

THE TAO OF DATING



The Smart Woman's Guide to
Embracing Your Inner Goddess and
Finding the Fulfillment You Deserve

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*There was something formless and perfect
before the universe was born.
It is serene. Empty.
Solitary. Unchanging.
Infinite. Eternally present.
It is the mother of the universe.
For lack of a better name,
I call it the Tao.*

*It flows through all things,
Inside and outside, and returns
To the origin of all things.*

*The Tao is great.
The universe is great.
Earth is great.
Man is great.
These are the four great powers.*

*Man follows the earth.
Earth follows the universe.
The universe follows the Tao.
The Tao follows only itself.*

*– Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Ch. 25, transl. Stephen
Mitchell*

The Introduction You Can't Skip

The story of Monica

It was one of those early fall Boston days a few years ago when you thought anything was possible. The sky was unusually clear, the air was crisp, and Newbury Street was humming with life and brimming with attractive people. I was excited about meeting up with my college classmate Monica, whom I had not seen since we both graduated from Harvard.

You probably know Monica, or someone like her. She was smart, good-looking, funny, in great shape, well-read, stylish, successful – the total package. She had her act together – so much so that guys in college had been almost too intimidated to ask her out.

We met at the sidewalk café Sonsie to catch up. And as we discussed work, family, friends, and love life, the question came up: “So – you seeing anyone?”

There was a shifting in the chair, a looking away, and Monica mumbled, “Well, no, not really.” Now, normally that’s not a remarkable fact. But Monica is kind

of a remarkable woman. One might even say a serious babe. If *she* was perpetually single, something must have been seriously wrong with the world.

Then I started having conversations like that one with other female friends, and a pattern started to emerge. Talented, educated, attractive women were having unfulfilling dating lives on an epidemic scale. They either couldn't find the right guy, were with the wrong guy, had relationships that didn't last, or had given up entirely on the whole dating business.

This came to me as a surprise. I mean, these were all exceptional women. There should have been a line of fantastic guys around the block for any one of them. And yet, they were alone. And lonely. Surely something was terribly wrong with the world.

So I had to ask – what's going on here? That's when I thought there may be a need for a dating guide specifically geared for smart professional women.

A guy, writing a dating book for women?

As it turns out, my guy classmates were having similar issues, so I started out by writing the book for men, which I finished in three intense months of writing and research in 2005. The book was well-received, and in late 2006, I set out to write the *Tao of Dating* for women, thinking that it would take about the same amount of time. Piece of cake, right? *Wrong*. Turns out it's not as easy as I thought to write a dating book for women when you're not a woman.

I was seriously stuck for a long time. More than once I considered abandoning the project. I mean, what does a guy know about the inner lives of women anyway?

Surely there were 3 billion people out there better-qualified to write this book¹.

In the meantime, I was getting daily letters from the men about *their* dating woes. And they were having said woes with women, shockingly enough. Little by little, from these thousands of men, a database started to emerge: what they really liked, what they didn't like so much, and what absolutely sent them running for the hills. As their confidante, I also became privy to their innermost thoughts, desires, and schemes. Could *this* be of interest to my female readers? Perhaps.

The story of Holly

Then, something else happened. Fast-forward to 2008. The book is still slogging along, and I was visiting Boston (I live in Los Angeles now). I'm having dinner with two of my college classmates, Ariela and Holly. Both are professional women in their thirties, both fabulous-looking and divorced. Ariela is single without kids; Holly has a daughter and is seeing someone. Let's call him Tim. Ariela clearly does not approve of Tim, so I decide to get the full story.

"Tell me about this guy," I ask Holly.

She responds, "Well, he's really tall and handsome; the sex is great; he's really sweet most of the time; he's a bit of the starving-artist type, and he's not as successful as I am, so I've been supporting him for the past couple of years."

So far, so bad. I sensed she was holding back, and called her on it. And – really sweet *most* of the time? What's up with *that*?

¹ That would be the female half of the world's population.

“Well, when we first met he was just such a sweetheart. But lately he’s been sniping at me, putting me down for no reason. And when I spend time with my friends he gets really jealous and makes me feel guilty.”

“Tell him what happened when your daughter fell down the stairs,” said Ariela with a fire of barely concealed rage in her eyes.

Holly hesitated. “Well, last month my daughter fell down the stairs at home and cut her head open. There was blood everywhere, and we rushed her to the hospital. I was so shaken, and I just needed Tim to be by my side, so I called him up. He didn’t come.”

Didn’t come? Just like that? And you’re still dating this loser?

“He said he was afraid of blood, and he just couldn’t deal with the situation.”

My heart sank. How was this possible? Why was this amazing woman wasting another minute of her life on this unworthy man? What else is happening that she’s not sharing with us? How many other women like her were stuck in the same place?

At this point, Ariela and I made a very clear case for why Holly needed to break it off with this guy immediately. Then Ariela looked me in the eye and held my right forearm for emphasis: “Alex, you have a duty to finish this book as quickly as possible.”

I realized that if my book could help even one woman like Holly (and Monica) get their power back, then I had to complete it and bring it to light. Two months after that talk, I finished *The Tao of Dating*. And Holly asked Tim (who turns out was also physically abusing her) to move out and never contact her again, not a minute too soon.

A dating guide for the modern smart, professional, educated woman

Although Monica and Holly were just two of the women amongst the dozens I spoke to, their cases were not unique. There were themes common to many of the stories women shared with me.

For most of them there were external circumstances such as their careers that accounted for part of what was happening. But I was also hearing excuses from them that didn't make a lot of sense: "There aren't any good men." "I don't have time to meet people." "I'm an old-fashioned girl – dating's just not my thing." Or the worst, from those who were dating the wrong guy: "But he's nice *sometimes*."

Some of them genuinely didn't know how to date effectively. And they weren't entirely at fault: the rules of dating are unwritten, and no one had bothered to teach any of us what they might be. But even more important, I witnessed that they had abdicated their own power as women and people. While I saw them as tremendously attractive, magnetic individuals that any man would be lucky to associate with, they did not. As a result, they ended up alone or with the wrong guy.

So this book has two objectives: to help educated, intelligent, discriminating women get back their personal power in the dating arena and beyond; and to give them some solid strategies for a fulfilling dating life. As a man, I wish to provide a fresh perspective on women's strength and beauty that they may have forgotten themselves and also provide the man's perspective on what dating strategies work best.

Since writing *The Tao of Dating For Men* three years ago, I have been privy to hundreds of stories of men's challenges relating to women. I combined that with my own experiences to give you a sense of what works best

with educated, intelligent, successful men of integrity when it comes to dating. As a hypnotherapist, seminar leader and personal success consultant, I want to give you tools to reclaim your personal power in all areas of your life. If you're reading this book, chances are you're a remarkable woman, and I want to make sure you remember that. Think of this book as what a big brother with your best interest at heart would tell you if he had a thorough knowledge of the male psyche and had been through several dates himself. Seeing you happy makes me happy.

As its title suggests, this book draws on Taoist philosophy, which arises from observation of the way the world works. As such, it is more about the way things are, rather than the way things should be – more descriptive than prescriptive, more empirical than theoretical. There is no doctrine, no dogma, and very few rules. In fact, at every point, I encourage you to test the ideas and find out how well they work for you instead of blindly accepting them at face value. If it works for you, keep it. If it doesn't, toss it and try something else.

Like the teachings of the Eastern masters and the *Tao Te Ching*, the concepts may seem paradoxical at first. I urge you to find the hidden truth behind the paradox. You may also find that some of these ideas go directly against your expectations or beliefs. In those cases, I encourage you to just test them out, without any prejudice as to whether they are right or wrong: just see what happens. As Albert Einstein said, "If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it." Ordinary ideas and measures will give you ordinary results at best. Extraordinary results, on the other hand, require extraordinary measures. As such, the more an idea challenges your current belief set, the more likely it is to effect breakthrough in your life.

You should think of the ideas in this book as tools for achieving whatever your dating goals may be, from a fling to marriage. I've based these concepts in ancient wisdom and proven science to ensure that they are as timeless and universal as possible – as likely to be true a hundred years from now as they are today. As such, although the book is based on a North American model of dating, most of the principles are applicable regardless of who or where you are. At the same time, I make some assumptions about you, the reader:

1) You are interested in long-term fulfillment as opposed to short-term gain. There are two operating words here: *long-term* and *fulfillment*. As with investment and career choices, the tactics for short-term gain in dating tend to be different from the ones for long-term benefit. Also, it's important to remember that fulfillment is not a person – it is a feeling. And sometimes the way to have that fulfillment will seem paradoxical (e.g. spending some quality time alone).

2) For the purposes of long-term relationships, you are interested first and foremost in a Good Guy. A Good Guy is a man (as opposed to a boy) who knows what he wants and knows where he's going. He has a strong internal compass guiding him along his life's purpose, he's completely comfortable in his own skin, and he's a leader. At the same time that he's a perfect gentleman, always having your well-being in mind, he's perfectly willing to give you some gentle ribbing every once in a while. He exists in contradistinction to such male archetypes

as the Bad Boy, Man-Child and Nice (But Kind of Wimpy) Guy.

3) You are open both to scientific concepts and spiritual principles and are willing to try on novel ideas that are likely to bring more fun and fulfillment into your life. If you're more scientifically-oriented, consider this an introduction to spiritual concepts. If you're more spiritually-oriented, consider this a chance to learn more about science.

In the end, this book is more about helping you find your own way than about telling you what to do. Sometimes we can get stuck in a rut, and all it takes is a tiny jolt, a little piece of information, to get us up and running again. Many people are finding that jolt amongst the precepts of Eastern wisdom, and if you're reading this, it's likely that you are one of them.

Some of you will find *The Tao of Dating* highly applicable to where you are and where you want to be, and some perhaps less so. As for me – I have been through 21 years of formal education, attended countless lectures and gone through thousands of books in my lifetime. It's safe to say that I have not used 100% of everything that I have learned. But I still seek out new sources of information, sit through weekend-long seminars and sift through new books. Even if I get *one* new idea, *one* mental shift to see something in a new way, *one* re-iteration of a key concept that I had forgotten, or *one* new application of a concept, then that exercise has been worthwhile. I urge you to look at any new learning experience in that way, including this book.

