You Are the Problem!

April 17, 2013 By Jeff Carroll

I am often asked when I am going to write a relationship book of my own. Now, I have a finished book which I think is hot and fits in the market place very well. In my book, The Hip Hop Dating Guide, I tried to answer relationship questions and make comments not found in other books as I do with my blog. However some subjects are so important, they become the focus of entire books. One of the subjects is change. One of the things I find I have to do with just about every client of mine is to explain to him or her that it is easier to change themselves than it is to change the world around them.

I cannot count the amount of people I hear complaining about the behavior of men or women. They say things like, “It’s hard to find a good woman because they have screwed up expectations or they have been scorned by messed up men. A lot of women have issues--serious issues.” Or, “Jeff, I’m just tired because all the men want is sex and all of them have commitment problems. I don’t have high expectations; I just want a man who is like me. If I can go to college, then I want a man who has gone to college. I have a good job working for a corporation, so I don’t want a man who works at some small-minded job. I want to be able to talk about more than just sports and entertainment.”

To all of these people, I say it is not the world or the selection of single people (at least not yet) that is the problem but it is they who are the problem. There are people connecting every day, according to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), there were over two million people married in 2011.

While reading the various books out in the relationship market, one book says everything I like to say just in the title: Get Over Yourself: How to Get Real, Get Serious, and Get Ready to Find True Love written by Patti Novak, star of the A&E series Confessions of a Matchmaker and Laura Zigman. Patti says that finding true love is not about having the right shoes or a flat stomach; it is about being ready. In her book, she breaks down how to get yourself ready to date by first understanding and fixing your own problems. She explains how to identify your problem behaviors while dating, and figure out if it is your tough girl attitude turning men off or your controlling behavior turning women off. Novak says identifying annoying and problematic behaviors is a very important step and dating trouble is not the problem; it is a symptom of other problems (Zigman and Novak, 2008). I totally agree.

To build on her premise, here are some of my suggestions for people to improve upon before their next date:

1. Accept the reality of the game. Face it, there are dishonest people who do not give mutually in relationships and have selfish agendas. Chances are, you will run across a dating predator throughout your dating years. Do not let a few knuckleheads distort your perception of other available singles. Make note of how you met them and how they behaved.

2. Learn how to communicate. No one can tell what you are feeling better than you. You must be able to express yourself and be able to critique without being offensive. High school age people's level of knowledge is regulated through tests and grade levels. Their experiences are a more comparable to each other; while the experiences and knowledge gap is much broader for older singles. Often times, older people find themselves explaining what they know or experienced so much during dates they feel like they are teaching a class. Communication is a combination of talking and listening. It is like a dance. If I could put as many people as I desire into communication classes, I would fill classes up in every state.

3. Conquer your flaws. Perfection is an achievement. Humans learn and grow their entire lives. We are not dogs we can be taught new tricks after we get old. I was 21 years-old before I went on a roller coaster. I did not learn to enjoy reading fiction novels until I was in my 30s. Living in Miami, I had to learn how to explain African-American history and behavior with more patience than I ever thought. Now, I can talk to people everywhere without getting frustrated over their limited understanding of my people's experiences. Sometimes, people who are single for long periods of time become so good at the small amount of things they do by themselves, the variety of things they know how to do is very limited. The world is very broad and unless you have been to every state and country there are still things you can learn to do and experience if you want to.

4. Bury your baggage. Learn how to use past relationships as historical lessons and do not allow them to become prejudices. I may blog about this on a separate entry. I am reminded of Beyonce's song, Irreplaceable, where one of the lines is, "I can find another you in a minute." I think that is not only stupid, but very common. Many people do just that; they break up with someone with problems and go out and find somebody else like the person they broke up with. People think of baggage as an acquired prejudice, but baggage can also be a change in your dating behavior. A break-up can cause people to change their racial preference. It can also cause people to react hesitantly and not exercise as much caution as they use to.

5. Improve your health and wellness. Your body is your temple, and the better you treat it, the more others will too. Let us be honest, eating chocolates after a break-up is not an urban folktale. A lot of people let their single status break them down and allow them to get out of shape. I say take any excuse you can to improve your health. Why not sort out your frustrations on the treadmill or doing a cleanse? It is your choice what you choose to do with your stress.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.