

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice



Relationship Advice <http://www.neilclarkwarren.com/advice.html>

ADVICE FOR SINGLE PEOPLE FROM DR. WARREN

- Do you believe soul mates exist? How can you tell if a person is really your soul mate?
- Are men less willing to work at communication and intimacy?
- How much time should you spend with someone "in person" before deciding to relocate?
- How do I overcome the fear of being rejected by a female without sounding like an idiot?
- I'm not physically attracted to him... am I being superficial?
- I have not dated for 5 years. Is there something wrong with me?
- Should I date my male friends?

ADVICE FOR MARRIED PEOPLE FROM DR. WARREN

- How can a newlywed couple maintain the passionate flame of love and romance year-after-year?
- How much of a strain can children place on a marriage?

As a clinical psychologist, best-selling author and respected speaker, Dr. Neil Clark Warren has become one of America's best-known experts on mate selection and healthy relationships.

Dr. Warren has been hailed by Time Magazine and USA Today as a "must read" author and "outstanding contributor to the field of marriage counseling." He earned a Gold Medallion for America's best book on marriage, "Finding the Love of Your Life," which is now available in 13 languages. Other bestsellers from Dr. Neil Clark Warren include: "Learning to Live With the Love of Your Life," "Date...Or Soul Mate?" "Catching the Rhythm of Love," and "Finding Contentment." His latest book, "Love the Life You Live" with Dr. Les Parrott, was released in September 2003.

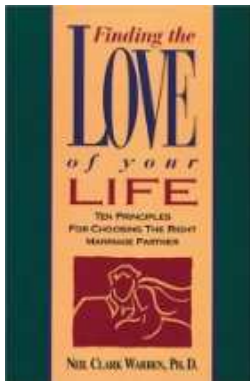
For more than three decades, Dr. Warren has counseled thousands of married couples and singles across the nation and in his private practice in Pasadena, California. Audiences of "Oprah," "The Pulse," "The Other Half," "Focus on the Family," and "Politically Incorrect" have heard the results of his research and interviews with successful couples. His premise is simple: Most failed marriages were doomed from the start because of incompatibility.

With the launch of eHarmony.com in 2000, Dr. Warren used over three decades of experience in counseling and research to create a service to help singles seeking committed and lasting relationships. This web-based relationship service is unique because participants must qualify for membership via psychological profiling based on the 29 critical dimensions Dr. Warren has identified as key to a successful relationship.

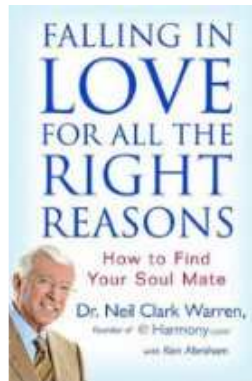
Dr. Neil Clark Warren earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from The University of Chicago, where he also served as a counselor and adjunct faculty member. He received his Masters of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and completed his undergraduate degree at Pepperdine University. In addition to founding Neil Clark Warren & Associates, Dr. Warren is the former dean of Fuller's Graduate School of Psychology.

Dr. Warren and his wife, Marylyn, live in Southern California. They have three grown daughters.

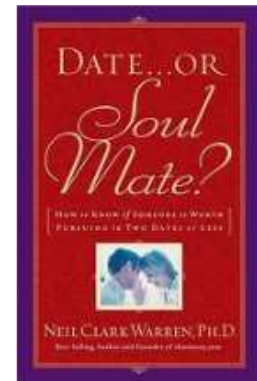
Dr. Neil Clark Warren's Books:



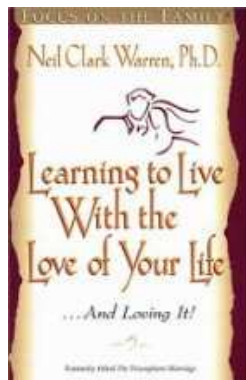
Finding the Love of Your Life: Ten Principles for Choosing the Right Marriage Partner



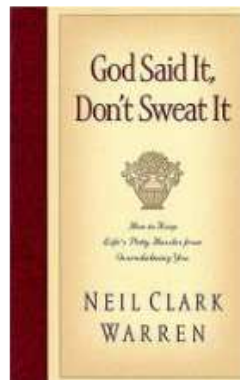
Falling in Love for All the Right Reasons: How to Find Your Soul Mate



Date...or Soul Mate? How To Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing In Two Dates Or Less



Learning to Live with the Love of Your Life . . . and Loving It!



God Said It, Don't Sweat It: How to Keep Life's Petty Hassles from Overwhelming You



The Triumphant Marriage: 100 Extremely Successful Couples Reveal Their Secrets

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Do you believe soul mates exist? How can you tell if a person is really your soul mate?

