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## **Foreword**

God leads us in some of the most unexpected directions. For Penny and me, this is one of them. One day while on the phone with her, we were discussing my desire to write a book about relationships and the premise of this book. Penny offered some great insight, and in an instant I asked her to be my co-author. And in another instant she said yes. We don't doubt for one second that God put us in this place and at this time to collaborate on this project.

This book is designed to help you find your soul mate or an extraordinary relationship. We will use these terms interchangeably throughout the book. There is a great way to find and sustain relationships, and we will help you discover that path in the following chapters. Our interest is to help you be clear about what you really want...what you are really looking for in your next relationship. We want to help you find the right relationship and weed out the inappropriate ones before you invest a significant amount of time or, worse yet, marry the wrong person. Is this book the end all and be all in finding your soul mate? Absolutely not! What we are presenting here are techniques for better self-awareness and improving your decision-making process. Through better self-awareness and decision-making ability, you start to set yourself up for a successful

relationship and less heartache. Learning how to spend your time productively in your search is what we are after.

We believe that God (or whatever greater power you believe in) will guide you to the right person. When you are in the right relationship, you will “feel” or “sense” that it is correct. Some call it a “gut feeling” or intuition. Regardless of what you call it, there is an incredible sense of knowing you are with the right person.

There is a lot of information out there available to help fix relationships that are troubled, whether you are single or married. However, there seems to be very little information available to help you find or choose the right mate in the first place. We believe that if you make the right choices up front, there won't be that much to work on *after* you are in a relationship or are married. Please don't misunderstand; every relationship takes work and constant nurturing. If you are with the right person, your soul mate, the work of nurturing the relationship becomes almost effortless.

There is also a lot of information out there that will teach you “tricks” to get the man or woman of your dreams. Do you really want to trick someone into dating you? What happens when he or she finds out they have been tricked? What happens when the person of your dreams finds out you are not really who you made yourself out to be? What happens when you find out that the man or woman of your dreams was not what you really wanted? We are not going to focus on anything but dealing with basic human nature and commonsense techniques to help you in your endeavor to find your soul mate and experience a connection with someone that transcends description.

Dating Backward is the process of looking back over your past successes and mistakes in relationships, reversing the usual social expectations of dating, and becoming a hesitant lover. The foundation of dating backward is being cautious with your heart and soul while waiting for that extraordinary relationship or your soul mate.

## Chapter 1

### What is a soul mate?

**T**he concept of a soul mate is foreign to many people, and it is foreign to men more so than women. Less than ten years ago, Rick would have told you there is no such thing and that it was just a loony fantasy to which women subscribe. Since then he has come to believe very strongly in the concept of soul mates and to believe that we all have the potential to have one or more in our lives. Penny always believed that soul mates existed or could be developed as a relationship grows. She has since discovered that you cannot grow or develop into a soul mate, but can discover or uncover him or her in your lifetime. We have received resistance from a few people along the way about the concept of soul mates and whether they even exist. If you don't believe in the concept of a soul mate, consider the term “extraordinary relationship.” We believe the terms “soul mate” and “extraordinary relationship” can be one and the same and can be interchangeable. If you are skeptical of this

kind of relationship or are in the category of nonbeliever, please keep an open mind as you read on and consider the possibility that an extraordinary relationship does exist and can be found in your lifetime. We are here to teach you how to discover and uncover that kind of relationship.

A soul mate is that person you easily connect with. This connection occurs completely on multiple levels, or the Four Relationship Cornerstones: intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical. These connections are more than infatuation or lust. Being with your soul mate will provide you with a sense of excitement along with a sense of calm and the feeling of completion. Communication with a soul mate is a shared understanding that is supernatural in nature in the written, spoken, and unspoken forms. Your soul mate can be the other half of what and who you are. It cannot be manufactured, changed, or purchased. To help you discover your soul mate, you need to understand yourself, the Four Relationship Cornerstones mentioned above, the love language(s) you speak, and the love language(s) that nurture your soul. In his book *The 5 Love Languages*, Gary Chapman describes the love languages as Acts of Service, Physical Touch, Gifts, Quality Time, and Words of Affirmation. He then helps you understand the primary language you speak and what language meets your soul's needs. It is our opinion that you and your soul mate will more than likely speak the same primary love language(s). While this is not an absolute, it does make communication at an extraordinary level much easier.

