

Devorah's Dating Do's and Dont's:

- 1 "Date yourself." Know who you are and what you're looking for.
- 2 Don't have a laundry list of things you're looking for in the perfect guy. Distinguish between *needs* & *wants*. Needs are things that are *essential* for your happiness & fulfillment. Wants are preferences that are not deal-breakers. (For me, an example of a *need* would be a man who is not hypercritical. A *want* would be someone who speaks French.)
- 3 Keep your top 6-8 non-negotiable deal breakers at the forefront of your mind—it keeps you focused & efficient. Know what you can compromise on and what you can't. Be realistic.
- 4 Network—go to families for Shabbat, meet with matchmakers & get the word out that you are dating for marriage. Have an “elevator pitch” to articulate what you're looking for (basically your deal breakers in 2 sentences).
- 5 Don't go to your single friends for dating advice! Adopt a happily married woman or couple as your “dating advisors.” Or hire a dating coach :)
- 6 Learn to be other-centered. Learn how to give w/o expecting something in return. Marriage is about giving without keeping score.
- 7 Look for the 3 G's—someone who is Giving, Good & into **Growth**. (*Head to Heart* by Gila Manolson)
- 8 Does this person have “hakarat hatov” (gratitude and appreciation) for people in his life?
- 9 Recognize your unique good qualities, but don't be blind to where you need to grow. Think about what you need, not what you “deserve.”
- 10 Does this person bring out the best in you? Or do you find yourself reverting to bad behavior that you thought you conquered years ago? Everyone has “allergies” to certain people or traits; if he has them, he's not for you.
- 11 Your husband doesn't need to be everything you're not, but it *is* healthy for your traits to complement each others—he's strong where you're weak etc. *in general*.
- 12 What are your deepest held values & beliefs? Does he share them? Any differences in these areas become more important as you get older and start a family.
- 13 What are your life goals? How do you envision your life? Does he share those goals?
- 14 Marriage is *not* a destination. It's a process & it's WORK. The day that you relax, let it all hang out & stop putting in the effort is the day your marriage starts to deteriorate. The success of a marriage has everything to do with how you as a couple cope with conflict—learning effective

- communication is key, but marrying someone who is committed to *working* on the relationship is even more important.
- 15 Find someone who makes you laugh—who you have fun with *doing nothing*. Most of life is mundane—groceries, laundry, bills, cleaning the house, kids complaining—you & your spouse should at least have fun living it! It's easy while dating to enjoy picnics in beautiful parks, concerts, movies, restaurants, entertainment... but you must feel good about each other faced with the demands of day-to-day life. Will you feel happy to see each other after a grueling workday or when the baby is crying?
 - 16 Love is not a magical feeling you get by sitting still. LOVE is actively appreciating goodness in another person & giving to that person. “Ahava” (love) comes from the same Hebrew root as “Hav” (to give). The best illustration of this is children, who never do anything for us, but who we love so much precisely because we've given so much to them.
 - 17 Your spouse will be no more perfect than you are, but he will be perfect for *you*. Whatever you're going through together is in order to make you better individuals & stronger as a couple.
 - 18 Once you're married, every boundary you draw when interacting with the opposite sex is an act of love, making your marriage into a sanctified space, reserved only for the two of you.
 - 19 The essence of oneness is mutual identification—recognizing that hurting him = hurting you, because you are *one entity*.
 - 20 Make sure you're aware of at least some of his flaws & can accept them (assume he won't change, though he probably will). Don't marry a 'project.'
 - 21 Distinguish between *chemistry* (immediate fireworks, not based on anything deep or real) & *attraction* (a feeling based on recognizing someone's positive traits). People who are easily infatuated should imagine themselves as newspaper reporters for the first few dates. It's not about “falling in love” or abandoning yourself to fate or chemistry. Real love is grounded in reality—seeing who someone really is--it's an act of responsibility. Train yourself to be attracted to nice men, rather than “bad boys.” A guy with “swag” is usually terrible marriage-material.
 - 22 PAIR--Physical attraction, Admiration, Emotional Intimacy & Respect. (*Dating Smart* by Rosie Einhorn)
 - 23 Make sure to see him in many different contexts, with many different people. Meet his family & friends. If you dislike all his friends or if he's reluctant for you to meet his family, be wary. Note how he treats people he isn't *trying* to impress—the waiter, the cashier, etc.

