

# Seven Dating Detours Women Take on the Road to True Love and Commitment

*By Lorraine Banfield*

Shakespeare once said, “The road to true love never did run smooth’, but that doesn’t mean we have to contribute to the bumpy ride ourselves. What I find as a therapist working with singles is that women often make serious dating mistakes and then wonder what happened. I call these detours and have identified the seven most common ones.

1. Discounting the role of biology and hard wiring in our dating behaviors. We have come along way baby, but we are still ruled by our hormones and our biology. What this means is that men are hardwired to do certain things and so are women. We can make intellectual decisions to do it differently, but these decisions are often sabotaged by our basic nature. Now does this mean that women are relegated to the home, while the man goes out and brings home the bacon? No, not by a long shot, but it does mean that women are receptive and men are proactive. In the dating world, this means he makes the call and you decide whether to answer the call. In other words, he pursues and you choose. He has the power to “go after what he wants” and you have the power “to choose what you want.” This is equal power in my book.
2. Miscalculating the high value men put on the respect they get from you as part of the decision to commit to a relationship with you. Yes, men are sexual beings and this is certainly important to them; but when I work with divorced men, I rarely hear them say they got divorced due to sexual issues. More often than not it has more to do with how the woman treated him and whether she respected and valued him as a man. So in choosing a man to date, choose one you can and do respect and value, and then let him know this by your attitude and actions toward him.
3. Choosing a Fixer Upper. Men are not do-it-yourself projects. This goes along with detour number two. If a woman does not respect and value a man as he is from date one, then going out with him and attempting to “fix him” is a major detour. Now I’m not saying that a woman can’t influence a man to change some things about himself-- she probably can, but be careful that these are not character or value laden things. If he is not an ethical and moral man, then nothing you do will change this. If has addictions or a history of infidelity or career problems or emotional issues of long standing, then these are what he comes with and will leave with. Don’t go there-- meaning, don’t start a relationship with a man unless you respect him right away. As for things you may be able to change--I have seen women who were able to get a man to improve his image in terms of his clothes. I have seen women who have been able to introduce a man to more cultural things, and I have seen women who have helped a man enlarge his vocabulary or eat a well-balanced diet, but those are about it. Most of the time, what you see is what you get.

4. Having sex before a committed relationship is established. This is probably the biggest and sometimes the most difficult detour to get out of once it happens. Here are the pitfalls: Men can have sex without commitment fairly easily. They can certainly have it without love. For many men, sex and a relationship do not necessarily have anything to do with each other. Remember, they are hardwired to pursue attractive women, women they can mate with – this is a biological urge. This urge does not make them bad people, it simply makes them normal men. Women, by the same token, are biologically programmed to find a mate who will stay around and provide for them and the baby that is the natural result of a sexual union. Now I know that some of you are saying, "Yeah, but we have birth control now," or even, "I have had all my kids and so has he, so this should not come into play"--but this is discounting biology and hormones as noted in detour number one. His hormones are urging him to find a willing woman and mate with her. Her hormones are telling her that once she has sex with a guy, bond with him and keep him around. This is because as soon as a woman has sex with a man, her body secretes a bonding chemical called oxytocin. Even if she was not sure about him before she had sex with him, now he takes on a rosy glow fueled by this powerful hormone. She now feels compelled to try and keep him whether he was just having some fun sex with her, he was a fixer-upper, or he simply wasn't what she had in mind.
5. Asking men to dance, calling them, sending them emails or cute cards is a waste of your time, if you are interested in a long-term committed relationship. It's the man's biological job to pursue the woman. So if he is not in active pursuit of you, then he is either not interested, not ready, or not in your league. Again, I go back to how we are hard wired. Men are hard wired to plant their seed – there is just no better way to say it. If they look at you at a dance or have gone out with you already and they are not actively pursuing you, then they are not interested, or not interested enough, to do what men have been doing since the dawn of time to get you to choose him. Remember, men pursue and women choose. Now once an LTR is established, and you'll know when this is the case, then you can do all of these things. Until that time comes, this is a big detour. So, unless you want to get stuck on that road for a long time, I would keep myself occupied with other things so I won't be tempted to make that call or send that email. By the way, this goes for first-time internet meetings as well. Do not send him a thank you email afterward. If he is interested in you, he will call you or email you. This has nothing to do with good manners either, so don't give me that. When it comes to dating, that rule does not apply.
6. Talking shop. Most women these days have a job, and many have professional careers. They are successful and when they are at work, they use the rules of work, which by the way, were established a long time ago by men. Work is a male world and women have joined that world and have done quite well in it. But dating is a different world and has different rules. Talking shop, that is, you talking shop, is a turn off to many, if not most men. He himself may do this as a way of impressing you, which is natural,. Remember, he wants you to choose him – but when you talk shop, it throws off the romantic chemistry of dating. He's looking for what makes you different from him--not what

makes you just like him. Also, men by nature, are competitive and when you talk shop this brings out his competitive side. Romance does not bloom in a competitive environment. Now this does not mean that once you are in an LTR that you can't talk shop with your man, of course you can. If you were not able to do this with him, then one of your important needs would go unmet – so I am not suggesting that you can never talk about your work – but not at the beginning. He needs to fall in love with the mystery of your feminine nature – the Aphrodite in you - not the part of you that is just like him.

7. Not valuing and validating your own self worth. Men love women who love themselves. Remember, they are competitive and like to win and of course they want to win something of value. If you think you are something special, then so will he. And this goes for women of any age – your value does not go down with age unless you think it does. It also does not go down with statistics. Just because there are other women out there on the dance floor or on his list of potential matches on Internet dating sites, does not decrease your value unless you think it does. If a man does not treat you in a way that feels like he values you, then you need to move on. He is either someone who doesn't value women and relationships or he has the impression from you that you don't think much of yourself, and he is just feeding back to you this belief. In this situation it is best to disengage from him and from dating and do some work on your own self worth, and don't date until you feel really good about yourself.

Now for those of you who are thinking this does not apply to you or you know someone who has beaten the odds and they are now living happily ever, all I can say is they are the lucky ones. Common sense and statistics tell us that most people on the other hand will fall within the great bell-shaped curve of this dating theory. Most successful women, in terms of finding true love and commitment, know and understand why these seven things are detours. They have gone down the bumpy road to love and have learned some valuable lessons.

They know that men and women are wired differently. They know that they can't change a guy from a frog to a prince. They know that having sex too soon is a big mistake. They know that if she does not respect him he probably won't marry her and even if he does they are headed for trouble; that talking shop is a real romance killer; that calling men and being the pursuer is why the book *He's Just Not That Into You* was such a big seller; and that if she doesn't put a high value on herself, she can't expect a man to do it for her.

So the next time you're thinking of taking one of these detours, stop and turn around and go back and re-start your trip. I guarantee you'll be glad you did.

Happy Dating,

Lorraine