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Prince Charming Potential (PCP)

Ninety-four percent of women between the ages of eighteen and forty-five start thinking about how to change a man within the first four minutes of a date. A man would *never* say about a woman he just went out with, "She's got potential." It's almost a comical notion: two men are sitting at a bar, and one says to the other, "So, man, how was your date yesterday?" The other nods and replies, "Yeah, this one, she's got potential."



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They each take a swig of beer. "If I can get her to swivel less on her golf swing," the second man continues, "she could break forty. And I'm sure that leg curls would take care of that bit of cellulite on the back of her thighs. She snorts when she laughs, but I can probably get used to that. Yep, this could be the ticket."

The first man slaps his friend on the back and says, "Good luck, man. You are more of an optimist than I, my friend. Remember that babe last year? I thought she was almost perfect. I thought I could change her. There were just a few little things that drove me nuts: that friggin' little dog of hers that she'd bring everywhere, that vegetarian kick she was on, and then the last straw—a Mets fan." Sigh. "But good luck, my friend."

Never. It never happens.

You, on the other hand, have said it a hundred times, and you've thought it twice as much. You are excited when you say, "Whew, baby, now this one, this one has some po-ten-tial!" Just a few tweaks, you think—whiten the teeth, throw out that dorky shirt he wears every third date, zap the propensity to quote *Superbad* or *Top Gun* at every possible moment—and he's golden.

Are you kidding? You become exasperated when you put together Ikea furniture or fix the glitch in the garbage disposal. Now you have a man who is hardwired to remember every Robert De Niro or Russell Crowe line ever uttered, and you think you are going to change him?

Regardless of your pathetic failure rate with past fix-it projects, somewhere inside you there is a voice saying, "Go for it. It'll be easy!" Are you high, girl? You have a better chance of birthing triplets at age fifty than slipping that gnarly shirt off the hanger and into the garbage without him noticing.

Rarely will a woman report, after a first date, that the guy is perfect exactly the way he is. No man is perfect. It's just that some have Prince Charming potential (PCP).

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We polled friends, family, patients, and strangers to find out the most popular reasons women label men as guys with potential rather than as ideal. It's because he does or is the following:

- Bites his nails
- Watches sports too much
- Is not romantic enough
- Surrounds himself with immature friends
- Is messy
- Watches only dude movies
- Has terrible table manners
- Has funny tics
- Displays bad hygiene
- Has a bad sense of humor
- Doesn't get along with his family
- Doesn't get along with your family
- Is a people pleaser to an extreme
- Is a little chunky
- Looks at other women
- Has a very narrow food range
- Drives like a maniac
- Is terrible to take to parties
- Is jealous
- Is stingy
- Is moody
- Works too much
- Works too little

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- Is always weighing in on how you look
- Is too controlling
- Hogs the bed
- Is too hairy
- Won't try new things

Women love to commiserate with one another about these things. Think about it: your friend tells you that her new boyfriend has an annoying habit of leaving dirty Q-Tips on her sink, and you can hardly wait until she's finished to tell her about your ex's dirty little habit of putting his toothbrush facedown on any surface in the bathroom. You never did get over his nose hairs, his mispronunciation of a particular word, the way he danced, or the fact that he didn't dance at all.

You both laugh. Then the conversation usually turns to how you failed to change him. You tried everything: cajoling, humor, bribery. Maybe you stumbled along, seething and nagging about the dirty toothbrush, until he slipped up with an indiscretion or a lie, and only then did you break off the relationship.

Perhaps the conversation turns to how the toothbrush guy also made you laugh all the time, was there for you through a crisis, or got your brother a job. You learned to rinse off the toothbrush and put it in the holder yourself because you realized that in the scheme of things, it was worth it.

There is a third, distant, possibility: that he actually learned to stop leaving the toothbrush around. There is a chance that something you said or did got through to him, whether it was a positive incentive (sex) or blackmail (no sex). Of course, this is the most desired outcome, because it seems to affirm that he really loves you. It's why women will gloat over successes in changing their boyfriends but linger over failures as if they were as personally meaningful as SAT scores.

