



Dating 101!

Facilitator Guide



Table of Contents

Session 1: Overview

Session 2: Introduction to dating

Session 3: Identifying and clarifying personal values as they relate to dating

Sessions 4 and 5: Analyzing & understanding past dating/relationship experiences

Session 6: Skills for dating

Session 7: Inspirational speaker/s

Session 8: First impressions – Presenting your best self

Session 9: How and where to find a date

Session 10: Internet dating – A prevailing option

Session 11: Communication and the first date

Session 12: Sex

Session 1 - Overview

The quality of this curriculum can definitely be enhanced when led by an individual who feels comfortable with an appropriate measure of self-disclosure related to his/her own dating experience.

- *Welcome class participants & introduce yourself.*
- *Explain the class schedule, providing a hand out with the schedule of meetings, including the length of each class.*
- *Explain that it is a closed group, meaning that once it starts, new participants cannot join until the next 12-week session. Absences are acceptable but discouraged. Make the point that discussing the dating process can be personal and that trust may be more easily built in the privacy of consistent group membership. Also request that people not discuss others' experiences outside of the group. Facilitating comfort is important for success.*
- *Explain that the group will be a combination of discussion and activities designed to stimulate self-reflection and make good choices.*
- *Track attendance.*

Ask the participants to each introduce themselves, including what each hopes to get out of this class and write responses on the flip chart, while generating conversation.

Next ask how long it's been since participants have dated and follow up by asking how the prospect of dating makes participants feel now & why, recording answers on flip chart. After each answer, explore the whys if individuals haven't explained their answers. Please be certain to include feelings that may be omitted, adding a personal experience when possible or relevant.

Wikipedia defines dating: (write on flip chart)

“Dating is a stage of romantic relationships in humans whereby two people meet socially with the aim of each assessing the other's suitability as a prospective partner in an intimate relationship or marriage. It is a form of social courtship, consisting of social activities done by the couple or with others”.

For the purposes of this class, we might also consider that it is ok to date without the expectation of finding a partner. If you are not partner-seeking, rather you are interested in getting to know others and simply having fun, it will be important to make that distinction for yourself before you begin this process. Naturally you may start out with one objective in mind and change course during the process of dating. In order to achieve personal goals, it is necessary to be clear about what it is you really want for yourself. In the world of dating, it is also fair to let prospective dates know what you are interested in as well, so feelings (yours and theirs) aren't unnecessarily hurt. We will continue this discussion next week.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant



Session 2 – Introduction to dating

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

What motivates us to date? Many of us are by nature social beings and are lonely without connections to others. There is much current research that suggests that social connections increase our happiness, mental health, and physical well-being. Even holding hands with a friend or family member can create warm, positive, connected feelings. For those who are spiritual, dating can enable one to care for others as well as be cared for.

In our last class we said that dating can become a partner-seeking endeavor or simply an opportunity to meet others and have new experiences. Ask yourself which resonates with you and why? Write reasons on flip chart with one column for partner-seeking the other column for exploration - record participants' responses. If you are partner-seeking, you will want to understand yourself better so you can begin to imagine the qualities you would desire or need in a partner for maximum satisfaction. We will have a chance to explore individual values and past experiences in our third and fourth classes which will inform this process. Participation in these exercises will help us each of us understand who we will be most compatible with and will facilitate making improved choices of mates.

Dating requires that you allow yourself to be vulnerable to rejection, which for some can be more challenging than others. Some people have strong fears of rejection, but remember that you will not like nor be attracted to everyone you date, which should help you manage the times when you are the one being rejected - without blowing it out of proportion. Trying to develop a mindset will help. If you can tell yourself that some dates will be romantic and exciting while others will disappoint, you will be prepared beforehand and hopefully avoid an overly painful experience. *Facilitate discussion about rejection in dating, trying to normalize and encourage resilience.*

An important part of presenting your best self *and* managing rejection is SELF-CONFIDENCE. Where do you stand on confidence? Some of us can spend a lifetime in therapy trying to understand our lack of confidence and build it.

