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Introduction

This book is designed for anyone who is interested in stories, advice, and lessons from the midlife dating front. If you are over 40 and haven't dated in a while — or even if you have — you'll learn ways to approach dating with zeal, optimism, and hope. Even if you've had more than your share of negative experiences, I'll share how to glean lessons from those adventures, rather than just declaring that “all men are jerks” or “men are just looking for sex.”

While most of the perspective is from a woman to women, men's comments, experiences, and lessons have been integrated as appropriate.

This book began as daily entries into my blog, *Adventures in Delicious Dating After 40*, which has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal* as well as on radio and TV. I wrote about my epiphanies from my and my friends' dating life. The best postings were culled to make this and subsequent books.

This book focuses on what you need to ask before agreeing to even a coffee date. You need to vet the men who email and call you to ensure you're not likely to waste your time with men who clearly aren't a match.



This book consists of three types of perspectives:

- ♥ **Lessons:** These are specific experiences I thought would be useful to you. A few lines from my experience illustrate the points.
- ♥ **Insights:** These usually start with an experience I've encountered, then the insights that experience spawned. It is usually comprised of around half story and half insight.
- ♥ **Stories:** These are examples of situations I've experienced — or was currently experiencing when I wrote that piece — that I thought would be entertaining. Or I thought the story would help you see what kind of things happen in the midlife dating world so you'd know what has happened to others.


Because these writings were real time, as they occurred, they are often set in the present tense. But they are not chronological. So a reference to “my current beau” may now be many sweethearts ago. I hope this isn't confusing.

I'd love to hear your stories and questions. Please email them to me at Goddess@DatingGoddess.com. They may make it into the blog or my next book!



Who is the Dating Goddess?

I am a middle-aged, white, professional woman. My husband of nearly 20 years left me in April 2003 when I was 47, 11 days shy of 48. After giving my heart time to heal from the surprise divorce sprung by the man I thought was my soulmate, I started dating 18 months later. Generally, I have had a great time meeting interesting men, some of whom became romantic beaux, some became treasured friends, and some I never heard from again.



*I am not a
well-preserved,
gorgeous,
marathon-running
middle-aged
women*

In the beginning, I had dates with single male colleagues, but I quickly found Internet dating was the way to explore the most “inventory” and qualify men who I thought might be a good match.

I am not one of those well-preserved, gorgeous,



marathon-running middle-aged women. I have been told I am attractive, but I am overweight and not a gym rat. So while I am active, I do not match the description 90% of men's profiles say they want: slender, athletic, toned, fit. I have some wrinkles — what one sweet suit-or mistakenly called dimples. I have what Bridget Jones called “wobbly bits,” as most non-surgically enhanced middle-aged women do. My genes — and a lifetime addiction to chocolate — have made their mark. Yet I've met and dated some wonderful men, so even if you're not a lingerie model, you can find guys who will think you're attractive, perhaps even hot!

In my professional life, I am a bestselling author of workplace effectiveness books, professional speaker and management consultant. I've appeared on Oprah, 60 Minutes, and National Public Radio and in the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*.

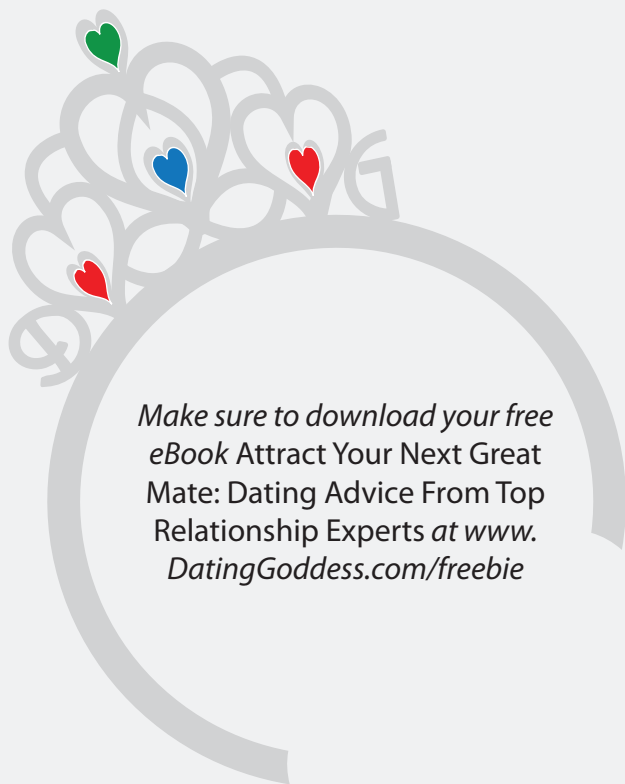
This book is intended to not only be useful to others and cathartic for me, but is also the genesis of a new topic for fun, thought-provoking speeches. I'm calling myself a dating philosopher and giving date-a-vational speeches! Let me know if you know a group who would like an entertaining after-lunch speech on how lessons learned from dating have implications in business and personal relationships and well as life philosophies.

