

2020

THE IT'S JUST LUNCH
GUIDE TO DATING



Chapter 8
Dating Exclusively

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DATING EXCLUSIVELY

You've made it past the three-month stage and you're still happily dating someone. Congratulations! You're moving out of the dating game and into relationship territory.

You no longer have to worry about attracting the opposite sex, going out to bars, getting set up by well-meaning friends, or any of those single life things. What a relief! But, being in a relationship does come with its own set of responsibilities and dilemmas. Working through them together will set the foundation on which to build something wonderful.

In this chapter we'll take a look at some of the fundamental issues and questions you might come across at this stage of the mating game. Things like coping with holidays and birthdays, saying "I love you" and ultimately, determining if he or she is



“the one” or at least on the road to becoming that.

Holidating

Ah, 'tis the season of love, generosity, joy to the world and peace on earth... unless of course you're in the early throes of dating. Then it can just as easily feel like you are walking through a minefield of difficult choices with the pressure of family dinners, gift giving and all those parties to attend. You can be pushed right into happy coupledom way too soon or be accused of neglecting your new potential amour in favor of your friends and family.

Add to that the pressure of holiday shopping and the anxiety over finding the perfect gift — one that won't be deemed inadequate, or worse, be deemed as too much. It's no wonder the thought of hibernating suddenly seems very appealing. So what is the right holiday protocol? After three months of dating, should you invite someone home to Wisconsin where your mother will inevitably express her desire for grandchildren while pulling on the wishbone? Or will your date get the wrong idea and assume things are getting serious because you're introducing him or her to your people? (Of course, if they're not invited, they might get offended and think you don't care. Oh, no! What are you going to do?)

In our experience, the top three issues that cause the biggest problems between couples during the holidays are gift giving, family dinners and party etiquette.

To keep you on track, we've put our heads together here at It's Just Lunch and come up with a few tips and ideas to help you navigate your way, peacefully, through the dating dilemmas of the holiday season. Our advice, of course, depends on how long

you've been dating.

Thanksgiving/Christmas/Hanukkah

Less Than Three Months

Spend it with your family and call him or her from home. It's too early to expect that you will spend these family-oriented holidays together. If you're in the same town, you can always invite your date over for dessert later.

Three to Six Months

If you've been dating for more than three months, bringing your partner to a friend's house for dinner is appropriate, but it's still a little early to bring them home if your parents live out of state. However, if you all live in the same city or reasonably close, it is probably okay. Feel it out.

Six Months Plus

If your new honey hasn't already met your family, now is the time. It can be a little nerve wracking and you might not have much of an appetite for your mom's turkey dinner, so be prepared. If you get invited to a family event, be on your best behavior and dress on the conservative side. Come bearing gifts and offer to do the dishes. Also, pay attention to how your significant other is around his or her family — you'll get a sneak peak of the real person coming out.

New Year's Eve

Less than three months

New Year's Eve has taken over from Valentine's Day as the world's most high-pressured and overpriced date night. If you've been together less than a month, don't expect anything — continue with your previous plans. If you're doing something where you can bring a date, mention it lightly, but don't be



offended if they already have other plans. If the two of you have been dating for more than a month, feel it out discreetly and make sure you have back-up plans so you don't sit home alone sulking.

Three to Six Months

It's a date. Plan something fun and expect to bring in the New Year with a midnight kiss from your dream date.

Six Months Plus

This is your first New Year together and you're in the sweetest part of the Honeymoon period, so make it special and celebrate your coupledness.

Valentine's Day

Less than three months

Don't even bring it up if you've been dating for a month or less. If you've been dating for more than a month, bring it up casually, but don't expect anything.

Three to Six Months

If you've been together this long, it's reasonable to expect to exchange gifts and to enjoy a good dinner together. If one of you isn't up for that, it's likely you're in different places in your relationship.

Six Months Plus

This is a time for somewhat bigger romantic gestures — a special dinner together at a fancier restaurant than you usually go to and an exchange of gifts that are nicer.

Birthdays

Less Than Three Months

Under a month, just wish them a happy birthday and buy them a

drink the next time you go out. If you've been dating more than a month, bring them a thoughtful (though not necessarily expensive) gift.