Confidence is especially important when meeting new people, probably more important than hair or weight or other physical attributes you may be concerned about. When you are confident you telegraph to others that you are worth getting to know, that you are 'together' or centered, and not overly 'needy' of others' approval and acceptance. Think about it, people are attracted to others who like themselves, know who they are and what makes them tick. If you lack confidence, it naturally may be helpful to explore the causes in therapy but a helpful technique to use until you *can* appear confident is to act 'as-if'. Acting 'as-if' is like pretending...and I've found that often when I act 'as-if' I start actually growing into and believing what my intended message is. Stand up straight (no slouching), make eye contact, smile, lean in toward the person you're speaking with, when you shake hands, make it firm (not limp). Be cheerful and positive and don't try to create or enhance confidence with alcohol and/or substances - this can backfire. Take form A and make a list of things that you like about yourself. What are they? Ask the participants to identify strengths of each of the other class participants. Other ways to build confidence are; helping others, or trying a brand new challenge. If you hold on to negative beliefs about yourself, please list them (Form B) and share with the group and see if others agree. Often our negative beliefs about ourselves are exaggerated and unrealistic. ACT 'AS-IF' if you need to.

Informally ask participants to give constructive feedback to one another about how confident they appear. Doing this in pairs may be less stressful.

It's also good to understand your motivation to date. Since dating can require a significant time investment, dating in the midst of a significant life transition like a new job or move or illness or loss of a loved one; may not be optimal timing.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, forms A & B, individual folders



Session 3 – Identifying and clarifying personal values as they relate to dating

- *Take attendance.*
- *Bring folders.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*
- *THIS EXERCISE MAY TAKE MORE THAN ONE SESSION.*

Ask the class what values are, making notes on a flipchart. After some suggestions, write the definitions of 'values' on a flipchart:

- One's judgment of what is important in life
- A person's principles or standards of behavior or sense of right and wrong

Values are the things that you believe are important in life and should help you determine what your priorities are. Identifying our own personal values helps us make the fundamental choices of who we want to be, and define the life we want to lead. Often, when things are going smoothly in life, we are acting in alignment with our core values. Conversely, if we are unhappy or troubled, it may mean that our behavior is out of alignment with our values.

Being aware of our core values is important because it helps us be more conscious of what makes us feel happy and proud of who we are, what our work is, who our friends are, and what we pursue in life, what direction we take. Living in accordance with our personal values supports our life satisfaction. Does this make sense? Questions or comments? Other reasons why identifying our values is important...it informs who our choices are in making friends, who to hang with, or choosing partners. Being with people whose values are in conflict with our own, generally creates dissension in the relationship. Can you think of someone in your life whose values are different than your own where there is conflict? Please share the experience with the class. This is the same with work- working at a job where the employer's values differ from yours will likely turn out to be unfulfilling and even stressful. Knowing your values can include the following benefits:

- Stress reduction
- Better decision making skills
- Increased happiness and satisfaction

- Supports personal growth and development
- Helps find relationships that support your aspirations
- Improved sense of self-worth
- Guards against conflict, lack of fulfillment, and discontent

Core values help focus and align your life and life choices! Keep in mind that values may change throughout the course of our lives so it's helpful to check in with yourself every few years to see if your values have shifted.

We will use this class to concentrate on identifying personal core values. This is also called a values clarification exercise.

Using form C, think back and identify times when you were most *fulfilled and satisfied*. List three, identifying what contributed to your feelings of fulfillment.

Name times when you were happiest- this can be in your personal life or work life. What were you doing? What contributed to your happiness?

Identify times when you felt the most proud of yourself? Why were you proud? What contributed to your sense of pride?

Ask participants to share their answers and record on flipchart.

Go to form D and complete

Imagine you are much older and sitting in a rocking chair reflecting on your life.

- What are the highlights or times that you hold dear?
- What made you proud?
- When did you make a difference?
- When did you touch other lives?
- What felt fulfilling or soul satisfying?
- What do you imagine your legacy might be?

Answering these questions can be a guide for how you want the balance of your life to be. If there are answers you are dissatisfied with, think about making conscious changes in your behavior going forward. What have you learned?

Hand out form E (list of values) and ask participants to select the values that resonate most with them. Choose 10 at most. Try to refine further, identifying and narrowing down your top-priority values.

Ask if these values make you feel good about yourself? Do you feel comfortable and proud sharing these with people who are important in your life? Why? Facilitate discussion that encourages participants to thoughtfully identify their values.

