

Fresh start.

New beginning.

Within a few weeks of my ex announcing he was leaving, these four words — “Fresh start. New beginning.” came to me while I was sleeping. I want to say they were in a dream, but they were so vivid and clear it was as if they were said by someone standing next to my bed.

While I was still in deep grief over the dissolution of my marriage, they gave me a perspective — even hope — that all would be fine once it was over.

Today, 4.5 years after my hearing them, they take on new meaning. Perhaps this year will be one of fresh starts and new beginnings for you, starting now.

So what fresh start and new beginning will commence for you today? What would you like to start anew in the relationship realm?





From hurt to flirt

When my husband of 20 years left, I was stunned. I didn't see it coming. After crying in a fetal position for a week, I had a talk with myself. I decided I was going to see if I could turn the situation into something positive. I had been able to do so in other situations, but none quite as debilitating as this one. I decided to see if I could find the "gift" in this life-changing surprise.



I asked myself, "What could be the opposite of 'my life is over'?" How about, "He has released me to explore the un-tethered life as a single woman"? It took me a month to say this mantra out loud without laughing.

At first the thought terrified me of re-entering the dating scene middle-aged and overweight. Who would possibly think I was attractive enough to date? Didn't men my age want young, vivacious women with pert, taut, supple bodies? But I began chant-

ing my mantra daily. And I began to date. In earnest. I began flirting with men of all shapes, sizes, and ages—straight, gay, married, single. It was fun!

Soon men initiated the flirting with me. I became more playful and had a lot of fun. I began to see I could be attractive — at least attractive enough to entice someone to flirt with me. I began having the life of my mantra — I was living the untethered life as a single woman — and having a blast doing it.

What are you saying to yourself about dating? For example, are you saying “The only men I meet are losers”? Or “All the good men are gay or married”? Or “I’ll never find my soul mate”?

How can you change your words to be inspiring? For example, “The men I meet are extraordinary, successful, kind, and caring.” “There are abundant good, straight men longing to meet a good woman like me.” “My soul mate is just around the corner and is looking for me as hard as I’m looking for him.” The more you chant your mantra, the more quickly it will come true!

What will your mantra be?



Dating is like Baskin-Robbins

I compare my philosophy of dating to visiting Baskin-Robbins where I ordered vanilla for 20 years. (Maybe it was Rocky Road at the end!). While I enjoyed vanilla, I want to try new flavors. And I didn't want to jump from vanilla and make a commitment to strawberry without having tasted a little pistachio, chocolate, mint chip, and more.

So I made a list of men I'd like to "try" (just like I "try" ice cream flavors). I got out my little pink tasting spoon.

I like smart men, so I wanted to try a lawyer, doctor, CEO, and venture capitalist. I like large men, so I wanted to try an ex-pro football player and ex-pro basketball player. I love men with accents, so I wanted to try some who came from abroad. You get the picture. I landed dates with all of the above and many more.

In the beginning I even gave my guys ice cream flavor names. Butter Pecan for the Ph.D. in electrical engineering because he was interesting and refined.

Double Dip Chocolate with Nuts for the fun-loving, 6-foot-9, black former pro-basketball player. Bubblegum for the 32-year-old boy toy. Jamoca Almond Fudge for the Caribbean-born gentleman. Cafe Olé for the Brazilian salsa dancer. Passionfruit for the good kisser. Chunky Monkey for the chubby one. Hunka Burnin' Fudge — well, you can guess that one was eye candy!

But I quickly ran out of nicknames, as I had more guys than Baskin-Robbins had flavors. Even borrowing from Ben and Jerry, I was burning through flavors faster than a double dip on a sweltering August day.

So I encourage you to try dates with men you might have turned away if you'd strictly adhered to your list of desired traits. Some of my favorite treasures have come from going out with men who wouldn't have been on my radar screen before. (A 6-foot-9 guy? "No way," I used to think. But Double Dip Chocolate with Nuts has become one of my dearest pals — as well as one of the best kissers I know!)

So don't limit your choices of flavors too much. Yes, those you date need to have the same values as you. But who cares if a man who lists himself as "athletic" in his profile is 40 pounds overweight? Extra weight can be shed, but integrity, intellect, thoughtfulness, respect, and caring are embedded. You can't change that.

What are the ingredients for the flavors of men you want to try?

*You've got to kiss a
lot of...princes!*

Most of the women over 40 I talk to feel frustrated about dating because they think many men are cads, players, jerks — in other words, frogs!

I'm here to jump in with another view.

In my first 3.5 years of dating, I went out with 91 men. No, that's not 91 dates, but 91 individual men. Many multiple times. I've had a few 6- to 12-week relationships and one 6-month beau.

Out of all those men, I've had 9 bad first dates. That's 10% — not bad, really. On the positive side, I've met a number of interesting, kind, generous gentlemen. Those are the princes, although none of them became my long-term prince. There was some fatal flaw that I — or they — deemed to be a deal breaker. Am I being overly picky? Perhaps. But after realizing I'd "settled" in my marriage of 20 years, I don't want to do that to my next partner — or me — again.



Please know that if you've had a bad encounter or two, it doesn't mean everyone out there fits the definition of cad, loser or jerk. It just means you have to do a better job screening by email and phone before you go on a date. You can tell a lot about others by the questions they ask — or don't ask — and what they tell you. I've saved myself many hours of suffering through a bad date by not saying "yes" to an invitation from someone who interrupted me constantly, was arrogant, filthy-mouthed, or sex-focused.

A dozen or more of my gems still keep in contact, even though we decided we weren't good matches. We still enjoy each other's company. I see them as princes for someone else. And I get to enjoy their "princeness" without the complications and expectations of becoming a couple. Besides, they're great resources when I want to ask my "Why would a guy..." questions.

You'll find princes everywhere. Give a guy a chance to see if he is your prince. I know my prince is looking for me as hard as I'm looking for him. But if I don't even answer his emails, how will I ever know?



What's your definition of dating success?

For many women the answer to this question would be, “To find my next love/husband/mate.” I invite you to consider another possible definition.

If someone were to ask you, “What is your definition of success in life?” you would probably not answer, “To find my way to death.” Both definitions focus on the end result, not the process.

To the second question, you would probably answer something like, “To enjoy myself, laugh, grow, love, make a difference for others and live life fully.” You’d focus on enjoying the process, not on the end result. I believe the definition of successful dating needs to include appreciating the adventure.

Not that all aspects of the adventure are thrilling. Think of a trip you’ve taken to a destination you really wanted to visit. Did you like all parts of your journey to Paris? What about the long plane ride or the taxi trip to your hotel? Most of us wouldn’t consider these

experiences particularly pleasurable. However, if you engage your seatmate on the plane, catch up on your sleep, and/or read an enthralling book, the journey is pleasurable.

Your trip from the airport can be interesting if you notice the people and architecture and query the cab driver on favorite non-touristy sites. It depends on what you make of the experience. I once had a grand time having a picnic in a Paris laundromat while doing my wash.

Consider defining dating success as something along these lines:

“To enjoy meeting and getting to know interesting men, broadening myself through new experiences, feeling the thrill of new romance, being willing to encounter the broad range of emotions from delight and love to disappointment and hurt, growing as a person and becoming more centered in what I want and who I am. And when the time is right, to meet my next long-term love.”

With this definition, you are bound to be successful. And when you do meet your guy, you will be so enticing he won't ever want to let you go.