Dear Dr. Warren,

I have a question about soul mates. Do you believe soul mates exist? And if you do how can you tell if a person is really your perfect match? Can a person have more than one? Thank you for your time.

-Norma

Norma,

I am reminded of the study we conducted at eHarmony.com that examined two hundred couples who had "highly successful" marriages. We found that there are twenty-nine characteristics-including religious values, ambition, and energy level-that determine a couple's "compatibility quotient." If a man and a woman match on a preponderance of the characteristics, it's highly likely that they will have a terrific marriage.

Let's consider a man who is 40 years old. Out of all the women in the world, there must be at least five hundred with whom he would match on all twenty-nine items. And there are probably thousands more he would match with on, say, twenty-six or twenty-seven items and still be quite satisfied.

Norma, I believe soul mates are made, not born. You start with the ingredients for a highly compatible, successful relationship and then you work to develop closeness and intimacy. Does this mean you lower your standards when it comes to finding a partner? Absolutely not! It simply means you "expand your field of vision."

My best explanation for "expanding your field of vision" is contained within my book "How to Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing in Two Dates or Less". Many times the person who is excellent soul mate material will be a diamond in the rough. They may not look like you're dream mate. They may not have the trappings that you've envisioned in your mind. To mine these diamonds you must become skilled at assessing the important qualities regardless of the packaging.

Take some time to focus on the ten traits you MUST HAVE in a mate. This exercise won't be easy, but it is vital to develop a short, tight list of traits that you absolutely must have from any relationship partner. Then spend any equal period of time listing the ten traits you can't stand in a partner. Be detailed. Be strict. But you are allowed no more than ten.

This list of twenty traits is what you will use to help uncover your soul mate. The next time you are considering a relationship with a gentleman, begin with your list. A person who fits into your list perfectly is worthy of serious reflection from you, even if they aren't your "type." Chemistry is certainly a part of any relationship, but take care to put important things first. Before you become infatuated or enthralled with your date's looks, consider what he is like inside. In the long run, it will certainly be what matters most.

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Are men less willing to work at communication and intimacy?

Dr. Warren,

I'd like your opinion on this matter. It has been my experience, and those of my women friends, that men are just less willing to work at communication and intimacy. They seem afraid of losing themselves in a relationship. Do you think this is generally true?

-Amy

Amy,

It has been my experience, during thirty-five years of counseling men and women, that men are less likely to be skilled at communication and intimacy. This doesn't mean that they are less willing to work at these skills, but unlike women, men are often raised without being taught to value their inner dialogue.

Most men are "outwardly" focused. If we think about the way boys are raised, it's easy to see how this happens. When a little boy falls down and starts to cry he's often told, "Big boys don't cry." By the time a boy is fourteen or fifteen he's probably been told to "be tough" or "act like a man" hundreds of times. As a society, we tend to want our men to move ahead and conquer the world without spending much time assessing how they feel inside.

Of course, girls are usually treated quite differently. Great value is placed on raising women who are nurturers, probably because this is vital to successful mothering. We tend to permit girls to express their emotions and examine how they feel about issues they value. This produces adult women who are comfortable with intimacy. Most women have been taught how to discuss their inner world much more effectively than most men.

Of course, this doesn't mean that a man cannot learn to communicate his intimate feelings--and many men have put great effort into building these skills. I firmly believe that in order to have a brilliant relationship, both partners must be willing to talk about their feelings in a meaningful way. This "verbal intimacy" is the absolute foundation for every successful relationship I've ever encountered.

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How much time should you spend with someone "in person" before deciding to relocate?

Dear Dr. Warren,

My question relates to long distance relationships initiated on the Internet. How much time should you spend with someone "in person" before deciding to relocate?

You can get to know someone over the phone and Internet, but I feel there are too many gaps that can only be filled by face to face interaction; and over an extended period. We are very attracted to each other and feel we are compatible, but how do you relocate across the country for a "maybe?"

--Brent

Brent,

This is indeed an important question. For many years I have emphasized that long distance couples need to take some determined and comprehensive steps before making a commitment of any kind.

My first suggestion is that you create as many opportunities as possible for face to face interaction before either of you move. You are correct, the phone and Internet work well to keep in touch, but eventually it's vital that you spend hours and hours of time together just being in the same place, the same part of the country. There's really no other effective way to determine if you are truly compatible.