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Exactly *how* one managed to change a boyfriend is an essential part of this conversation. Tactics (usually subversive ones) are shared and analyzed. Women pride themselves on spotting PCP and on how they made their man change. Persistence, creativity, and the three Bs—bargaining, bribery, and blackmail—are the most common feminine fixer-upper tools. Women use them without any shame, and that is what blows men away: women will change men (or try to) without batting an eyelash, and then rehash the whole thing over salad with a friend.

Blame Music

For every feisty Pink song, every girl-powered TLC song, and, of course, Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive," there are hundreds of ditties playing in elevators, supermarkets, and gyms all around the country that are whispering the same message in your ear: love will conquer all. Male singers croon, "Without you, I am nothing." These messages are—surprise!—hogwash.

Whether you are divorced or holding out for a one and only, chances are that you want a man who will be a good gym partner, a vacation mate, your financial and intellectual equal, and someone who dreams as you do of bigger and better. Women now, more than ever, see that they have the choice not to marry or to stay single after a divorce. They are exploring all of the twenty-first-century options, which include coparenting and cohabitation as well as other alternative situations.

It turns out that marriage is not always such a great thing for women, and this is not a recent finding. In 1972 sociologist Jessie Bernard reported in her book *The Future of Marriage* that fulfilled single women lived longer than their disappointed married sisters. Men, on the other hand, needed to be married to live longer than their unmarried counterparts, regardless of their happiness.

Blame Hollywood

Nearly every “chick flick” out there, culminating with *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, is about a guy with a heart of gold who has undergone a change in order to get the girl. At other times it's the woman who has to step up her game, whether it's learning to break-dance (*Step Up*) or trading in her poodle skirt for a pair of high-waisted spandex pants (*Grease*), all to show the guy that underneath it all, she is the one that he wants. She thinks, “You may not be attracted to a woman like me, you may be embarrassed or think we have nothing in common, but *I* will change your mind.” Maybe the change she encourages is showing him that his soft side, the little boy inside him, is safe with her. Whether the man is Baron von Trapp, Rocky, or Jason Bourne, she can melt his icy heart. It's worth it; he has PCP.

It's hard to find a major motion picture that features a female lead who is content to be single. Almost every plot includes a romantic story line, preferably one that culminates in a big wedding. It's such an important device in feature films that the quality of the male partner seems to take the backseat. All he has to do is show up. *Sex and the City* was practically one long commercial for a wedding, and for what? So Carrie could marry the guy who had been stringing her along for years and then left her at the altar? In *Knocked Up*, Alison sidelines her successful career to mate with an unemployed pothead. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the heroine chases down a man in the street—in her underwear, in the snow. It didn't matter that he had just read her diary and started a fistfight at a dinner party.

In real life, you probably would recognize that being completely unreliable, unapologetically unemployed, or disrespectful of your privacy are significant, highly detrimental qualities in a boyfriend. If you're now thinking, “But I could change Mr. Big,

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Ben Stone, or Mark Darcy!” , it’s important that you read through to the end of this book.

What Is Your Prince Charming Perspective?

You meet a man who is exactly what you’ve been looking for (pick one): tall, rich, funny, outdoorsy, family-oriented, wild in the bedroom, fanatical about workouts, and good to his mom and his sisters. Furthermore (pick another), he hates sports, loves shopping, likes to cook, actually does laundry, and is crazy about having in-laws. You have gone off the deep end thinking about how this tall, laundry-doing man will chat with your dad as he whips up some of his famous Bolognese.

He needs some tweaking, you say, but they all do. You know that he’s not going to be perfect—who is? So how do you regard your new friend, who has so many good things going for him that all he needs is a little fine-tuning? Does he become your project? Is it your moral imperative as a girlfriend to help him out? Or will you try to make adjustments in successive approximations, hoping for a compromise? If you’ve ever had a boyfriend accuse you of being controlling, or if you’ve ever referred to him as a “diamond in the rough,” a “fixer-upper,” or a guy with “tons of potential,” this is you. Don’t worry; we are here to help.

Women who like to work on partners who have PCP fall into one of the three following groups. Which one sounds familiar to you?

