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Dating for Marriage: Three Non-Negotiables

by [Penina Jacobs](#)

Attraction, character traits and common life goals.

Dear Penina,

I'm in my early 40s and have been dating for the purpose of marriage for what seems like forever. I am open-minded and would not consider myself to be overly picky, but every guy I go out with seems to be just not quite right. Sometimes I will meet someone I like and we will give it a few dates, but it never progresses beyond that. I can't put my finger on what the issue is but I leave every date feeling more hopeless than before. Why can't I just meet a normal guy who wants the same things I want out of life?

Sincerely,
Liz

Dear Liz,

It sounds to me as if you need to be clear about what you are looking for before you resume your search. The three most important things to be looking for when evaluating the compatibility of a potential life partner are attraction, character traits and common life goals.

Let's start with attraction. You might meet a guy online and start a whirlwind relationship based on a flurry of text messages, emails and phone calls – all before that first date. And when you finally meet in person, your heart sinks.

Everything about the way he looks makes your skin crawl.

This does not mean that you need to be totally swept off of your feet from the first second. It does mean that you should feel some level of attraction and that this should steadily increase as you get to know the person.

Unless you feel a physical attraction on some level, or at least the potential for this exists, all bets are off and you need to move on, politely but swiftly.

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It is important to identify and make a list of the character traits you would value most in a spouse. This should not be confused with things like athleticism or a love of animals. While these are virtues, they don't rank all that high on the list of absolutely necessary traits for a spouse. They're added perks. Consider internal character traits such as honesty, integrity and kindness. Which traits are non-negotiable for you and which ones would fall under the category of nice but not totally necessary?

Make a list and then narrow that list down to four or five character traits that must strongly exist in a person you would choose to spend the rest of your life with. Keep the list in your wallet and refer to it often. You may wish to make adjustments as you learn more about yourself and others during your dating process. The ones that are truly important to you are likely to remain on your list. If you are physically attracted to someone, be sure to refer to the list and evaluate his character before deciding to move forward.

The foundation of a successful marriage is built upon the commonality of life goals between a husband and wife. You might have phenomenal chemistry and adore the character traits inherent to each of you. But if you feel differently about the level of religiosity in your home, the number of children you would like to have, the material standard of living you feel that you need, or any other significant lifestyle issue, you could be headed for trouble down the road.

Dating without a concrete idea of what type of man you are searching for is like impulse shopping in the supermarket

without a list. You might end up with a lot of fun things in your cart but once you get home, you realize you forgot the essentials.

If you meet someone who “looks good on paper” try to find out as much as you can beforehand. You may save yourself some time but at least make sure you get your questions answered on the first date. Don’t fumble through the process hoping that things will just click when you meet the right one. Sometimes that does happen, and it is a blessing when it does, but most people need to be proactive and clear about the non-negotiable issues in order to maximize the effectiveness of and minimize the time spent in the process of dating.

I wish you clarity in your search and that it ends swiftly in a walk down the aisle with the one you were really looking for all along!

This article can also be read at: http://www.aish.com/d/w/Dating_for_Marriage_Three_Non-Negotiable.html

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