How did I come by the Dating Goddess moniker? After a few months of dating dozens of men — one week yielded 7 dates with 6 guys in 5 days — my friends dubbed me this name. I liked it, so it stuck.

I'm purposefully not sharing my picture as I don't want you to think either, "How did she get any dates at all?" or the opposite, "Of course she found it easy to get 91 men to ask her out." I am not hideous (usually) nor am I stunning (without professional hair, makeup and Photoshop!). Some men find me attractive, some don't.

I continue to search for my "one," but I have learned a lot along the way, and my single and not-single friends have loudly encouraged me to share my experiences and lessons in the hopes of helping others navigate the adventure of dating with more success. And to have a delicious time doing it!





Knight and day

How many women have said they want a “knight in shining armor”? Well, I found one. Literally. His after-work life involves teaching historical swordplay and leather craft. He often gives dueling demonstrations at Renaissance fairs.

He introduced himself by email the other day. (I wonder if it’s hard to type while wearing metal gloves. Maybe I should say he chain-mailed me.)

He’s also called me twice. (Must be fun to see an armor-wearing, sword-wielding guy on a cell phone.) We jested about jousting and how he could pun in his classes: “Do you get my point?” “This one will slay you.”

He seems to be on a crusade to woo me. (Will our first date be at Round Table? Will he pick me up on a white horse?) I think I would like being referred to as “M’Lady” and treated like a queen. His bowing when I enter the room might get old, but I should try it before I decide.

If we move in together, would we buy Costco-sized armor polish? And just how does one launder a cod-piece — in a cold, warm or delicate cycle? Would we get

a giant circular table for when his knight-friends visit?

It might be fun to live in a castle, although I rarely see them in the local real estate listings. Would you have to get a variance for a moat?

A modern-day Lancelot has allure, but there would be some barriers (hopefully not hot-oil filled ones). While he has a ready-made Halloween costume, I just don't have the wardrobe to accompany a knight — by day or night. If we were invited to a suit-required event, would I have to specify, "Not the metal one"? Would his tights and mine get confused in the wash?

It would be comforting to know I'd be out with a man who would fight (and no doubt win) if my honor was impugned. But I just don't see myself hanging out at duels. Could I bring my laptop, and would there be a wireless connection?

It seems we are fond of different centuries. Perhaps I'll let this one pass. Or I might just have an ale with him to see if he's as sharp as his sword.

If it didn't work out, I have my exit line ready: "Good knight, good luck"!



Becoming smitten with the fantasy

I've been surprised when men become smitten with me without yet meeting me. Perhaps we've had some interesting emails and phone calls, and they begin professing their love — or lust — for me. It's happened enough times, I've decided it has little to do me — they fall for the fantasy. When I was first dating I did the same thing. Now I'm more savvy.

It is easy to fall for someone absent the reality. You only have blurry or old photos, a few hours — at most — of phone conversation, and some emails. Until you meet, you don't really know if there is a spark, or if there is some annoying habit that is a deal breaker.

A while ago I was contacted on a Tuesday by an intelligent, successful, tall, nice looking, articulate guy. We talked by email and phone a few times over the next few days. He was flirty and suggestive, even leaving one erotic voicemail — all before we'd even met. I warned him that reality was never as good as fantasy.



