

DATING INTERVENTION

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DO'S AND DON'TS TO DODGE DISASTER

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TouchKC

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Table of Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	4
DATING DISASTERS: A LIST OF DON'TS	8
Chapter 1: Lack of Intentionality	11
Chapter 2: Being in Love with Being in Love	24
Chapter 3: Interviewing vs Auditioning	31
Chapter 4: Putting the Cart Before the Horse	40
DATING DISASTERS: A LIST OF DO'S	47
Chapter 5: Prepare Yourself	49
Chapter 6: Position Yourself	55
Chapter 7: Practice Paranoia	61
Chapter 8: Pamper Yourself	70
DATING DISASTERS: REVIEW	
Chapter 9: Dating Does & Doesn't Mean	74

FOR

anyone looking to cultivate their
interpersonal skills

*Our relationships are our most
important resource.*

Preface

So I'm a big "why" guy. I have to know *why* in order to *be motivated* to do. If this resonates, then know you are not alone. I personally believe **why** is more important than **what**. This book was created because I realized that there is a very important element of marriage that is not talked about. If you can imagine marriage as a timeline, usually we focus on the middle (*the middle being the actual marriage*), and we all hope for a pleasant ending. Unfortunately, often times that end is traumatic. Often times that end is divorce. But no one talks about the beginning. **No one talks about how to date.**

Challenge accepted!

With few exceptions, every romantic relationship begins with dating. This is where the timeline

starts, and this beginning sets the foundation of everything after. I want to at least spark conversation on how to think about dating, how to approach dating, and how to be safe while dating...all while having fun. Dating is exciting! Dating is awesome! But just like with most things that are incredibly awesome (driving a car for example), if we do not have proper instructions, we can/will hurt ourselves. I would like to offer a solution to this dilemma that we all face from time to time.

The objectives of this book are beautifully simple. By the end of this book, you will be able to:

- Understand the do's and don'ts of dating
- Describe what dating means and what dating does not mean.

As stated earlier, I'm really big on definition. Definition allows clarity, direction, and intention. Consider this: without definition you can't have

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

process; without process you can't have order, and without order there is only chaos. As we journey together, try to be conscious of not just what you are thinking, but *why* you are thinking it.

Introduction

Cognitive dissonance.

It does not matter if I am presenting a seminar on dating or a workshop on how to mentor effectively, I always take time to explain cognitive dissonance. It is a reality that you have to manage, or it will manage you.

Cognitive dissonance occurs when beliefs are contradicted by new information. This conflict activates areas of the brain involved in personal identity and emotional response to threats, real or imagined. This causes the brain's alarms to go off, triggering a person on both a cognitive and emotional level. The person may shut down, or even become violent in response, disregarding any rational evidence that contradicts what they had previously regarded as truth.

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

Now, I know that's a really technical definition, but cognitive dissonance is something that we all have all experienced at some time or another. If I'm being honest, even though I am very much aware of it, dissonance still catches me off guard from time to time. As an example, have you ever had a friend that was in some ridiculous relationship that has failed several times? This SAME friend claims that they hate the person, yet this SAME friend still ends up in the SAME toxic relationship, hurting themselves over and over again. It always ends badly, but they "love" them. They are willing to give the object of their affection just one more chance—a promise made empty by all the times you've heard it. Finally, being the good friend that you are, you approach them.

You point out the obvious in the friendliest, gentlest, most loving way you know all in hopes that they might do something different. Surely, they must be unaware. Who would just choose to keep making the same mistake over and over?

Maybe no one that they love and trust has brought this dangerous cycle to their attention.

And what do you get for this effort of love and honesty? Aggravation, if not aggression. You are now the bad guy. They label you without regard to your intentions. They shut down. You have no idea what you did wrong or why they would refuse your help with such venom and anger.

What they experienced was cognitive dissonance. They know everything you are saying is true. They also believe themselves to be smart and intelligent. The truth you are presenting to them tells a story that conflicts with the truth they believe about themselves. A self-defense mechanism kicks in, and you, the messenger, now become the object of their internal struggle. Attacking you is easier than investigating the cause of their inner turmoil. Many friendships have ended over such dilemmas.

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

Cognitive dissonance occurs when one's truth contradicts reality. This contradiction can be infuriating. "Don't shoot the messenger" is a plea not to mishandle dissonance. I now make that plea. Everyone struggles with dissonance at some point or another. When dissonance knocks on my door, I try to use the irritation as an invitation to look deeper within myself. Something triggered my internal alarm. It would be emotionally irresponsible of me to not at least check on what I believe I am protecting.

