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Dating after Divorce

Since you've probably been out of circulation for a while, here are some of the rules of the new Dating Game -- from [Rebound Relationships](#) to the [Ten Commandments of Dating](#).

By Leah and Elina Furman

Coming out of a relationship can be a miserable time. And since misery loves nothing so much as company it is difficult to withstand the temptation to forget about what ails you by jumping into another relationship. The problem with using other people as heartbreak menders is that it can turn into a pattern. Next thing you know you've got a list of busted relationships a mile long and no idea as to why your love life seems destined for failure.

As anyone who has ever been there will tell you, be sure to stay away from any new relationships until you are good and ready. When you're on the rebound, you are especially vulnerable and could put yourself in situations or relationships that you normally wouldn't be caught dead in. Better you clear your plate of all liaisons and concentrate on yourself for a while. Think about your past relationship issues and learn from them. Because, as the saying goes, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. So if you truly want to enjoy what the future has in store, give yourself time to come to terms with your past.

The Ex Factor

Upon breaking up, many a couple fantasizes about getting back together. Long nights spent alone can wreak havoc on anyone's psyche, especially if you don't have the first clue about how to work that Eric's Solitaire icon on your computer. So be forewarned: the urge to reconcile will be strong, but you must be stronger. After all, you did have a perfectly good reason for breaking up, right?

If the temptation to call your ex or show up at his or her house is just too overwhelming, head straight for your daily planner and make an appointment to call the next day. Yes, go ahead and write it down in permanent marker. This will allow you to rest easy for the time being. And chances are that come sunup you'll be looking at your agenda and shaking your head in bewilderment or disgust.

The more times you resist the impulse to come crawling back, the better you'll get at spending time without an escort. Once you're not so desperate for company and thinking more clearly, you'll finally be able to judge whether you did the right thing. Until that time comes, you should stock up on some serious willpower if you don't want to get into a vicious cycle of an on-again, off-again love affair.

Too Soon to Tell

If, in spite of all our warnings, your belief in the theory that the best way to forget a spoiled romance is to start a fresh one remains unshaken, go ahead and do what comes naturally. But at least try to gain a little perspective before you fall head over heels in love with the first man or woman who shows the slightest bit of interest. Understand that you are, in fact, on the rebound and keep a casual and light-hearted attitude about all of your dates. If, perchance, you should find yourself falling deeply in love with someone you've just met, understand that it may just be the rebound talking.

While seeing new people can distract you from your woes and confirm that there is life after you know who, then by all means, date away. But if you're beginning to get serious about someone new too soon after the separation, you may be getting in over your head. The best way to deal with intense, rebound-related emotions is to reason your way out of them. Admit to yourself that you may be in dire need of affection and try to see your new flame from an objective perspective. If you still feel that you are deeply in love, then hold off on saying anything. You don't want to lead someone on, only to realize months later that you were never truly in love to begin with.

Heart to Heart

There's no harm in rebound relationships if you take them for what they're worth. They can reaffirm the fact that you are still as desirable and vied-after a catch as ever there was. Staying single for a year or longer is also par for the course. You can use this time to get back in touch with yourself. And don't worry if all your dates fail to measure up to the one that got away. That's only to be expected. After all, how can mere strangers ever compare to someone you once called "cookie toes."

Eventually as you put more and more experiences between the time of your breakup and the present day you'll be ready for a new, and hopefully improved, relationship which may just force you to retire the phrase "on the rebound" from your vocabulary altogether.

The Ten Commandments of Dating After Divorce

You've made the plans, confirmed the plans, and now it's time to get down to business. The date portion is one of the most savory dishes on life's expansive menu so prepare to sample your fair share. You probably don't want to hear any lectures about the dating do's and don'ts, so we'll just skip the do's and get straight to the don'ts. Just as Moses handed down a set of laws, or commandments, if you will, for us mortals to follow, so shall we bring forth the laws of dating. Should you break a commandment or fail to follow the formula for perfect dates coming up in the next section, you should prepare to endure all the torments of dating hell. Don't come crying to us when your phone doesn't ring the next day and don't go calling on the mighty powers that be to reverse the situation. No, you and your love life will do better if you just follow the rules. That said, let's get on with the show.