Communication that occurs with your soul mate across all Four Relationship Cornerstones is so strong, so great, that you can discuss virtually any subject. It is through emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical connections that communication and bonds are formed to make an extraordinary relationship. An extraordinary relationship with a soul mate is a two-way street of give and take between two souls with utmost consideration for each other in every possible

way. Communication is the vehicle that strengthens the bonds within the Four Relationship Cornerstones. These conversations may not always be easy, but you will feel safe to have them. You both need to be emotionally and socially mature enough to listen to your mate. If you or your mate tend to retaliate with caustic, hurtful, hateful words that can never be taken back, you may have emotional or social maturity issues, which do not lead to an extraordinary relationship. Soul mates are emotionally mature. While soul mates may not have extraordinary communication styles, they are able to communicate extraordinarily well with each other. A soul mate will be *the* match for his or her mate.

Not all individuals are mature or communicate well. Assuming you, the reader, are emotionally mature and communicate effectively, you will need to be able to screen out those who are emotionally immature and have poor communication styles that conflict with your needs in a mate. With your soul mate drama and stress are naturally kept to a minimum, or within the parameters of the relationship that are comfortable for both of you. What is stressful and constitutes drama to one may not to another. It is important to understand what creates stress and drama for you and your mate and communicate these issues with each other.

A sign of a strong, mature person is that there is little or no drama, stress, or mental and physical illness in their life. Maturity brings the ability to:

- Deal with reality constructively.
- Adapt to change.
- Make long-range choices.
- Have a reasonable degree of independence.

- Have a concern for other people.
- Have a satisfactory relationship with others.
- Work productively.

In a mature relationship, individuals respect and feel joy for their mate and are able to share those special qualities and values. Soul mates are two unique individuals who connect to become stronger and more powerful as a couple. The relationship math equation is  $1 + 1 = 1^{10}$ . Together, you become greater, more creative, more inspirational, and more effective in life than you are individually. There is a natural synchronization of mind, body, and spirit that creates a deep, abiding love for each other.

### Meanings of love

There are different types of love. The Greek language has several different words for love, while the English language has only one word with multiple meanings. In English, you can love ice cream, which is different from loving your dog, which is different from loving your children, which is different from loving your mate, which is different than the love for God. Most of the Greek versions are discussed in the Bible. Here are the four most common types of love in no particular order.

- *Storge* means affection in ancient and modern Greek. It is natural affection, like that felt by parents for children. The word is used almost exclusively as a descriptor of relationships with the family. A common example in the American culture today is “motherly love.” This is one of the stronger

loves because it involves a commitment that relies only on one characteristic of the receiver of the love, and that is that he or she is a dependent.

- *Philos*, or *phileo*, means friendship or affectionate love in modern Greek. It is a dispassionate, virtuous love, a concept developed by Aristotle. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. In ancient texts, *philos* denoted a general type of love, used for love between family, friends, or lovers, as well as a desire for or enjoyment of an activity. When Jesus wept following the death of His dear friend Lazarus, the onlookers remarked, “See how he loved (*phileo*) him!” (John 11:36). Another example would be “After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself” (1 Samuel 18:1). In an extraordinary relationship, *philos* will be present because your soul mate will be your best friend.
- *Eros* is the root word for “erotic” but does not describe sexual love only. It actually describes all emotional love...the feeling of love. As an emotion, it is morally neutral. It can lead just as easily to lust as it can to passion. It can be a passionate love with sensual desire and longing, which is how we most commonly think of *eros*. *Eros* can be interpreted as a love for someone whom you love with more than *philia*, the love of friendship. It can also apply to dating relationships as well as marriage. *Eros* within a dating relationship is designed to be morally pure and without passionate lust. *Eros* within marriage is designed by God for physical and emotional pleasure. You can have passion for a person without passionate lust, aware that physical purity is necessary for spiritual purity. You will experience *eros* with your soul mate, hopefully with

passion while dating, and save the physical pleasure for your mate until after you are married. We will discuss physical intimacy in chapter 7 of this book.

- *Agape* is unselfish love, unconditional love...a commitment to seek the best and highest good for another person, regardless of any response. In the ancient Greek, it often refers to a general affection or deeper sense of “true love” rather than the attraction suggested by *eros*. *Agape* love is not in any way dependent on circumstances, because it says “I love you because I choose to.” This kind of love for your mate will be one without expectations, no strings attached, and you will love expecting nothing in return. Your love will be all about him or her...all about your soul mate.