Let your choices guide your choices in life.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, (forms C, D, and E), individual folders for each participant



Sessions 4 & 5 – Complete values clarification and move on to > Analyzing & understanding past dating/relationship experiences

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach*
- *Complete values clarification before moving on to the next class.*

This class will focus on looking back at past dating experiences and we will ask ourselves what worked well and what didn't. Understanding our past experiences may help us know ourselves better and make better choices in the future. In the second part of this session I will ask you to consider what values you've identified as being your core values and then take the next step to identify the qualities that you are searching for in a prospective partner.

Hand out form F, asking the class to think back to a relationship that worked reasonably well and made you happy. What are the qualities about the person you particularly liked? *Write on flip chart.* What was it about the relationship that was fulfilling? *Write on flipchart and encourage discussion.*

At the bottom of form F is space for what did not work well in the relationship or what created strife or unhappiness? Can you imagine doing things differently now? How? List on flipchart and discuss.

Ask what traits are critical to you in a partner? Refer to your personal values sheet while considering this question. Get personal and write on flipchart.

What kind of people make you feel most comfortable? What is it about a person that makes you want to be close to them or be friends with them? (for example answers may be; a person who I can trust & rely on, someone who is playful and has a sense of humor, someone who is compassionate & gets me). After and/or during class discuss about this, ask participants to complete form G.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, (forms F & G), individual folders for each participant

Session 6 – Skills for dating

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*
- *Is everyone clear about our values and how they inform what we are looking for in someone to date? Go back if necessary before moving forward.*

What is a skill? Make the point that there are three types of skills: (write on flipchart)

1. physical skills- making a bed or washing clothing. Can you think of other physical skills?
2. emotional skills- initiating a conversation or sharing negative feelings. Can you think of other emotional skills?
3. intellectual skills- balancing a checkbook, planning a meal or writing a resume. Can you think of other intellectual skills?

Characteristics of a skill are: (write on flipchart)

1. behavioral- appear directly in the form of an action that can be seen or heard by others
2. purposeful- it is intentional
3. generalizable- can be used in many different circumstances
4. compound- it is a combination of knowledge and behaviors
5. standardized- can specify the ideal way of doing it
6. stable- remains the same in many situations

Let's consider together some common skills that we all need to learn that will help in meeting and dating others: (write on flipchart)

- how to start a conversation

- how to charm or flirt
- active listening
- how to make a date
- positive conversation
- stating a difference of opinion
- saying no

How to charm or flirt

Charming is meant to make someone feel great and/or special without asking for anything in return. Flirting includes the same characteristics but also includes being playful with a light touch

1. Identify something complimentary to say
2. It must be genuine and real
3. Make eye-contact
4. Lean your body in
5. Smile, be warm and positive and offer your comment

GROUP PRACTICE

Active listening

1. Make eye-contact
2. Ask questions if you do not understand what the person is saying
3. Confirm what they are saying by asking “do you mean....”
4. Shake your head positively
5. If you do not understand what they are saying, don’t be afraid to ask for clarification!
6. Respond by saying something that demonstrates that you understand and be compassionate

GROUP PRACTICE

How to initiate a conversation

Often people feeling nervous starting a conversation. There are some simple guidelines that should make this an easier experience.

1. Do not ask yes or no questions. Ask open-ended questions such as;
 - How do you feel about.....?
 - What do like about.....?
 - What do you like least about.....?
 - Tell me more about.....?
 - What's your favorite.....?
 - What's the best.....?
2. Be sure to listen to their answer, because that will give you valuable information to guide your next question.
3. Look interested, not bored.
4. Remember to smile.

GROUP PRACTICE

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant



How did this date go?

Session 7 –Inspirational speaker/s

Invite one, two or three people you know (it could even be yourself or another staff member) to speak about their dating experience in a way that can be inspirational to the group. Please leave plenty of time to answer questions.

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

Why not you?
Why not now?

Kelly Swanson

Session 8 – First impressions - Presenting your best self

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

A first impression is a one shot deal...you don't get a second chance to make a first impression, so think about your first date ahead of time – but without unnecessary pressure!