- *The Civilizer:* All men need a little bit of refinement. The basics are there. He just needs someone to help him grow up. It takes a bit of time and a whole lot of patience, but the result is that you have a decent man who is grateful that you helped him to grow, and he might even chuckle with you over what a savage he was.

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Subtext: You'll help him to grow. All it takes is a little TLC. The trouble is that you'll sound like more like a nagging mom than a girlfriend.

- *The Leveler*: You weigh the good qualities against the bad to see if the good ones prevail. For example, he's kind to you and your family, and he cleans up after himself; so what if he needs some more time to figure out what he wants to do with his life? You'll help him by being supportive and by introducing him to new ideas and the right people.

Subtext: It's a give-and-take. You're not perfect, either. Being in a relationship means that you bring out the best in each other. The drawback here is that complementary traits never perfectly mirror each other; it's rarely a 50–50 percent situation.

- *The Sculptor*: You look at every man as a lump of moldable clay. Like an artist seeing the painting on an empty canvas, you view him as your masterpiece in progress. To be with you, he has to change. Whatever method (force, ultimatums, or guilt) you have to employ to make it happen, you will.

Subtext: You love the challenge of a project. Within minutes of meeting someone, you start making lists of the things you'd like to improve. The problem is, when will you ever be happy?

These three descriptions have the same ingredients in common: your love will make him see the light; he'll weigh the wins and losses and come up with the conclusion that he needs to give up _____, grow up and stop _____, forget about _____, or come to terms with the fact that your love is worth so much more than _____.



Real Stories

"I grew up with the idea that everyone has faults. You took the good with the bad and then tried to minimize or extinguish the bad. For me, the bad was something I homed in on and tried to break down."

"To me it was just about adjustments and compromises that you make when you are with someone else, like sharing. Whenever you do something with anyone else, you always have to adjust—think of a roommate or a new tennis partner. I figured that if I was amenable to changing some things, he should be, too."

"I was about the project. Give me a messed-up guy, and all I would want to do is fix things around him. I'd start with his surroundings, then manage his life. He became my project. He needed me but hated me because he needed me. If I left, he would come crashing down again—I thought."

The Beginning

How did you get to this place? Experience and conversations with women have convinced us that it usually begins this way: After one date, or three or four, you think that he's quirky, but you know that you can smooth out some of his eccentricities. Perhaps he is normal and you are just waiting for some wacky thing to catch you off guard. Sometimes he has just hung around long enough to catch you on an off night when you happen to be a bit more open-minded. After a little wine and some good kissing, you figure that you can get over his one flaw—whether it's that he is a tiny bit condescending and protective or is actually proud of the fact that he has worn the same sneakers since 1998.

He needs a few adjustments, but he seems to be totally into your suggestions. You definitely think he has PCP.

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At least, it *seemed* that he was keen on what you were saying. When you hinted that he needed to work on his self-esteem because he underestimated himself, he smiled—in agreement, you thought. You were more or less putting the bait out there, saying, “You could strive for so much more, you could be my prince.” He heard you, and he smiled, which is universally understood as a positive sign—right?

Here’s the catch. From his perspective, he only heard you softly say something about how great he was. He was hungry, and you looked really good. Whatever you said didn’t require a reply (or so he thought), so he just smiled. You seemed happy enough with that.

Fast-forward a few more dates. You’re still talking about his self-esteem problem (as you have termed it), and he’s still smiling all the way back to your place. Everything is going fine, and he seems to really like you. So you decide to push, just a little bit harder, toward whatever it is you think would help him the most: therapy, a new job, or confronting his demeaning boss. You raise this issue. Once again, he only smiles. Not this time, you think, and you push again. This time you want a verbal response.

Here’s where things can get sticky. The poor guy doesn’t even know that he’s been chosen for your makeover project. He just might not want to participate. Perhaps he’s happy with the way things are, or maybe he doesn’t want to date a life coach. At this point, you should drop it, but you won’t. You’ve already decided, regardless of the odds, that you will make this guy over, even if it takes the whole year (or several). Besides, you’ve already invested x number of hours dating him, which doesn’t include the time you spent getting ready for dates and pondering over what he should do in life in order to really showcase the PCP that you know he has.