Throughout this book, you may experience some dissonance. That's okay. Honestly, the issue is not experiencing dissonance, but ignoring it. If you feel yourself being flabbergasted while reading, make yourself reason through it. Pause. Breathe. Then come back. **Do not let cognitive dissonance rip you away from an opportunity to be healthy.**

DATING DISASTERS: A LIST OF DON'TS

You are still here? Great!

So, we have not one, not two, not three, but *four* disasters that are the typical destroyers of romantic relationships. One would need to recognize and circumvent these disasters to date effectively.

Dating does not have to be destructive. Healthy relationship building should be a pleasant experience, even if things do not go beyond being platonic. And of course you want a pleasant, healthy experience; otherwise, you wouldn't have picked up this book!

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

Here are the four disasters to avoid:

1. Lack of intentionality
2. Being in love with being in love
3. Interviewing versus auditioning
4. Putting the cart before the horse

The principles that you are about to learn in this book do not promise to help you “find true love.” However, this book does give the proper insight on how to value your time and get the most from the dating experience.

Often what we think is the problem is not really the problem. Instead, how we think about the problem is the actual problem.

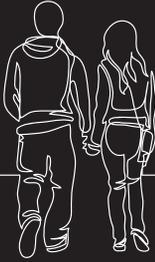
Read on if you are interested in addressing and solving the dating crisis in your life. It will be uncomfortable at times. If you are looking for a quick fix...this is not the book for you. However, if you are really looking to make some significant

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

differences in how you approach dating, I applaud you. Not only are you showing awareness by seeing that there is a problem, but are taking steps to do something about it. I am honored to be a part of your process.

CHAPTER 1

LACK OF INTENTIONALITY



“We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end.”

Blaise Pascal

11 | Dating Intervention

LACK OF INTENTIONALITY

So here's the thing—dating is about you. You are valuable. Your time is valuable. For any of the concepts of this book to make sense, you have to embrace this reality. You are valuable everywhere you go. Any place you enter instantly becomes different because you are there.

You are valuable.

Don't let anyone tell you differently. The greatest part about dating effectively is understanding that dating is about you. And when you believe something is valuable, you are very intentional with how you handle it and who you let handle it. To put yourself in a physical situation without really thinking is dangerous. But when you put

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

yourself in an emotional situation without thinking...it can be traumatic.

Be aware of your emotional state. We have seen what happens when matters of the heart are handled carelessly. Devastation and heartbreak, resentment and shame; these negative experiences are often the result of being careless. They don't have to be included in the dating experience. These are things you can avoid, but when you are not intentional, that means you are moving to someone else's agenda.

I'll give an example. Have you ever gone to the grocery store without a plan? You had just money and your hunger. You go to the store because you are hungry and hope for the best. Walmart is counting on you, your hunger pangs, and your wallet. A most dangerous combination.

If you're anything like me, now you're at the cash register with a whole bunch of stuff that you really

don't need, challenging your budget in ways that are completely unnecessary. The cashier rings you up. Now you have to choose between praying that your debit swipe doesn't betray you or require you to make that long walk of shame, replacing items you didn't need in the first place. And think, this is just grocery shopping. It is even more dangerous when we tie ourselves emotionally to people without being intentional.

Dating while being lonely and distraught has some parallels to grocery shopping while hungry; you can end up paying for what you never should have purchased in the first place. Remember, you are valuable. If you have forgotten that, or if you find yourself wondering if it is true...then don't date. You are a starving person at Walmart. Time is the currency, every isle an opportunity to spend. An hour later, you are still wondering the isles, looking for fulfillment. In dating, you can waste a lot of time and resources simply because you were unsure of what you were looking for in the

first place and you allowed your emotional state to influence your decision making. This is very dangerous indeed.

Know Your Agenda.

There was something I read recently about the psychology behind grocery store aesthetics. Placement, colors, even the music, are all purposely with intention for the consumer to... well...*consume*.

You don't need any ice cream; you probably have ice cream at home, but why not? You may believe that you wanted ice cream, but in truth, some companies actually hire a psychologist to help them set you up. If you go there without intention, then you are following their agenda. Similarly, if you are dating without intention, then you are following the other person's agenda.

You are more valuable than that—drifting without purpose. You don't know where you'll land. As I

will say again and again throughout this book, your time, resources, and effort are too valuable for just “*hoping for the best.*”

Here is a phrase to remember (especially around the holidays): **Don't let loneliness make a fool out of you.**

Relationships are too important to our well-being. Don't just “drift” into them. Be selective, be intentional, have a plan. If you are dating to just have fun, that's okay. But be upfront about it. Communicate your intentions. Things may change...and that's okay, too. But be aware, be vocal, be honest. I'm not just talking about being honest with yourself, but also with others. So much emotional static occurs because of lack of transparency with self and others.

Delay intimacy.