What are the things you notice about a person when your first meet them? Record on the flipchart. What are the first things you noticed about me? You can be honest, just do it with kindness. Use the flipchart and be sure to include characteristics like;

Size	Attitude
Content of what someone says	Hair
How a person behaves (smoking, chewing gum, etc.)	Face
How a person moves (open, closed, rigid)	How one is dressed (formal, casual, messy, clean)
What a person says (content and tone)	Teeth
Mood (happy, cheerful, angry, nervous, worried)	Facial expressions (smiling, worried, anxious)
Body language (eye contact, personal space)	General cleanliness (nails, hair, clothing)
How a person smells (breath, body)	

Ask the class if it's ok to bring a mirror to class and offer observations to one another with kindness. Be sure to recognize if clothing fits, is clean, neat, flattering, cheerful? Is hair combed, clean, neat, is the style becoming? Teeth clean? Is make up appropriate (if used)? Is face clean-shaven? Are beard,

mustache, side burns clean and neat? Shoes polished? Nails clean and shaped? Body odor / bad breath? Ask class to give feedback to one another that is realistic but **kind**. Obviously it's not useful to criticize attributes that cannot be changed.

Aside from physical appearance, attitude is important. Show up on time, smile, be friendly & warm, show confidence, stay positive, don't complain, plan to do something of mutual interest. Subjects to avoid in the beginning; religion, ex-boyfriends/girlfriends, sex, and material that is very personal. Movies, television, hobbies, sports, music, books, climate are always more safe. People used to avoid talking about politics, but often today people feel very identified with a particular set of values, so this may be ok to discuss at the beginning. You may need to feel your way about this.

Be yourself, relax, project self-confidence and try to have fun! People are attracted to others who are confident; people who are comfortable with who they are, what they think, and not being dependent on what others think of you. Sometimes if we feel that if someone is disinterested in us we may think that there is something "wrong" with us. This is simply untrue...we are all attracted to a wide variety of characteristics in people. At times we will be rejected and at other times we will do the rejecting. When possible, it's a good idea to develop a thick skin around rejection and not take it too personally.

It's also a wise idea to make the first date brief, like meeting for a cup of coffee or a walk. This way you can make a quick getaway if you feel uncomfortable or are disinterested. A first date should ideally be in a very public place. Never meet someone in a location that is isolated – it's important to stay safe. Until you get to know someone, see them only in public where you can easily leave or there are people around from whom you can ask for help. Also remember to keep your home address private. More about where to go on a first date later.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Session 9 - How and where to find a date

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there are any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

Taking a proactive approach to dating is important; many people think that finding a suitable match is *simply a numbers game*. After meeting a broad set of people, sooner or later we're bound to meet Mr. or Ms. Right. Before moving forward, it's important to acknowledge that some of us may feel shame or embarrassment about dating or being single. Explore with the class if anyone can relate to this and attempt to dispel unnecessary negative thoughts/feelings.

There are many ways to go about meeting people and it's often helpful to actually create somewhat of a strategic plan – in writing!

An excellent way to meet people that is often overlooked, is to first TELL FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, COLLEAGUES (if appropriate) YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE DATING AND ASK THEM TO INTRODUCE YOU TO APPROPRIATE PEOPLE! Tell them what characteristics you are looking for, while keeping an open mind.

Remember to retain your dating mindset 24/7. People have been known to meet their mates in the produce department of Trader Joe's or in an elevator. My friend's brother finally found a cab on a very rainy day and as he got into the back seat, a woman was getting into the same back seat from the other door. They were both drenched and frustrated and at first started arguing with one another....but one thing led to another and they are now happily married. Keep your eyes and mind open at all times!

Many of us are very plugged into our phones, so to start with, when you leave home, put your phone away! Look around, head up and be aware of who is around you. Smile and appear friendly and approachable. Be courageous and get comfortable initiating conversations with others. Make plans with friends, or be brave and take yourself somewhere alone. Spend time in environments that you find interesting. For instance, I have a friend who joined a neighborhood Community Center. She works out in the gym, where people are very friendly and regularly engage in conversation. She attends a film series there, another

excellent place to meet like-minded people. And when there are events like a singles event, she goes and has found several dates through that one affiliation. Go to a museum or an art gallery or a historical society exhibit that interests you. Free concerts can be found in many communities both indoors and out. Become a 'regular' somewhere; a coffee shop or local restaurant. Become a volunteer for a cause that you feel committed to. These days people of all ages are volunteering to help candidates get elected, or pitch in on voter registration drives, or encourage legislation that you believe in. Many nonprofits welcome volunteers; like food pantries, or after school centers to tutor children, etc. Identify a cause and commit some time to it. Facebook is a good resource to find events.

On a flipchart make a list of all the places we're likely to meet others, Brainstorm and discuss.