Then confusion sets in. The relationship seems to be going well. He enjoys the things you like to do. He solicits your opinions; he is thoughtful and inquisitive. It seems as if he really likes you. Now,

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because he seems so into you, you start to wonder, shouldn't he want to change? Shouldn't he want to become someone you'll like even more, who can make you very happy? Does this sound familiar? Change the venue or the issue at hand. Does it ring a bell yet?

At this juncture, you must consider the obstacles between your man and his potential. You know that he has PCP, so there may be all sorts of reasons for his flaws. Some may affect you more than others. Does he drop out of sight because he's a pilot or because he just "forgets" to call? Is he moody because he hates his job? Does he wear that ugly shirt that he dubs "lucky" because he won the lottery wearing it? Most obstacles are removable, but *how* is another, bigger question.

You keep working on him. The longer you date, the more straightforward your suggestions become. It should come as no surprise that this often provokes a knee-jerk emotional response. For example, you've been dating for a few weeks, you've slept together a few times, everything is great, and you suggest being exclusive. The guy thinks, "I worked hard to get to be a ladies' man, and she wants me to be monogamous." Maybe he cancels dates to work late and is MIA on Sundays prepping for the upcoming week. You ask him to lighten up, to remember that life is short. He thinks, "My family encouraged me to be diligent, and now you're asking me to work less." You pull one way, he pulls the other, and the tug of war is on. He is thinking about getting promoted and job security and you are thinking of the priceless quality of time spent together.

The Game of Tug-of-War

The ball is back in your court. You've suggested something, he has resisted, and now you need to decide what to do. The big question is, how will you react when he does something that he knows you

specifically want him not to do? For example, you've asked him to drive more carefully, but he's still doing eighty miles an hour past the elementary school. You've told him not to invite his friends over all the time, but they've been eating pizza on your couch for three days straight. Are you going to be able to keep your cool?

It can be endlessly frustrating to have the same conversation over and over—for both parties. It's possible that he's just forgetful and that as soon as you ask him to slow down, he apologizes and complies. Then again, he may give you the finger. If you ask him nicely to get his friends out of the house, it might jog his memory. If you reprimand him in front of his buddies, he's unlikely to be sympathetic to your request. Remember, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Still, no matter how nice you are, this situation is ripe for conflict. Maybe he shuts down and just doesn't want to hear your advice anymore (that he would be better off if he stopped biting his nails, getting too drunk, or dressing like a high school nerd circa 1987—of course he would be).

Here is where you have made your first mistake: you have assumed that he will be grateful that you believe in him. After all, he has PCP, and your intentions are so obviously right-minded. In fact, the more change you create, the more indebted he will be. Not only will you get the man of your dreams, he'll even thank you for it. This will bring the two of you closer and closer and closer—in your dreams.

I Don't Really Want to Change Him, I Just Want to Tweak Him a Little

You want the guy you're dating to just stop wearing one particular shirt or just stop telling one particular joke. There's always going to be one loose thread begging to be pulled. For most women, that

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thread is like a beacon. It's always there, in the corner of your eye. You tug gently at it, and you play with it when you're bored.

It might be an oversized leather jacket of his that you don't like, or maybe it's the story he always tells that gets on your nerves. He can certainly stop telling the one about "the blonde," but his sense of humor is going to remain the same. In a few weeks, someone will have sent him an utterly unfunny e-mail that he's now repeating at cocktail parties, and you'll be longing for the old lousy joke.



"I've never been a big believer of trying to

change someone else, but Randy was so close to perfect in every other regard that I felt almost desperate about trying to convince him to change. How could I give up all those other wonderful traits?"

Why Are Women Like This?

There's a lot of unconscious thought behind your work on a man. Women tend to become invested in a relationship more quickly than men do, which means that women are willing to devote more energy to it. Being supportive is often an important component of the way that women show love. There are many other reasons that women gravitate toward men they want to change, that they are so lured by guys with PCP.

For many women, the desire to fix up a boyfriend comes from the same place as affection. It seems natural that because you like him, you want good things for him and expect him to want good things for you, too. You look at your man and think, "Since I care about you, I want you to be the best that you can be. The standards I set for you are determined by love. I want you to aspire to things in the same way I do. If I didn't like you, I wouldn't care about what you achieve in life."