The word of the day is situationship (*Webster eat your heart out!*). A situationship occurs when the

content of the relationship doesn't match the label given. For example, you are "friends" (label) but are also sexually involved and living together (content). Situationships should be avoided. Here are some signs that you know you are in a situationship:

- **"What are we?"** If you have to ask...then you know exactly where you are. A situationship.
- **"We're just talking."** For my readers of European descent, this is an urban code for "I don't really know what is happening, but I'm developing feelings and hoping that the other person feels the same, based on very thin evidence."
- **"Friends with benefits."** This is a title that says nothing at all. All friendships should be beneficial. It sounds like a grown up thing, only to be handled by the sexually mature. But do you think you can have one side of sex (climaxes, relief, affection) and not the other

(attachment, bonding, desire?) Don't fool yourself. "Friends with benefits" is a situation that comes with a timer. It's a game of hot potatoes, and who ever cares first loses. You are too "mature" for that.

- **"Your relationship has to be a secret."** Why are you ashamed? Sure, I understand how people can be nosey and make things dramatic. But there is a difference from keeping something secret and keeping something private. More times than not, you are hiding from your friends and family because you know what you doing is foolish, and don't want your honest friend to tell you about yourself.

If any of these points define a relationship you are in—congrats! You are in a situationship! Stop telling people "it's complicated." At least be honest with yourself and the person you are dealing with. It's one thing to take a fruitless risk.

Do's and Don'ts to Dodge Disaster

It's another to be in denial about it.

Here is a truth, even for the most introverted individuals—you want to connect. I want to connect. Everyone wants to connect! So, now you are connecting haphazardly to a person in a desperate attempt to deal with your own loneliness, to deal with the hunger that you have. “A hungry man walks into a grocery store”...if you remember that analogy from earlier, you can see that making decisions while in a desperate state of mind or condition can be dangerous.

Before you have cognitively assessed what you are signing up for, now, intimacy has been created. Intimacy is a glue that gives the greatest high. This is why that “friend” that was in that bad relationship and can't get out of it. They are addicted to the intimacy and the connection it provides.

I used to play this game with magnets when I was

younger (and so did you). I would take two magnets and see how close I could get them without touching. It would take so much control, and I could not maintain it indefinitely. Unless I completely and intentionally placed them down a safe distance apart, they always snapped together, sometimes startling me. Human beings are very similar in regards to affection and attraction. There is such a deep need for validation, that it doesn't take much for us to be pulled in. **Attraction, time, and opportunity are the main ingredients to form intimacy.**

In your mind, you were going to regulate how close your *magnets* would be. *“Oh, you know, but we aren't going to let it get that that far.”* But that's not a plan. That's bravado. Now you're in another situation; your best friends are pleading with you to escape. Now you are mad at them, as intimacy, which is beautiful in the right context, now creates chains that are hard to escape. Dating has become something else. The content

of your relationship and your label aren't matching.

Honestly? Dating is just really getting to know a person intentionally. That's it. Take a business date. Getting to know another for a specific reason, whether it is a possible partnership or creating a marketing strategy, it's just getting to know a person. When intimacy gets involved, something changes. Please hear me out. Follow the logic. Think of your closest platonic relationship. Was physical intimacy necessary to get to know them? Of course, not. In fact, when a person is trying to rush intimacy, that should be treated as a red flag. It is an attempt to rush an emotional connection before addressing things cognitively. If you haven't caught it yet, **dating should be a cognitive process.**

When it is purely an emotional one, when intimacy is out of context, you'll find yourself in these dangerous situations. The bruises and scars

might happen even when you are cognitive. But the horror stories usually happen due to failed expectations that were made only in the context of emotional fulfillment.

Don't do that.

Ladies, when he approaches you, all handsome and educated and full of compliments and expensive cologne, feel free to be flattered. There is nothing wrong with that. If he finds you attractive, please, investigate that possible blessing. But your own desperate desire to belong to someone will cause you to add other expectations prematurely. No, he is not the one. No, he is not proposing tomorrow. It's a compliment. Yes, you are beautiful—and so are dogs, cats, and mice. **Emotional stimulation is not a sign of commitment, but observation.** That's it.

Make him actually clarify his intentions, and then

hold him to that. Gentlemen, don't let her trap you with a commitment when you are just dating. Marriage is a commitment of a lifetime, not a gift for her "being there for you." Define where you are, what you are, and be clear of your intentions. If you are only getting to know each other, that is fine. If you are trying to do more than that, that is fine, too. Be clear, be concise, and be wise. Remember: while you were playing with action figures, she was playing with baby dolls, pretending that the Baby Alive was her baby. She has been groomed to want a family. You have to address the issue directly and honestly.

