

Do's and Don'ts in Your New Relationship

If you are confident that you are spiritually and emotionally ready for a new relationship (and your pastor and other mature Christian friends agree), these practical suggestions could help you avoid some problems that often lead to remarriage failures.

Don't date people whose divorces are not final

Gary Richmond, author of *The Divorce Decision*, advises: "Your very first question for the other person should be, 'Is your divorce final?' If the answer is no, then avoid that person like you would avoid the plague because anything could happen. That person could go back to his or her first mate and reconcile (this happens more often than you would think). You could also get enmeshed in their legal problems, which sometimes never find an end. You have no idea as to how long you will have to be dating a married person, and until the divorce is final, you are dating a married person, and it's not appropriate.

"Also, this person is not healed. The reality is that a person whose divorce is not final is not going to need anything but nurses and doctors for a while, and you, if you're wise or well, don't need to be dating someone who is sick. You'll catch it again."

You may be tempted to date a person who is still in the divorce process. That person may seem strong and well. Perhaps he or she has been in the divorce process for over a year. Every reason stated above by Gary Richmond is an excellent reason to avoid that relationship or to put it on hold. Remember how easy it is in the divorce process to push down hurts and losses and to try and put a Band-Aid over wounds instead of facing them and feeling them. True healing is difficult; it takes a relationship with Jesus Christ, and it takes time.

Now, more than ever, you need to be completely in touch with God. Spend extra amounts of time sitting quietly and listening to Him. Pay attention to wisdom from God's Word, mature Christian friends and Christian books. Surrender completely to Him: "Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field" (James 4:8 *The Message Bible*).

You may feel that this relationship is right. Be sure that your feelings line up with God's plan for both of you. Your relationship will be better, stronger and deeper if you both follow God's plan and pursue it in His timing.

"Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field."

—James 4:8 Msg

“It’s a fact that we are drawn to the same type of person over and over again, which means you have to make an effort to say, ‘I will not be drawn to this kind of person again.’”

—Gary Richmond

Do make a list of character qualities that you require

The next suggestion to help you develop a successful new relationship is to make a list of character qualities that you require in a person you want to develop a relationship with. You are worth every good quality that you list, and God wants the best for you. If the new person falls short of some of these characteristics, then you need to prayerfully consider if God is leading this relationship.

After you have listed good characteristics, then list the qualities of your former spouse that drove you crazy in the first marriage or that were just plain wrong. The person you date or marry should be mostly free of these qualities. Do not fool yourself into thinking you will feel different this time because it is a different person.

Gary Richmond says, “It’s a fact that we are drawn to the same type of person over and over again, which means you have to make an effort to say, ‘I will not be drawn to this kind of person again. There is going to have to be more substance of character, and I’m going to have to view that.’”

It is easy to fall back into old patterns of thinking and behaviors when seeking a new relationship. Think carefully about Gary Richmond’s statement that says, “There is going to have to be more substance of character, and I’m going to have to view that.” Be certain that the new person has demonstrated time and time again the strong character traits that you have listed as prerequisites for a relationship with you. For instance, if honesty, dependability and no abusive language are character traits you feel are crucial in a mate, then give the relationship ample time for you to discover if the person is honest, if he or she can be counted on and if he or she uses encouraging and supportive words. Don’t ever compromise your beliefs when you choose to be in a new relationship.

Follow the advice of Matthew 5:37 when it comes to standing by your beliefs: “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” If God wants you to have a new relationship, He has a person planned for you who is kind, godly and true.

Do pay attention to the parental relationship

When you are considering a new relationship, be sure to examine how the person you are interested in relates to his or her parents. “Honor your father and your mother as the Lord your God has commanded you,” says Deuteronomy 5:16, “so that you may live long and that it may go well with you.”

Gary Richmond suggests that you “take a close look at that person’s relationship with his or her parents. It will be a reflection, not only of the parents’ relationship with each other, but also of that person’s respect for elders and for the opposite sex. If you see an emptiness or loneliness in the parental relationship or if you see disrespect, then you’ll know the person you are dating may not have the skills to relate to you the way you want to be related to.”

**“A sweet friendship
refreshes the soul.”
—Proverbs 27:9**

And you, in turn, may need to consider how you relate to your own parents.

Don't marry a person in debt

If you are seeking a new relationship, make sure you know how well the other person manages money. You should not marry a person who is deeply in debt. Wait until the bills are paid off.

“If you are really wise, you will look carefully at the financial practices of the person that you are getting intimately involved with,” admonishes Gary Richmond.

Financial management can be a difficult subject in any relationship, but it is important to discuss money and not be naïve in a new relationship. Especially if you are considering remarriage, your new partner should be open with you about his or her financial practices, debts and investments.

God's Word on debt is, “Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another” (Romans 13:7–8).

Do understand your differences

You should also examine the similarities and differences between you and the other person.

“You need to look closely at having some things in common. If all you can base your relationship on is physical attraction, it just will wear thin in the same way that a roller coaster gets increasingly less exciting the more you ride it,” says Gary Richmond.

Some things in a marriage are extremely important to have in common; for instance, your beliefs about God, ideas about raising children and convictions about honesty, commitment and faithfulness. It is also important that you share interests, hobbies and ideas about how to spend free time. You do not need to or necessarily want to share every activity with your mate—you are a unique individual with special talents and tastes—but you do want to be able to have meaningful and stimulating conversations about more than just your relationship. The person you are interested in should not only be a romantic interest, but also a friend, someone you have things in common with.

“A sweet friendship refreshes the soul” (Proverbs 27:9).