Why is it important to know what the different types of love are? You have to understand the different types or qualities of love to make sure you understand what you are feeling and what you are looking for. It helps you distinguish between infatuation and being in a loving relationship. The ultimate love in an extraordinary relationship is *agape* love. This is unconditional love. When you are in an extraordinary relationship and have unconditional love, you are with your soul mate! In this relationship you will experience *phileos* and *eros* also, but they will be surrounded or wrapped in *agape* love. In an online article titled “Love and Dating: How Most Singles Have Love Backwards, June Hunt states

Most dating starts with *eros*. In fact, many couples never move beyond this phase. Those who do move past “romantic” love typically move to *phileo*, the affectionate love of genuinely liking. This route, however, rarely leads to *agape*—unconditional love that seeks what is in the best interest of the other person—because

it’s hijacked along the way by selfishness, lust, or any number of other relational roadblocks.

Unconditional love without expectations is not easy to find. The key is patience. Other than with God, you will not find *agape* love just anywhere. It is out there and you will need to be discerning about the relationship that you enter into. Once you have experienced *agape* love, you will never want to settle for any other type of all-encompassing love in a relationship. Knowing that your significant other is so totally in love with you and you totally in love with her or him is the ultimate in relationships. There is a freedom to love and be loved for who you are and without demands or expectations. This should be the goal of everyone looking for a substantial long-term relationship. Without this type of love, at best you will have a great relationship. It will never be extraordinary.

### **Relationships that are not soul mate quality**

Relationships that are less than extraordinary are often filled with drama. Most causes of drama are related to emotional immaturity. These individuals are often known as drama queens (or kings) who can suck the life out of a relationship. They are self-centered narcissistic people who are emotionally unavailable for anyone but themselves. Stress and drama can be self-created through communications, actions, and the daily choices they make. This negative tension is the driving force for this individual and often takes energy from all positive people, values, and social settings around them. When you come across someone like this, red flags should pop up. Politely excuse yourself from the conversation and leave the room. Don’t worry; there will be plenty of others to take your place in their life, and it will free you from excess drama and open the door for you to find your soul mate.

In college, Penny dated a young man, and initially there were good times, communication, and laughter together. Penny said, “It was an instant connection, or so I thought. Looking back, I really missed the red flags of his emotional immaturity and should have terminated the relationship early on.” Over the three months of dating, I began to notice changes in his behavior and our relationship. He demanded my full attention and became jealous at parties when I socialized with other friends. If he failed to get the attention he demanded, he would begin to pout and close down communication and withdraw his kindness. His remarks would become snide and cutting. The negative communication, control and acting out were unrecognized red flags and he lacked emotional maturity. His increased expectations were unreasonable. Emotionally mature people do not cut down, belittle, or speak words of harm in an effort to make themselves appear more intelligent, funny, or the life of a party at someone else’s expense. He would say, “It was just a joke, quit being so sensitive.” At this point I should have recognized this kind of communication as disrespectful and harmful and walked away. Rick and I will discuss the harmful effects that this type of emotionally immature relationship can have on a person in chapter 3.

“It was not long after that when I missed another red flag. Issues of control were growing and became problematic. He was moody if I spent time with my girlfriends, went shopping, or had lunch out.”, stated Penny. My time was not my own, and there was a lack of respect growing between us. There was a beginning feeling that I could not plan any activities or have enjoyment outside of our relationship or without his approval. There was a loss of self-choice, self-direction, and friendships. Friends are life’s treasures, and we are blessed to have them in our lives. A true love or soul mate will respect your values, time, and friends. If by chance your friends are poor choices, a mature and true love will openly communicate by speaking to you kindly, with concern and love in his or her heart for your well-being.

Emotionally immature individuals disrespect your time, values, and choices that do not revolve around them, and they can ultimately seek to control you.

One evening Penny discovered that, “Owning your contributions to a failed relationship is the first step to obtain a mature relationship.” My boyfriend shared the problems that he had in his first marriage with his ex-wife. It was awful to hear that his ex-wife became so angry with him that she took a claw hammer and beat him with it. I wondered, “What on earth would make a woman so mad that she felt the need to beat another human being with a claw hammer?” According to him, it was all her fault and he had done nothing to provoke that fit of anger. It was at this time that instincts or gut feelings took over and told me something was not right. It was at this point where clarity and courage to end the relationship happened. My personal goals and values did not match his. I knew that this was not the kind of person I wanted to marry. He lacked the values of respect, integrity, honesty, and maturity. I knew it was best to end the relationship. He planned on leaving the state without me, but before he left there were two more times when he came to the house and stood outside ringing the doorbell and waited in the driveway. It was a bit stressful feeling and it was like hiding out in my own home. The truth was, there was no desire to answer the door, and I was finished with the relationship. I knew that owning my responsibility to a failure was necessary to be successful.