One spark is sometimes all it takes to start a raging fire, and I sincerely hope that you will find many sparks in the time you spend with this book. I congratulate you on making the decision to bring the Tao into your life today. Once you allow it, you will find that it will empower you and change your life in ways you had not imagined before.

The five themes of *The Tao of Dating*

This book is organized around five overarching themes. We will go over each one in detail in the book, but I want to prime your mind so you pay closer attention each time they appear:

- The first is *wealth-consciousness*, or the mindset of abundance. There is enough of everything to go around for everyone.
- The second is the *Be-Do-Have mentality*, which relates to Napoleon Hill's famous saying from *Think and Grow Rich*: "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve."
- The third is *enlightened self-interest*, which is about acting with your long-term well-being in mind.
- The fourth is *feminine-masculine (yin-yang) polarity*.
- The fifth is *getting out of your own way*.

How to use this book

The purpose of *The Tao of Dating* is not just to give you some tricks and hints for you to scrape by on, but

rather to turn you into the most empowered, fulfilled version of you possible. As such, this book is equally about *transformation* and information. In order to effect that transformation, you have to apply the principles in the book to your life.

So I want you to think of this book less as a novel that you read once and shelve and more like a handbook, travel guide or cookbook. Print it out so you can refer to it over and over again. Mark up the chapters and exercises that you like and come back to them. I've read the *Tao Te Ching* at least 300 times, and I keep on coming back to it, just because something in there always provides me with a new perspective on what's happening. Think of this book in that vein – a reference you will keep on coming back to.

Now if you're like most people, you're probably going to start reading the book, get to an exercise, skip it, and go straight to the juicy parts about tips and tricks. So go ahead and do that – I won't tell anyone. Skim the book once from beginning to end. Then go back and *do the exercises*. That is where the transformation occurs (and where some of the tips and tricks are hidden).

The Tao of Dating contains a lot of information. If you attempt to remember and try out every idea at once, it may be overwhelming. That is why the book is organized in a linear fashion. Start from the beginning, from the work on values, beliefs, attitudes and what you want. Then move on to the section on how to find quality men. Progress stepwise to meeting men, attracting them, and perpetuating your relationships with them.

Think of it as baking bread. If you've never done it before, you start by thinking about a recipe. You then go through each step of making the bread in order: go to store, buy ingredients, mix them, make dough, bake, eat. If you try to do everything at once, you're more likely to end up

with a mess in the kitchen than an edible loaf. But if you go sequentially, at every step of the way you just have to remember what the next step is. As Lao Tzu says, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Go easy, and good fortune.

I'm very interested in your thoughts about this book, so do me a favor and drop a line sometime. Just put 'Question', or 'Comment' or 'That was awesome' in the subject line of your email so I know to pay special attention to it. You can write to me personally at:

dralex(at)taoofdating.com

Part I
The Way:
Foundations of
the Tao



Chapter 1. Dating for Fulfillment

Which would you prefer: the menu or the food?

Imagine that you're hungry right now at a diner. And they offer you just the menu but no food. Would you settle for that? Or would you demand actual food?

That may seem like a silly question. But in real life, people sometimes operate as if they aren't sure about the answer. They chase down the symbol representing what we want – money, titles – instead of the actual thing that we want. But the money and the titles are only good for the feelings and experiences they can get for us.

So while reading this book, I'd like you to keep in mind what constitutes real fulfillment for you in the dating

realm – the actual food, not the menu. Because fulfillment is not a person – it's a feeling. The right person is the one who catalyzes an abundance of fulfilling feelings in your life, like love, peace and contentment. And if you're not getting those feelings, it may be a sign that either you're with the wrong person or that you're approaching matters with an unhelpful perspective.

Square one: accept and love yourself now

Some argue that the ultimate aim of everything we do in life is to get more love. You could be reading this book because you want more love from men, more love from your friends, or more love from yourself. Of those three, only one is directly under your control – the love you have for yourself. Generally speaking, being better with men won't make your friends like you any better (and sometimes may have the opposite effect). And chances are that if you are not happy with yourself right now, no amount of success with men will ever make up for that. And no man will be able to trigger feelings of fulfillment in you.

In fact, it only gets harder when you *have* what you *thought* would make you happy and still find happiness elusive. So go ahead and decide *now* to be comfortable in your own skin and to accept yourself exactly as you are. Why? Besides being a good starting point, there is no time when it's not right now. Now is the only time. And true fulfillment can only come from sharing your joy, contentment and self-sufficiency with the rest of the world in the present moment. Decide it, claim it, be it.

*...If you look to others for fulfillment,
you will never truly be fulfilled.
If your happiness depends on money,*

you will never be happy with yourself.

*Be content with what you have;
rejoice in the way things are.
When you realize there is nothing lacking,
the whole world belongs to you.*

– Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Ch. 44

So if you're perfectly okay right where you are, why would you need this book? Great question. It reminds me of an old Buddhist saying: "We are perfect as we are, and we could all use a little work."

Here's one way to think about it. Seeking out resources for self-improvement simply means that you are on a journey of growth. And in order to reach your goals in dating – or anything else in life – it's important to believe that at every point along this journey of growth, you are complete. A sequoia seedling is always a sequoia at every point along its path to becoming a towering tree. And so are you always an empowered, fulfilled woman on your way to even greater empowerment and fulfillment. You are always turning into the best possible version of you.

This is important because the world tends to be a reflection of your dominant thoughts. When you signal to the world "I am okay," the world will agree with you. When you signal "Well, I'll be okay if I just get this little part fixed, but I'm not quite okay right now," then the world will agree with you also.

Recognize that whatever mindset you have right now is the one you're likely to carry with you for the rest of your life. If you don't think you're okay right now, chances are that no events or circumstances will change that. Thus I encourage you to choose right now to adopt the mindset that, wherever you are, regardless of your real or imagined

inadequacies, you accept yourself just as you are. Stop the struggle and just be. Chapter 29 of the *Tao Te Ching* puts it thus:

*Do you want to improve the world?
I don't think it can be done.*

*The world is sacred.
It can't be improved.
If you tamper with it, you'll ruin it.
If you treat it like an object, you'll lose it.*

*There is a time for being ahead,
A time for being behind;
A time for being in motion,
A time for being at rest;
A time for being vigorous,
A time for being exhausted;
A time for being safe,
A time for being in danger.*

*The Master sees things as they are,
without trying to control them.
She lets them go their own way,
and resides at the center of the circle.*

Fulfillment is a feeling, not a person

The most common question I get from my readers is "How do I get this guy?" The answer is simple: you're asking the wrong question.

Deep down, women seek relationships not because they want a particular guy, but rather because they want the feelings that a good relationship brings them. This class of

feelings I call *fulfillment*. Fulfillment is having someone to see that movie with, someone to cook dinner for (or to cook for you), someone to take with you to your best friend's wedding, someone to cuddle up with on a Friday night.

A big mistake in relationships is focusing on the person instead of the fulfillment. The object of your desire could be the most exceptional man on earth, but if he lives 5 hours away or is a workaholic and is never around when you want his company, chances are you are not going to be fulfilled in the long run.

When you are dating someone, ask yourself often, "Do I feel fulfilled in this relationship?" and answer that question with utter honesty. If the answer is 'no' at any point, you may wish to reconsider your situation. The flip side of that is when you *do* feel fulfilled for the most part, but there are some points of conflict looming in your mind. In that case, you may wish to weigh the relative importance of those peccadilloes compared to the fulfillment you're already experiencing.

Another issue with seeking out a particular man as the key to your fulfillment is that by doing so, you are denying the abundance of the world. When you chase anything in life, you are affirming its lack in your life. Spiritual law holds that the world tends to mirror your dominant thoughts. So if you affirm the lack of something in your life, be it wealth, companionship or health, the world will agree with you, and that thing will be driven farther away from your reach. We'll discuss this topic further in Chapter 5 on Beliefs.

Now one sure way to chase away your own fulfillment is to compare yourself to others: Jane has a better-looking, better-educated boyfriend who cooks for her; Barbara's boyfriend is marriage-minded, etc. Comparison gets you in trouble because comparing

yourself with those whom you perceive as better off can make you bitter. Comparison with those whom you perceive as worse off can make you vain (and frankly, bitter and vain people are a bit of a drag to be around). If you're ever going to compare, compare yourself to your former self, and notice how far you have come along. And stay centered on your fulfillment, which will be different from that of anyone else.

The power of gratitude

So what constitutes a more effective approach than wishing, wanting, needing, and yearning your way into a fulfilling relationship? The secret weapon here is called gratitude. The idea is simple: right now, if you are sitting somewhere and reading this book, chances are you have a roof over your head and are clothed and fed. You probably have a job and friends and family who care for you. Trillions of cellular operations are all working in harmony this very second to keep you alive and functioning. There is *no end* to the things you could be grateful for.

Of course, you have a choice. You could focus on what's missing from your life – a 70-ft yacht on the French Riviera, a villa in Tuscany or a doting, movie-star boyfriend or husband. Or you can focus on the infinitude of things that are *right* with your life (and there are billions of them, I assure you). Focusing on the billions of things that are right with your life is more likely to make you feel good than focusing on the few things that you perceive as missing. Try this fun little exercise to get a better sense of what I mean.

Exercise 1. The Power of Focus

Take about 30 seconds right now to look around the room. Take notice and mentally catalog everything in the room that is *brown*, and do your best to remember as many of them as possible. Look around and do that now; when you are done, continue reading.

Now, while keeping your eye on the page, recall all the items in the room that are *green*. Green? Yes, green. You probably didn't come up with many, since you were so focused on the brown stuff. You tend to get more of what you focus on. So choose to focus on the good stuff, and you'll have no choice but to get more of it.

Gratitude feels good. Gratitude may be the most empowering feeling you can have. And it's always there, even when you think it isn't. All you have to do is to choose to focus on what's good in your life. In his moving book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl recounts how even in the midst of the unimaginable brutality of a Nazi concentration camp, he was able to find things to be grateful for: the companionship of his friends in camp; a moment of solitude; the savoring of a dry morsel of bread. If you find yourself in a position even slightly better than a concentration camp, perhaps you can find some reasons for gratitude as well.

