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## DECIDING TO COMMIT by Renee Piane

As the dating Coach at Elite, I'm asked a lot of questions about commitment. In today's fast-paced dating scene, people are confused about when and how to commit. Fear of scaring someone away, being rejected and not knowing the person well enough are common reasons we don't commit. I believe it "takes two to tango." If both of you are ready and willing to commit, the relationship has a chance. The problem is with timing and when one person is uncertain. I recommend that couples--in the courting phase who like each other but don't yet know if there's long-term potential--make a short-term commitment to one another as follows:

- A. Decide to date each other exclusively without the distractions of dating others concurrently.**
- B. Establish that you share the goal of a long-term commitment and explore the relationship with that intention in mind!**
- C. Discuss the important issues: religion, sex, children, work, money family, fitness and any other topics relevant to either/both of you in the long-run.**
- D. Agree to a mutually-acceptable timeframe--say two to three months, after which you will both reevaluate the relationship and agree (or not) to remain exclusive for another period of time e.g. a month or two, which in turn will determine if there's a long-term commitment, engagement plans etc.**
- E. Work on opening your heart, communicating freely, exploring compatibility and keeping the relationship fresh and the fire of passion burning.**
- F. Don't ignore red flags; speak up when something is bothering you and/or your feelings change. The commitment is only valid when both of you are embracing it. If the relationship isn't working, then do something about it; discuss ways for improvement or sever the commitment.**

*I know many couples who have tried this method and succeeded! Need some motivation or pointers on livening up your social life or giving yourself a makeover? Elite Connections clients get a special discount! 800-923-4200*



# WHY DO MEN CHANGE THEIR MINDS?

**If you are among the women who thought you had a story book romance only to find that Sir Galahad became The Invisible Man and left you feeling like Lady I've-been-had, this is for you!**

**Did Prince Charming ride off at a full gallop when it seemed time to make a commitment?** He wasn't complaining, right? You were spending most weekends together for several months, and everything seemed fine. How could he have gone from aggressively pursuing you to exiting stage right without a cue? It's so confusing! He up and left with a rather hollow-sounding explanation like: "It's not you; it's me." You find yourself asking what the heck happened.

**What changed? Did you miss something? If it wasn't him, then was it you?** Relationships are about two people relating, not about which of you is to blame. In instances of many divorces I've seen, in which one person finally calls it quits, the "deal-breaker" was usually there from the start. Most see the weakness or flaw early on but overlook it, hoping it will go away or become unimportant. Perhaps they see other qualities that outweigh the flaw and are willing to "take the bitter with the sweet". Unfortunately, it's only during a bitter break-up that attention is drawn back to that negative trait. We might ask ourselves why the relationship was okay for this long and not good enough for a real commitment. It's helpful to examine what it was that we were communicating about? We noticed that Romeo wasn't perfect. However, in order to avoid conflict and focus on compatibility, did we simply choose to focus on areas of agreement? That may be good strategy at a party but can be disastrous in a romantic relationship. We all--men included--make decisions based on our deepest held values and then simply put up with the small stuff. And if we are driven to make everyone like us, then we might avoid serious issues where lack of agreement may cause conflict.

**Instead of using dating or a matchmaking service to screen through the masses for our soul mate, we may find ourselves saying: "Choose me! Choose me!" on every date out of a need for approval and love.** In other words, you haven't even decided whether you even like him (with or without his faults), but nonetheless you get deeply invested in whether or not he likes you. You may also be busy proving that you are worthy of a relationship (never mind the quality of it!), particularly after the last cowboy rode off into the sunset without you. You may be missing the point of dating and failing to recognize the reason the last one trotted off.

**Getting along in dating is a bit like getting along on a vacation.** Who can't do it when you're away from it all in such a beautiful place? Mostly it's fun...dinners, movies, plays, barbecues, cocktail parties, concerts, sports activities etc. Who can't get along most of the time doing these things? So you get along, but do you both focus on common ground and areas of compatibility, avoiding areas of discord? Did you build a relationship on pleasantries and hormones but fail to delve into the real issues of building a life and family together? It's certainly tempting to avoid controversial issues, particularly when the relationship is hormone-driven. It's so much nicer avoiding conflict!

**Addressing important, personal issues may test your basic assumptions about intimacy and the very foundation of the relationship.** However, avoidance of such issues is only putting off the inevitable and causing you more pain and grief in the end. It also dooms the relationship to superficialdom. It might label you as someone who's not to be taken seriously or too fragile to handle serious issues and/or conflict. Of course, the man is just as much to blame for steering clear of significant and potentially disruptive issues. He, too, may be unwilling to confront controversial matters or deal with the flaws he sees in you and/or the relationship. And he, perhaps even more so than you, is heavily invested in the intoxicating sexual intimacy. However, playing it safe only provides temporary contentment and eventual heartbreak.