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A relationship is also a partnership, and as in any partnership, it's hard to keep everything equitable. You should certainly lend an ear if your man wants to unload and talk about his tough day at work. It's your job as a partner to help him feel better. You probably look at your boyfriend and conclude, "If we are going to be a team, then I have to encourage you, and you have to encourage me. That is what teams do."

Since relationships are joint ventures, many women, especially ambitious women, evaluate them the same way. For these high-powered women, their men have to fit with their vision for the future, and they're willing to help their fellow become that future if they believe that he has potential. Perhaps you gaze at your guy and say to yourself, "I have big dreams, so you have to step up to fit in my dream. I want you to be more polished, more successful, more sophisticated. How are we going to be an 'it' couple if you are satisfied where you are?"

The best partnerships involve people who have different skills. To you, it totally makes sense to be with someone because you are uniquely qualified to improve on his individual flaws. It feels like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle coming together. You may take a good long look at your man and think, "The thing you lack is the thing I am good at. You are like work for me, but I am comfortable with work."

Women who are looking for a real challenge go for broken men the way that cats go for catnip. These women think that they are acting altruistically, and these men make them feel safe. A guy quickly opens up and maybe even becomes dependent on his new girlfriend, at least for a time. Perhaps you can imagine yourself actually saying, "You are damaged but approachable. Initially, you are grateful that I would even pay attention to you. Then I start pushing you out of your damaged

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approachable comfort zone and you are not as psyched to be with me.”

There are a million variations on this basic theme. Flawed men strike deep chords in women. It is confusing because it seems like love, and it often is an essential part of love. However, it's important to recognize where your feelings are coming from—which nerve keeps being stimulated—especially if you always find yourself stuck in the same rut with boyfriends who just can't go the distance.

The Types of Women Who Love “Project Boyfriends”

Women who take on men who are “projects” are not all the same. Some do so consciously, others by habit. You either fit squarely into one of these categories or are a combination of two.

The Down Dater. Some women gravitate toward men who they know are somehow out of their league, and not in a good way. These men are often less attractive, smart, and accomplished than the women they go out with. If you haven't been one of these women, you've surely seen them: she has youth, beauty, and a great smile, and she's dating a man with thinning hair, a big gut, and a pocket protector. You might have thought, “He must have a lot of money,” but that's not always the case. Some women are just suckers for an underdog because they can be cute, plucky, passionate, and willing to please. Does this sound like you?

“I love the underdog. I root for the losing team, the overlooked student, the character in the movies who is always coming up short. I want to be the woman in the movie in which the underdog wins, and he gets, well . . . me, of course.”

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The Rebel. There are women who just love to date men who they know are inappropriate. On some level, they enjoy it when their men break the rules. He's way older, he's way younger, or he doesn't speak English and that's the only language she speaks. Does this sound like you?

"I love being defiant. It doesn't matter what I am defying. Ask me to do something, and I am automatically not going to do it. All you have to do is say to me, 'I don't think he is good for you! You are interested in *him*?' To which I will respond, 'Yeah, why not?' Then I will proceed to fall deeper in love with my physics professor, my questionable upstairs neighbor, or cellmate number 988-8098."

The Do-Gooder. Altruistic women who have gone through something bad—addiction, unemployment, depression—are deeply moved by someone struggling through the same set of circumstances. It's all so familiar, which can make it seem almost imperative that you help this man who is down on his luck—especially if your own struggles were difficult because you didn't have anyone to lean on. Does this sound like you?

"Once I was in a bad place, and I needed someone to help me. Now that I've met him, I can do for him what I wish someone had done for me."

The Skeptic. A real cynic thinks that men are deeply, fundamentally flawed. Therefore, you need to find the most controllable jerk around; someone who will be putty in your hands. By the time you're finished with him, he won't be such a jerk anymore, but (you think) he will feel completely grateful and attached to you, and only you, forever and ever. Does this sound like you?

"No guy is faithful. If I pick a real loser and fix him, he will stay with me. I can relax and totally be myself because he will be forever thankful."