You can even feel gratitude for the relationship that you would like to have. The fact is that the person with whom you'll be sharing this relationship is already out there somewhere, and it's only a matter of time before you meet or recognize him. Think of it as a paycheck that you've already worked for and is coming to you sooner or later;

you're sure it's coming, just not exactly *when* it's coming. And you're okay with that.

When you feel gratitude, you feel good, and when you feel good, you glow. Other people will gravitate towards you. There is no more attractive force than being an epicenter of positive feeling. So gratitude becomes the magnet that will draw the right person into your life. As Tenzin Gyatso, the 13th Dalai Lama famously noted, "There is no way to happiness; happiness is the way."

Another neat feature of gratitude is that it tends to be its own reward. Feelings don't come with little color-coded flags saying *this is the name of what you are feeling*. For example, what you may think of as fear you could just as easily re-interpret as excitement or anticipation. Similarly, gratitude feels a lot like fulfillment; in fact, it may be the essence of what fulfillment is. So when you consciously choose to feel gratitude, you're bringing fulfillment into your life on demand. And when you have that feeling of fulfillment and the empowerment that comes with it, you may no longer feel that you really *need* a man, since you already have the feelings that he would bring. However, you may still *want* a man, which is a much more empowered position to operate from than needing one. More on that later.

The Be-Do-Have Paradigm

Most people are seeking some kind of result in life, and believe that success means *having* that result, be it wealth, status, relationships. As such, they're often looking for the shortcut, the quick and dirty solution, the overnight scheme. Sure, there are overnight schemes; the problem is that it also tends to last only overnight. Easy come, easy go.

True success, on the other hand, is not an accident; it is a *habit*. Most lottery winners go back to their original or lower level of wealth just two years after winning all that money; many go bankrupt. True success only comes from embarking on a path of mastery, which takes time and effort. By purchasing this book and reading this far, you have taken the first and second steps on that path. For that I congratulate you. Seventy percent of people don't even make it this far*. Keep up the good work.

Most people think of success in terms of possession: in order to *be* someone, you must *have* something. If you have money and spend lots of it, you are rich. If you have an attractive mate, you are successful in dating.

The truth is that the *reverse* of this mindset is the true key to success. All great works of spirituality from the *Tao Te Ching* to the Bible emphasize that the first step of success is to embody the vision of the success you want to have: "As you believe, so it is done unto you." A simple and powerful articulation of this is the Be-Do-Have paradigm, in which success comes from possessing the mindset, "I am a successful person." This in turn leads to actions. The actions then manifest the signs that people commonly refer to as success.

There is a long-standing tradition in Eastern wisdom of being detached from results. As Krishna said to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, you are entitled to your actions, not the results of your actions. Here's the insight: if you are following the path of fulfillment, then the *action is the result*. The work is the wealth. As Mahatma Gandhi put it, "Full effort is full victory."

Let's use the example of money. In order to be wealthy, first you must *be* a wealthy person, with the

* And 82% of all statistics are made up right on the spot.

attendant mindsets and beliefs. You wake up in the morning thinking, “How would Warren Buffett spend his day?” Once you have convinced your brain that you are a wealthy person, then you will naturally *do* what a wealthy person does – do your homework, make good decisions, have shrewd associates, be thrifty in your ways, have overall welfare in mind. And, as a result, not only will you effortlessly *have* what a wealthy person possesses, but you will also have the true wealth of following a the path of fulfillment. This is true of any sphere of endeavor.

You rise to a higher level of consciousness by taking your attention away from your present limitations and placing it upon that which you desire to be. Do not attempt this in day-dreaming or wishful thinking but in a positive manner. Claim yourself to be the thing desired. I AM that; no sacrifice, no diet, no human tricks. All that is asked of you is to accept your desire. If you dare claim it, you will express it.
– Neville, Your Faith Is Your Fortune

For example, Marie Curie was always the brilliant Nobel-winning scientist, even when she was a young, penniless nanny. When she inhabited that 18-year old mind and body without access to knowledge of her future, she may have never imagined turning into one of the greatest scientists in history and the winner of two Nobel prizes. Yet to us, it seems strange to think of her any other way than *the* Marie Curie, regardless of her age. You can apply that example to the young versions of any great person in history. The young Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Austen, and Indira Gandhi all harbored self-doubt in their development

towards greatness. Yet, in retrospect, they were great to us even as young women on the journey. Recognize that you are on that same journey of greatness, and that it takes a little bit of time for the greatness to fully manifest.

So now I invite you to envision the most brilliant vision of your future. Where do you see yourself in 10 years? In twenty? What will you accomplish? How do you want to be remembered? What kind of relationships will you have? With what kind of people? Make that vision as grand as possible, and then start to embody it immediately. Re-read the quote from Neville above. Is there a guarantee that all the details of your vision will come true? Perhaps not 100%. But *without* the vision, there is hardly a chance of achieving the goal.

So dare to think and imagine. No one has access to your thoughts, so make them as big and brilliant and inspiring as possible. Great thoughts cost as much as mediocre ones, so might as well go big. Now is a good time to do the following exercise.

Exercise 2. Your highest vision of yourself

Take a deep breath and close your eyes. Imagine yourself as a child, maybe 7 years old. Remember then how badly you wanted to grow up, be tall, go places like the grownups, reach high shelves, drive a car. Remember that feeling of inadequacy that you had then and how you just couldn't wait for all this to happen.

Now bring a picture of your current adult self into the scene, and give your child self a big hug saying, "Hey, told you it was all going to be all right." Feel that deep compassion and acceptance.

Now imagine a third version of yourself – a version from the future that embodies all the accomplishments and goals you are seeking right now. What does that person look like? Really take the time to notice her voice, her gait, her demeanor. How does she look and sound? How does it feel to be her? Now have that future you come in and give the present you a big hug, saying "It's all going to be all right," just the way you hugged the 7-year old you.

Now let the three pictures of you from the past, present and the future merge into one another, leaving an image of that highest vision of yourself, and realize that it is you, right now. When you feel the empowering feelings that brings, squeeze your left fist twice. From now on, all you have to do to bring that empowering feeling back is to repeat that double squeeze.

In this chapter, we will break down the Be-Do-Have paradigm into four practical components: right beliefs, leading to right attitudes, leading to right behaviors, which naturally flow into right results. The steps go from the more hidden to the more manifest. Beliefs and attitudes are

the *be* phase; attitudes and behaviors are the *do* phase; results are the *have* phase.

Beliefs are completely hidden, not even manifest to the trained eye. Since your beliefs are yours to know alone, it makes sense to have the most effective beliefs possible, as grandiose or foolhardy as they may sound. Strong, empowering beliefs cost as much as mediocre, ineffective ones: they're all free!² So use the beliefs that serve you best.

An *attitude* is the first-level manifestation of a belief, hardly detectable even to a trained observer. Sometimes it is expressed verbally or in body language; other times it manifests itself as the subtext of behavior. People tend to respond not to your hidden thoughts or to your manifest behavior, but rather to your overall attitude. Your attitude is the meta-message and meaning of your behavior.

Behavior is what you do, which is easy to observe. The range of possible behaviors is infinite, yet most of us operate within a narrow envelope of behavior which those who know us call our personality. When we do something that seems to breach that narrow envelope, they say that we are behaving 'out of character.' Behavioral range is determined by attitudes and beliefs. It is possible to change attitudes and beliefs by regularly engaging in new behaviors consistent with those new beliefs.

Results are the most manifest component of the process. Results broadcast themselves just fine yet reveal little useful information regarding how to achieve them.

² Didn't I just say that? Yes I did. And I'll say it again, because it's so important: as long as all thoughts are free, choose to think the positive, empowering ones. Feeling good, like feeling crappy, is mostly a choice.

Knowing how much wealth someone has does not help you get rich like them; nor does seeing that someone has a wonderful companion tell you how that came about. This may seem obvious, but most people find themselves motivated by observing the results and not the process by which they came into being. So henceforth, in all spheres of life, wherever you observe success, look at the *process*. That is where the true wealth resides.

The soft overcomes the hard.

The slow overcomes the fast.

Let your workings remain a mystery.

Just show people the results.

– Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Ch. 36

Affective forecasting, or what *really* happens when you get what you want

We humans are hypersocial beings, and companionship is an essential part of our experience. But, come to think of it, you don't really *need* a man in your life. Not the same way you need food, water, shelter, clothing, oxygen and Vitamin D; they are essential to your survival and health. Now you may *want* a man, and that's okay (and in any case, men are much more flattered when they are wanted rather than needed).

However, a man is not a panacea. If you're in a bad job situation, don't get along with your family, have financial troubles, or fundamentally aren't happy with yourself, a man in your life is not likely to solve those issues, no matter how fantastic he is. You will not feel fulfilled by his presence. A man can at best be a conduit

and catalyst for feelings of fulfillment. Keep in mind especially that all feelings that you have, *you* generate inside your head. There is no wire from the outside world that plugs into the back of your head and makes you have feelings. If there is one person in the world chiefly responsible for your feelings, it's you.

Daniel Gilbert of Harvard studies *affective forecasting*, our ability to predict how we will feel in the future in response to events. What he has found is that, a few months down the road from the event, we don't feel nearly as good as we thought we would about pleasant things, nor feel nearly as bad about negative ones. In other words, we overestimate both our happiness and distress in response to future events. A year after an event, we tend to return to the same baseline level of happiness we had before.

Finding a suitable male companion may be likened to winning the lottery. Most women desirous of a relationship think they would be *really* happy if they started dating a wonderful man, in the same way that most people think they'd be really happy if they won a lottery. The fact is, soon after winning a lottery, the winners tend to return to the baseline level of happiness they had before winning. It's reasonable to conclude that the level of contentment and happiness you feel, after the initial whirlwind of excitement in a relationship has settled, is the same as the one you are experiencing right now in your seat while reading this passage.