#1: Thou shalt Not Ignore Thy Date

Paying close attention to your date's every move is not up for discussion. There are some people who feel like they have to leer at every attractive person that walks through the door. Most dates would get offended by this sort of behavior, taking it as a personal insult to themselves. So unless you're intent on hurting your companion's feelings, keep your eyes and ears directed at your date at all times. If you made your date feel like they're the only person in the room, you'll have gone a long way towards living up to your role as the perfect date.

If you happen to take your date to a party and feel like mingling with some of your friends, keep in mind that your date's happiness is your first priority. Be extra attentive by doing small things such as bringing drinks, initiating conversation, and making all the right introductions. You can bet that your little acts of kindness will not go unnoticed.

#2: Thou shalt not drink or become intoxicated

Even if you're not driving, excessive consumption of alcohol and other recreational drugs is strictly prohibited. If you've ever been forced to sit through the film *Blind Date*, in which lovely Kim Basinger proceeds to get sloshed during a night on the town with Bruce Willis, you know that there's nothing less attractive than a perfectly nice date who's three sheets to the wind and feeling no pain. As far as first impressions go, this behavior can put you at a disadvantage.

The best way to avoid becoming too drunk is to eat plenty before the date. That way you'll be able to absorb the alcohol faster. And even if you're just looking to chase the butterflies out of your stomach, forgo the booze in favor of some deep breathing exercises.

#3: Thou Shalt Not Talk about Thy Ex

Whether you've just broken up, happened to run into your ex that day, or just can't help digging up the past, talking about your ex is a first date faux pas. The last thing your date wants to hear about is how horrible or great your ex was. As far as your date is concerned, you've never ever gone out with anyone before.

Many people think that dredging up a former love will somehow make them seem more desirable. This couldn't be further from the truth. Your date is more likely to think that you're having a problem letting go and are on the rebound. If they're smart, they will never want to see you again. If they're not, it's you who should be running the other way.

#4: Thou Shalt Not Lie

First dates are all about getting to know each other and being honest. If you happen to be out of a job, living with your parents, or hard up for cash, by all means don't lie about it. You can omit the information, so long as you fess up when asked point blank. Don't equivocate, don't change the subject, and don't make up some elaborate ruse. If the date proves successful, and more follow, you'll eventually be exposed for the charlatan that you are. And, besides, if your date can't accept you exactly the way you are, then you're better off finding someone who isn't so superficial.

#5: Thou shalt Not Commit an Act of Road Rage

When transporting your date from one destination to another, thou shalt obey the rules of the road and be courteous to other drivers. If you happen to be cut off by a kamikaze driver or even get thrown the bird, act as if nothing happened. Do not, and we repeat, do not proceed to chase down the offender or slam on your brakes to get revenge. Not only will your date be paralyzed with fear for his or her safety; he or she will remain uncomfortable for the duration of this, your first and last date together.

#6: Thou Shalt Not show Up Over 20 Minutes Late

When it comes to dating, timeliness is next to godliness. The worst thing you can do to your date is keep them waiting. Nobody likes to sit around wondering whether they're being stood up, especially if they're already nervous about going out with someone for the first time. Before heading out for the outing, make sure you have scheduled plenty of time to pick up your date. You should also avoid scheduling any other activities for at least one hour before your date. Many dates have been known to be canceled right from the get-go because of tardiness. Make sure you're not one of the many casualties in the race against time by allowing plenty of room for error.

#7: Thou Shalt Not Come on Too Strong

It's considered in very bad taste to make lewd comments about your date's appearance, touch them without permission, or insinuate wanting to get more sexual. Unless you're looking for nothing more than a basic wham-bam-adios-amigo -- which, by the way, you're still not likely to score using these tactless methods -- keep your sexually charged particles in line.

