

Are you trying to rush love?

By Margot Carmichael Lester Everything moves so quickly these days, including relationships. Few of us realize when we're looking for the love of a lifetime that we have more time than we think to find it. So we rush into dating relationships and often experience less-than-optimal results.

"New relationships are often fragile, and it takes time to establish trust and build intimacy," says Wilmington, Delaware-based life coach Aileen McCabe-Maucher. "People who have recently been divorced or widowed should take some time to check in with how they are feeling about relationships in general, and resolve any emotional issues prior to starting a new love relationship."

In other words, you've got a little work to do before you rush into your next love connection. Why? "Unresolved issues can sabotage a new relationship quickly," McCabe-Maucher notes. And that can take time, so you'll want to proceed slowly.

But that doesn't mean slamming on the brakes at the first sign of sparks flying. "Taking things slow may not be wise advice for everyone," she adds. "If one is overly cautious and takes things too slow, a simple friendship could develop when one or both parties initially desired a romantic partnership." So how can you find the right pace for you?

Listen to — and trust — yourself. "After divorce, trust is often diminished—not just trust of others, but trust of oneself," says Dallas-based Pam Garcy, psychologist and author of *The Power of Inner Guidance: Seven Steps to Tune In and Turn On*. "To increase self-trust, start by getting more in touch with your inner consciousness. Take time to turn inward, ask yourself questions and wait for the answers. Keep a journal of the answers you receive and honor what you learn. To increase trust in others, decide what a person will need to do to be defined as trustworthy in your opinion. In addition, take time to really get to know the other person and his or her values. Ask your date hypothetical questions now and then (not rapid-fire interview-style), and listen to how he or she would solve issues that are important to you."

Listen up. "Listen to your own inner voice and trust your gut," McCabe-Maucher counsels. "There is no perfect relationship pace, and all relationships develop and bloom in their own time. Your feelings are a great indicator about how you should proceed in a relationship."

Get focused. The hard part is figuring out what drive you really want to address," admits Dan Mallick, a newly divorced resident of Chicago. "I really do want a stable, long-term relationship. I also want some new friends. And some physical contact would be nice, too. So if I meet someone I really relate to well, I try to serve the desire for friendship and dating, instead of the baser one. That helps me pace myself until I get to know the woman better and can decide between friends and lovers."

Let it simmer. "Any relationship — regardless of whether you have been divorced or not — should have a three-month arc," suggests Cooper Lawrence, a relationship expert and author of *The Cult of Perfection: Make Peace With Your Inner Overachiever*. "The first three months should be about two things, having fun and getting to know the other person. If at any time during those three months, you ask yourself, 'Where is this going?' stop and instead ask yourself, 'Am I having fun, am I getting closer to this person?' That will give you much more information, because in the first three months, you really don't know where it's going, nor should you. Don't make any major decisions during those first three months."

Finding the right dating pace boils down to knowing what you really want and how you really feel—and not being afraid to ask for it.

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