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The Frankendater. The most idealistic of all the women who are looking for a fixer-upper wants to start with a man who is pretty much a blank slate. He has to meet some basic standards, but you fully anticipate molding most things about him to suit your requirements: clothes, humor, sociability, friends, and so forth. He will be your greatest creation, your true Prince Charming. Does this sound like you?

“I want to build the perfect boyfriend from scratch. All he needs are the basic qualities; I’ll add the extras and make him over. At least he’ll be predictable.”

Sometimes the character flaws are there to stay, and you would rather bear them than take on every last thing. If he drinks only Budweiser and you love nothing but wine, you may be able to happily coexist under the same roof. Other shortcomings are not so easy, however. Take a look at the following list of imperfections and test your reaction. What can you live with and what can you help him to change? Your answers will be based on your own personal tolerance level.

- He has poor social skills: he’s so shy that people think he’s aloof.
- He has a bad sense of humor: he’s crass, he’s loud, he’s immature.
- He is self-deprecating: he’s so down on himself.
- He is moody and can be mean: you never know whether he’s going to be nice to you.
- He is vain: it takes him longer to get dressed than it takes you.
- He is disorganized: he regularly misplaces his keys, wallet, phone, or passport.
- He is a flirt: you always find him talking to the pretty women. (That’s how he met you!)

Prince Charming, I Know You're Out There

Face it: you are a princess even if the glass slipper doesn't fit your foot (Cinderella) or even if you don't sleep through the night (Snow White). For once you'd like to see a story about a princess who lines up all the guys in her village, makes them flex and cook her dinner, and then decides "I'm not settling down yet" and dates for another couple of years. That would be nice.

However, it's not just Disney that has contributed to the idea that there is a Prince Charming out there just for you. Every day, you hear someone refer to her partner as her "other half," her "soul mate," "the one," or "the lid to my pot."

Desire Disconnect

Tantalizing you like a carrot in front of a donkey is the notion of your very own Prince Charming, only you're not living in a fairy tale. Prince Charming is in your own mind. Who he is, what he does, what he likes, and how he behaves are all projections based on your lifetime of experience. The irony is that the experiences you've had don't necessarily add up to envisioning the most realistic of guys.

Women are always looking to change the men they date, but they seldom realize why that PCP is such tempting bait. Many don't carefully compare the list of traits they ideally want in their future mate with the list of things they actually need. In other words, be careful what you wish for. Your imaginary Mr. Right could easily become a huge disappointment in the flesh. You think you want a rich, worldly man, but in fact, you'll be lonely when he goes away on his frequent work trips. You think you want an athletic, healthy man, but then you'll be annoyed every weekend when he spends Sunday training and making protein shakes.

Unfortunately the disconnect between desires and necessity regarding a mate is pretty common. Sometimes women just refuse

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to let their fantasies die. Perhaps you're attracted to bad boys and their motorcycles, but when you really think about it, you realize that you want a man in the kitchen making romantic dinners. Since you are unlikely to find a bad boy who is also a homebody, you will need to revise what it is you are looking for and why. Women might want to be with someone like James Bond, who can be rough-and-tumble and then waltz them tenderly around a ballroom, but the chances are that they won't be able to find that guy.

It may seem as though you've already been struggling with this situation, dating guys who seem to have everything you want (or thought you wanted) but who invariably lack the characteristics you absolutely need. For example, you're unlikely to find someone who is just like you in terms of education and background but who is also going to be totally unpredictable. If you want someone who's financially stable, that same man is unlikely to want to quit his job and travel for a year. Some accountants do indeed rock climb, but you have to make sure that the desired and required qualities you're looking for in a man don't negate one another.

Define Your Search

Which type of prince are you looking for? At least, whom do you *think* you're looking for?

Type 1: "I want a guy who is my best friend. We will be partners in the adventure of life."

Example: We went to school for the same amount of time and are in the same industry. Sometimes we are even told that we look alike. We are in sync. We exercise and eat in similar ways. He feels like my intellectual equal. We even make a similar amount of money. He can read my mind, and I his.

Pros: Negotiating everyday life is easy. You know how he thinks by thinking about how you think.

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Outcome: In your brain, similarity translates into relationship, and the more similar you are, the more he is relationship material. You are literally looking for you in male form.