We set a drink date for Friday. I dressed in nice, sexy casual. He arrived looking nothing like his picture — he left his toupee and glasses at home. However, we had good conversation, and he asked if I'd like to stay for dinner. A good sign. We continued talking about personal history, divorce stories, business, world events. He walked me to the car and left with a hug and quick kiss on the cheek.

I wrote him a nice “thank you” email, as I always do, saying I'd be happy to see him again if he'd like. He sent me a “nice evening; we're not a match” response.

So how did he get from erotic emails to we're not a match? Whatever he fantasized about me wasn't a match for the reality. I have recent, full-length pictures posted in my profile, so he saw what I looked like. So somewhere during our meeting his fantasy fire was extinguished.

Now when I hear someone going overboard before meeting, I know it's a yellow flag. Best to reserve your assessment until you've actually been with someone, and then you need to see them a few times before their “real” self begins to emerge.



*Can Google help
— or hinder — your
dating life?*

Perhaps you're like me and immediately Google a guy as soon as you have his first and last name. While I've never found any incriminating evidence this way, I have found some interesting items about the guy I'm considering meeting. I imagine myself a CSI (one of my favorite TV shows), linking disparate clues to complete a puzzle.

Early in my midlife dating adventure, a man with an unusual first name contacted me online. His profile said he was active in our local Rotary Club as well as an organization specific to his lineage.

I Googled the local Rotary Club web site. I searched the site for his first name and voila, a mention appeared including his last name. Armed now with more information, I Googled his full name. I found the web site for the small company he owned, complete with picture



(which luckily matched the one on the dating site, so I knew he'd posted a reasonably recent one). It gave the company's address, phone number and map. His bio said he'd been president of his national trade association. Nice!

A little more digging found the organization relating to his ancestry. A quick search on the site by his first and last name revealed a listing with his home phone number. Googling that yielded his home address, and a Google map showed me where he lived. If I had wanted to go the next step, Zillow.com would have revealed how much his house was worth (although no info on any mortgages or liens).

This took all of 10 minutes.

Scary, isn't it? Which is why I suggest you be a bit secretive in the beginning of relationships. You don't want a guy you haven't met Googling your home phone number and getting a map to where you live!

I don't typically tell a guy I've Googled him. Some read it as "potential stalker." However, when I have disclosed it after a few dates, most guys seem flattered that I took the time to look, and that I know things about them that they didn't know were on the web.

I Googled a guy I dated for two months who was

a former city official. There was lots of press on him, luckily all good. The reporters were respectful of him. That says a lot.

So I encourage you to Google away. However, keep the findings to yourself unless you uncover something bothersome, then ask him about it. If he squirms, gets upset or avoids your inquiry, then it's probably best to pass on this guy.

Google yourself and see what's out there about you — or someone with the same name.





Getting to know a man through Google

A new man contacted me who held some allure so I promptly did a Google search, armed only with his profile's unusual alias and his city. A wealth of information was divulged.

I read the posting he'd made in public forums so could see his comments were thoughtful, articulate, and had correct spelling and punctuation. I agreed with many of his views. Most of us aren't particularly guarded when we post something to a forum, especially if using an alias. So the fact that he didn't curse or call other posters idiots — as others in the forums did — showed me he had a sense of appropriateness and decorum.

But the most telling information came from his Flickr account. Dozens of photos were on public view. I could tell from what profession he was retired as there were pics of him at work, his hobbies, and photos of him growing up. Thanks to the captions, I saw pictures of his friends, mother, work mates, kids, and past girlfriends! I even learned his last name, which prompted

another Google search.

Putting the pictures, captions and forum postings together gave me some tenor of the man. Posing with his arm around his mother and kids sent the impression he was close to them. His comments about his coworkers were positive. The candid shots showed him laughing and having a good time. And his captions describing his past girlfriends divulged to me the kind of woman he was drawn to. (I checked the dates the last girlfriend pics were taken and they were a year old!)

Can you learn everything you need about a person from such sleuthing? Of course not. But such snooping — even if it is in public sties — can show inklings that might have taken longer to experience in person. I will meld this information with his articulate emails with his just-begun brief phone calls and see if I want to get to know this man further. After all, I've done a lot of research on him!