There is a spiritual principle in operation here, reiterated in many guises in numerous traditions, but its essence is this: *You have everything that you need*. Right here, right now. Now this may be challenging to grasp, as you wonder about unpaid bills, an empty fridge and all that extra room in your bed at night. But at a deep and

fundamental level, it is always true. At every point in your life leading to this moment, you have had everything that you *needed* (once gain, emphasizing need rather than want): a womb in which the cells of your body multiplied and grew, caregivers to raise you, a nervous system that was capable of learning language, movement and other complex tasks, and the inner resources to succeed at school, work and human relations.

However, let's leave alone the factual accuracy of whether or not you have everything that you need and play pretend for a moment: What if that were actually true? How would that make you feel? What kind of person would you be if you truly believed that you have everything that you need? And what kind of people would you draw into your life if you were that person? *Start there.* In the chapter on beliefs, we will delve deeper into how beliefs empower you and bring you more of what you want.

Chapter 2. Who You Really Are

Right now, as you are sitting there, reading this sentence, a number of answers may come to mind to the question, "Who are you really?" These answers may have to do with various aspects of your supposed identity: Your age, for example. Where you were raised. Where you went to school. Your employment. Your preferences in clothing, food, leisure and travel. Your endearing quirks. That cute little dimple you get every time you smile. Your vivacious spirit.

These are all aspects of who you are, but they are not *you*. No single characteristic makes up who you are, and most of them are mutable in any case. Jobs change, habits come and go, temperaments evolve. So what is that stable, immutable part of you which will always be you, your *self*?

The concept of no-self

Buddhist philosophy argues that there is no such thing as a fixed self. Right now, you just took a breath, and trillions of oxygen molecules came from the outside and exchanged with the carbon dioxide in your blood. Billions of blood cells moved around to nourish your body. You just read that last sentence, which means that millions of your neurons fired to see, process and make sense of these words on a page. As a result, you are not exactly the same as you were five seconds ago – *you have changed*. Perhaps not in a way obvious to the naked eye, but in a very real sense, you are different than you were a moment ago.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said that you never bathe in the same river twice, because it's never the same river and it's never the same you. If you were to look at a river, close your eyes, and open them again a few seconds later, every water molecule will have moved, the banks will have rearranged themselves by a little bit, and it will effectively be a brand new river.

You, too, are like a river. There is no fixed version of you. There is no self. The Buddhists call this concept *anatta*, or no-self. In fact, they say that nothing in the world has a fixed self; everything is in flux. Including you.

You may find this concept of no-self distressing: "Oh no! I don't really exist! What am I to do?" Or you may find it a purely philosophical, not terribly practical exercise: "Well, clearly I'm here, so there is some kind of self. What's your point?"

Let me offer another way to look at no-self: as a concept that can be both useful and liberating. Since this book is about dating, let's think about it in a dating context. What would happen if no-self were true?

Well, you wouldn't be afraid of rejection. And you wouldn't be concerned about what others thought or said of you, since there is no you! As a result, you would be willing to approach and speak to any man you fancied. This would vastly increase the range of men you'd be able to date.

Since there's no fixed self to hurt, you'd be less afraid of getting hurt in a relationship and more focused on the enrichment you can derive from the connection. When you do end up dating a man, you would be less likely to feel insulted or slighted by any of his actions, since you can't take any of it personally. Your ego would not get in the way of a good connection. And when the time comes to part, you'd be less likely to feel hurt, rejected or abandoned, since there's no self to be hurt, rejected or abandoned.

Suddenly, this no-self idea seems really handy. Is it really true? Who knows. Can it enrich your life? Absolutely.

For better or for worse, the concept of no-self is easy to grasp but challenging to implement. If we have conditioned ourselves for decades to have an ego and serve it, then we are probably not going to get rid of that tendency overnight. Buddhist monks spend entire lifetimes meditating in monasteries to get to *anatta*. Since that kind of commitment may exceed your available time and patience, here are some practical ways to bring more *anatta* into your life:

1) Meditation. You don't have to spend years in a monastery to derive benefit from meditation. As little as three 15-minute sessions a week is enough to start significant impact on your life.

This reminds me of an old Zen story about a student who comes to his teacher and asks earnestly, "O master, how can I achieve enlightenment?" The teacher says, "Go in that room and meditate about a cow. Just think about that cow with unwavering attention."

So the student goes in the room, and meditates. He doesn't come out all day. And then the next day. And the next. By the third day, the master gets worried, so he asks the student, "Aren't you going to come out?"

And the student replies, "I would, but my horns won't fit through the doorway."

You tend to get more of what you focus on, to the point that you may even *become* what you focus on. So if you concentrate on the idea of no-self diligently, it's bound to take a hold on your consciousness.

Here's a meditation my students have found useful for getting the idea of no-self anchored in their minds. An audio recording of this meditation is **included with this book**. You can find it at www.taofdating.com/galactic.

Exercise 3. The Galactic Consciousness Meditation

Imagine that you have become very, very small. You are so small that you are the size of a molecule of air. Now imagine that you are in outer space, with nothing around you but the stars and the galaxies. You see them all in their vastness, glory and beauty. Some are so far away that they just look like a ring or disc in the distance. Some are close, and you can appreciate that there are 100 billion stars in a given galaxy, all of different sizes, luminosities, shapes. They are all beautiful, all incredibly vast, unimaginably full of light and energy.

In the corner of one such galaxy, you can discern a tiny blue marble. You start to move towards it, and for a long, long time, there's hardly anything in your way – the occasional bit of cosmic dust, but otherwise the vacuum of space. You get closer and start to discern features of the globe – oceans, continents, swirls of cloud. Eventually, you get close enough to approach the Earth's atmosphere. You encounter molecules of air – just a few at a time at first, then more and more of them. You zip past them, getting closer to the Earth's surface. Gradually you are engulfed by molecules of air. You are swimming in them.

As you approach the Earth's surface, you see a figure who has a striking resemblance to someone you know. Actually it's you, and you get closer and closer to the surface of your own skin. And as you pass through your own skin, you become aware that the density of molecules around you goes up. Remember that you're the size of a single molecule, so as you travel through your own body, you notice its utter vastness – the billions of molecules that make up each cell, the trillions of cells that make up the whole organism. It's as if the body itself is like a galaxy, these countless elements working together to create a living, magnificent being.

You spend some time inside your own body, and then exit out of it into the atmosphere again. And then, you travel past the skin of another person, into another body that's just as vast, just as awe-inspiring as the last one. You travel to another body, and another, and another, noticing all the ways in which they are similar to one another while maintaining their individuality, just like those galaxies you were looking at from outer space. And now you're moving faster and faster, journeying through body after body, and you start to see each cell as a star inside that galaxy. You

travel through the bodies of animals, of plants, of every living being, and see them all as they truly are, as expressions of one essence, one truth. As you do that, you eventually return to your own body, and expand and expand, until you inhabit it fully. You are now that galaxy, and you now appreciate the vastness of you, and the kinship you have with everything else in the world. Feel that kinship now, as you bow your head in reverence to your own magnificence, and the magnificence of all of creation.

Another simple technique I like is the *hong-sau meditation*. Sit down with your back upright and your hands on your lap, palms upturned. Now close your eyes and focus on the space between your eyebrows, the 'third-eye center'. Now with each inhalation, say to yourself the sacred Sanskrit syllable *hong*; with each exhalation, silently say *sau* (pronounced like 'saw')³. All the while, maintain your concentration on the space between your eyebrows, or third-eye center. You can make this your daily meditation practice, starting at 15 minutes a day and building from there.

2) Do yoga. I think of yoga as a moving meditation. The more vigorous the practice, the better. Why? Because you'll be so busy breathing, holding and balancing, you'll have little mental space left for such trivial matters as the ego.

Once again, the key is to have a regular practice. The more you bathe yourself in this pond, the more of the old notion of self you'll wash away. Practice at least twice

³ The syllables *hong* and *sau* have no translation; just use them as sacred sounds to focus the mind.

a week if you want to see any appreciable results. Three or more times a week and you will notice some serious progress.

3) Use the Reminder Technique. You may have heard of the holy month of Ramadhan in Muslim cultures where everyone fasts for a month. One of the requirements for your fast to be acceptable is to keep your thoughts and deeds pure in addition to refraining from eating and drinking. That gnawing hunger you experience in the pit of your belly is a reminder to be a better kind of person all day long. And the idea is that, after a whole month of that, you stand a real chance of behaving differently the other eleven months of the year, too.

You can do a similar version of that for the idea of no-self. An elastic wristband, a ring, an ink mark on your right thumb – anything can serve as your reminder to live the concept of no-self during the day. Use this reminder several weeks in a row, and the idea may just stick.

4) Experience flow. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (pronounced 'cheeks sent me high') talks about *flow* – that optimal state in which the task is matched to the ability. You're stretching yourself just a little bit, so the task is challenging (as opposed to boring) without being frustrating.

All of us have experienced flow at some point or another. For a pianist, it could be the performance of a Brahms prelude. For a rower, it could be that time when the whole crew works together as a unit and the boat 'swings'. For a surfer, it could be paddling at just the right speed to catch and surf a perfect wave.

Whatever flow is, you've got to find it for you. And start doing that thing more and more. Why? Because when

you're in flow, you *are* the action. Ego dissolves, and there is no more you – there is only do. So think back to all those times when you were in flow, and seek out those activities again. You may be surprised to find yourself revisiting something you haven't done in a long time which you still find strangely gratifying.

5) Travel. Of all of the methods listed above, this may very well be the most potent. Much of what you consider your fixed identity is anchored into your environment: your dwelling, your workplace, the streets you usually drive, the supermarket you usually shop at, the drink you usually order, the people you usually hang out with, the clothes you usually wear.

Remove all those hooks, and a new version of you (or no-you) has a chance to emerge. The more removed the locale from your everyday experience, the more likely you are to let go of the fixed notion of self.

So go hang out with some Galapagos turtles, Peruvian shamans, African springboks, and Mongolian herdsman. Then write back and tell me how it went.

There's one method that's guaranteed not to give you any results at all, and that's doing what you have been doing all along. Nothing changes if nothing changes. This book is about getting results by *taking action*. No action, no results. You've taken one big step towards getting results by purchasing this book and reading this far. If you really want to test the idea of no-self and reap its benefits in your life, commit to doing at least two of the above steps now. You'll be glad you did.

