GTP Program: Discussing Topic #3

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**“How to Find True Love” By Tina Su**

From: http://thinksimplenow.com/relationships/how-to-find-true-love/

*“I’ve realized that one of my main goals is to find a worthwhile and long term relationship. I noticed you have entries on how to keep a relationship and on how to end a relationship so would you consider writing an entry on what you perceive to be the best way to find a worthwhile relationship. How to avoid making the same mistakes, overcoming fears, keeping up motivation after failure etc.” -* Gary (Dublin, Ireland)

 Regardless of our culture, our level of education or economic status, everyone has the same desires- to love, to be loved, and to be happy. Of course we could add other desires to this list, like money and wealth and fancy things, but when you drill into these things, the reason for wanting them is so that we can appear more desirable, and will hopefully be loved and accepted.

 If love is something so fundamentally important to us, then why is it that we have so many issues and misunderstandings in the area of finding it? I think the answer is simple: that most of us have never been educated in this fundamental area of our development. Chances are you didn’t grow up with parents who were relationship experts, and we certainly didn’t study relationships in our high school curriculums. For most of us, it’s been an adventure in trial and error and learning through pain and heartbreak. But is there an easier way?

**Who Is Your Ideal Mate?**

 We all have a rough idea of what our perfect partner is like: beautiful, or smart, or rich, or educated, or tall, or petite, or pale, or dark, or handsome, or fit, with this car, or with that house or whatever else that strikes our fancy. The problem comes when we find ourselves in a relationship and we are constantly comparing our partners with this imaginary ‘perfect’ person. When that happens, we stop appreciating our partner for all the beautiful qualities they do possess. The truth is this perfect person does not exist. More importantly, we may not actually need all of these qualities in a partner to be extraordinarily happy.

 What we need is to identify the most important qualities that we must have in order to feel satisfied and fulfilled. By not having identified the must-have qualities in our chosen life partner, we end up settling, and since the person cannot give us the things we truly need, we start to resent them. This will snowball into larger issues.

 For example, if height is something that is really important to you, and your partner does not meet that height requirement, regardless of how much they try, they will never grow taller or shrink shorter, and this will bug you and affect your union.

 In life, we will get random results if we have not specified what we want. Identifying and understanding what it is that we need in a relationship, allows us to set clear intentions, and in doing so, moves us closer to realizing our intended desires.

**Identifying Must-Haves**

 Here’s how to discover and identify the must-have qualities in your partner. I highly recommend taking at least 10 minutes to go through this, even if you are presently in a relationship. Grab a pen and some paper. Find a place where you won’t be interrupted. Turn off the phone, the TV, the computer. Ready? Here we go:

**Step 1. The Perfect Image**

 On a blank piece of paper, list out all the qualities that your ideal partner will have. What kind of characteristics and qualities do you truly desire? Be creative and open. Use a bullet pointed list, not sentences. List out as many as possible, and use as many pieces of paper as needed.

 Be as specific as you can. Get into details like physical attributes, values, lifestyle, views on money, spiritual beliefs, personality traits, hobbies, abilities, age, habits, profession, tastes, etc.

For physical attributes, include things like height, weight, body type, hair color, ethnicity, or anything that you would want if you had your choice in creating your ideal partner.

**Step 2. Minimum Requirements (MR)**

 Minimum requirements are qualities you need from your partner, and without them, you will feel unwell or unsatisfied. Go through each quality from step 1 and test it with this question:

“Would I rather be alone than be with a person who wasn’t [insert quality]?” If the answer is yes, mark MR next to the quality, otherwise, leave it blank. Don’t worry if your list sounds superficial or ridiculous. One MR item on my list is “Great dancer with rhythm and groove”, which may seem like a trivial or petty quality for some people, but is a deal breaker for me.

**Step 3. Screening MRs**

 Now, filter through the MR list, for each item with the MR label, ask the following question: “If a person had all the other qualities on my MR list, am I willing to let this quality go?” If the answer is yes, cross out that MR.

**The Selection Process**

 I believe it is crucial to identify and clearly communicate our relationship expectations and personal timelines early on in the dating phase.

 First, be clear with yourself on these types of issues. Understand what kind of commitment you are looking for in a relationship, how you feel about children and where you plan to live. There are no wrong answers, but be honest and specific about what you are looking for in the current stage of your life. Next, tell yourself that on all of your first dates, you will be clear with people about your relationship expectations and timeline, if any. It can be a scary and awkward experience at first, but it will become less of a nerve-racking experience over time.

 On my first dates with any guy, I found that telling them my expectations was pretty nerve-racking, especially for men I was really attracted to, since they could potentially run the other way. I would begin to tell myself that this would be too much of a shocking conversation for most people to handle on a first date. Why not just wait until date 5 or 6, when I know that he really likes me? The answer is that by then I would have emotionally attached myself to this person and would then be in a situation where I would either have to settle for less than what I wanted, or break it off. It would have been much better to learn on the first date whether or not we were a good fit.