Three to Six Months

A nicer gift and/or flowers is reasonable, along with a nice dinner alone or with friends.

Six months plus

Invite a few of your honey's favorite friends and throw a surprise dinner party.

The Gift-Giving Guide

The hassle of fighting your way through all those pushy holiday shoppers is enough to give you a cardiac arrest without the added pressure of getting him or her that perfect gift that says it all.

The key is to plan ahead. It'll save you from rushing out in the last minute, spending extra money and compromising more than you planned.

The best way to figure out an appropriate and well-received gift is to be mindful of your mate's interests, dreams and desires.

This will give you all the information you need to find that perfect gift.

It really is the thought that counts, and if you just put a little of it into your gift, it will make a colossal difference. A husband we know always sends his wife flowers. What makes it so unique is that he hand selects the vase, matches it with the perfect card and gives everything to the florist to deliver with a beautiful arrangement. It's the hand selection of the vase and the personalized card (instead of the standard card the florist fills out) that makes it extra special. This is such a cool idea if you're a



guy who wants to say thanks for a great date. (Girls, remember most guys do not want flowers.)

You don't have to wait for a special occasion to give something thoughtful. A woman we know, who met a man through a dating service, was blown away when he showed up for their second date with a small box of her favorite candy — chocolate dipped strawberries. How did he know? He remembered it was on her profile among her favorite things. Needless to say he won major points for being so thoughtful and going that extra mile to say she was special. At the end of the day a gift will not make or break your relationship. Good communication will go further in creating a love affair than a piece of jewelry or a set of golf clubs.

When to Whisper Those Three Little Words

There comes a time in a relationship when one of you will utter those three very important little words. It's a significant moment, often accompanied by fears of rejection.

Don't ever feel pressured to say, "I love you" unless you really mean it. It's better to say that you sincerely care about your significant other than falsely claiming to love them. Lying will inevitably come back to bite you in the butt, so don't even go there.

By the same token, don't force your mate to say or feel it in return because you're afraid they don't. Saying "I love you", and saying it genuinely, means you have no demands back. Love is a gift that is given freely and without expectation.

Partners often feel the urge to amplify their feelings by projecting their affection onto one another and in the heat of the moment will blurt things out. But if you're not sure of your feelings and your mate tells you they love you, you must respond honestly.

If you love them, tell them. If you're unsure, say, "Thank you for

being so open, that makes me feel wonderful.” Or say, “That makes me very happy. I really care about you, too.” If you don’t feel the same way be delicate when responding, as it could really hurt the other person. Don’t ever dump your feelings onto your partner by responding with, “don’t say that,” or, “I don’t love you yet,” or, “I’m not ready to hear that.” It takes courage to be vulnerable, so handle with care and compassion.

Show How You Feel

It’s possible to go a long time in a relationship without saying, “I love you.” Often, actions speak louder than words and there are many other “little things” that indicate a person’s level of affection for another.

Both men and women respond to “little sentiments,” those tidbits of information that might seem irrelevant to most people but become benchmarks in a relationship — things like remembering the song that was playing on the radio when you first kissed or their favorite color, leaving love notes under their pillow or packing their lunch.

You don’t have to spend buckets of money to show your partner that he or she is precious to you. In the same respect, “talk is cheap,” and you can throw about “I love yous” but in order for the words to really make an impact, they must be backed up with significant action.

It’s important to observe all the non-verbal clues in a relationship, too. Determining if someone is right for you lies as much in his or her actions and in what they don’t do, as it does in what they say.

Telling your girlfriend that you want to spend more quality time with her and then spending weekends at the golf course just doesn’t measure up. As time goes by, your endearments will lose



their meaning and your trust will begin to deteriorate.

Pay attention to the special things that touch your girlfriend or boyfriend and make an effort to introduce these into your relationship on a regular basis. It takes effort and mindfulness to create a phenomenal affinity with another person. But it's worth it because ultimately you both reap the rewards.