**This brings us to yet another difficult issue-- namely, whether or not you and the dearly departed partner presented and maintained an authentic self in the relationship.** Were you both genuine, or did you present a lovable but inauthentic semblance of yourself? Did either of you try to present a nearly perfect image, only to crumble and flee when blemishes oozed out? It's possible that your relationship was maturing and on the verge of becoming serious around the time he couldn't cope with the loss of his image and subsequent loss of your respect and admiration. *If one leaves when the relationship seems okay, then the relationship can be remembered as a good, self-validating one. The alternative is waiting for it to fall apart and having to deal with failure. While he may seem like the villain, maybe he left in order to forever remain a "prince" in his own mind.*

*Written by Dr. Gary Golden for Elite Connections*

## Ask Sherri and Keri "Matters of the Heart"

Online dating advice  
**Get answers to your  
dating dilemmas!**  
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### HE'S BLOWING ME OFF

Dear Sherri and Keri,  
I've been having a good time with Tom, and we've been dating about four months. But he has been blowing me off for the last couple of weeks. Do you suppose he's really so busy that he can't make a 10-minute phone call?  
Sylvia, 42, Calabasas

Dear Sylvia,  
**We hate to break it to you, but it sounds like he has either changed his mind about you or met someone else. It's a cop out to just stop calling, but many people simply default to this approach. If you need closure, you ought to call him and let him know that his disappearing act is unsettling to you. Ask him to be honest with you about what's going on with him, and make it safe for him to open up.**

### AFRAID OF COMMITMENT

Dear Sherri and Keri,  
I've been in a relationship for six months, and my girlfriend (30 years-old) is pushing me to commit. I like her a lot but don't think at this time I'm ready to settle down. I've been faithful, but if I have to ask her to marry me right now, the answer is no. How do I tell her without losing her?  
Steve, 33, Agoura

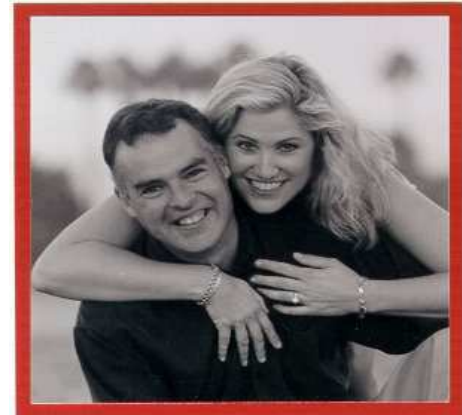
Dear Steve,  
Honesty is always the best policy; so let her know where you're coming from. Most women her age don't have time to waste on a guy who's unsure about a future together. On the other hand, six months isn't always enough time to be able to make that kind of decision. Let her know how much you like her and have been faithful to her. That says a lot and should be enough for her to hang on a little while longer. As time goes on, and you still don't want to lose her, then maybe she is THE ONE for you!

### At A Loss About Women

Dear Sherri and Keri,  
I can get women in their late 20's and early 30's to look at me and talk to me. But to even get a coffee date with them is a big problem. I have dozens of stories that are examples of this. I'm thinking that there is something in my relating style that's getting me shot down. I have a good idea of what that might be, but damn if I know how to change it.  
Paul, 43 Business Owner, Redondo Beach

Dear Paul,  
**The women may find you friendly and easy to talk to but who knows if they're interested and or available? That's the problem with meeting women you just happen to bump into while out and about. More often than not, the women who are friendliest are the ones who are attached--as in have a boyfriend or husband. It's "safe" for them to flirt, when they are not actually single. In the future, if a woman declines a date, she is either not interested or not available. Or it may be the simple fact that you are a little too old to be a match for women more than 10 years your junior. If there is something in your "relating style" that needs changing, just being conscious of it is half the battle. You won't change over night, but you can make some adjustments over time.**

## A Match Made In Heaven!



### Magnificent match leads to marriage!

*Al and Liz met in the fall of 2000, after Liz's brother Brian bought her a membership to Elite Connections. Two introductions later, Liz met Al Tyler. A year later they were engaged. And on April 27, 2002, they tied the knot in a beautiful ceremony at St. Margaret of Scotland Episcopal Church in San Juan Capistrano, followed by a spectacular reception dinner at The Ritz Carlton in Laguna Niguel, where matchmakers Keri and Sherri were honored to be guests.*

*As he quieted the band and took the floor, Al addressed a ballroom-full of over 200 guests. "None of this would have been possible," he said "if it weren't for Elite Connections and Keri Roberts."*

*The happy couple honeymooned for two incredible weeks in Tahiti and Bali. And the honeymoon will continue in their beautiful new home in Long Beach.*