Classes, grocery store, book store, sporting events, church or spiritual services, parks, bowling, walks, places to work out or exercise, music venues, coffee shops, political events, adult education classes, yoga, self-help groups, dance clubs, movies, community centers, library, work, museums, art galleries, volunteer activities, skating, parks. If you use the bus, keep your eyes open while you travel! Make an expansive list with the participants, based on their own experiences.

There are websites to meet others including:

www.Meetup.com

www.eharmony.com

www.lonelynomore.com

www.match.com

www.tinder.com

www.jdate.com

www.christiansingles.com

www.plentyoffish.com

www.zoosk.com

www.okcupid.com

www.bumble.com

www.facebook.com

Some are free, some are focused on dating and others aim to help you meet people to simply engage in common activities. We will devote the next class to Internet dating, so for today, let's focus on what to do if you're in a yoga class or in church and you see or meet someone you think you may be interested in. Go back to the skills that we reviewed in class number 6, initiating a conversation, flirting, etc. Generally we can gauge if someone is responsive or interested in pursuing a conversation with us. Pay attention to their body language, facial expressions and the content of how they respond – this can tell a lot about their level of interest in us. If after a few conversations you think the person may be interested, you can suggest getting together after class, or church, or whatever it is you're both doing. You might suggest an activity that is low or no cost, where talking is permissible, easy to get to, isn't competitive, doesn't involve alcohol, and would be interesting to both of you. You can make a suggestion or ask for a suggestion. You may need to discuss transportation. If there is an associated cost to the activity, think ahead of time what you feel comfortable with. It probably makes sense not to spend more than a couple of hours together on a first get together. If you have very limited funds, you will want to decide for yourself ahead of time whether you are prepared to pay or share the cost. Cost sharing is always a good go-to. Only reveal as much information as you feel comfortable with and of course only have physical contact like holding hands, kissing, walking arm in arm if you are comfortable. Pay attention to your "spidey sense".



Example of the many websites

Session 10 – Internet dating – a prevailing option

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there are any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

There are approximately 110 million single adults living in this country. 40% of Americans use online dating websites. By a light margin, slightly more men than women use them. 10% of current committed relationships began online. There are two important tasks to get you started with online dating; writing a profile and identifying photos to use. It is important with both to be truthful, genuine and be exactly who you are. Do not misrepresent what you look like, how old you are, what you're like, what you're looking for in a mate. Lying will always come back to bite you. Does anyone know why? It is easy to become discouraged, but most people who engage in online dating, meet worthwhile partners sooner or later. Be patient. Explains what filters are to the class; i.e., setting the parameters on what YOU are looking for including, gender, how many miles away, profession, income, professional status, educational level, number of children, previous marital status, religion, height, weight, etc. Be authentic but also be realistic. If you would date someone 25 miles away, does that mean you would reject someone who lives 30 miles away? Be open ended when establishing your filters.

When selecting photos, resist the urge to use old ones that may make you look younger. You might attract more people that way, but they will undoubtedly be disappointed and even annoyed or angry when they meet you and find out you tricked them. The consensus is that the ideal number of photos to post is 4. You can make this a mix of headshots and full body shots. If you have some when you are engaged in an activity, that can have a positive impact. If you like the theater, taking a picture in front of one helps to tell your story. Avoid being sexually provocative, and avoid using photos with others in them. Of course select ones that are flattering *but* keep them realistic. Enlist a trusted friend to help you take photos and choose ones to use.

Next task is to write your personal profile.

DO

Be positive

Be confident

Be exciting

Use correct spelling & grammar

Mention your hobbies, interests, qualities

This is your time to SHINE- tell a story that describes what you're like in a flattering way

Be flirty & fun

Be honest

Say what you're looking for

DON'T

Be negative

Lie

Be demanding

Make typos

Talk about sex or try to be sexy

Keep saying "I"

Just say you're funny, tell a story that illustrates it

Brag

This exercise is likely to make you feel vulnerable, but ultimately it will be worth it!

Four very popular websites now are Zoosk, OKCupid, Match and eHarmony. It is recommended that you choose one or two to start with and judge how that goes. You must be prepared to allocate at least several hours a week for this; it is time-intensive.