Second, I suggest that you visit each other under as many different circumstances as you possibly can. Limiting your visits to romantic weekends or holidays creates a false sense of experience together. It's easy to come away from 5 romantic weekends convinced that your partner is loving, kind, attentive and adaptable. Of course, your range of knowledge about the person is shallow because you've never seen this person after a hard day of work, stuck in a traffic jam, furious at you because you were late, or enduring a crushing disappointment.

You must find a way to gather a broad range of knowledge about this person before pulling up your roots and moving. It may seem strange to travel across the country to try and witness your girlfriend while she goes about her everyday life, but I believe it is vital if your relationship is to have a chance to become a brilliant one.

Lastly, you must come to terms with the risk involved in your relationship. At some point, before you marry, one of you is going to have to pack up and move across the country. This should be done BEFORE there is intent to marry and certainly before there is an engagement.

If you have set the wheels in motion to marry and the move is just a prelim step in that direction, the momentum of the wedding may make it hard for one or both of you to say, "Wait, this doesn't feel right." You risk making a grave mistake. You need to spend time early in your long distance relationship discussing how this move would happen if the relationship were to continue.

Obviously Brent, the broad question you ask, "How much time?" is impossible to answer without knowing you and your circumstance personally. But my best answer is that you should

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wait as long as you can afford to wait and gather as much information from as many different circumstances as you can before you propose marriage. Whatever decision you reach with this particular person, I think that the caution and contemplation that you use at this stage of the marriage making process will serve you well throughout the rest of your life.

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How do I overcome the fear of being rejected by a female without sounding like an idiot?

Dear Dr. Warren,

My worst fear is being rejected by a female, and when I do try to talk to the person that I like, my words come out all wrong. People say that a first impression is the most important thing, but with me, I often fail that first test. How do I overcome this fear without sounding like an idiot?

-- Scott

Scott,

The first important point for you to recognize is that almost every person you've ever met has had this fear at one time or another in their life. Fear of rejection is one of the most basic human fears. Until a person learns some skills to lessen their anxiety and communicate confidently, this nervousness will continue.

You don't mention your age, but many people learn these opposite sex social skills as a teenager. By enduring the awkward teenage social scene many people, in a series of hit and miss episodes, discover how to relate to the opposite sex in a meaningful, confident manner. Of course, the story is different for others. If you're having trouble expressing yourself as you'd like, I can offer a few suggestions that may help.

Focus on the other person

When meeting someone for the first time, especially someone with whom you may have a romantic interest, it's common to focus on how you look, how you sound, how you portray yourself. This is what is called "Being Self-Conscious." It causes you to second guess every word you say. It virtually forces you to stop being your natural self and become a cautious self-analyzer.

The key to overcoming this problem is to recognize it and make a purposeful effort to control it. When you meet someone, take a moment to focus on them. If you're taking a woman out for the first time, spend the first few minutes together noticing the details of her appearance. Notice her hair, the tone of her voice, the way she smiles. You can do these things in a casual way.

By putting your focus and attention on her you will become less self-conscious.

Become a first rate listener

This suggestion may not help you overcome your anxiety, but it will lessen how nervous and awkward you seem to be. You see, Scott, people like to be around those who make them feel good about themselves. If you become an attentive, active listener, you'll learn about the other person in great detail. This will give you plenty of information to discuss in the course of your evening together. It also lets you react to her insights and opinions, which takes the pressure away from your conversation skills.

By asking questions and giving her room to open up and share her thoughts and feelings, you'll also be communicating that you value her and enjoy listening to her. These are very rare and important traits. Once you can make a person feel valued and thoroughly understood, you will have mastered a key to personal relations. I believe that after you've practiced this approach several times, you will begin to discover a new and significant inner peace and confidence.

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Control Your Fear of Rejection

This, you may say, seems the hardest of them all. But fear of rejection is usually determined by the perceived importance of the person we're approaching. For example, you may get on an elevator and at the next floor a 70 year old grandmother joins you. I'm willing to bet that if she says "Hello," you'll have no trouble striking up a light conversation as you reach the lobby. See, your brain doesn't sense that there is anything at stake in that encounter and your anxiety remains low.

Now replay the situation, instead of a 70 year old getting on the elevator, this time it's an extremely attractive and apparently single young lady. She says, "Hello." What do you do?

I believe that the key to keeping your fear in check in the second scenario is telling yourself that regardless of this encounter, you will eventually prevail. Or, as the old adage goes, "there are lots of fish in the sea." Sure you'd like to ask this attractive woman out. You're going to spend the few minutes you have focusing on her, asking her a question or two and listening to her answers, but if she isn't interested, that's just fine. You will certainly meet someone else.

Scott, this mental state will lessen the importance of THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT. Remove the pressure. Minimize the anxiety and fear. I'm confident that over time you'll become more at ease with yourself and women of all ages and types.

