

SHOPPING FOR LOVE using your retail know how on the single scene

If you've spent a fair bit of time shopping in the 'dinner for one' aisle, you probably know how hard it can be to find a long lasting, loving relationship.

Its funny, really, that competent and mature women like us can be so level-headed and savvy when it comes to making a great find in the retail arena, and yet so at a loss when we are shopping for love. Well, looking for a partner is a lot like looking for that special dress to wear to an important occasion. Or at least, it should be.

When we want to dress up and look our best, not just any old thing will do. The perfect dress needs to be eye catching and look great in its own right, and it needs to fit you well – suiting your unique body shape, accentuating your attributes and minimising your flaws. Finally, you should feel absolutely fabulous when you wear it.

Likewise, our relationships are an important aspect of our lives. We should be looking for Mr Right – not making throw-away decisions and settling for Mr Right Now. You should scrupulously hunt out the man who catches your eye and whose personality you enjoy; there should be a good 'fit' between you regarding your interests, preferences, values and aspirations; and most of all, you should feel absolutely fabulous when you're with him!

When women hit the shopping centres looking for the perfect dress, we generally have a good plan of attack. We have certain criteria and preferences to stick to – price range, colour, length of the

dress, halter neck or sweet-heart cut etc. We put in the time and leg work it takes to hunt around and try on all the choices that take our fancy to find out which works for us best. We might even take a couple of girlfriends to give their unbiased opinions and observations. We certainly wouldn't walk into the first shop we see and buy a dress without trying it on. We wouldn't buy a dress just because of the label or because someone else recommended it either. So why do we tend to be less choosy when it comes to relationships?

The following points identify some of the reasons women don't 'shop around' for love.

- **Feelings of inadequacy.** Feeling inadequate as a potential partner can stem from deep-seated low self-esteem issues and the belief that we are unworthy of love. Some women aren't choosy because they feel they don't deserve anyone better.
- **Fear of rejection.** Women who are fearful of rejection tend to shy away from social interaction and have difficulty meeting new people. They are less inclined to actively seek out the sort of people they would like in their lives, and they are limited to the choice of potential partners who approach them.
- **Being a pleaser.** Sometimes we can be 'sucked into' a relationship after a few casual dates without ever making a clear decision that we want to start a relationship with someone. You may feel a sense of obligation to the partner

because you have been dating, and you don't want to let them down or hurt them by ending it. This is essentially a fear of saying 'no' and reflects submissiveness.

All of these are common experiences, and can really hinder our search for love. So before you even start looking, remind yourself that you are special. Remind yourself that you are a confident and mature woman who deserves the best that life has to offer. Don't be afraid to shop around!

Now, let me just clarify that 'shopping around' does not mean sleeping around. Its simply about having the courage to get out there, meet new people, go on dates, and explore your options. And why shouldn't we? It can be empowering and liberating for women to go on dates, have an enjoyable night, and know that a single date doesn't automatically lead to a relationship. Dating serves an important function – it allows you to learn about his passions, interests, and personality, and for him to learn about yours. How else will you know if the two of you 'gel'? You can't judge a book by its cover, you know!

Whether you're looking for Mr Right, or just a decent bloke to go out with, remember to use your retail skills. Start with a general idea of what you're looking for, have a keen eye for quality, and don't make a purchase until you feel absolutely fabulous!

- Dr Vanessa Cook, Registered Health Psychologist
Inner Balance Personal Training. Ph 0419 894 621

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