You should plan to make your filters broad and be flexible when responding to people who contact you. Of course, if there is nothing that engages you at all in their profile, no need to answer. You must also be proactive and reach out to as many people as you can find. Remember: this is a numbers game! After a few email exchanges, a chat on the phone may be in order **IF** it feels right. You should make it a practice to phone screen potential dates prior to meeting them.

Advice from www.eharmony.com for writing a profile

“Better profiles get better results”

It's important to remember that while there are no magic ingredients to finding success with online dating, there are key ways to showcase your personality and to get the attention of prospective matches.

Here are the five most important characteristics of a great online dating profile:

- 1. They're sincere**

A great dating profile makes you want to learn more about a person because it seems genuine and real. You get the idea that this profile reflects a person with real interests and aspirations, not just a robot.

- 2. They use humor**

Humor is a much sought-after quality in a potential partner. Whether it's adding in a witty or self-deprecating line about yourself, telling a joke, or incorporating song titles into your 'About Me' section, including a little bit of humor in your profile goes a long way to getting you attention.

- 3. They don't use clichés**

The best profiles don't have to resort to overused words and phrases. Members who take the time to talk about themselves in a unique way are more likely to gain the attention of other members, simply because it's so refreshing to read a really original profile.

- 4. They're clear about what they're looking for**

Great online dating profiles make it clear that the user knows what they want out of a match – whether it's marriage and children or a partner to travel and share life with.

- 5. They include a call to action**

A successful profile will often have an invitation for users to get to know them more, whether that's a cheeky, 'This is more information than I'd share with my mum, so you should probably ask to find out more!' or a line about the kind of people you want to message you.- www.eharmony.com”

Advice from www.Zoosk.com for writing a profile

“Tip #1: If you want to help someone get a sense of who you are, it's the little things that really count.

Out of all our tips, my number one (for men and woman) is to add details to your profile. You can say you love to cook or you can share your go-to dish or talk

about a recipe you're experimenting with. One makes you sound like everyone else, the other makes you stand out. It's the details that make your profile come alive.

Tip #2: Give Them an In

If you add a question or a conversation starter for the person looking at your profile to message you about, it can really help someone break the ice and message you first. It's hard coming up with ways to start a conversation that aren't the same tired, "Hi, how are you tonight?" messages. So help people out! Tell them to share their favorite book, tell you the last hike they went on, or to elaborate on something you're interested in. You'll get a lot more messages and have better conversations.

Tip #3: Lists Are Your Friend

If you're not the best writer in the world, try listing out your hobbies, facts about yourself, or your favorite things. Lists are an effective and quick way to get your personality across that's easy for other people to read and scan.

NotYourAverageJane, 28

Shiny things distract me, people-watching is a favorite pastime, I live for the moments you can't put into words, and few things transcend a cup of coffee and someone to share it with. On the weekends you can usually find me in a friend's backyard ... waiting for something good to come off the grill but I love to use my Sundays to get out and exercise and get ready for the week ahead too.

Tip #4: Go Ahead and Get a Little Weird

With so many people out there, you want to stand out from the crowd so don't be afraid to showcase what's 'weird' or different about you. Do you have an odd laugh? Freak out at scary movies? Are you blunt and to-the-point? Let people know! Even if it turns some people off, you'll turn the right person on. Like Dr. Seuss once said, "We are all a little weird and life's a little weird, and when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall in mutual weirdness and call it love." Which brings me to my next tip...

Tip #5: Use a Quote

If you have a favorite quote or song lyric, add it in. Quotes can be a great way to get your personality across and show people what you believe in without having to explain it all yourself. Still not sure what to say? Check out our [list of over 100 online dating profile quotes](#) for some ideas.

Tip # 6: Give the What and the Why

Don't just say what you love, say why you love it. It's easy to say you love hiking or being outside, but telling people that you love the outdoors because seeing a mountain makes you feel small and insignificant, but in a good way or that hiking helps you push yourself to your limits, helps them get to know who you really are and makes your description more compelling and unique.

Tip #7: Leave Them Wanting More

In the past, online dating profiles read almost like a resume—the point was to outline everything about yourself like you were writing a long cover letter. Now things have changed and you don't need to say a lot in order to attract the right person. In fact, it's better if you don't. Your profile is a preview of who you are, not the whole picture. Give people a reason to message you to learn more.

Tip #8: Be More Than One Thing

If you love your job, you should definitely talk about it but make sure that's not ALL you talk about. Same goes for your hobbies and even your kids or family. You're more than one thing, there's a lot that goes into what makes you who you are. So make sure your profile reflects that!