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I'm not physically attracted to him... am I being superficial?

Dear Dr. Warren,

I've met a person on eHarmony.com with great qualities, and he looks terrific on paper, but I'm not physically attracted to him. Am I being superficial when this person is such a kind, loving, and caring man?

-- Joan

Joan,

As human beings, we are created capable of feeling physical attraction. It is one of our most powerful mate selection criteria. Much of my philosophy and writing regarding relationships has to do with placing physical attraction lower on my list of selection criteria, because when looking at "long-term" relationship success, physical attraction doesn't rank very high. In other words, when talking to couples that have been successfully married for many years, they rarely list "physical attraction" as one of the core dimensions that has led to their marital success.

In addition, I think that in today's society people often use physical attraction as their "only" gauge of whether to pursue a relationship. This notion is reinforced constantly by our media and leads to large numbers of shallow, dysfunctional, and ultimately failed relationships.

Having said all that, I do believe that physical attraction is germane to a healthy, successful relationship. I actively discourage relationships between two people who get along great, appear to be compatible, and yet have no "spark." I believe that building a great marriage without the excitement and attraction that comes from passionate love is impossible.

Remember, a "great person" is not a "great person for you" unless they meet your needs and desires in a partner. You needn't feel guilty about your lack of physical chemistry with this person. In fact, I believe you will be acting compassionately by letting this person find someone who does find him physically appealing.

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I have not dated for 5 years. Is there something wrong with me?

Dear Dr. Warren,

I am a divorced single parent who has not dated for 5 years. It sometimes feels like there aren't any available men. I have attended many social functions and sometimes feel like there must be something wrong with me. My friends keep telling me I'll find someone when I stop looking. I'm really tired of hearing that. Do others share my same frustrations?

-Laurel

Laurel,

I often hear from single parents who are beginning to explore the dating world for the first time in many years. It isn't surprising to me that you are noticing a profound lack of available men. If you're over the age of 30, in most parts of the country your pool of available dating candidates begins to shrink, and this process continues the rest of your life.

As we get older, and when work becomes a larger and more pervasive component in our lives, most people make fewer and fewer new friends. This fact, combined with the decreasing number of single individuals, means that just meeting someone who is available can become a difficult task.

But Laurel, I believe the most important element of your question is whether or not you should actively search for a gentleman to share your life with. I know many people believe as your friends do, that you can only find "the one" when you aren't searching. I don't share that opinion. In my experience, I've rarely seen a general policy of inaction yield the results a person desires.

In fact, I started eHarmony to give single persons, just like you, a way to put their communication skills to work and find a loving, caring, life-long relationship. eHarmony has a database of over 7 million single adults from all over the world. This database can give you an extremely large pool of dating candidates, to a degree you never could develop on your own.

eHarmony has helped countless couples meet and get married. These newlyweds come from all walks of life and all layers of the socio-economic strata, but they have one thing in common: Each person, in each relationship, took the initiative and reached out to find their soul mate. Their action was the first, and I believe, the most important in their journey towards meeting the love of their life.

I encourage you to take wise action in your search for a new relationship. Take action to make sure you have regained your emotional health since your divorce, to read and develop your knowledge of what a healthy marriage should be, and to find a relationship service, such as eHarmony, that can guide you in your search.

Finally, I advise you to pursue this task with a gentle spirit. Taking action doesn't mean acting desperately. Treat each potential mate with a careful heart and an open mind and I believe you will be richly rewarded.

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Should I date my male friends?

Dear Dr. Warren,

I'm a 35-year-old single woman who is active in my community, is interested in lots of things, loves people, and is ambitious about my life. I have never been married, and surround myself with the types of people I enjoy being with as much as possible.

My life is filled with wonderful men who never take that step away from "close friends" to move to dating, even though the relationships 'look' like we are dating based on the amount of time we spend together. I continue to enjoy these relationships, but find myself frustrated and wonder about "what if?" What do I do with this? Why does this happen?

-TJ

Dear TJ,

You've asked several important and related questions. At the heart of your letter seems to be a nagging feeling of confusion about the male relationships in your life. I want to applaud your efforts to reach out and understand these friends and what they mean to your life.

You mention several close male friends who spend a great deal of time with you, and I believe relationships like this are extremely important, especially when you are single. A friendship network should contain several members of the opposite gender who are capable of providing honest and heartfelt support. But these relationships can often get confusing. After all, you spend a great deal of time together. You get along well and share common interests. You usually begin to share friends and even meet each other's families. Isn't that what happens with a loving romantic couple? Isn't that the sort of relationship every one dreams of enjoying?

