

## Instructions in English

By Nikki Silverstein

Dating is a game. Play well enough and win the matrimony prize. It was fun in my 20's and 30's, but now it's just exhausting. I'm not sure if the rules changed or if I ever had the right ones. It's like when I helped my friend put together her daughter's toy kitchen. The instructions were in English, but it was obviously written by someone whose first language wasn't. Although we assembled it; it wasn't quite right.

To figure out the dating instructions, I enlisted the help of Marin's Relationship Development Experts Lorraine and Richard Platt of Passion and Purpose. This married couple coaches single people on how to create meaningful relationships. I was determined to interview them, get answers and get out. Frankly, I was skeptical. People have successfully dated and mated for thousands of years without experts. Aren't we needlessly complicating things? Have we turned into lemmings lured to investing time and money in counselors and dating services that we shouldn't need? My parents didn't participate in this nonsense and they managed to marry and reproduce.

Initially Lorraine and Richard did nothing to alleviate my skepticism - my New Age warning bell rang. I'm not into that touchy-feely say your positive affirmations stuff that abounds in Marin. They threw around typical buzz terms: intimacy barriers, manifest love, feminine essence. I groaned inside and thought, "Cut to the chase. I'm here for the playbook. Step by step instructions on how to find a good guy."

Being more polite than my thoughts, I said nothing and kept taking notes. Every now and then, I caught Richard looking at Lorraine. I don't think a man has ever looked at me with so much adoration. Well, I still wasn't convinced. My parents love each other too, so maybe I should just ask my vinyl siding salesman father and my neurotic Jewish mother for advice. Actually, I did. My mother was too busy playing mah jongg, but my father said, "Remain true to your values. Your house could have the most beautiful vinyl siding, but if the foundation's shaky, it's worth bupkis. Don't pick a shmuck." See, anyone can do this.

Although I was sure I wouldn't, sometime during the interview I started to like Lorraine and Richard - a lot. Both have been where my friends and I are - in and out of unfulfilling relationships that drain us and make us swear to never try again. They gave up, until they met each other. It took months before Richard even kissed Lorraine. By that first kiss, they knew they had a basis for a relationship. Why did it take so long? Because both hit bottom in their previous relationships and neither cared if they were ever in another. They took the down time to ditch desperation and become happy alone. Lorraine summed it up by saying, "The goal is to have two strong individuals making life richer, not two individuals seeking an island of escape."

My friends and I say we're happy alone. But I think if we're completely honest, we'd admit that we're often not just alone, but lonely. Lorraine and Richard explained why our parents didn't need help dating, yet we do. Our parents had clear cut rules. The father was the provider and the mother the homemaker. Both sexes now have freedom, which complicates our roles. There *are* new instructions, which Lorraine and Richard narrowed to 6 steps. Here are the CliffNotes:

- Get clear about your ideal mate.
- Accept nothing less than what you want.
- Release anything in your way.
- Have the life you want right now - get out in the world and do what you love.
- Sex doesn't equal love.
- Get support.

I decided to watch Lorraine and Richard in action by attending their seminar at the Marin Bay Club. At first it was no different from other singles events. I wasn't interested in any of the men. During the middle of the seminar, the men were separated from the women. Us gals shared stories and laughter, but the men were conspicuously quiet on the other side of the partition. Evidently Richard got the men to implement some of his ideas. When they returned, there was a palpable difference in their demeanor. Richard transforms the inside of men like Queer Eye's Fab Five enhances the outside. By the end of the evening, with their newfound confidence and composure, I would have dated every single one of those single men.

My cynicism is gone. Lorraine and Richard get it. Bravo. Thanks for translating the instructions into a language I understand. If I want an "A" in the dating course, I'll need to stop cheating with the Cliff Notes. I think it's time to sit down and read the whole manual.

*To learn more about Lorraine and Richard, visit their website at [www.passionpurpose.org](http://www.passionpurpose.org)*

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