



**The**  
**5 BIGGEST**  
**DATING and RELATIONSHIP**  
**MISTAKES**  
**and**  
**HOW TO AVOID THEM**

Hello,

Making mistakes is part of being human. We all make mistakes and I have made some dandies in my lifetime. This is nothing to be ashamed about. Relationship mistakes can be costly not just financially, but in the time, happiness, and all too often, self-esteem that is lost.

Many people punish themselves for making even **one** bad relationship decision.

What I sincerely hope is that by sharing this with you, you will become more aware of problem relationships and avoid them altogether before you invest any significant time and emotion.

All of these will apply to some of you. For others, maybe only two or three will apply. The important thing is to recognize these potential problems and make every effort to avoid them.

Here are the 5 that I see most frequently with my clients and workshop participants. They are in no particular order and one is not necessarily any more significant than another.

Cheers,

*Rick Soetebier*

## Mistake #1: Not knowing exactly what you are looking for in a relationship

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This is by far one of the most common mistakes people make. When I ask someone what they are looking for in a relationship, at best they have a very vague answer like Honesty, Loyalty, Loving, Kind and Truthful floating around in their head. On top of that, they may not even know whether they want just a casual friendship or something long-term that leads to marriage. Most people know more about what they DON'T want in their next relationship than what they do want. Consequently, these people will spend months, if not years, in poor relationships only to discover that it's not the relationship that they are looking for.

Your limiting beliefs keep you in the wrong relationship reasons such as:

- I won't find anyone better.
- I've invested so much time already, I'd hate to give up now.
- I don't deserve any better.
- He/She really does love me; I don't want to hurt them.

### The Solution:

If you're in a poor relationship now, your first step is to leave! I know that sounds cold, but it's true. You aren't doing either of you any favors by sticking around. Neither of you are in your ideal relationship even if it's just you that's unsatisfied. You **both** have to be happy and satisfied.

When you are emotionally ready to find a great relationship, you have to become crystal clear about what you want *before* you start dating! Now is the time to create your *Must Have List*. This is a list of **all** the **non-negotiable** characteristics you want in your next mate. This list must be written and must be stated in the positive. For example; "Must be physically active" instead of "No couch potatoes." Or; "Must be smoke free" instead of "No smokers."

Whether your list is written on paper, a computer, iPad, or cell phone, you need to keep it with you always. You'll find that as you date, your list will grow because from time to time you'll find traits in someone that you will find desirable.

Finally, in any new relationship you will be overcome with infatuation and raging hormones. It happens to all of us! Your *Must Have List* will help you step back from the infatuation to make an honest assessment of whether the person you are dating is the right one for you. If they are missing ANY of your Must Haves, it's time to move on. Settling for less than everything you want should never be an option. See Mistake #2 below.

## Mistake #2: Settling for less than you want and deserve in a relationship

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Society, as well as everyday advertising, tells us that we should strive for the best. We deserve the best that life has to offer. We deserve to drive the best car, live in the best home, eat in the best restaurants, and shop at the best stores. We need to have the newest cell phone, faster computers to go along with a faster internet, and the newest, hottest brand of shoes and jeans. Virtually every message we see or hear tells us we need the best there is.

All the dating websites tell you that you deserve to be in love. Most match making services will guarantee you a certain number of dates.

However, when it comes to dating, we receive mixed messages. Family and friends, as well as society, tell us that we can't have everything we want in a relationship. Anyone that tries to have it all is unrealistic, too picky, or is dreaming. Don't listen to them! This just isn't true! They are part of the 85% that settles for less than extraordinary. You *can* have everything you want in a relationship as long as you are willing to put in the time and effort necessary to find it.

### The Solution:

You can't think too much, you can only think badly. This is where your limiting beliefs come into play. Limiting beliefs are the stories we tell ourselves about why we can't do something, have something, or change something in our lives.

You may be in a relationship now and recognize that it isn't exactly what you want or dream about. You tell yourself that "If I leave I won't find anyone better." or "I've already invested 5 years in this relationship, I just can't walk away now." And then there is "I know that if I just stick with it I can get him/her to change and everything will be fine."

The reality is that you are creating a story in your head to justify why you shouldn't try to do better. *If you think you can or you think you can't, you're right. ~ Henry Ford.*

If your relationship isn't extraordinary from the beginning, odds are it never will be. *You* have to set higher standards for yourself and your mate. It's as simple as that! This is another reason for creating your *Must Have List* (discussed above) and your *Deal Breaker List*.

I'm here to tell you that you can have and deserve nothing less than extraordinary in a relationship. You deserve to be with your soul mate! The question becomes, are you willing to change your limiting beliefs and do what it takes to seek extraordinary in your life?

### Mistake #3: Failing to recognize red flags of poor relationships

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This is a really huge mistake that most people make. When we are in a new relationship, we are usually blinded by infatuation, raging hormones and the excitement of someone new. That is one of the reasons it is so important to know what you are looking for in a mate before you start to date. Recognizing emotional immaturity, co-dependency, and narcissism is critical to keeping you out of toxic relationships. Knowing the type of relationship you want and what your *Must Haves* and *Deal Breakers* are will help you temporarily step back from your infatuation and recognize the potential problems you face long before you invest a significant amount of time and emotional energy in a relationship that isn't right for you.

### The Solution:

Make sure *you* are emotionally healthy to begin with. If you find yourself identifying with the emotional immaturity, co-dependency, or narcissism characteristics listed below, consider seeking professional help before entering into a long-term relationship.