So, many times, friends who are enjoying the situation I've just described look at each other and say, "Why aren't we having a romance? Shouldn't we try?" It has been my experience that almost every friendly couple who explores a romance comes to the conclusion that it won't work. The spark that is necessary to drive a life-long romance just doesn't appear to exist between them.

Because of the strong public stand I've taken against relationships that are based solely on physical attraction, many people think that I completely discount physical chemistry as a key component in a successful relationship. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I believe that a relationship **MUST** have a certain degree of passion. The attraction you feel for your partner is part of the energy that makes you willing to work through much of your relationship's early friction.

The important questions to ask yourself, TJ, are these:

Why didn't these relationships begin romantically?

Why haven't you put the issue on the table and discussed the matter with these male friends?

I suspect that the answer to both questions is that you really have never felt a spark with these men. If your letter had mentioned that you had romantic feelings for a close male friend and were torn about how to handle it, I might feel differently. You may wonder, "What would it be like to date Bob?" but within your heart of hearts I think you may sense that it could never be the romance you deserve and desire.

This, of course, leads us back to the core issue and the reason you have these thoughts about your male friends. You truly want to have a passionate, compatible, loving relationship. You want to find a special person who can be a friend and a lover and share your life in a way these male friends never can. It won't surprise you to hear me suggest eHarmony as the best route towards the relationship you want.

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How can a newlywed couple maintain the passionate flame of love and romance year-after-year?

Dear Dr. Warren,

I'm still recovering from the pain of a devastating divorce. I feel like I need to solve some of the issues that plagued my marriage before I can move out into the world and look for someone to love. This is why I'm writing.

All new marriages start with passion and romance. It is usually one of the reasons the people are getting married in the first place.

But how can a newlywed couple maintain the passionate flame of love and romance year-after-year without the relationship going stale and eventually dissolving into a divorce? And how much of a strain can children place on a marriage once they are added to the family?

-Rick

Rick,

As a psychologist I spent 35 years working with troubled marriages and encountered your question countless times. Most people seem to view marital passion as a mysterious force that comes and goes with no rhyme or reason. They assume it is natural law that as a marriage gains years it loses passion.

I can tell you, Rick, that I've seen nothing to suggest that either of these viewpoints is an unavoidable fact. It is all too common that these beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies.

In my heart I believe that you control your passionate feelings. They can be coaxed. They can be created, often when you aren't even sure they still exist. I'm reminded of this old story:

A man went to his attorney and announced that he was ready for a divorce. He no longer found his wife attractive. She was caustic, overweight, and frumpy. The two were at war, fighting constantly and he had grown to hate her.

The attorney listened for a while and then offered the following suggestion. "I can hear how much you detest this woman and I have a plan to inflict maximum damage on her. Go home and spend the next 30 days treating her like the most important person in the world. Engage her in conversation and listen attentively. Help her around the house. Take her to dinner, and see a romantic movie once a week. Do everything in your power to be kind to her. You will have set her up for the biggest hurt of her life! THEN we will serve her with the divorce papers and she will be devastated. I'll have the papers ready in 30 days."

The husband was more than happy to carry out the vicious setup. He went home and immediately began to practice all the unscrupulous suggestions that the lawyer had given him.

30 days later the attorney called the man to tell him that the papers were ready to be served. But the husband was horrified at the very suggestion of divorce.

"Divorce?" he said. "Why would I want to divorce her? She's an incredible woman, even better than when I first fell in love with her. She is everything I dreamed of. Why would I want to divorce her?"

It is a corny story. But the point is clear: certain actions create results. By taking concrete steps to engender passion and romance you keep that flame alive throughout the years of your marriage.

Consider these simple, effective steps:

As obvious as it sounds, you and your partner need to spend time together.

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I mean ample and consistent time together. Some couples don't see each other all week and then expect the romance to rekindle on Saturday night.

Take time each day to consciously pull for each other.

Make a point of being your mate's biggest fan. This greatly affects your love for each other. Take every opportunity to show your partner that, he or she is right at the center of your consciousness. There is something immensely powerful and bonding that happens when two people choose to focus all their hopes and best wishes on each other.

Find a way both of you can serve each other.

Caring for others makes us feel good about ourselves. We are most attractive to those people in whose presence we feel best about ourselves. When you and your spouse serve together and feel great about it, all kinds of positive, loving feelings are bound to follow. This is just a solid beginning. Let me applaud you for taking the time and energy to investigate this problem while you are still single. Your commitment to learning about passion and romance means that, when you do choose to marry again, you and your wife can grow your passion over the years instead of watching it wither.

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How much of a strain can children place on a marriage?