and emotionally involved. If you heap on praise, you sound as though you still have romantic feelings for them. Tender a healthy respect for



your past relationship and the lessons you learned.

-Know what you want out of the relationship and what you're capable of. "Be honest with yourself first, then with potential partners."

Getting Back into the Dating Scene as a Single Parent

Some single parents get back on the dating scene with the hope of getting remarried — and perhaps having more kids some day. One single mom we spoke with said: "Motherhood has made the search for the right guy way simpler."

She explains that the stakes are higher, now that she has a child. After the first date, she asks herself, "Would he be a good father to my daughter?"

Although this question might be valid, and very tempting to ask — it's not necessarily fair. Wondering if someone might be a good mom or dad after a first date is jumping too far ahead into the future. It is important to stay in the present.

Try to find out about the person sitting in front of you before you let your mind wander to the future. Your child is part of you, of course, but first dates are meant for exploration. So, explore the person you are with.

Jennifer Wolf, a writer for About.com and a certified parent coach, suggests that single parents create a list before they start dating.

Here's how Wolf suggests you make the list:

-In the first column record the qualities you consider "absolutely necessary" in the people you date.

-In the middle column write down qualities you see as "somewhat necessary."

-Finally, make a column listing things that are "not absolutely

necessary.”

“For example, you might consider loving kids to be absolutely necessary,” says Wolf. “Being well-educated might be somewhat necessary, and being a fan of your favorite baseball team might be not absolutely necessary.”

One of our single dad clients, for instance, listed “an enthusiasm and love for children” as an important trait he’d like his future mate to have. Clearly, he would have listed that in the “absolutely necessary” category. It is good to know these things about yourself as you begin dating.

Just remember: Thinking about someone’s potential as a parent to your child on the first date is not fair to either of you. You will do yourself a favor by getting to know the person for who they are.

First Dates for Single Parents

When you decide to begin dating, lunch dates are a great way to get your feet wet. You can easily fit a lunch date into your workday — and you don’t have to hassle with finding a babysitter. Moreover, you don’t have to tell your child or children right away that you are dating. You can do a little exploring on your own, and then talk to them about it.

Wolf says that when you are ready you should talk with your kids about your desire to date. “Your kids are your family,” says Wolf. “Of course, you can’t predict the future, but you can clue them in to your intentions. Think of your honesty at this point — before you’ve even begun to date — as a seed which will grow into their future acceptance.”

Of course, talking to your children about your dating life depends on their age. Younger children – say, under the age of five



— might need to know that you're getting "Mommy/Daddy time" or that you're going out with a friend. But older kids are more perceptive. You will need to figure out the best way to explain to them that you are dating.

The bottom line is, your kids are a very important part of your life but you have to make yourself a priority, too. Give yourself the opportunity to get to know someone before you go sizing up their parental potential! Get out there and have fun!

Other single parents, however, might not be looking to get remarried, or to find a potential step-parent. Maybe your kids are older. Maybe they'll be off to college soon. You plan to keep your romantic and parenting lives separate.

You want to experience love and physical satisfaction, but you don't want to bring your kids, (or their kids), into the mix.

Perhaps you've spent many years giving your kids all the love, attention, and cuddling they needed to keep them healthy and happy — and now you want to focus on YOU.

We say, go ahead and do what's right for you. You've earned it!

Dating After the Loss of a Spouse or a Partner

According to John Gray, the author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, "While it may seem daunting at first to date again after a loss — or to date someone who has suffered the loss of a partner — with a little strategic sensitivity, it is possible to turn it into a joyous new beginning."

Here are some ideas about how to find success once you begin dating again:

1. Try not to talk about your deceased spouse on the first date. If it does come up in conversation, keep it brief. You want your date to feel confident that you are ready to move on.
2. If the topic comes up, address any questions your date has

— and let them know you'd be open to talking more about it as time goes on. This way, you can have the deeper conversations as your relationship and trust grows.

3. Share memories of your lost spouse at appropriate times.

Don't overshadow the events you are sharing with your past memories.

4. Remember that starting to date again means getting a fresh start. Don't try to look for a replacement or copy of your former spouse. This is a difficult standard for a new person to meet

5. Give yourself time! If you go on a few dates and then need to take a break that's fine. Remember that this is a process and you will need to give yourself love and plenty of patience.

6. Ask for support! If you are feeling frustrated, scared or just stuck seek support from friends and family and ask for a shoulder to lean on. There is no need to rush!

A Final Word

We hope this book has inspired you in some way to get out there and embark upon your dating adventure. We also hope it has helped you to replace any negativity you might have toward dating with faith and enthusiasm. Anything is possible if you believe. Take a few physical and emotional steps toward making it happen and you'll be amazed how the scales tip in your favor. It's all about attitude — your attitude.

If you're still reluctant to take control of your dating destiny, ask yourself this: If not now, when?

Seriously! This is your life happening, right now. Don't put off love until tomorrow, or it might never come.

Dating is the chance to try a few relationships, see how they fit and decide whether or not you want to make a long-term purchase.



Yes, there are emotions involved. Finding the love of your life means you'll have to take some risks and you could get hurt. But not dating doesn't mean you won't be exposed to emotional pain. Loneliness isn't much fun, either.

Remember, Mr. or Ms. Perfect only exist in the movies. Your goal is to find the perfect union, not the perfect person. The more you date, the more you develop your dating radar. You'll know quickly when a relationship has all the ingredients you're looking for.

Allow yourself to fail as many times as it takes before you prevail. If you find yourself single again, don't worry. There are endless options when it comes to being a proactive dater. Eventually you'll meet "the one." It takes time, so be patient.

You're armed and ready to go out into the world with hundreds of places to go, take or meet potential dates in your city. What more do you need?

Now get out there and have a blast!