Tip #9: Get a Little Silly

Trying to be funny while writing is hard, but one of the most attractive things for both men and women is someone who has a good sense of humor and can be fun. Don't feel like you have to tell an actual joke, but try sharing something silly or a little weird about yourself. It doesn't have to be hilarious, but a light-hearted anecdote can go a long way towards showing people that you're a fun, friendly, and approachable person.

Tip #10: Put Your Passion Out There

Some of the best dating profiles I've seen are profiles where the person opens up about things they're passionate about. Maybe it's about her dog or kids, maybe it's her job or a favorite book, sports team, or restaurant—when someone can't help but get passionate about something it's interesting and attractive. Put yourself out there and don't be afraid to open up or geek out about something you love.

Tip #11: Keep Conversation in Mind

Your profile isn't just your first impression, in many ways it's also the beginning of

the conversation you'll have with someone. If someone's interested in messaging you, they'll often go to your profile to find clues and hints of what to talk about, so as you're writing about yourself think of things you could bring up that will make it easier for someone to come up to you. Whether it's a favorite book, your relationship with your family, or the fact that you're planning a vacation, little details they can ask you more about or comment on will make you more approachable.

Tip #12: If You Have a Story, Tell It

If you've been on an adventure, are in the middle of a life-change, or have had some experiences that are worth sharing, go for it! Maybe you've moved to a new city, recently changed careers, are going back to school, just became a grandparent, or had your kids graduate and leave home. Chances are there are other people out there going through the same thing and you'll have something to talk about."

If you're still looking for more inspiration, check out our Pinterest board of online dating profile examples.

Examples of profiles:

LocalsOnly, 42

Just a small town girl, living in a lonely world... That's right, I'm a local girl. Born and raised. I moved away to the city for a while for work but couldn't be happier to be back in town with a new gig and a bit more experience behind me. I absolutely love sports and am happiest when I'm outside making myself tired. Whether it's playing in a softball league, going for a morning run, playing soccer in the backyard with my two boys, or tossing the football around, I'm all about it.

The Spontaneous Adventurer

Five things I couldn't live without:

F My passport, my iPhone, my best friend, my scrapbook and...tequila.

My friends describe me as:

Easy-going, passionate, creative, and spontaneous.

The three things I'm most thankful for:

1) Having been fortunate enough to visit 59 countries (and counting!)

2) *My fantastic friends*

3) *A great job that allows me to live the life I want and have fun!*

More about me:

Hello gents – thanks for stopping by. I’m a creative, fun-loving, energetic and active gal whose favourite words – in any language – are, ‘Please proceed to your gate for departure’. I’ve been bitten HARD by the [travel bug](#) and have been lucky enough to visit every continent (well, I’m working on Antarctica!) I love going out, meeting new people and generally getting the most out of life – whether that’s trying new bars and restaurants or picking up a new sport (I once joined in a game of pick-up basketball with a group of kids in Zimbabwe – it was great!) You should shoot me a message if you’re fun-loving, fit, and up for anything – I am!

The most important thing I am looking for in a person:

I’m definitely looking for someone who is in love with life and open to exploring all its possibilities. Travel is a really big part of my life and I’d love to meet someone who wants to join me on my many adventures. I’d definitely like to start a family one day, so I’m looking for a guy who’d also like to raise a couple of beautiful, multilingual, adventurous kids!

Why it works:

There’s no doubt this member is an energetic and spontaneous person with a lust for life. Her enthusiasm is infectious, and you can’t help but smile at her excitement about travelling the world and meeting someone to share that with.

Telling a story about playing basketball in Zimbabwe not only demonstrates that she’s travelled a lot, but it also gives other members something to talk about in a message. This profile would attract a like-minded guy who’s attracted to her adventurous streak, but she’s also made it clear that she’s committed to finding a serious relationship and hopefully starting a family when the time is right.

There are many examples available, just Google away!

Supplies: *Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant, computers if possible*

Session 11- Communication and the first date

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there are any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

Especially with Internet dating, it's very easy to fall into an email, phone or texting relationship with someone. These choices of communication can feel less threatening than getting out and meeting someone face to face. Though it's certainly important to email and have a call or two, too much can become an obvious barrier. A physical meeting will reveal things that email cannot, such as how a person looks, how they carry themselves, what their body language says and whether there is the potential for that important element we call chemistry.