Please note that this is a very important teaching moment in ending relationships. Do not open the door, accept phone calls, e-mails, texts, or letters, or allow any other type of communication. If you do, you allow that person to enter back into your life to try to control you all over again. Done is done, over is over, and when you end this type of relationship, it is time to move on to the future. It was a great relief when he finally moved out of state. This experience was life changing for me (Penny) and created a feeling of fear and left me a

bit unsure of my judgment in men. If only I had been taught about emotional immaturity, what it looked like, and that it is best to end relationships like this very early on. You cannot fix the emotionally immature individual. You did not break them, and you cannot fix them. The best option is recognizing this and moving on.

### **Foundation for a mature, successful relationship**

Emotional maturity begins with an honest evaluation of your personal values, your response to life situations, and your relationships. Where you grew up, who raised you, the era in which you were born, your economic status, school experiences, your religious upbringing, and everything else, positive and negative, that has happened to you in your life will influence your value system. What is said, what is not said, what is done, and what is not done all express values. A core value system that does not change is a sign of a healthy, mature person. Your soul mate and you gain energy and grow from your experiences as individuals and as a couple. You admire, respect, and love each other.

As human beings, when we are young, we tend to be wide eyed and naïve about relationships and have poor insight to our values. We are overwhelmed with infatuation and lack the experience and understanding about life and the Four Relationship Cornerstones that make relationships successful. We tend to follow society's prescription for dating, infatuation, being head over heels, and crazy in love. What is valued in relationships during our teens and twenties is very different from what is important to us at forty or fifty years of age and beyond. Living life is guaranteed to change your list of things that are important, and it will continue to evolve as you travel through life. Dating backward is the ability to look at an individual and yourself before going forward into a relationship. Extraordinary relationships grow and evolve through life in tandem together. While

you may not grow in the same areas or in the same direction, you will share in the joy of your mate's growth. Relationships that are not successful or extraordinary tend to experience change that is not communicated or shared as a life experience. Growth as individuals and as a couple is often lacking or missing in relationships that fail.

Infatuation is an incredible aphrodisiac and deludes the inexperienced into thinking it is true love. It is so powerful that we overlook serious flaws in the people we date, court, and even marry. As described in his book *The 5 Love Languages*, Gary Chapman explains the effect of infatuation or "the obsessive stage of love" on relationships. It has been observed that infatuation will last, on average, for two years. When we make decisions based on infatuation, we are often totally incorrect and will probably regret our decisions later on down the road. Infatuation does not mean you are with your soul mate. It may be an indication of *eros* love but not true or *agape* love, which you should be looking for. A true soul mate is able to demonstrate *agape* love across the Four Relationship Cornerstones with extraordinary communication.

When you are infatuated with someone, you may see the imperfections in them that you are not willing to live with long-term but you gloss over them. You may ignore the imperfections, you may think you can change the imperfections in your mate or believe that the imperfection will somehow magically disappear. Infatuation causes chemical changes in the brain similar to narcotics and is very addictive. There are those who cannot continue relationships because of the lack of the infatuation feeling and because they need to feel it over and over again. They are "forever daters" and can never commit to a long-term relationship. The chemical change can cloud perception and judgment in the same way narcotics can. Under the influences of these chemical changes, it is easy to gloss over unhealthy relationship characteristics and make errors in judgment. The impact of these chemical changes and self-talk allows us to draw conclusions that may take years to understand before we discover

they are erroneous. The singular belief that “He or she will change in time and come to a greater understanding like mine” is a relationship death trap. And often, several years into a relationship or marriage, we realize that the change didn’t happen no matter what we said or tried to do to “help” them change. Change can only come from within, not from outside pressure. In spite of any encouragement (which usually turns to nagging and cajoling in unhealthy relationships), your mate can change themselves only if they desire to make the change. Some of us, even as we age, never learn this lesson and are doomed to repeat this error again and again. Infatuation blinds us to the realities of the relationship (or the lack of one). This is why it is so very important to understand how infatuation affects us and to always look realistically at a new relationship. If there are aspects of his or her character that you cannot live with for the rest of your life, it is time to end the relationship before it goes any further, because these character traits will not change.