Who you really are

We've talked about how you are not some static entity known as the self. Let's say you agree with that. So what *are* you then?

We've got a lot of options here, so let's try this one on for size: you are a conduit for abundance in the universe. To say that you are a conduit means that abundance is already present in the universe; you are merely the instrument it passes through. Since you are the conduit, you do not get to own any of the abundance; you are just the pipeline.

Expanding on that idea, you are also a conduit for right action, or *te*. *Te* is the implementation aspect of the Tao. Taoism is far from being a passive philosophy. It is about taking right action so in consonance with the Tao, so in tune with the natural way of things, that it *seems* effortless, the way water flows downstream. When you become one with the flow of the Tao, your actions take on a lightness, grace and effectiveness that they wouldn't have when they were emanating from the ego. You abolish struggle.

Another idea to ponder has roots in every ancient spiritual system. In the Hindu tradition, it is called *advaita*, which is Sanskrit for non-duality. It simply means that there is a ground of being, a basic essence from which all beings in the universe arise. Plainly stated, it is about how we are all cut from the same fabric.

Rationally, this is easy to grasp: we're all made of the same molecules and atoms that make up the rest of the universe. The chair you're sitting on, the air you're breathing, the clothes you're wearing are all made of the same molecules of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, etc. By extension, you can imagine that there is also a spiritual essence that makes up all beings and the whole of the universe. And you are made of that.

If this seems like an abstract concept to you right now, don't worry. Monks spend years meditating on this so they can fully grasp their oneness with the universe at a visceral level. As long as you are interested in grasping this concept and applying it to your life, you will.

Perhaps some day you'll start a regular meditation practice (if you don't already have one) and really feel the meaning of *advaita* in your bones. In the meantime, the passage below from an ancient Hindu text is one of the best I have encountered in explaining how all beings are made of the same essence. In it, King Aruni is explaining the concept of non-duality to his son Svetaketu, who has just returned from his long studies:

The bees, my dear son, prepare honey by gathering the nectar of different trees and reducing that nectar to a unity. So that the nectar from each different tree is not able to differentiate: "I am the nectar of this tree" and "I am the nectar of that tree." In exactly the same way, my son, when all creatures merge into reality, they are not aware that "We are merging into reality." No matter what they are in this world – whether they are a tiger, a lion, a wolf, a boar, a worm, a moth, a gnat, or a mosquito – they all merge into that reality. That finest essence here is the self of the whole world. That is reality; that is the self. And thou art that.

– Chandogya Upanishad, translated by R. Hume, p. 264

Embracing The Goddess

Western society has a pervasive habit of self-diminishment. As children, we are told that pride is the deadliest of the seven mortal sins. Hubris brought Achilles

down, and if we're not careful, it will surely bring us down, too. Thus, many of us spend our lives overcompensating for this fear of egotism. We politely deflect compliments, try our best not to seem too smart, too pretty, too stylish. We compete in self-deprecation contests to see who can put herself down the most.

Now I'm not quite sure how you benefit from hiding your light under a bushel. How does playing small and feeling small enrich the world around you? In fact, diminishing your gifts is a selfish act since you're depriving all those around you of your light. And as a woman, the world needs your light now more than ever.

There is no more eloquent expression of this idea than in Marianne Williamson's *Return to Love*:

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our greatest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, fabulous, gorgeous, talented? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that's within us. It's not just in some of us. It's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we automatically give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others.

So I would like to propose an alternative to this regime of self-diminishment: the embracing of the Goddess within. In many Eastern spiritual traditions, especially the

various forms of Tantra, we are all manifestations of divine energy. Thus, as a woman, you are the incarnation of the divine in female human form.

At some point before, you may have heard the idea that you contain the Goddess within you. You may have even found it interesting and appealing if somewhat abstract, not certain how it would apply to your life.

I'd like to bring to your attention that, far from being an abstraction, the idea of embodying the Goddess is an eminently practical one, with immediate, life-changing consequences. Because Goddess status is not something that you apply for or wait to receive when you are worthy. The Goddess is already within you, waiting to emerge. You just have to let it. In her excellent book *A Woman's Worth* (which I highly recommend if you haven't read it already), Marianne Williamson says:

We think of ourselves as flesh and bone, resumes and relationships, clothes and cosmetics. The truth of who we are, why we're here and where we're going is far more spectacular than any of these worldly things indicate. We are God's precious vessels and we are always pregnant with his possibilities.

The way to allow the Goddess to emerge is simple: *act as if you already are her*. If the Goddess represents infinite kindness, then you act with infinite kindness. If the Goddess is grace, then you behave graciously. If the Goddess is nurturance, then you nurture those around you. If the Goddess is strength, then you are strong and give strength to those around you. If the Goddess is radiance, then you shine your light wherever you go.

Exercise 4. Embodying the Goddess

What does the word *goddess* mean to you? Take a few minutes to write down what comes to your mind as you complete this sentence: "To be the Goddess is to be the embodiment of ..." Here are some ideas to get you started: wisdom, beauty, grace, joy, sensuality, nurturance, passion, kindness, forgiveness, strength, radiance.

Now that you have your list, take a moment to imagine what it would be like if you were to embody those characteristics. What would you look like? How would you move differently? What would it feel like in your body? Imagine a few situations you were in this week, and notice how you would handle them differently if you were embodying the Goddess. What would you say? How would you act? Imagine some scenarios in the future – at home, at work, or in a social setting. What do you notice about yourself?

Finally, imagine yourself interacting with a man you're interested in – perhaps a former or future companion. What is the quality of the connection? How does the relationship unfold differently from before?

If you are not yet completely comfortable with the idea that you are the Goddess, that's okay. Do the exercise anyway. Do it again. And again. Eventually, it will feel right. And sooner than you think, it takes hold in your consciousness.

This is not about egotism. It's not about being better than anyone else. It's simply about exercising the choice to become who you already are. Once again in *A Woman's Worth*, Marianne Williamson says: "At every moment, a woman makes a choice: between the state of the queen and the state of the slavegirl." Embodying your true

power as Queen and Goddess is a choice – one you can make right now.

When you are the queen, the Goddess, then the right kind of men – the Warriors, the Kings – will naturally gravitate towards you. The slavegirl will also attract men, but she's much more likely to attract the wrong kind. When you flourish into the most glorious, radiant, version of you, people will take notice – especially the good men. But that is merely a side benefit. Much more important is that you will feel alive and empowered, which is its own reward:

When a woman has owned her passionate nature, allowing love to flood her heart, her thoughts grow wild and fierce and beautiful... When a woman conceives her true self, a miracle occurs and life around her begins again.

– Marianne Williamson, A Woman's Worth

Your shortcut to divinity

If I were to pick one and only one quality that would bring out your goddess nature and make you irresistible to men, it would have to be *radiance*. It encompasses earthly aspects: radiant health, glowing skin, radiant smile. It encompasses metaphysical aspects as well: radiating positive energy, shining the light of the divine.

That's nice, you say, but how do you *do* that? Well, if I told you that doing one simple practice would make you irresistibly radiant to almost any man, and remove every woman as competition, would you do it? Think about that for a second.

What if I told you that this practice would require all of your courage and a complete re-thinking of who you are? Would you still do it?

The practice is simple, and it encompasses nearly everything we discussed in Exercise 4. It is called *devotion* (which may mean something different than what you think). If you are able to convey complete and utter devotion to a man, he will feel so energized, so elevated, so manly that he will have absolutely nowhere to go but to you. You will be irresistible. We will discuss devotion and how to practice it in an empowering context in Chapter 10 when we talk about attraction.

Part III

Do



Chapter 8. Find

Now that we have established the mental framework for fulfillment – the *Be* phase – we can get on with the practical aspects of *The Tao of Dating*: the *Do* phase. A logical sequence for that is to find the man you're interested in, meet him, attract him, and then perpetuate that relationship through time. This sequence is true of a relationship of any duration, from fling to decades-long marriage. Each of the five stages involves a particular skill set. First is the finding.

The good news is that there are over 6.4 billion people on this earth as of the writing of this book, and about half are male. Eliminating all the men who are too old, too young, taken or not your type and assuming that only one tenth of one percent of all men are single and interesting to you leaves you with your pick from among a mere 3.2 *million* men. That means if you met 100 of them every day for the rest of your life, there would be 1.4

million left unmet the day you die. It is estimated that in the U.S. alone, there are 50 million single men. Think abundance – incredible abundance. Eligible men are everywhere.

The other news is that most women do not meet a new man every day, let alone one hundred of them. When you meet new men on a regular basis, your chances of finding one you like improve. An old Persian proverb says, “From you, action; from god, blessings.” So take action. And the first step of the action is mental preparation.

So take a moment to look around at all the manufactured objects around you – stapler, computer, desk, building, monument. There is nothing in this world that did not start out as an idea in someone’s head before manifesting in the world as a tangible object.

Now, what if that were also true of your ideal companion? What if by taking a minute of your time to imagine him vividly, you doubled your chances of meeting him? It sounds a little farfetched, but what do you have to lose? What if it actually works? What will you gain if it does? What will you lose if it doesn't?

If you’re a bit of a skeptic, that’s fine. I am, too, so I’ll understand if you just want to skip the ‘Ideal Man’ exercise below. But take a minute and do the exercise preceding it – the famous ‘Quarters’ exercise of Robert Anton Wilson, first published in his fascinating book *Prometheus Rising* (which remains to this day the most stimulating book I have ever read). Done correctly, the quarters exercise will make you look at the world in a very different way.

Exercise 11. The Quarters Exercise.

Visualize a quarter vividly – shape, size, shininess, texture – and imagine that you are going to find this quarter on the street, on the sidewalk, etc. Then look for the quarter every time you go for a walk, continuing to visualize it vividly. Notice how many quarters you find during the course of the week.

