

FEAR of Being Alone...Forever

There are certain questions that people will ask, that I have been asked hundreds of times before. When I receive an email that really sums up one that I hear over and over again, I respond, but also save it for the “Ask the Sex Therapist” articles here in LWM each year. In the past, I’ve addressed multiple questions and problems in the same article. This year, however, I have tried to focus on questions specifically about love & relationships, and will spread them out over three issues so I can go into more depth with my answers for each one. All names and identifiable information have been changed or omitted to protect the source(s).

Dear Dianna,

I have been single for a very long time, and I’m starting to become really afraid that I will be alone forever. Even though I feel like I’m a pretty independent woman (I have a good career, my dream car, a wonderful home, etc.) I still feel like my life feels empty without someone to share it with me. I’m in my mid-fifties and it’s been two years since I’ve been with anyone. And just so you really understand, I’ve only ever had a handful of relationships my entire life—the longest being five years. I’ve never been married or had any kids. I spend a lot of my time trying to figure out why I can’t find a man and I become sad and frustrated with myself. I truly believe that I’m not attractive enough for anyone to want to date me. Who wants an overweight woman in her mid-fifties, when there are so many available “younger models” out there?

-Old and Alone

Dear Old and Alone:

First, let me say that I don’t consider mid-fifties to be “old.” Haven’t you heard? Fifty is the new thirty. ;) More seriously, let me say that what I’m hearing from you are several painful feelings, as a result from not having a partner. It seems your fear of being alone has caused you to have symptoms of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and ongoing frustration with yourself. In addition, you’ve expressed feeling unattractive and being overweight. Even though you did mention a few positive things in your life, like your career, dream car, and home; there is nothing else positive that you seem to have to say about yourself. If this is what you’re putting out into the world, it’s not a very good advertisement to attract a mate. My suggestion for you is to suspend your thoughts of finding a partner and instead put all of that energy into creating a more happy and healthy self. Focus on creating your own happiness. Find ways to enjoy life, without the focus being on finding a partner. Work on changing the negative beliefs you hold about yourself. Work on making your mind and body healthy. You just may find that while you’re working on creating a happy, healthy life for yourself, you may unexpectedly find others attracted to you. Men are generally attracted to happy, healthy, self-confident women. Self-confidence is the result of doing everything you can to feel great about yourself and your life. To quote RuPaul, “If you don’t love

yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?” I’d add to that, if you don’t love yourself, how can you expect someone else to?

I wish you all the best in your newfound journey to completely fall in love...with yourself.

~Dianna

If you’re identifying with the thoughts and feelings of the person above, I imagine you might feel overwhelmed with how and where to start with your own journey. First, let me say that generally periods of being single tend to not last longer than two or three years, especially if the individual is actively seeking out a partner. However, if you are like the person above, think about what you could change in your life, to live a happier, healthier life and start there. Here’s a general “check-list” of what I would recommend single people do to become the best versions of themselves, before looking for a partner to add to the mix:

- If you’re struggling with any mental health issues, including anxiety or depression, seek out the help of a mental health professional.
- Being alone for a long period of time can lead to feelings of desperation. Desperation can lead to low self-esteem. Work on changing the way you think about yourself. Stop beating yourself up with harmful, negative thoughts. When you catch yourself saying something negative like, “I’m not attractive enough for anyone to date me.” Stop yourself. Interrupt this negative self-talk as quickly as possible, and try to replace it with a positive message like, “I’m working on loving myself and creating joy in my life, and right now that is all that matters.”
- If you’re struggling with physical issues, make and keep the appropriate doctor’s appointments to get those problems to be more manageable, if not completely relieved.
- If you’re not happy with your body shape or size, find a personal trainer that you feel has a good understanding of you and your needs. Note that I’m not simply saying, “Start exercising.” If you were able to be that self-motivated, you’d already be doing it, right? Right. A personal trainer will help keep you accountable to show up and do the workouts and can also help you to not feel alone in your weight loss journey.
- If you don’t like your job, start looking for employment elsewhere. Frequently, people who are miserable at work carry that misery home with them. We can’t all have jobs that we “love,” but it’s not unreasonable to find a job that you enjoy and/or gives you a sense of purpose.
- Look into hobbies/interests that you would find enjoyable. For example, if you love reading, join a book club. If you love dancing, take some dance lessons. There are plenty of “meet-up” groups available to join, so you don’t need to engage in activities alone. (Check out meetup.com for activities in your area). If you already have friends with similar interests, spend more time with them doing things that you have fun doing.
- Get your house in order. I mean literally, clean your house. Is your physical residence cluttered? Are all of your closets full? Or do you have space available? One way to make space in your life for a partner is to physically create space for them. The act of doing this is part of what’s known as a “Law of Attraction” (but that’s an entirely separate article, so for now, just trust me!). You may also find that with less clutter, you feel happier and more in control of your life.

- Finally, know what you're looking for in a potential partner. Take a piece of paper and write down all of the qualities and characteristics of your "ideal" mate. Include things like personality traits, interests/abilities, physical traits, and thoughts or belief systems that match yours. Throughout your personal journey for happiness (as outlined above) add or delete from the list as you grow and change. It's important that you know what you want, so you can recognize it when it's standing in front of you! 😊

Until next month, I wish you all well on whatever journey you may currently be traveling! Believe in yourself, and never, never give up.

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Dr. Dianna Palimere is a Psychosexual Therapist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has been working in the field of mental health for the past 13 years, dedicating the past eight years to specializing in clinical sexuality. She holds a Bachelors degree in Psychology, a Masters degree in Social Work, a Masters degree in Human Sexuality Education, and a PhD in Clinical Human Sexuality. Utilizing a holistic approach to therapy, she incorporates a variety of clinical interventions in her work with individuals, couples, and families. She is devoted to helping people achieve sexual health and healing through her work as a psychotherapist in her private practice in Pike Creek, DE; as well as in her work with local nonprofit organizations. To learn more about her or to schedule an appointment, visit her website:

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