Cons: Are you confusing the comfort of similarity with love? Will this end up feeling as if you are dating your evil twin?

Type 2: "I want a guy to save me. He will be my knight in shining armor and sweep me off my feet."

Example: He wants to take you away from your daily life and plop you into his. He pursues you eagerly and wants to incorporate you into his routine immediately. He loves to take you out to fancy dinners and give you gifts. He's romantic and traditional. He opens doors, pulls your chair out for you, and knows how to slow dance.

Pros: It's nice to be showered with attention. He makes you feel secure, desired, and beautiful.

Outcome: Every time you start dating someone new, you clear your calendar in case he calls. You evaluate each new relationship by how attentive the man is, and you would never think to pick up the phone (or a dinner check) yourself. You expect each date to blossom into a movielike series of romantic scenarios.

Cons: What is it about your life that makes you need to be taken care of so badly?

Type 3: "I want a guy who complements me, who is everything I am not."

Example: He's outgoing, social, and popular, whereas you are quiet and shy. You go to parties with his friends, and he does most of the talking, which is fine, because he's charming, funny, and smart (qualities you're not so sure about in

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yourself). When you take him to an occasional party with your friends, you can relax, knowing that he'll carry all the conversations. Sometimes you wonder if your friends like him more than they like you.

Pros: You can now experience the other side of life effortlessly. He holds your interest and satisfies your desire to be a different person.

Outcome: Every time you meet a man who strikes you as different from you in how he talks, dresses, or behaves, you think that he is your soul mate.

Cons: Could you work on the “missing” parts of yourself without a man?

Type 4: “I want a guy who is my better half, literally. He will make sure that I stay on the straight and narrow.”

Example: Perhaps you have struggled with discipline or even drugs and alcohol. On your own, you tend to oversleep, miss meetings, and get too drunk at cocktail parties. Your boyfriend makes sure that you get up, reminds you about your appointments, and starts substituting water for alcohol if you become a little sloshy. He's like a safety net, ready to catch you if you slip up. He often scolds you for behaving badly, but you deserve it.

Pros: You can relax, knowing that your man will keep you in line. You feel supported and taken care of. It's kind of like having an assistant.

Outcome: You associate policing and discipline with love and affection. You find men attractive who, even if they hardly know you, will tell you what to do.

Cons: Are you looking to date the father you never had or the big brother you did?

He's Got Potential

Type 5: "I want a guy who provides a nice home and financial security. He'll be reliable and stable."

Example: You may never see him, but you know that he's working hard at being a doctor, a lawyer, or a businessman. He's occasionally stressed out, but you know that it's because he's working so hard, and you put your own concerns aside to take care of him (because he's the breadwinner). You often go out with him and his business associates and their wives. It's a conventional life.

Pros: You don't have to worry about money as long as you're with this guy.

Outcome: Every suitor is evaluated first by his bank account and second by his earning potential. You can't become interested in a guy who's not in a position to take financial responsibility for both of you.

Cons: Will you be able to live independently if he jets off with his secretary?

Type 6: "I want a guy to show off to my friends, family, and coworkers. He'll be gorgeous, smart, and accomplished."

Example: He's an international mergers and acquisitions negotiator who is always just getting off the plane (first class) from Zurich, Tokyo, or Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, he looks perfectly stylish and masculine. He tells great stories about negotiating peace deals in the Middle East. He looks like an underwear model. Everywhere you go, people want to know who he is.

Pros: It makes you feel awesome to show up with him wherever you go. Your friends and family are totally wowed that you could date someone who is so amazing on paper and in person.

Prince Charming Potential

Outcome: Each first date is like an interview. You evaluate potential mates by how impressed your high school best friend will be by his work experiences and his cheekbones. Even if you don't feel much chemistry brewing, if he's an Ivy League-educated, highly employed fashion plate, you'll go out with him again and again.

Cons: Is it fun to date someone else's supposed ideal?

What Is Your Prince Charming **Really** Like?

Tall, dark, and handsome may be a good place to start, but besides the obvious, what does this perfect specimen of a man have that you have been looking for? There are a million different characteristics that could seem paramount to you. If your family is your number one priority, your prince will have to fit right in with them. Your parents and your siblings have to approve of him, and he has to like them enough to want to spend time with them without putting up a huge fight.