The first time I heard about this exercise, I laughed. But I had nothing to lose, and it seemed like a fun exercise, so I thought, what the hell, let's try it. And then something bizarre happened: quarters started popping up *everywhere*. On the sidewalk. Next to my car. Under the desk. For a week, I almost didn't have to worry about finding quarters for doing the laundry, because *the quarters found me*. When you do this exercise (assuming that you get the same results as I and everyone else I know who's done it), something very unusual happens: *you, too, start to find a lot more quarters*.

Now the question becomes: is it because the quarters were there all along and now you're paying more attention, or is it because the mind is forging new quarters out of sheer nothing? And the follow-up question to that is: does it matter as long as you're finding the quarters you want? After having done the quarters exercise, you may wish to go back to the Ideal Man exercise if you skipped it, because who knows – it just might work the same way. Whether you create him out of sheer nothing or merely start to notice him when you hadn't before, the result will be the same: his presence where there was absence.

You may have already experienced this if you've ever bought a new car. Recently, I purchased a Toyota Prius. Now, before my purchase, I had noticed some of

them on the road, not thinking much of them. But now that I was driving one myself, it seemed like the roads were teeming with them. Every other car now seemed to be a Prius. Did a slew of people just suddenly decide to buy Priuses at the exact time I did, or did I just start noticing what was already there right under my nose?

Similarly, the man whom you will date or marry is out there already. He's not going to emerge fully-formed out of the head of some mythological deity, age 30 and gainfully employed – he's been around for a long time. In fact, you may even know him already. Your task is merely to do a better job of noticing him.

Exercise 12. The Ideal Man.

Describe your ideal man in detail. What is he like? Go into as much detail as possible – the way he looks, sounds, feels, smells etc. Go into even greater detail – the way he smiles, the books he reads, the way he talks – and make a vivid mental picture of him, with sight, sound, feeling and even smell.

Now close your eyes and visualize a picture of you and him together, holding hands and gazing into each others' eyes, as if you are already lovers. How do you feel about him? How does he feel about you? Summon the picture and the feeling, and express gratitude for his presence in your life. Keep that picture in your head and fully expect to meet him the next time you go out. Report back on your findings.

The goal of the preceding two exercises is to effect a mental shift in your mindset towards abundance and wealth-consciousness. Let me use another example. Let's

say you go to the supermarket because you need some fruit, and you have money in your pocket. Which one of the following describes your mindset when you arrive at the fruit section?

- Case A: “Oh, look, here’s the fruit I was looking for. It’s here for me and I can have as much as I need, and there’s no reason for me to pick anything but the ripest fruit in the best condition.”
- Case B: “Oh wow, look at all that beautiful fruit! What an incredible accident! Will I be able to have any? Will they be willing to sell me some? Maybe if I just settle for the unripe or damaged ones they’ll give me a little bit.”

Chances are your attitude is closer to Case A than to B. And yet, in the relationship marketplace, an overwhelming majority of people approach a social setting with attitude B in place, even though they are in an identical position. Luckily, you can decide to stop this counterproductive thinking *right now* and adopt the abundance mentality.

The world is already your supermarket, and every time you go out, there are attractive men *specifically* there for you to meet. It’s almost as if the world has special-ordered them, just for you. You have inexhaustible money in your pocket in the form of your attractive qualities, and therefore you need not settle for anything but what’s best for you. Notice that this is not about haughtiness or arrogance. Are you being arrogant when you pick the best fruit and leave the bruised and unripe ones behind, or merely being sensible? Decide to *make this mental shift now*, and notice how dramatically more willing you are to

meet men in social situations with this attitude in place.

The three-step process for finding quality men

Now that you have done the mental preparation, it is time for some real-world technique. There are three steps to the *find* process:

1. Figure out what kind of man you'd like to meet.
2. Go to where he is likely to be found.
3. Have a simple plan for opening and continuing an interaction with him.

Step 1: Figure out what you want. You went into this step a little when you did the Ideal Man exercise. Figure out what you're looking for. You're not likely to find coffee beans in the dairy section of the supermarket, and you usually won't find 40-year old physicians in the same place that 19-year old college guys hang out. Knowing what you want makes it easier to spot it when you see it. Being completely open to meeting any man as long as he's attractive will paradoxically diminish your results. You do better when you have specific selection criteria.

Step 2: Go to the source. Now that you've figured out the kind of man you'd like to meet, you need to figure out where to find him and to *go to the source*. Again, the more specific you get, the more likely you are to find him.

For example, let's say you want to find the kind of man who goes running across the Brooklyn Bridge at 5.30 am. Now all you have to do is simply show up at the Brooklyn Bridge at 5.30 am for a week, and you're likely

to meet several men who fit that description. If you want to meet a man who likes classical music, go to a chamber concert. If you want to find an artist, go to a gallery opening. If you like tall Dutch men, go to Holland. If you're interested in someone who cooks, go to a cooking class or fancy supermarkets.

Even though this seems utterly obvious, I belabor this point because so many people neglect it. I often hear women complaining that they're not meeting the right kind of man, only to find out that most of their opportunities for social interaction come from bars, nightclubs and the workplace. These are nonspecific, unfiltered venues, and as such there is no compelling reason for the men there to be your type. Get picky, get specific, and go to the source.

Nonspecific venues are, more often than not, a waste of your time when it comes to meeting quality people – and acknowledged as such by members of the opposite sex. That means that even if you do meet the man of your dreams at a bar, he will likely think of you as “that bar babe,” with all the lovely attending connotations.

Step 3: Be prepared. The most important technique is to *be prepared*. In a world where men are everywhere, you should be prepared to meet them everywhere. Luck is the intersection of opportunity and preparation – “Fortune favors the well-prepared mind,” as Louis Pasteur famously remarked. The best way to be prepared is to have a protocol for meeting a man in a given situation, such that you know what to do without hesitation. I will give you two methods for doing that in Chapter 9, “Meet.”

Below I have compiled a list of 11 different types of men that you may find attractive, and the likely venues for meeting them. Some of it may seem obvious, and I repeat it because the obvious is what we are most likely to

overlook. As you go through this list, you may see opportunities for improving your own ‘find’ strategy and realize why you haven’t been meeting too many artistically-inclined men at the gym or rock-climbing men at church. A big part of this strategy involves getting involved and developing your interests.

Type of man...	Can be found at...
Artistic	art gallery openings, art classes, museum lectures, acting class
Literate	book readings, poetry readings, literature night classes
Cultured	classical concerts, opera, ballet, book readings, gallery openings
Intellectual	university coffee shops, on-campus lectures, bookstores, book readings, book conventions, scientific or philosophical talks
Adventurous & outdoorsy	Sierra Club meetings, scuba classes, motorcycle lessons, rock climbing gyms, adventure outings
Athletic	yoga classes, spin classes, fitness conventions, classes at your local gym, races (runs, triathlons, bike races, etc), running clubs
Spiritual	yoga retreats, special classes at yoga studios, holistic events, Amnesty International meetings, Esalen, Omega Institute
Kind or civic-minded	volunteer organizations
Affluent	dry cleaners, first/business class, the opera, charity events
Particular nationality	the country in question, local events put on by that country’s consulate, foreign movies from that country, cultural societies
Particular ethnicity	ethnic neighborhoods, ethnic restaurants, holiday festivals
Single and looking	anyone who is ringless and unattached on Valentine’s Day, New Year’s Eve, at church or at a wedding

Bars, nightclubs and supermarkets don't do well on the 3 Cs scale (which we're about to discuss), which means that optimally, you should not *plan* to spend time there. However, if you find yourself already in a bar, club or supermarket, by all means use the system. You have nothing to lose, and practice makes perfect.

The three Cs of optimal venues

The laws of physics say that the initial conditions of any event chiefly determine the course of that event. I have found this to be true of dating as well: the conditions in which you initially meet someone have a large bearing upon the subsequent course of that relationship. As such, it's not only important to choose wisely *whom* you meet, but also *where* you meet him. As such, here are three cardinal characteristics that determine whether or not a venue is optimal for meeting men (and by extension, people in general):

Conversation-friendliness: Since men are primarily attracted through the eyes, you have an advantage in a loud venue since they can still see you. However, to evaluate *him*, you want to be able to hear what he has to say, and for the courtship to progress at all, you need to be able to hear one another. So ask yourself whether a particular venue is suitable for carrying on a conversation. Quieter places are generally better. Loud clubs and bars generally are not, but sometimes their quieter patios or balconies can work. Bookstores and coffee shops are much better.

Community: There is pre-existing rapport when some common thread of interest connects a group together. The

more specific the thread and the greater effort people have made to come to the venue, the stronger the rapport, and the easier time you will have making contact. Talking to people watching a game at a bar is likely to be a fleeting interaction, whereas the people you meet at a conference in Buenos Aires on emperor penguins may become lifelong friends.

Continuity: Stationary people are easier to meet than those in motion. The longer people tend to stay at a given venue, the easier it is to meet them. Continuity can also develop over longer periods of time. There is built-in familiarity with a man you see three times a week at the gym which makes it easier to meet him.

Apply the 3 Cs to the various places you spend time over the course of a week. Then decide to spend more time at the places that score higher on this scale. Every minute of your life that you spend doing one thing is to the exclusion of doing something else that could be more rewarding. Economists call this *opportunity cost*. You want to minimize your opportunity cost by making sure you spend time in places that optimize your meeting potential. This means fewer bars and nightclubs (low on all three Cs) and more book readings (high on all three), coffee houses, and group events with friends.

On the balance, you are better served by places that facilitate the connection process, not hinder it. Using the foregoing standard, you can assess how worthwhile a given venue is and apportion your time accordingly.

Opportunity cost means that every minute you spend doing one thing is to the exclusion of doing something else that could be more rewarding.

The optimal venues for meeting quality men

One of the most frequent questions I get from women is, "Where are all the good men?" The answer is that the good men, like the good women, are everywhere. However, there are good places to meet these men, and there are even better places to meet them. The best venues are those that score high on the Three Cs scale, because these are the places where you have an opportunity to make an accurate assessment about the men you meet.

Extraordinary results require extraordinary measures. So if some of these places or events seem unfamiliar or beyond your comfort zone, that is a good sign. Remember that in life, *everything* that you want is outside of your comfort zone. Because if something is inside your comfort zone, it's either something you already have or something so trivial as to be undesirable: you don't *want* something you already have. So in order to get what you *want* but don't yet have, you have *no choice* but to venture outside of your comfort zone.