When getting to know someone for the first time, most people prefer to keep things on a platonic level. That means putting a nix on the sexual advances. At least have the decency to wait until your date is more comfortable with you. Most importantly, never try to push your date into a sexual situation. Always err on the side of caution-even if while their lips are saying no, their eyes are saying yes.

#8: Thou Shalt Not Use Thy Cellular

In the name of insufferable bores everywhere, deactivate your cell phone while on your date. Should your friends be trying to reach you they can leave a message on your voice mail. Using a cellular phone during your date can be a major turnoff. By talking on the phone, you're saying that your date is not significant enough to captivate your attention, implying that your work and friends are much more important. That's not exactly the message you want to convey to someone who has kindly agreed to go out with a cellphone-flaunting-Sal/ly like yourself. If you cared enough to go on the date, keeping things lively should be your top priority.

#9: Thou Shalt Not Talk about Building a Family

Few things are more frightening than going on a first date and being confronted with the issues of marriage and family. Such situations make most people stop and look around to make sure they're still in America -- as opposed to some countries, where one meeting is all you get before striking an arrangement.

Before sizing up your date for mate potential, take a breather and get a little perspective. You've only just met a little while ago. If you happen to be looking for Mr/s. Right, keep your plans to yourself or risk scaring off potential suitors. Remember, whatever will be, will be. Grilling your date about their desire to have kids will only make you seem foolish and desperate. If you want to find out whether someone would make a good husband or wife, try studying their behavior instead. Actions will always speak much louder than words.

#10: Thou Shalt Not Whine

If "I want" figures prominently on your list of most frequently used phrases, then prepare to monitor your behavior during date hours. Bossing your date around or pouring on the old "bitch and moan" routine when you don't get your way are sure-fire ways to spoil a romantic mood. If you have your heart set on doing

something particular, take the lead—just make sure your date is fine with your arrangements. If, on the other hand, you've let your date take control, either voice your dissent right away or pretend you're enjoying the 100-degree weather and the two-hour hike. The prima donna attitude will make you seem spoiled, selfish, and definitely not second date material.

Out on the Town

Now that you've got the basics of dating down pat, you are in pretty good shape for the date. If you're wondering about all those little things that can make a big difference, you have a point. While a basic set of guidelines is all well and good, nothing beats good old-fashioned attention to detail for sending your companion into a tailspin of appreciation.

Dinner Time

No matter what you do, or where you go, there will come a time when you have to satisfy your hunger. The reason so many people choose to break bread on their first dates is because eating with someone can tell you volumes about who they are. So if you want to pass the dining test, make sure your table manners are practiced and polished.

Table Talk

During dinner you'll be called upon to provide stimulating conversation. There's no getting around this requirement, so come prepared. The best way to improve your table talk is to simply ask questions and discuss current events. The rules for asking the right questions are twofold. First, you should try to ask open-ended questions rather than those easily satisfied by a one-word answer. For instance, if you're interested in finding out what a person does for a living, your best bet is to ask, "So what do you enjoy about your line of work?" rather than, "What line of work are you in?" The first question necessitates that your date give their opinion, while the second asks for little more than a job title. The difference lies in the awkward silence you'll experience once they've made their response.

You should also avoid asking anything too personal on the first date. Subjects having to do with marriage, sex, or income should be put off for another date. If your dinner companion is interested in revealing something about their private life, they'll do so of their own accord. Don't pry, because if your date isn't telling you everything, chances are you're better off in the dark.

Before your date even begins, you should try to collect a reserve of sample topics of conversation. Catching up on MSNBC, CNN, CNBC, and other news programming should fill your coffers with conversation topics galore. You can then freely select topics that are of interest to you on the date. If your companion is interested in the subject of your choice, they will take the conversation in the direction of their choice. To keep the discussion rolling as smoothly as possible, remain flexible and open to new subject matters. Most importantly, forget the PC police and trust your date with your honest opinion. If you play it too safe, you'll sap all the fun right out of your tete-a-tete.