- 24 Check his references. Find unbiased people who know him. Google him and check out his FB profile.
- 25 The Talmud states that to really know someone, you must see them “b’koso, b’kaso, b’kiso”—how they deal with alcohol, with anger, & with money.
- 26 The ingredients of a healthy relationship (Rosie Einhorn):
 - compatible goals & outlook on life
 - mutual respect
 - mutual admiration
 - physical attraction (distinguish from chemistry)
 - emotional intimacy
 - affection
 - acceptance of each others’ flaws
- 27 Distinguish between bad habits (which can improve easily with coaching) or bad character traits (much harder to change.)
- 28 If in doubt, go out (again). Date until you have clarity that this is not your husband. If you're unclear, speak to your dating coach/mentor.
- 29 Be friendly, not friends with people of the opposite sex. This impedes your search for the right one.
- 30 Have faith that G-d has someone picked out for you-- don't lose hope. Each person you date is bringing you closer to your bashert. "There's a pot for every lid."
- 31 If you are *significantly* anxious during engagement, don't set a date until you've figured out where it comes from. Distinguish between a fear of commitment (“cold feet”) vs. a real problem in the relationship-- if this issue bothered you from the beginning (a “red flag”) then it's probably something real. If you are *suddenly* bothered by something that was always there, it's probably nerves. Short-term, goal-oriented therapy is often a good tool to distinguish these issues. If you are prone to anxiety generally in life, you will almost definitely feel anxious during engagement, even with the right guy.
- 32 The first date should be light—think short coffee date-- you only want to focus on whether or not you'd like to see him again—don't get ahead of yourself and freak yourself out evaluating whether he's your husband! Second date should be a bit deeper, but still don't get ahead of yourself. See if you enjoy being with them and whether there's a connection. Dates 3-? is for making sure all your deal-breakers line up, common goals & values, building emotional intimacy and making sure attraction is there.

- 33 Don't dump all your issues on the table on the first few dates—give him a chance to get to know you and like you before you take all the skeletons out of the closet.
- 34 If you're not sure about the attraction, give it at least 4-5 dates to see if it grows.
- 35 See each other 2-3 times/week. Give yourself time to process and miss him, and yet if you don't see each other enough, the momentum will be lost.
- 36 Keep texting, emailing and even phone calls to a minimum—your dates should be in person as much as possible.
- 37 Don't get caught in the “something better might be around the corner” syndrome—focus on the person in front of you, or you may never get married.
- 38 Date as long as you need to get clarity, but have a short engagement (it's a stressful time.)
- 39 Use the time when you are single to “fill yourself up” rather than just waiting. Once kids come along, you won't have much time to yourself. Go to classes, take up a new hobby, exercise, learn new things, spend time with friends. You'll be a much more interesting date if you have things to share.
- 40 You know you've found your soulmate when you miss him when he's not with you, be excited to see him before a date, and want to share with him the things that happen to you during the day.
- 41 Remember: taking the physical off the table (especially while you're getting to know him) is **DATING SMART** because 1) It is much easier to move on from a failed relationship and not get cynical. 2) It weeds out the guys who are not interested in you for the right reasons, or are not dating for marriage. 3) It keeps your head screwed on straight (keeps you objective) so that you can make an educated decision about the most important thing in your life!
- 42 Look over your Facebook profile with an objective eye. If your future husband was looking at it, would you feel embarrassed? What messages are you sending with the photos you post?