Some women are intent on finding the best gene pool for their future babies. These women are saddled with an almost endless list of qualities to consider: intelligence, health, height, athleticism, emotional well-being, and so forth are all on the list of traits.

What traits make a man a Prince Charming in your eyes? Put a checkmark next to the ones in the following list that matter most to you:

Smart

Funny

Successful

Kind

He's Got Potential

Generous
Introspective
Extroverted
Athletic
Family-oriented
Good in bed
Ambitious
Good with children
Shy
Adoring
Good in the kitchen
Adventurous
Interesting
Well traveled
Well read
Stable

Is This a Female Problem?

We don't need to remind you that men and women approach the process of mating very differently. Men cast a wide net, and depending on confidence, alcohol, and peer pressure, they draw a porous line between the women who are good enough for the night and those who might be good enough for longer than that. The only real math they are doing is to evaluate what's on offer in any particular scenario: a potential girlfriend or a simple roll in the hay. Any woman who responds to their clichéd one-liner will

Prince Charming Potential

fit into one or the other category—or will have a cute friend who is standing behind her.

Women, unlike their undiscerning counterparts, are choosy about whom they make eye contact with. Think about it: if you made eye contact and smiled at every guy at the bar, you'd be ambushed by all of them. Instead, your brain conducts a complex calculation that takes milliseconds, taking all of the variables into account. These variables are weighted and interchangeable: maybe you'll look at a guy who's too short, because he has great eyes and seems to be having a great time, or maybe you'll approach a guy who's dressed like a geek, because he's tall and stepped out of a Ferrari.

Women tend to be more realistic when it comes to dating. We talked earlier about women who date guys who are supposedly beneath them. You've probably known loser men who seem to get the best women. For some reason, they attract a lot of women and disdain dating anyone with any of their own flaws. They do this by finding women who want to fix them. Maybe these men stick around only until the nagging becomes really annoying, but in the meantime, they're satisfying their needs.

In addition, women are constantly getting feedback about themselves from girlfriends, magazines, television, and people on the street. Since how women look is generally considered so much more important than how men look, they're always asking their friends for advice: "Do you like these jeans on me? Should I cut my hair shorter?" Most guys couldn't care less if their jeans are good for their shape or if they use too much gel in their hair. Men's magazines, unlike women's magazines, are constantly telling their readers how hot and awesome they are; no wonder they go out ready to chat up any XX chromosome carrier in the vicinity.

He's Got Potential

Given these stacked odds, women are practically destined to be more flexible about who they like, because they're interested in having far fewer romantic partners. Men are wired in the other direction. They'll nod at everything you say if there is a chance of bedding you. They may never call you again, but that's another book. In the next chapter we'll explain in more detail how men's and women's brains work to encourage your fixer-upper instincts.

Finally, maybe you keep picking men to fix up because you have the notion that asking for more is being too picky. Maybe you don't think that you deserve someone who is already as fabulous as you are. Nevertheless, you either have a guy like this now or you keep picking this type and losing. That is why you are reading this book, isn't it?



Real Stories

"I would make a direct line for the most broken guy in the room. If he looked sad, confused, angry, or lonely, I was all over him. First I'd figure him out: let him talk and talk, ask questions, and become the world's best listener. The more information I got from him, the more I thought that our relationship was special. I knew things he had never told anyone."

"Jeff was cheap—not frugal, just cheap. He'd cut corners, try to get me to cut corners, try to take seconds for free, and bargain every chance he had. He was so cute and charming when he did it that it didn't bother me at first. Then one time I started thinking that he just didn't want to pay the extra couple of bucks for me, and I was livid. As far as I was concerned, if he tried to save money at other times, so be it, but why when he was with me? Wasn't I good enough?"

Prince Charming Potential

"Frank was frugal; he wouldn't spend a dime on himself. I'd look at his old towels and sheets and his worn-out clothes and want to fix them myself. Soon I was buying him things. It never came back around, though. The unspoken rule was that if I wanted something changed, anything from a new comforter for the bed to new soles on his shoes, I'd have to get it."