Mind Your Manners

If you're out at a nice restaurant, dressed to kill, but can't find the right fork to save your life, then you're simply out of luck. No matter how well you hide them, there's no escaping bad table manners. If you can't tell a salad fork from a dessert fork, you'll be dead in the waters of most fine-dining establishments. Unless you plan to compensate by taking all your dates for shakes and fries (no forks, no problems), you'll have to brush up on your dining etiquette.

First off, there will be no talking with your mouth full. Men take note, for you are the most frequent offenders. Even if you have the world's wittiest thing to say and you're dying to let your humor flow, put a muzzle on it lest you repulse your date. Nothing spoils an evening faster than spraying your date with semi-chewed potato chunks.

You should also abstain from making any chewing noises or offensive grunts while munching away. The key to becoming a silent diner is to chew slowly and with your mouth firmly shut. That way you won't embarrass your date or disgust neighboring diners.

Utensils are another hot button issue. Many people are divided on the utensils question, especially when it comes to eating meat on the bone. We're here to tell you that when it comes to the first date, you're better off playing the conservative card. Even if your entree includes a lamb shank or chicken drumstick, you must

tackle it with your knife and fork. If this goes against all your moral principles, refrain from ordering the controversial item altogether. And, while eating with your hands may be acceptable at certain restaurants, licking your hands is never permitted. Contrary to what you may have heard, nothing merits being called "finger-lickin'-good" on the first date.

Last but not least, never attempt the long reach on a first date. If you need something on the opposite end of the table, simply ask your date, who will be more than happy to oblige. Leaning over the table is not only awkward, but it is the leading cause of food-related accidents and high dry-cleaning bills.

Pay Your Way

We don't blame you one bit for being a little squeamish about this phase of the dining experience. The question of money never fails to bring out the worst in people, but try as you might, there's no avoiding it on a date. Most people have a hard time gauging when a person truly wants to pay his or her way or if he or she is merely being polite. So here's the drill: If you asked your date out, footing the bill is your responsibility. Should your date decide to chip in, refuse the offer twice. If your date persists, suggest that he or she only pay for the tip or split the bill. If your date continues in his or her attempts to cover all costs, now is the time to acquiesce.

Saying Good-bye

There are those dates that you wish would never end, and then there are the others. Whichever category your date happens to fall into, a polite exit is a must. That's right, this is not the time to tell your date what you really think of them. Neither is it acceptable to sneak out during the movie or jump into the first available cab as your stunned companion helplessly looks on. And even if you're trying for a happy ending, calling out "Hey! No fair!" when your date gives you the cheek or the pat on the back is also out of bounds. Following our suggestions should make all your good-byes that much sweeter.

To Escort or Not to Escort (for men)

There's nothing tougher than deciding whether your date wants to finish the date by saying good-bye in your car or be escorted to her door. When in doubt, the best thing to do is to simply ask.

If you're really anxious to leave, however, you may be able to get away with simply making sure your date gets in her house or apartment safely. Tell her that you'll watch from the car to make sure she gets in all right. She'll appreciate the effort even if the date didn't go that well.

One thing you should never do is to drop off your date and burn rubber as soon as her feet hit the pavement. Even if you absolutely despised your date, there are better ways of handling the situation.

To Kiss or Not to Kiss

The after-date smooch has to be one of the event's most awkward moments. Unless you've already snuck some loving in during the date itself, the romantic ice between you may not yet be broken. When deciding when to kiss someone for the first time, you will have to first decide how you feel about him or her and then try to determine whether or not he or she would be receptive to your advances.

Call You Later?

Even if you had a very unsatisfying date with little or no chemistry, some people will want to end things politely by telling their date that they will call later. This is our advice: do not tell someone you'll call unless you really mean it. There's no point in raising someone's hopes when there's absolutely no chance that you'll call. Or, worse yet, if your equally dissatisfied companion takes your words at face value, he or she might be forced to screen all calls for the coming week. So save everyone a lot of trouble -- if you're stuck and can't find a nice phrase to tie up the loose ends, just tell your date that you had fun and thank him or her for going out with you. Try "sweet dreams" or "drive safely" instead of an insincere "I'll call you."

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