Return to lesson number 9 to review the first date. STAY SAFE, GO OUT IN PUBLIC, LET SOMEONE YOU KNOW, KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING AND WHEN YOU EXPECT TO BE HOME. DO NOT GO TO ANY CLOSED NON-PUBLIC LOCATON. DO NOT DISCLOSE YOUR ADDRESS AT HOME OR WORK.

A word about disclosing a mental health problem or diagnosis. We all feel differently about this, but many people think it's a safe bet to talk about a mental health condition *after* you've been dating a while and the relationship is *beginning* to get serious – when it feels safe. My advice is to describe what happens to you when you're 'symptomatic'; how you feel, how your behavior and thoughts are impacted, rather than focusing on a diagnosis which can be stigmatizing and in the end tells very little about YOU. This is highly personal and it may be helpful to talk this through with a trusted friend or ally. Facilitate discussion in class about this important topic.

Now that you know more about the characteristics you are looking for in a potential date, engage in conversation that will help you understand who this person is. While you may want to ask a lot of questions, remember to be a good listener too! Be realistic. If it's important to you to have children and your date clearly does not, don't be fooled into going further because you may be attracted in other ways. Being rational may help save you the avoidable pain of a break-up

in the future. While it's natural to hope you can change someone's mind, it's unlikely you will succeed

Pay attention to your gut instincts. If something about this person makes you feel uncomfortable or 'funny', even if you can't identify what it is, pay attention and do not move forward with this person.

Although we often see the first date as an anxiety provoking fact-finding mission, try to enjoy yourself!

Other things to be mindful of in planning a first date include: choose an activity that you actually enjoy, is affordable, easy to get to, where talking is permissible (and even encouraged). Don't invite others along with you. Try to avoid alcohol, or minimize intake, as well as activities that are competitive.



Session 12- Sex

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there are any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

What do we really want from a relationship in addition to feeling more connected and less alone? Write answers on flipchart. Be sure to include:

- To be accepted for who we are
- To be known with all our flaws
- To be heard and understood
- To be liked and loved
- To be needed
- To be cherished

We include sex in this curriculum because it is such a highly charged topic that many of us have difficulty speaking honestly about. When two people become sexually active there is often a metamorphosis that follows. Sex is often about exposure; mental, physical, emotional...it makes you vulnerable. It's always best to talk about sex prior to engaging in it so no one gets hurt. If you are becoming physically intimate because of need (someone's horny), there is a greater chance someone will get hurt. There may be an immediate high, and can make you feel a false sense of closeness, but this is likely to fade. There is a difference between sex and love but the two can naturally feel confusing. Unless there are true feelings developing AND goodwill, you are likely to feel disconnected and lonely afterward, which may have been the motivation for enrolling in this class in the first place.

Before moving forward you should be clear about your motives and expectations for becoming sexually active. Do you trust this person? Do you expect monogamy? Do you think that having sex will make your partner want to be monogamous or more serious? Do you hope that having sex will make your partner fall in love with you more? Do YOU want to have sex or are you being

cajoled? Discuss these questions and emphasize that **WHEN IN DOUBT, HOLD OUT.**

If and when both parties agree to move forward, it is wise for both to be tested for a broad array of sexually transmitted diseases such as herpes, AIDS/HIV, Hepatitis, HPV, warts and others. It's important to consult with your doctor. It is also imperative that you speak with your doctor about birth control and find an agreed upon method **AND USE IT!** If you and your partner do not get a clean bill of health its important to share this information so you can exercise caution and **BE SAFE.** Either way, do not feel pressured into having sex before you are ready and comfortable. This is best to be non-negotiable.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, pencils, markers, tape, individual folders for each participant



Resources

[www.https://mentalhealth.net](https://mentalhealth.net)

[www.https://jamesclear.com](https://jamesclear.com)

[www.https://decision-making-solutions.com](https://decision-making-solutions.com)

[www.https://mindtools.com](https://mindtools.com)

Sargeant College of Allied Health Professionals /Boston University Center for
Psychiatric Rehabilitation Training Modules

Dating for Dummies by Dr. Joy Browne

[www.https://eharmony.com](https://eharmony.com)

[www.https://zoosk.com](https://zoosk.com)

[www.https://okcupid.com](https://okcupid.com)