### **Do you know and love yourself?**

You must know yourself and love yourself before you can know or love another. You must understand what you like and what you don’t like. You have to know what excites you, what gives you the desire to get out of bed in the morning, and where your passion lies. Just stop reading for a moment and think about this concept. Start writing in your journal all the things that you enjoy in life. This exercise can accomplish a couple of different things. First, it will help you decide what makes you happy, excited, and motivated. Second, it will help you to start defining some of the things you might be looking for in a mate.

The characteristics of your mate are very important, but for now, let’s focus on you. Does a good book excite you? What about attending sporting events? How about lying on a beach? Does something at

work excite you and motivate you? How about acquiring a new client or creating an award-winning presentation? Do you love photography or painting? Are you great with your hands—maybe a mechanic, a carpenter, a cake decorator? If you are drawing a blank and you are just not coming up with anything, ask yourself: “What could I be excited about?” Start building your list from there. You don’t have to have a long list of things you are excited about. It might be just a couple of things. The more you think about it, the more you are likely to see your list grow.

An example of what we are talking about here is that one day Penny and I were discussing work, and I expressed some displeasure with my chosen career at the time. Penny paused and asked me something that no one had ever asked before. She asked, “What are you passionate about?” At that moment in time I didn’t know. There are a lot of things that bring enjoyment, however, they are not things that would get me to jump out of bed in the morning and hit the floor running. With some soul searching, some prayer, and some quiet time, I realized God had placed writing this book on my heart. This subject is my passion and fascination. It is also about helping people...helping them start to think and helping guide them in the right direction. It is about presenting some commonsense information about relationships that most people just never think of. If you are struggling with coming up with things that excite you, take some time to be quiet and just let your mind wander. This is a great time to just reflect on what is important to you and what motivates you.

Why do you need to love yourself? It may sound a bit self-centered, but if you don’t or can’t love yourself, who will? Pick up a mirror and look deeply into it. Who or what do you see looking back? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and what you see in yourself is projected for others to observe. When people don’t love themselves, they believe it is because of some inherent flaws. A universal truth is that if you do not love yourself, you prevent yourself from being

loved by anyone else. This can be corrected with a re-evaluation of your self-perception. You need to be comfortable and confident with yourself as you are. By loving yourself, you are accepting yourself for who you are. If you don't love and don't like yourself, you will not be able to fully love others. We all have traits that can be improved on, and we all have traits that are unique, making us precious, lovable, and beautiful. How can you expect someone to love you when you view the person you see in the mirror as inadequate? Others will sense this too and will not be willing to get involved with you in any kind of deep, meaningful, healthy relationship. There is not one person alive who wants to spend his or her waking hours working toward pleasing or convincing someone of his or her worth and value. It is also a great thing when you share positive feedback with someone you love, but having to reinforce this daily drains you of precious energy. A soul mate will not drain you and leave you feeling empty. They will meet you where you are, love you for who you are, and accept whatever weaknesses you may have. Loving others fully and completely is the basis of an extraordinary relationship because you will not be holding anything back.

### **Define the relationship you desire**

In this section, we want to start off by helping you define your expectations for a relationship. Let's take a look at the type of relationship you want. There are a couple of questions that come to mind when we think about relationships. Are you looking for a long-term relationship, something that could lead to marriage? Or are you looking for a short-term, casual relationship, just a friend to do things with on the weekends or an evening during the week and nothing serious? Before you start your search, you need to start with an idea of where you want your relationship to go.

Set the expectations early so, first and foremost, *you* know what you want and, secondly, so that your prospective mate knows what you are looking for. While this may seem pretty basic, it is amazing how many people just start looking and have only a vague idea—no specifics of the relationship they are looking for. Having a vague idea about the type of relationship you want is akin to setting out on a road trip without a map. You may have a general heading but are unlikely to reach your destination because you don't have any specific direction.

### **Determine the personal characteristics you are looking for**

Our emotions create desires, goals, and life dreams to bring us a sense of accomplishment and joy. Dreams are created for the things we most desire in life. What is your heart's desire for a mate? Are you dreaming of a relationship that is intensely intimate, without walls, where you are so connected that you think and act as one? Are you dreaming of a man or woman who honors your intelligence and allows you the freedom to be you? Is your dream of two happy, separate individuals that are so connected that their responses and actions are as if they are one person? Have you ever dreamed of being so close to someone you can feel their joy and pain without speaking to them? We want you to seek your dreams and make them a reality, and to know what to do when reality is not matching your dreams.