This venturing could be literal, as in going to a new neighborhood or museum, or it could be metaphorical, as in throwing a party at your apartment when you've never done so before. Either way, I encourage you to enjoy the experience of expanding your comfort zone and recognizing that discomfort is often the surest sign of growth.

Everything you *want* is outside of your comfort zone.

The following are some venues that not only score very well on the Three Cs scale, but also have a highly filtered male clientele. While some of them have a male-to-female ratio that may seem undesirable at first glance, remember three things.

First, you would rather be at a place where there are only a few men with lots of potential than in a place where there are many men with little potential (think sports bar).

Second, with the willingness and ease that you will have in meeting men through the principles of *The Tao of Dating*, you will be far ahead of the women at any venue who are less willing to initiate contact with men. If there is only one man in the room that you want to meet, you still have to make the effort to meet him, regardless of whether there are zero women in the room or ninety-nine. So if you're the only woman who is willing to put in the effort, it's effectively as if you're alone with the man.

Third, think abundance. There is no competition; there is only opportunity. And there are millions upon millions of men out there, a good number of whom are worthy of your companionship. Remember: you are attending these events because they are intrinsically worthwhile. Going there primarily to meet men is broadcasting to the world that there is something missing from your life. It's not. Your life is complete. At the same time, you are aware of the opportunities for companionship, fun and fulfillment that the world is presenting to you.

One more thing. Some of the venues and events listed below may strike you as infrequent or one-offs, and they are – like plane rides and weddings. But, as Nassim Taleb discusses in his book *The Black Swan*, improbable events often have a disproportionately large impact. So be prepared for them.

That said, let's see where these worthy men can be found:

1) *Dinner parties.* This is by far the best place you can meet a man. Why? First of all, it scores very highly on the Three Cs. The venue (usually a private residence) is bound to be conversation-friendly; there is continuity in that all of you are spending several hours together; and there is a high degree of community in that all of you were invited to the party and have at least one friend in common. Weddings and the like also fall in this category.

There are many reasons why dinner parties are quite possibly the best way to meet men. First off, the sense of community engendered by the fact that you've all been invited by one person (you or the organizer) enables good conversation. Second, if you are the hostess, it is a fantastic showcase for your talents as an entertainer and cook. Do not underestimate the power of the hostess.

Most importantly, the men at these dinner parties are going to be *networked-in*. This means that they are already embedded within a network of friends and link back to you through that. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. A networked-in man is much less likely to behave poorly than a complete outsider, because he's aware that his actions carry consequences. Moreover, you (or your friend) have hand-picked these men to be present at your party. Most men would travel any distance for a home-cooked meal. Add to that the potential of meeting

fabulous single women hand-picked by you, and the invitation becomes practically irresistible.

A dinner party is a deliberate affair requiring planning and effort. But as with all things, you get out of your dating life what you put into it: results are commensurate with effort. Although making a dinner party happen will take time and money, so do all those nights out and all those dinner dates for which you spent time and effort getting ready and showing up. The good news is that a dinner party is bound to give you a much higher return on your investment of time and effort.

A note on weddings: everything that we said about dinner parties is generally true about weddings, too. Add to that the fact that everyone is bound to look their best, and good feelings are running high in the celebratory atmosphere. The high alcohol consumption and vacation mentality tends to jump-start things. Also, beware of the temptation of starting a long-distance relationship with the handsome groomsman. If you want to have a fun little fling, that's fine. But know that thinking that you can perpetuate that into a full-fledged long-distance relationship is more often than not a ticket to frustration, which is the opposite of fulfillment. Just remember that the long-distance caveat applies.

2) Conventions, seminars and fairs. These events all score very high on the Three Cs, especially on the community aspect. If you have all traveled and paid to attend an event, chances are you have a tremendous amount in common already. Because of the intense nature of these events and the fact that you're spending so much time together in a short span, friendship and familiarity can build very quickly, providing a foundation for future interactions. Additionally, the men are more networked in than the

average stranger, since you are all bound to be in the same professional field or community of interest.

3) Gallery openings. Every week, local publications like the *LA Weekly* or *Village Voice* (NYC) list several gallery openings ranging from the avant-garde to traditional. These events rate high on all three Cs, are usually free, and often have free drinks and food. Young, intelligent, artistically-inclined men frequent these openings, and discussing the art is a natural way to get the interaction started.

4) Book readings and lectures. Intelligent, educated men go where the books are. Get there early and sit next to the guy you'd like to meet. You can also talk to him after the reading, with built-in conversation starters: "What did you think? What brought you to the reading? Have you read other works like this?" Run with it.

5) Wine tastings. These events do well on the 3 Cs and attract an affluent, cultured clientele. And if you're into wine yourself, there's no better place to meet a man with similar oenophile tendencies. The atmosphere is generally festive, and the wine presents plenty of pretext for conversation and jollity.

6) Yoga and pilates classes. Your intention for coming to class is always to deepen the spirit by exercising the body, so you're not going to class as a social exercise. However, it as long as you're already there, it makes sense to make friends with like-minded people.

Although generally more women than men attend these classes, the men who do attend tend to be spiritually-inclined, emotionally aware, and educated. Because of the

silence and discipline involved in a yoga class, it's not an ideal time to meet people *during* class, so show up early and strike up a conversation *before* class.

After class some people tend to be in a rush to get back home and clean up, but it's often a natural segue to go get a casual bite after class at a local eatery. If he has any sense in him, he would rather eat with you than be alone. People tend to frequent the same teachers and time slots; do the same, and you can naturally and easily build a network of yoga friends.

An even better occasion than the yoga class to meet men is the special classes or events held at your local studio. Almost all yoga studios have classes on special topics which tend to be much more social than regular yoga class.

7) *Community service interest groups.* Amnesty International and Sierra Club local chapters are good examples. Men who willingly join these groups tend to believe in their causes and as a group tend to be more conscious and spiritually-inclined.

8) *Church services.* All kinds of people attend church, so it's up to you to select the type of church (or synagogue, or mosque, or non-denominational spiritual gathering space of your choice) that attracts the type of man you're interested in. The main value of a venue like a church is that it creates community and continuity, allowing you to interact casually with potential dating prospects and thereby get a feel for them.

Two places within the church are particularly suitable for meeting men: the bookstore and church-sponsored activities. The community service activities are

best, since that's where you're most likely to meet the warm-hearted men.

On the other hand, I would advise you to avoid assiduously any church-related activity with the word 'singles' in it. From my experience, these events have a slight but distinct odor of desperation to them, and the good men avoid them like the plague while the wrong men show up in droves. Incidentally, I have found this to be generally true of *any* singles-oriented event (see below). You have been forewarned.

9) *Continuing education.* Adult school, church classes – these are all fantastic opportunities. Go to the classes that interest you, not the ones that you think would maximize your potential for meeting men. Remember, you are the furthest thing from desperate. Take the class because it's fun and it'll make you a better person, because what man in his right mind can resist a fun, amazing woman?

10) *Running and cycling clubs, races.* Healthy, fit, affluent men with whom you have at least one activity in common will show up at these events. However, beware of the man who spends a majority of his time training (e.g. triathletes). As great as he may be, he probably won't have much time for *you*. Remember that fulfillment is a feeling, not a person, and creating fulfilling feelings for you requires time. Proceed with extreme caution with any man who doesn't possess enough of this essential commodity.

11) *Long-distance transportation.* You're stuck on the plane, bus or train anyway, so you might as well make the most of the situation and meet someone interesting. Sit next to him at the gate; that way, after you've already struck up a conversation at the airport, it's only natural for you

guys to continue once you're on the plane and rearrange seats if necessary. Phrase your request to sit with him as if he's the one doing *you* a favor – he would be saving you from the potentially smelly and boring person that would otherwise be sitting next to you. Most men will jump at the opportunity to be chivalrous and have good company at the same time.

12) Retreats. Yoga or any other kind of retreats are amazing places to bond with like-minded individuals. Friendships are forged here with both men and women that last a lifetime.

13) Performing arts venues. Cultured, educated, affluent men will be found at the theater, the ballet and the symphony. If this is something you're interested in anyway, go to the event. Then find out about their pre-event lectures, wine tastings and such, or strike up a conversation during intermission.

Some not-so-great places to meet men

Although *The Tao of Dating* is mostly about what to *do* as opposed to what *not* to do, I feel it's necessary to cover why certain venues are particularly unsuitable for meeting quality men. Although some meaningful, long-lasting relationships may have very well started in the places I'm about to mention, those are the exceptions that prove the rule. Generally speaking, if you're seeking a fulfilling, long-term relationship, you're better off spending your time at one of the goldmine venues listed above.

Bars and nightclubs. Aside from the fact that they score poorly on the 3 Cs scale, the main thing that will sabotage

the potential for meeting a quality man at these venues is that *you* will be different. You will be affected by the loud noise, perceived competition in the form of other women, alcohol, and irritating crowds in a way that makes it more difficult for you to present your best side – or to perceive his. Moreover, even if you meet Mr. Perfect at such a venue, afterwards you may not be able to take him seriously because of the circumstances under which you two met.

Anything advertised as a singles event. For some reason, these events attract the wrong kind of people on a consistent basis: the desperate, the needy, the clueless, and the just plain bizarre. If that's your dish, by all means go. If not, you're often better off staying at home.

Matchmaking services. Some people really like these 'introduction services', and they're generally free (or nearly so) for women to join, and cost a lot of money for men to join. And that's the problem: the asymmetric involvement of money taints the whole process. Add to that the whiff of gold-digging around the whole enterprise, and you have a setup that does not necessarily have your long-term fulfillment in mind.

On the other hand, if you have friends who know you well and *do* have your best interest in mind and simply enjoy connecting interesting people together, by all means be open to their suggestions. That's how some of the best introductions happen.

Long-distance relationships: a brief, biased rant

Let's say you meet a fantastic guy on a vacation trip. You spend several days together, and generally have a wonderful time. In fact, you get along so well that you

decide to continue seeing each other after the trip. There's only one issue: he lives in Austin; you live in Los Angeles. Should you continue seeing him or not?

