

A DATING PRIMER

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A Single's Strategy For Marriage



Your Single Friend Is Listening

This week's column is a little different than usual. It is directed toward our married readers. Most of us who are married have become very involved in the minutiae of married/family life; our jobs, household responsibilities, child care, bill-paying, in addition to our ongoing interactions with our spouses and children. Often, we become so involved that we forget to use certain sensitivities when we interact with our single friends.

Because our single friends appear to us to have more discretionary time to use as they please, we may make them the perfect "victims" of our venting. We complain how busy our lives are, how stressed out we feel from all of our responsibilities, that we must attend yet another PTA meeting or community dinner, how the bills are piling up, or how the kids are driving us crazy. Our single friends are often great listeners. In fact, we don't realize how well they listen.

Phil and his childhood friend, Ari, have never lost touch, even though they graduated from high school 20 years ago and have gone in different directions. Ari and his wife put themselves through graduate school, spent the next 10 years paying off student loans, and along the way were blessed with five children. Now in their late 30s, Ari and his wife are just emerging from one debt only to be faced with another financial burden — their growing yeshiva tuition bill.

Phil traveled the world after college and then settled into the pharmacist's position that was waiting for him at his family's drug store. He's never been married, although he has an active social life. From the way the two friends talk, it appears that Phil isn't going to consider marriage any time soon. Ari regularly complains how strapped he feels, with tuition and child care obligations exceeding \$60,000. He and his wife both work, but they don't enjoy the luxuries that most people in their income bracket do, and they constantly juggle bills so that they can get by each month. Ari thinks he's getting a sympathetic ear, but in reality he's scaring Phil to death. Each time, Phil thinks, "I'm certainly not going to make the same mistake as Ari," and pushes thoughts of getting married off yet another time.

When we express our frustration with our daily lives to our single friends, they tend to react in one of two ways. Like Phil, they

life, even if it is sometimes lonely." Or, they may think to themselves, "Here I am, struggling to find someone to spend my life with, and you have everything. I wish you would stop complaining and appreciate what you have." Chances are, though, that our single friend will not tell us what he thinks. Instead, he processes his thoughts and often reaches the conclusion that the responsibilities of marriage can be overwhelming and he may not be able to handle them.

Of course, when someone like Ari complains about his frustration, he doesn't give a full and accurate picture of married life... the love he feels for his wife, the mutual support he and his wife give each other and the sense of security and comfort that engenders, the good times the two of them have together as a couple and as parents, they joy he experiences raising children, the way he has grown as a person as a result of his marriage. If Ari had to choose between being married and being single, he'd happily choose marriage, with all of its stresses. Phil doesn't hear any of this.

If Ari knew the impression he was making on Phil, chances are that he would not vent to his old friend, or that he would apologize to him and say, "I'm sorry to complain — even though I'm frustrated about this, I don't usually feel this way. I'm happy that I'm married and that I have kids. The life I have now is worth everything." If each of us married individuals were more sensitive to the fact that our single friends are constantly observing us and listening to us, and pick up on every nuance, we'd be a lot more careful about how we portray our feelings about marriage.

Married people can make a tremendous, positive impact on singles' lives when they mentor a friend or neighbor who is dating for marriage. We will be conducting a three-hour workshop for prospective dating mentors on Sunday, November 14, beginning at 11:30 a.m. at Merkaz Hasimcha, Avenue M and East 19th, Brooklyn, NY. Frumster.com and Aish Hatorah are sponsoring the program for a nominal fee, and participants can register by calling 212-921-9090. Singles can hear our presentation, "Getting Out Of The Dating Maze" at a "Mix and Mingle Melaveh Malka" on Metzkei Shabbos, November 13, at 8 p.m. at the Manhattan Beach Jewish Center in Brooklyn (call 718-891-8700 for reservations). ■

Psychotherapist Rosie Einhorn and family lawyer Sherry Zimmerman founded Sasson V'Simcha (www.jewishdatingandmarriage.com) to help Jewish singles achieve their goals of marriage and are the authors of the books *Talking Tachlis* and *In The Beginning* and the advice column "Navigating the Dating Maze" on www.aish.com.

Dynamic Dating Mentor Workshop Comes To New York

Frumster.com, the largest and most successful online dating service for Orthodox, marriage-minded Jews, has teamed up with Aish HaTorah/Discovery to offer a dynamic workshop, entitled "The Art of Being a Dating Mentor."

Sherry Zimmerman, Esq. and Rosie Einhorn, L.C.S.W. well known speakers and acclaimed authors of *Talking Tachlis* and *In The Beginning*, have been presenting this successful workshop to thousands of attendees throughout the Orthodox world in North America, Israel and beyond.

The workshop trains laymen in the community to be effective dating mentors who can sensitively and objectively guide a single through dating and engagement. The workshop reviews the preferred model for courtship, explains counterproductive pitfalls that many singles encounter when they date, and helps to demonstrate how to counsel singles to deal with the issues that have prevented them from dating successfully.

Such programs are critically important and beneficial as singles often find a void when it comes to securing objective advice or just someone to listen to their personal concerns. This is particularly true in the case when two individuals are seriously dating, and one individual may seek to address a personal issue to a third party. A dating mentor is an objective, caring, and sensitive individual who can act as a mentor and motivator, and who can appreciate the need to listen, when to offer advice, when to encourage an individual, or even when to perhaps direct the individual along a certain course.

Event Details: Sunday, November 14, 11:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Merkaz Hasimcha, 1898 Bay Avenue (E. 18th Ave. and Ave. M). Separate seating for men and women. Cost: \$15 prepaid, \$25 at door. Includes materials, certificate of participation, and lunch buffet. Please call: 212-921-9090 to register. ■

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