

10 Healthy Dating Practices

There are plenty of unhealthy ways to date, so I've compiled 10 healthy dating practices that I believe cut to the core of what it means to date with intentionality and maturity.

1. Date with intention. This is going to be for the best of both parties involved. Dating isn't a game, and the last thing you want to do is get in a relationship with someone when your intentions are anything but pure. If you're just looking for fun, I'd recommend you be open and honest about your intentions with anyone you meet or connect with. It's only fair to them and their emotions.

2. Make sure your first date is in a public place. You just never know who you're going to meet. I'd recommend your first date be in a public place in front of lots of people and I'd even recommend you let your friends know where you will be in case something were to happen. You never know who the person you've chatted with on the phone might act in person, and the last thing you want to happen is end up in a private place with someone whose motives are anything but respectful.

3. Try to learn as much as you can before meeting them. Yes, the beauty of social media. If they have public profiles, then make sure to do your due diligence and research as much as you can about the person. It only makes sense to do a little Facebook stalking to see whom you're meeting with. Come on, we've all done it. While someone's online profiles might not always match up with how they act in person, it's always a good idea to see how someone presents themselves online and it may give you the opportunity to end a date before it even starts. Better to be safe than sorry.

4. Value the input of your friends and family. Your friends and family play a valuable role in your dating life, and it's always good to get their opinions when it comes to the person

you are dating. Mind you, they might always give the best advice but it's always good to get wisdom from the people who are looking out for your best interest.

5. Continue to stay social with your friends and family. Don't be that person who gets a relationship and then disappears from the face of the planet. We all know that person. Yes, I know you want to spend time with your new babe, but it's also healthy to continue carving out time for your friends and family members.

6. Have a "define the relationship" every few dates to see how things are going. Nobody likes dating in the dark. I don't mean literally, but emotionally. Not knowing where your relationship stands can be extremely stressful, so I suggest that you and your new girl/guy take time every few weeks to discuss where each other is at with things.

This will give you both clarity, keep the relationship healthy, and keep the relationship from ever going further than it needs to.

7. Be open and honest from the very beginning. Relationships thrive on transparency. Letting people know about you from the very beginning is quite possibly the best thing you can do for your relationship. Everyone's made mistakes, and I'd encourage you to share about the big pieces of your life that have made you who you are today. Don't keep things hidden in fear of rejection. Be open.

8. Don't play with someone's emotions. If it's not working, then end it. Some relationships are kind of like the TV show *American Idol*—they go on way longer than they actually should. Seriously though, don't keep a relationship going just for the heck of it. The best thing you can do is be transparent about how you're feeling. If things aren't working out, then end it with care. Ending the relationship as soon as you realize it's not working out will show you care about the person more than

dragging it along. Trust me.

9. Don't have important conversations via text or email. We've all been there. Auto-correct and text interpretation can be a relationship's worst nightmare. Save the important conversations for an actual conversation, not a banter of back and forth emojis and broken English. Plus, waiting to talk in person will give you time to really think about what you want to say instead of texting out of pure emotion.

10. Don't settle. Simple. Don't settle for a mediocre relationship. You deserve to be with someone who supports you, encourages you, cares for you and loves you for who you are. Don't settle for mediocre when you could have extraordinary.

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