What characteristics are you looking for in a relationship? What is your ideal mate like? These are two key questions we need to review next. Beginning your search starts with a sheet of paper with one side titled "My Soul Mate" and the other side "Me." Each side will have two columns: one of them with the heading "Positive" and the other "Negative." This list will be a work in progress and one you will revise and update as you grow and become clearer on who you are and what you want and need in a relationship. An example is provided below.

| My Soul Mate               |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Must Have List or Positive | Deal Breaker List or Negative |
| Emotional                  | Emotional                     |
| Intellectual               | Intellectual                  |
| Spiritual                  | Spiritual                     |
| Physical                   | Physical                      |
| Communication              | Communication                 |
| What I am looking for:     | Deal Breakers:                |

| My Self-evaluation         |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Must Have List or Positive | Deal Breaker List or Negative |
| Emotional                  | Emotional                     |
| Intellectual               | Intellectual                  |
| Spiritual                  | Spiritual                     |
| Physical                   | Physical                      |
| Communication              | Communication                 |
| What I am looking for:     | Deal Breakers:                |

On your sheet of paper or in your journal, start to make notes about your ideal relationship. List the relationship characteristics you want in the positive column. These need to be *your* wants and not what anyone else thinks you should be looking for. The idea is to define what is important to you—what *you* must have and also what the Deal Breakers are. The Deal Breakers will go in the negative column. There will be certain minor things or characteristics that may be acceptable if that person possesses virtually all of your Must Haves. You should never settle for anyone that has any characteristics that you would normally consider Deal Breakers.

Continue to develop your list of Must Haves in the positive column to describe the person you are looking for. Include physical characteristics—tall, short, blond, brunet, fit, about average, curvy, long hair, short hair, blue eyes, hazel eyes, etc. Be as specific as you can. Some people aren't as interested in looks as others. If looks are not as important, then your list may not be as detailed. Men are generally more visual, so guys, your list will probably be longer. Women, on the other hand, tend to see more of the person on the inside, so ladies, your lists may be a little vaguer when it comes to looks, but longer with personality traits, characteristics, and needs. Note: the more Must Haves you have, the narrower the field of possibilities will be.

Personality is important. Do you want someone who is quiet, someone who can be the life of the party, or someone in between? Should he or she be very open and direct, or do you find a more reserved and quiet personality to be attractive?

What other characteristics are important to you? What about income? Is a clean house important? Do you have or want pets? Do you have or want children? Is faith important to you? What about politics? What are your personal goals, and is it important to have someone that shares your dreams and goals with you? Are you open

to new experiences or do you like routine? Do you want private “me” time or do you want to spend all of your free time together? Is personal hygiene important to you? What about saving and spending money? These are just a few of the characteristics that should be considered. Virtually anything that you consider important in a relationship should be added to your list. Always state your preferences in the positive. Framing your Must Haves in the positive helps keep you from looking at potential relationships with negative thoughts. For example, if you want someone that is active, rather than saying “No couch potatoes,” say something like “Must be active or adventurous.” Here are some examples of writing positive Must Haves.

- Must be willing to help clean the house.
- Must want to be with me but not need me.
- Must be a Christian with strong morals and values.
- Must earn a respectable living.
- Must be politically conservative/liberal.
- Must have a strong personality.
- Must have personal goals.
- Must enjoy modest personal displays of affection.
- Must have a positive attitude.
- Must be able to communicate effectively.

- Must be intelligent, not necessarily educated.
- Must be healthy physically and emotionally.

If you are serious about seeking a soul mate, these are all things that you need to be thinking about, adding to your list, and refining your list as you date. Some people you meet will automatically be dropped as a potential mate even before the first date. Some will be eliminated after a couple of e-mails or phone calls. A few will make it to a first date, and it will be “one and done.” A select few will make it past the first week, maybe a month or longer. If you pay attention to what you listed as important characteristics, you will be able to very quickly eliminate anyone who does not meet your criteria.