His Needs, Her Needs

Yes, by now we all know that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, but what we haven't quite figured out is how in the heck are we supposed to ever get it together? Here are a few guidelines to help you give each other what men and women need most in a relationship:

- DO agree to do things with his/her friends or family.
- DO listen attentively (lots of eye contact) and be interested in discovering his/her likes and dislikes.
- DO be affectionate and romantic.
- DO talk to your boyfriend/girlfriend. It's an important emotional need and you'll learn how to become more compatible through conversation.
- DO be honest and open. Build trust by sharing your thoughts, feelings, habits, likes, dislikes and daily activities.
- DON'T expect him/her to date you exclusively until you've had the exclusivity conversation.
- DON'T expect sex.
- DO let them go out with his/her friends.
- DO allow him/her personal time.
- DO make an effort to look attractive and wear outfits that make you feel great.
- DO give him/her compliments and let him/her know s/he's appreciated.

- DON'T push him/her into commitment or saying s/he loves you.
- DON'T try to be who you think s/he wants you to be— be yourself.
- DON'T try to fix or change him/her.

Are We Ready for Commitment?

Are you and your partner both emotionally ready for a committed relationship at this time? If one of you is and one of you isn't, you are both wasting your time and energy. Avoiding this conversation (or choosing to overlook the importance of it) is a major mistake. You could mislead someone into believing there is a future with you, or you might spend months or years fooling yourself with an unavailable partner.

In relationships, as in life, timing is everything. We all get to different stages of emotional growth at different times and there is no right or wrong time for commitment.

It happens when you're ready. And for some, it may never come. Relationship experts believe that we attract people who reflect some part of ourselves, so if you find that you frequently attract non-committal partners, you may have some unconscious motivation not to commit yourself.

One of the greatest benefits of joining a service like It's Just Lunch is that our clients are all committed to the dating process and looking for a relationship. It's an efficient way to weed out many time wasters, fence sitters and serial daters.

Is This “The One?”

Most people have an idea of what constitutes a desirable mate. We usually get fixated on superficial aspects like appearance, income or lifestyle and don't give enough thought to the quality of that relationship. It's emotional intimacy, being able to share



your truest, deepest, most vulnerable self with your significant other, which makes us feel loved. Skip judgments based on superficial aspects and focus on how you connect emotionally; how comfortable you are being yourself when you're around them, and how often you laugh and have fun together.

Really, that's all there is to it. If you can read the paragraph above and know in your heart that your partner meets all of these needs and makes you feel great about yourself, then he or she has all the qualities to become your ideal partner. The rest is up to the two of you.

A relationship is like any long-term investment: it requires a great deal of time, effort and devotion. Couples come and go, but real relationships are those that can survive whatever life throws at them. They go through it together and come out closer than before.

One final thing you should ask yourself before you decide that this is the person you want to spend the rest of your life with: Do you both share the same vision for the future?

Do you want the same things or are you at least committed to helping the other fulfill his or her dreams as well as your own? Do you both see yourselves together for many years to come? Can you imagine investing in a house, raising a family and eventually growing old together?

Recognizing Mr. or Ms. Right

Follow the steps below and you won't lose your head as you get to know your significant other better. Remain clear and confident and you'll make the right choices.

Before you choose to commit to someone, make sure you have no desperate need for attachment and that you are in a good

place with your self-esteem. Be ready to walk away if things don't turn out as planned. Don't try to force a relationship to work or invest time trying to change someone. The whole purpose is to avoid ending up in divorce court. Why would you want to close a deal that has the wrong foundation or missing parts?

If you have seven or eight of the signs below in your relationship, then this could be it!

Nine Signs for Recognizing Mr. or Ms. Right

- You listen to each other.
- You have great chemistry.
- He or she is a cheerleader for your hopes and dreams.
- You tell them what you want in a relationship and he or she steps up to the plate.
- Your partner is genuine, trustworthy and understanding.
- You can both compromise and work together to resolve disputes.
- You have a similar approach to life (values, morals, goals).
- Your partner shows you kindness, consideration and respect.
- You are focused on each other, and choose to spend time together over other people in your lives.

A relationship is a two-way street. Don't forget that you need to be all of these things back.

