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Looking for the right person ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I'm a guy who can't seem to find the right person. I'm not unattractive or a louse, but for the longest time I've had trouble starting a relationship with anyone. The problem is that when I meet a woman, I can't seem to progress past the friendship stage. Many of these women become my good friends, but they just don't seem interested in starting a physical relationship. My bad luck has left me feeling unattractive and unconfident. I get frustrated when I hear about my friends falling in and out of relationships. Any ideas on how I can improve my relationship status? I know it's vague, but it's been troubling me for a long time.

Thanks,
Down on his luck

Answer

Dear Down on his luck,

As luck would have it (or not), romantic relationships often have little to do with luck. Finding a partner and maintaining relationships take time and hard work. While it may be tempting to give up rather than spend time fostering a connection with a potential partner, it may be helpful to take it slow (but not too slow) so you can enjoy the initial excitement and momentum a bit longer. Or, you may decide that it's time to take a break from the dating world to reflect on why your confidence is lacking and work towards building it back up.

Relationships are complex and dynamic, which means they can also be frustrating. It seems like you're already experiencing frustration because of the strong feelings you're having about not being in a physical relationship. If you feel romantic about someone, you may try flirting or being a bit more direct and clearly communicating that you're interested in pursuing the relationship past friendship — that way the other person knows of your interest.

You mentioned that your bad luck with relationships has left you with a lack of confidence. Gender aside, individuals are often attracted to confident people with high self-esteem. Your lack of confidence may be detectable to potential partners and give off the vibe that you aren't ready to fully enjoy a new relationship with someone because you aren't yet content with yourself.

Investing the time to really know yourself, build your confidence, and actually like yourself can better prepare you to approach a new partner with more to offer, not more to desire.

Admittedly, this is all easier said than done; this process will take some work and patience on your part. To help you get started, you might consider taking a workshop about building self-esteem or even one on navigating relationships. In any case, give yourself some time and focus on yourself. If you're a student, it might be helpful to talk with a health promotion professional about it. You could also check out the mental health services your school offers to see if you can start short-term therapy sessions to further explore your feelings and where you're at with relationships.

Here's to a sense of renewed confidence and hope for the future!

Alice!

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Published date:

Sep 01, 1993

Last reviewed on:

Apr 28, 2017

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