 Personally, I was looking for a husband and to start a family. I would tell them that I wanted to get married before I turned 30 and to start making babies within two years of getting married. Oh, and I would also like to have two children. “Are you okay with that timeline?” I would ask them. The men who were okay with my timeline stayed and the ones who weren’t went away. No hurt feelings and everyone wins.

 As such, communicating your desires, needs and expectations, ahead of time, becomes crucial. For example, if having children is of utmost importance to you and your partner is set against having kids, then likely the relationship will not last and both parties are wasting time in the process.

 Dating shouldn’t be about settling out of a fear that a better fit might not come along. I believe that dating is about identifying the qualities you need in a person and in a relationship, and then “filtering” through as many people as it takes until you find someone who possesses all the important qualities that you need.

**Love Yourself First**

 The [art of loving yourself](http://thinksimplenow.com/happiness/the-secret-to-self-loving/) is not only important in the healing process from love lost, but also in finding love. I believe that we cannot truly allow others to love us, until we first love ourselves.

 Another way of looking at this is to imagine each person in a relationship as a wooden stick. If one person is independent and the other is dependent, it’s like one stick is standing perfectly vertical and the second stick is leaning against the vertical stick. If the vertical stick moves horizontally, the leaning stick will fall. When two people are both independent and joined together through love, it’s like two sticks standing vertically. When they join together, they become a larger and stronger stick and they become interdependent and stronger. If one stick moves horizontally, the other stick will move with it.

 Practice loving yourself: take yourself on a date, do things that please and relax you, spend quality time with yourself, write love letters to yourself, practice saying and feeling “I love you” in the mirror. Additionally, the practice of loving yourself makes you a more attractive person to the outside world. When you truly love yourself, you will exude and spread a magnetic energy to those around you. Before you know it, you will be surrounded by those attracted to you for who you really are.

**Forgiving Our Ex’s**

 When we hold onto unresolved issues from previous relationships, they become emotional baggage in our future relationships. I’ve found forgiving your ex’s to be a liberating exercise that contributes to the wellbeing of yourself and your future relationships.

 A few years ago I sat down with, or phoned, several of my ex-boyfriends, and apologized for hurt feelings I may have caused, and expressed and forgave them for my own hurt feelings from the relationship. This experience brought closure to those relationships, removed the baggage, and allowed new friendships to develop.

**A Few Words On Sex**

 For those of us who are sexually active, I would like to point out one thing. When you have an orgasm, there is a chemical change that takes place in your body. In particular, your body releases a hormone called [oxytocin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxytocin) that binds you emotionally to the other person. For a man, the effects of this hormone last for 48 hours. For a woman, the effects last for 14 days.

 This explains why, after having sex with someone who is clearly a bad fit for us, we can end up in a relationship with him or her, even if it’s for a short amount of time. Far too often, these relationships can turn into long-term relationships that ultimately end badly.

 It is recommended by relationship experts to not have sex during your dating and selection process unless you are okay with being emotionally bound to that person or having that person be emotionally bound to you for 14 days. Alison recommends not having sex with someone unless they fit all the qualities on your MR list.

**Parting Words**

 People often ask, “Where should I go to find this person?” The logical answer provided by most is to go to places where such a person would hang out, but this practice can often lead to disappointment. My suggestion is to go through the exercises above to gain clarity on what you need and the types of relationships you want. Then spend time practicing the art of self-loving, while being open to the idea of your ideal mate entering your life. I would not actively seek it. Instead spend your efforts on self-development.

 As with all things of the heart, there is an ingredient of magic in finding love. There are no coincidences. Everything happens for a reason. Love is beautiful and unpredictable. The best thing we can do is to start to become the most outstanding person possible. The universe will know when we are ready, and when we are, true love will happen, unexpectedly.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Describe your perfect partner:
	1. What is their appearance?
	2. What is their personality?
	3. What is their character?
	4. What is their social and family background?
2. The author of the article describes “must-have” qualities. What are the three “must-have” qualities that you expect your mate to have?
3. The author says that before you begin looking for another person to love, you should learn to love yourself.
	1. What does it mean to love yourself?
	2. Why is this important?
	3. Do you love yourself? Why or why not?
4. The author says that it is impossible to have a healthy relationship when we still have anger remaining from old relationships. Do you think this is true?
5. Many people have sex with people they are not really ready to date seriously. The author says that this is a really bad idea. What do you think?
6. Where is a good place to meet people who fit your needs?
7. Do you believe in “love at first sight”?
8. Have you ever been on a blind date?
9. How important is it for your family to approve of your partner?
10. Do you want to get married?