Here's my stance on long-distance relationships: more often than not, they are a setup for disappointment and heartbreak. A long-distance relationship *could* work out – 'working out' meaning that it brings both partners tons of fulfillment over the long-term and maybe ends up in something like marriage. However, it's not *likely* that it will work out. Now my job is to help you find long-term fulfillment – not quick fixes, not the entertainment of your whim, or any kind of longshot that's over 90% likely to bring you more pain than joy. And the rare long-distance relationship that does work out is the exception that proves the rule.

Here's why. Let's go back to the idea of fulfillment-centered dating. *Fulfillment is a feeling, not a person.* And there are many, many persons who could provide that feeling of fulfillment – just as there are several different kinds of food that could fill you without all of them having to be Cherry Garcia ice cream.

Fulfillment is having someone to catch a movie with on a Friday night, someone to dress up with to the opera and snuggle with afterwards, someone to share brunch with on a Sunday morning. For the most part, someone who lives more than 200 miles away from you cannot provide you with those fulfillment feelings, simply due to geographical constraints.

Before we go any further, let me define what I mean by a long-distance relationship. You are in a long-distance relationship if the physical distance or scheduling challenges between you and your partner *precludes spontaneity* and you can see each other less than once a week. 90 miles of distance between you will do that, as

well as exceptionally busy schedules. In fact, you may already be in a long-distance relationship with someone in your own city and not know it.

Now let's explore what would happen if, say, you started to date seriously (whatever that means to you) a man who lives more than 200 miles away. First, chances are you would see each other relatively infrequently – two or three times a month. This means that every time you do see each other, it's just like Christmas! You are thrilled to see one another, and it's a highlight reel of fun times.

As great as this sounds, it does not allow for the natural, everyday dynamic between you to develop – the way you would interact if, say, you were married and saw each other on a daily basis. So even though you're having a lot of fun, you effectively know nothing about one another in a domestic arrangement where you see each other regularly.

Second, no man is an island – they all come with their buddies and cronies, as do you. To assess accurately whether you and a given man get along, you need to see him in his natural habitat (and vice versa). In the perpetual first date that is most long-distance relationships, you'll never find out that his friends annoy you to no end and frankly smell funny. Or that his mother hates you. These are useful things to know *before* getting deeply involved with anyone.

Third, an unconscious undercurrent of resentment will develop regardless of how well you get along because of the sheer effort involved in seeing each other. Why couldn't he be closer? If he loves me so much, why can't he just move here? If *you* don't ask that question yourself, your friends will, and they will also resent that fact that he's the cause of your being away for long stretches of time. Moreover, *he* will probably be having similar thoughts.

That said, there are circumstances under which a long-distance relationship could work out. In my observation, two criteria need to be fulfilled. First, there needs to be a definite deadline by which you have both agreed to live in the same town. Second, you both know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you will be together for the long term when you do make the move. In other words, you're already engaged or close to it.

If you're in doubt and still wondering what course of action to take, err on the side of caution. A man who loves you enough *will* offer to move to your city. And if you truly love him, you will ask him to get his own apartment, since that gives the relationship the best chance of success.

Let's examine two case studies, one in which a long-distance relationship worked and another in which it did not. Perhaps you can spot elements in each story that contributed to the success or demise of the relationship.

Case 1: Hillary and Tom.

Hillary and Tom met through Howard, a mutual friend. Tom was Howard's best friend in college, and Hillary had worked with Howard for several months. Howard knew both of them well and thought they would make a good match, both being highly educated, intelligent, level-headed individuals on successful career tracks. Although both Tom and Hillary had many interests and were lots of fun to be around, neither was the partying type. Both came from stable family backgrounds where the parents were married for over 30 years. Tom was 27 and Hillary was 25 when they met.

On their first dates, Tom and Hillary hit it off. At the time, they both lived in Boston. After a year of dating,

they were engaged to marry. However, Tom was to leave for the Bay Area in a few months. They decided to stay together even though Tom was moving to the opposite coast, 2600 miles away. Hillary knew she would be done with graduate school in a year and a half, at which point she would get a job in the Bay Area.

Tom and Hillary actually got married before Tom's departure. And I'm thrilled to say that ten years hence, they are still happily married and just had their first child.

Case 2: Kristina and Jeff.

Kristina was a beautiful 37-year old Hungarian émigré who had lived in Los Angeles for 4 years. She moved to Los Angeles after her divorce and decided to start over. Being independent, driven and adventurous, she decided to start her dream business, and after two years of challenges, the business was starting to grow.

At this time, encouraged by a friend, she decided to attend an expensive 5-day motivational seminar in San Francisco to get her life on track and accelerate her success. At the seminar, she met Jeff, a dashing, independently wealthy American who lived in San Francisco. The seminar was emotionally and physically intense, and they spent almost all their time there together.

After the seminar, they continued seeing each other, sometimes Jeff coming down to LA, other times Kristina flying up to San Francisco. Every time, Jeff would suggest that Kristina leave LA behind and move to San Francisco to live with him. Kristina was wary of abandoning her business, but he told her not to worry – he had plenty of money and was happy to provide for both of them until she found her footing. It seemed like an ideal arrangement. After a few months, Kristina, with some reservations but

feeling adventurous and optimistic, gave in to Jeff's blandishments and moved to San Francisco.

It took about two weeks of living together to make both Kristina and Jeff realize that this arrangement was not going to work. They had never lived together in close quarters, and under the pressure of constant daily contact, the magic in their relationship faded. Towards the end, Kristina felt as if she did not know Jeff very well at all. Additionally, independent Kristina did not enjoy being unemployed, dependent and effectively at the mercy of someone else financially. She moved back to Los Angeles, emotionally exhausted and a little disappointed in herself, but glad that she had extricated herself from a bad situation. She only wished that she had not gotten in that situation in the first place.

These are two real examples of what can happen in a long-distance relationship, and perhaps two extremes of the spectrum. All the same, you can recognize the indicators of potential success and failure of a given long-distance relationship from the way the players and stage are set. Generally speaking, a high-risk scenario is fun in the short term and painful in the long term. A low-risk scenario may be less fun in the short term but a better setup for long-term fulfillment.

Internet dating: perils and opportunities

There are multitudes of books on internet dating on sale today. This is not one of them. However, I would be remiss not to give the internet a mention, since it's such a powerful tool for dating.

As a woman, online dating provides you with a lot of opportunities since you will usually be in the position of the chooser. If men do most of the pursuing in real life, it's

even more so online. Also, many men who are too busy (or shy) to go out will have an online presence, expanding the dating pool for you. In turn, by having an online presence, you are allowing access to that discriminating man who can appreciate the rare bird that you are.

On the other hand, when you get a lot of responses online, you also have to sift through a lot of duds – and that's a lot of work. Moreover, when you meet a man off the internet, it usually means that he's not networked in – he's a total stranger. This increases the likelihood that one (or both) parties will engage in socially dubious behavior since accountability is low. If you're venturing into the world of online dating, expect surprises.

The main peril of online dating has to do with its high potential for disappointment, since it upends the natural order of the mating process. Nature has built in our brains highly accurate, discriminating systems for detecting suitable companions. Upon meeting a man in person, you are immediately sizing up his height, weight, shoulder-to-waist ratio, complexion, general symmetry, strength, smell, tone of voice, and thousands of other parameters you're not even aware of at the conscious level. These systems have worked for thousands of years to help you make a good decision regarding his suitability as a mate.

Online, you have access first to a picture and written description, then maybe a disembodied voice over the phone. And then, if things go well, you may meet in person, at which point you know within the first 10 seconds whether things will move forward from that point on. Most of the time, things don't go any further – after all that investment of time and effort and building of expectation. Whereas had you met in person, the first 10 seconds would have been sufficient to make that judgment.

The best way to approach online dating is the way to approach the rest of dating: by taking it lightly. Chapter 55 of the Tao Te Ching says:

*The Master's power is like this.
She lets all things come and go
Effortlessly, without desire.
She never expects results;
Thus she is never disappointed.
She is never disappointed;
Thus her spirit never grows old.*

Since I don't ever want your spirit to grow old, I encourage you to avoid activities that involve a high risk of disappointment (e.g. online dating). However, if you choose to brave the waters of online dating, here are some pointers from a man who knows what he and other men find appealing online:

Represent yourself accurately. Ensure that everything you say about yourself – height, weight, age, occupation, location, etc – is accurate. A man will only love you for who you are, not who you are not. Any misrepresentations will come to light upon your first meeting, at which point you'll experience an irrecoverable loss of goodwill, regardless of how much rosy prelude you've been through.

Have as many pictures of you as possible, with clear shots of your face and figure. Make sure you play to your strengths (as discussed previously). Get the shots done professionally if at all possible – they will be worth every penny.

There are many men out there who will like you for exactly who you are and the way you look right now. The better an idea they have of how you look, the more likely

they are to interact with you. It's obvious when someone's hiding something, and men will run from that.

Be specific about what you want. The more criteria you have for the kind of guy you want (without being hyper-picky), the more likely you are to find him. It also cuts down on the amount of sifting you have to do through the responses, since the right men will self-select. Be especially clear on your deal-breakers such as age, marital status, pets, children, ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

Be relentlessly positive. Mention all the things that you *want*, not the things that you do not. Negativity is as big a turnoff online just as it is in person. Never air complaints.

Play to your strengths. Online you have the extraordinary opportunity to highlight your advantages – both in appearance and aspects of you that are not noticeable at first glance. If you feel as if you're disadvantaged in the looks department (which is almost never true as much as you think), this is where you can talk up your other strengths – kindness, humor, cooking expertise, ability to knead him into a pliant pile of putty. And if you're already getting too much of the wrong attention because of your appearance, you have a chance to emphasize other parts of you. *How* you attract has everything to do with *what* you attract.

Use social networking tools to find common acquaintances. If you do have friends in common according to a social networking site, then he's more networked in and therefore a safer bet than before. You may even do some due diligence by asking questions from your common acquaintance.