Rick was having a phone conversation with a woman that he had met. In one of their previous conversations, the subject of politics came up (because that subject is important to him). They discovered that they didn't necessarily agree on the topic. Rick is very decisive and opinionated, and she was, for lack of better terms, wishy washy and very unsure of what to believe. She took offense to Rick's position and the importance that he placed on the topic. She commented that she didn't believe that we needed to have a cookie-cutter mate to have a great relationship. She believed that you didn't necessarily have to be on the same page to be able to get along. For her, that may be true. For Rick, it is not. Experience tells us that the more things two people have in common, the stronger their relationship will be, because they will have less to disagree about. The more disagreements or arguments you can remove from a relationship up front, the fewer arguments you are going to have down the road. If you are not on the same page about the big things—the things that are most important to you—you cannot develop a deep connection on all levels. We believe that you cannot develop a deep, spiritual connection with someone who doesn't have the same fundamental beliefs in God

that you do. The same holds true for the intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects of a relationship.

Is it important that someone meet every characteristic on your list? That is up to you. Are you willing to settle for less than extraordinary? If not, then you need to keep looking for the one with all the characteristics you are searching for. The more specific you are, the more likely you are to find your soul mate, but it may take you a longer period of time to find exactly what you are looking for. There are a number of other factors that need to be in place for this person to be your soul mate, but this is a good start for now. We will discuss these other factors in later chapters.

One of the things Rick experienced in finding his first soul mate is that while a man may continue to see beauty in other women, we tend to start comparing them to what we already have and quickly realize that there is no real comparison. When you are with your soul mate, you instinctively know that you already have the very best in your mate and there is no one else who can compare. This is a fundamental principle of extraordinary relationships. You realize and understand that there is no reason to look any further because the person you are with is the one that makes you complete. There will always be a more physically attractive person out there, but none that has all the unique qualities of your soul mate that attracted you in the first place. This is absolutely the most incredible feeling that one can have. It is so deep and absolute that there is no question in either of your minds as to who is the most important person in your life. This is the chemistry that people talk about. It is that connection that allows you to look across the room and smile just because you know he or she is with you. And, if you doubt this, strike up a conversation with the most beautiful person (man or woman) you can find. You will soon see that there are significant interpersonal qualities that are missing for them to be a great match for you. You will not connect with him or her because some part of the equation is

missing—the spiritual, intellectual, or emotional connection will not be there. Looks alone are never the sole characteristic that will make an extraordinary mate.

Penny and Rick have both independently come to know the power of identifying high-priority characteristics that they desire in their individual extraordinary relationships. The more specific you are in defining your ideal mate, the better your chances of finding that person are. Time is finite. We are given only so much of it on this earth. Wasting time on bad dates is not beneficial to anyone; not you and not your date. By being patient and taking time to screen your prospective dates and make sure they meet most of your criteria up front, you will eliminate a lot of unnecessary dates and some of the painfully uncomfortable situations you would otherwise find yourself in. Weeding out incompatible candidates is not a judgment that a person is bad; it just means that he or she is not right for you. Dating is work, and even with the best screening efforts you will find that there are those “one and done” dates, or after several dates the true character of the individual surfaces and you must end the relationship because of the game playing or deception that was experienced.

It is our belief that there is no one right answer to any of the questions that follow. There are as many answers as there are people answering the questions. And there are countless more questions you can ask. Here are some examples of questions you can ask yourself about the characteristics you are looking for in a mate:

- Do I want to have someone to travel with?
- Do I like adventure?
- Am I a homebody who likes to do things around the yard?

- Am I social and do I like to entertain, or do I like to have quiet meals at home?
- Is religion important to me?
- What about personality? Do I want someone with a strong personality or someone who is laid back?

These are just a few questions to get you started. The sky is the limit as far as the number of questions you can ask yourself. The more detailed your list, the more specific you can be about your ideal relationship.

As you start to define the relationship you are looking for and start to create the picture in your mind, don't think that this list is carved in stone. Don't be afraid to make adjustments to what you find important to your ideal relationship. As you date, you will have experiences that may or may not be good, and they will help you refine your list of Must Haves. Defining what you want is the basis for setting any goal. Finding your soul mate is no different. As you work on your list mentioned above, write all those positive things you desire in your mate, such as physical appearance, emotional expressions, intelligence, and spirituality. These positive traits give you a measuring rod for your potential mate. In the Deal Breaker or negative list, include all those things that you are not willing to live with and that are undesirable characteristics in your mate. Keep this list in a safe place because you will use it over and over. From time to time you will modify this list and update it as you mature and grow. Many things make impressions on us in our life. We need to evaluate these impressions, determine whether they are positive or negative, and utilize that information to help make better choices.