The characteristics listed below are just a thumbnail sketch and by no means a comprehensive list. Do additional research if necessary, and make sure you walk away from any of these toxic relationships.

**The emotionally immature might show these characteristics.**

- Their mother is in touch nearly every day. She may even buy their clothes, groceries, and do their laundry.
- They may have childish tantrums.
- They expect to be pampered and taken care of on demand. They take, but never give.
- They cannot maintain long-term, stable romantic relationships.
- They have few, if any, close friends.
- They are often passive-aggressive.
- They are financially irresponsible and would rather play and party than plan for the future.
- They don't accept responsibility; it's always someone else's fault.

**Co-dependency can look something like this.**

- They have an excessive tendency to rescue or take responsibility for others.
- They derive their sense of purpose by building your self-esteem through their extreme self-sacrifice.
- They try to fix troubled, addicted, or unmotivated people whose problems are far bigger than they can deal with.
- They tend to attract people who will take care of them so they don't have to take on adult responsibilities.
- They enable others bad or poor behavior.

**Narcissists can display some of these behaviors.**

- They can be enraged with a perceived personal insult.
- They don't care about how others feel.
- They need positive affirmation.
- They want to be recognized by others for their accomplishments.
- They feel other owe them something, yet do not give in return.
- They see themselves as being able to excel at everything they do.
- They use people for their own purposes.
- They are name droppers.
- They are averse to criticism.
- They always make the conversation about themselves.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of traits or characteristics nor is it meant to be a medical diagnosis. It is meant to give you an idea of what potential problems might look like and allow you to recognize red flags before you get overly involved with someone.

#### **Mistake #4: Not being mature or strong enough to walk away quickly**

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We all need to be adults and make adult decisions. If you see a relationship isn't right for you then don't stick around to see if something or someone will change. Odds are that will not happen. You can try to change or fix someone, but the changes are usually only temporary, and that person usually becomes resentful. Just because someone is not a good match doesn't make either one of you a bad person. It just means you are not right for each other.

I hear several common excuses why not to leave a relationship.

"I don't want to hurt his/her feelings."

"What if I can't find anyone else?" or "I don't believe I can find anyone better."

"I know he'll change" or "I can change him/her."

"I'm not willing to give up what I have because I'm afraid of growing old alone."

#### **The Solution:**

You need to be mature enough to recognize the situation for what it is and move on before you invest too much time and emotional energy. It's not fair to you and it's definitely not fair to your partner to stay in a poor relationship. You both deserve extraordinary. Even if you're in a one-sided relationship, it may be great for one of you but the other will still be unhappy and unfulfilled. Recognize that and be willing to let go for the benefit of your partner.

When ending a relationship, most people sugar coat the reasons why they want out. They are afraid of hurting the other persons feelings. If you want to be really mature, be honest!

This is something that will not get better with time. Make the best decision early on for both of you. Another way to look at this is that as long as you're emotionally involved in a poor relationship, you are unavailable for the extraordinary person you are looking for.

#### **Mistake #5: Not knowing what a great relationship should look like**

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Depending on the studies you look at, an average of only about 20% of marriages that last are strong healthy relationships. That means most of us grew up in families that are dysfunctional in some way. That also means most people don't know what a healthy relationship should look like. All we know is what we grew up with and what we have experienced.

Most people don't date to find someone to make them happy. They date to find someone that makes them feel comfortable. That comfort comes from what we know and what we've observed from our parents. Then, as we date we tend to be attracted to what we know. After all, that's what we grew up with and that's what we assume is normal. That's why most marriages are not happy healthy relationships.

## The Solution:

We must break through the fear that a great relationship is too good to be true. Anytime you experience something for the first time it can feel uncomfortable, if not scary, and that's when we run away.

If you are looking for someone to "complete" you. Stop looking! If you need someone to complete you that means you're not whole and that means you're not emotionally healthy enough for an extraordinary mate. What you'll find in a soul mate (or extraordinary) relationship is that your mate will *enhance* your life because you are already whole.

Extraordinary relationships build a foundation by developing deep connections intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. These are the Four Cornerstones. Without any one of these your relationship will falter. Note: This does not mean you need to jump into bed to develop a physical connection. It means you first need to be physically attracted to your mate. Physical intimacy should be delayed as long as possible so you are able to more deeply develop an intellectual, spiritual, and emotional connections first.

What about the saying that opposites attract? Well, they do...for a while. However, studies show that these relationships tend to flame out in just a few years. Why? Because the differences you originally thought were so cute, exciting and entertaining, eventually become tiresome and irritating. The more you have in common with each other the more roadblocks you take out of the way down the road. Life is difficult enough as it is. Don't complicate it.

It takes effort to make a great relationship work. It takes even more effort to try to make the wrong relationship work. It is important to take time to learn what a great and healthy relationship should look like. There are also plenty of great self-help books on this subject, one of which is *Dating Backward*, a book I co-authored. When you are able to identify what a healthy relationship looks like for you, then you are able to stay focused on the key characteristics you are looking for and will not settle for anything less than extraordinary.

## Summary

Recognizing and understanding these five common mistakes is critical in helping you make better dating and relationship decisions. You can learn from your past by identifying your unique mistakes if you are willing to be open and honest with yourself. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes.

How is it that I have come to all this knowledge about dating? It's because I have made all of the mistakes above...and many more. Many times our best lessons come from our experiences. Learn from your mistakes; learn from my mistakes and start to make better decisions about the people you date and relationships you enter into.

**To learn more about cultivating extraordinary relationships, visit [RickSoetebier.com](http://RickSoetebier.com).**



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