

LIFESTYLE

If You're Wondering 'Why Am I Single?' Start Here

These are the unconscious habits, patterns, and pitfalls that could be holding you back from love.

By **Maressa Brown** | Published on May 21, 2021 @ 11:38AM



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As we head into what's already being characterized as a "hot vax summer," filled with opportunities to socialize with potential partners after a period of far too much distancing, you might be among the many people who are totally freaked out by the prospect of dating again. And if you've already done your fair share of video dates, distanced dates, and everything in between, it's totally normal to be frustrated by the prospect of "getting back out there" altogether. Despite your best efforts to put yourself out there, you might be wondering, "Why am I single??"

Sure, there's the fact that swiping right or swiping left can be incredibly dehumanizing and the dating pool is full of people who

aren't ready for a serious commitment. But the reasons you're still single can also be unconscious, points out [Stephanie Macadaan](#), a licensed marriage and family therapist in the San Francisco Bay Area, California.

Here, nine reasons you might be unattached, even if you don't want to be, according to experts.

1. You're trying to protect yourself from getting hurt.

If you didn't grow up feeling safe and secure with your parents or caregivers or struggled to experience that feeling in previous relationships, it's natural that you might have developed a fear of intimacy. "As humans, we are born to connect and bond but experiencing unpredictable relationships can create a fear of opening yourself up to another again," says Macadaan.

In order to protect yourself from a painful experience, feeling trapped in an unhealthy relationship, or a bond leading to a big change in your life, you'll have an "inner saboteur lurking under the surface, putting up blocks," explains Macadaan. "The saboteur is creative and can show up in various ways including insecurity, body image issues, being extremely picky, avoiding dating altogether, continually putting off socializing and dating or keeping yourself very busy with other things."

To address this, she recommends writing down all the fears and blocks and doubts that come up around dating, and see what comes up.

While you can gain a lot of self-awareness through this exercise, working one-on-one with a therapist is the best way to understand unconscious blocks and gain more control over them, says Macadaan.

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2. You could stand to identify your dating blind spots.

Those fears and blocks and doubts can also manifest as "patterns, behaviors, or ways of thinking — or dating blind spots — that are holding you back from finding love," explains Logan Ury, Hinge's Director of Relationship Science and author of [How to Not Die Alone](#). She categorizes the common blind spots into three different "dating tendencies": the romanticizer, the maximizer, and the hesitator. (You can find out which category you fall under by taking a quiz on her

site.)

The romanticizer is the person who loves love and believes they're single because they just haven't met the right person yet. "They expect love to be effortless, so when they get into a relationship and hit that inevitable rough spot, they think, 'Oh, this must just not be the person for me,'" notes Ury.

The maximizer is the person who's constantly looking for someone who might be a bit hotter, a bit more ambitious, never fully embracing the partner they might have right in front of them. "They always keep looking instead of committing to someone and building that great relationship," says Ury.

The third type is the hesitator, who has unrealistic expectations for themselves, believing they can't get out there until they've become the person they want to be — until they've lost 10 pounds or cleaned their apartment or gotten a different job. "But dating is a skill, and you only get better by going out and doing it," notes Ury.

By identifying your dating tendency, you can gain the kind of self-awareness that helps you reform those relationship-blocking patterns and behaviors in order to move forward, explains Ury.

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3. Your screening process could use a bit of zhuzhing.

The best potential partners can end up looking different from what we expect, points out [Camille Virginia](#), dating coach and author of the forthcoming book *The Offline Dating Method: 3 Steps to Attract The Perfect Partner In The Real World*. And holding too tightly to those expectations can be a roadblock for getting into a healthy, happy relationship.

"The main barrier that I see my single clients hitting when they say they can't find any potential partners is that they are screening potential partners for the wrong criteria," says Virginia. For instance, you might mistake hot chemistry for partner compatibility — in other words, being on the same page around big picture values.

[Amie Leadingham](#), a master certified relationship coach, agrees, calling this "the packaging trap." This happens when you base your connection "on another person's material or superficial qualities" — and as time goes by, "you both discover your core values or beliefs do not align which can lead to relationship doom," she notes.

To steer clear of this pitfall, Virginia recommends clarifying the type of person you want to attract. Perhaps you decide you want someone who's family-oriented and on the same page with their career. Going into a date holding that in mind, you can then see if the person fits that criteria via their words and actions.

4. You struggle to hold space for someone else's feelings and views.

All humans are innately egocentric – after all, over the course of evolution, focusing on ourselves and our safety kept us alive, Virginia points. But we have to put that basic instinct aside in order to recognize that other people have had different life experiences from us, and thus have different – equally valid – viewpoints and opinions, she says. And having a hard time holding space for someone else's experience and feelings can keep you from connecting with a potential partner.

On the other hand, being open to another person's perspective and being willing to compromise can help you not only hit it off with someone amazing but grow together. "There's actually a joy in admitting we're not always right – it takes the pressure off – and growing with a partner by incorporating their perspectives, which may be different from yours," notes Virginia.

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5. You might want to diversify the ponds you're fishing in.

Lee Wilson, a dating coach and founder of [My Ex Back](#), says he usually asks single people who are looking for love where they're fishing. "By that I mean that if someone isn't going out and being around people, then the odds of them meeting potential romantic partners are small," he says.

This doesn't mean you have to be going out dancing and buying bottles at clubs (is that even a thing again?), but you need to go where the people are. "There are lots of other ways to interact socially," points out Wilson. "Sports leagues, self-defense classes, wine tastings, book clubs, church groups, festivals, charity events, and volunteering at animal shelters are some ways I recall people having met romantic partners or even marriage partners."

You can also ask friends to play matchmaker. "If you don't make the

effort and take the chance, you won't get what you want," he notes.

6. You could use a confidence boost.

If you're feeling like your social skills could use some brushing up since quarantine, you're not alone, but a lack of confidence can greatly inhibit your ability to connect with someone, says Wilson. You might be concerned about your appearance, conversation skills, or even self-conscious about eating in front of someone.

If you feel like you're struggling with any of these insecurities, Wilson recommends stepping up your social interaction. Even just interacting with friends can serve as a reassurance that you're more on your A game than you thought.

7. You're not practicing what you preach.

Virginia says it's crucial to model and embody the behaviors you want to see in a match. If you want someone who's honest, but you're a habitual fibber, or you're hoping to meet someone who's prompt and reliable, but you're always running late yourself, you could be setting yourself up for disappointment.

She recommends making a list of the top five values or traits you want in a partner, and then, give yourself an honest once-over, asking yourself if you embody these values and traits. If so, how?

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8. Your pacing is off.

Wilson says when clients have come to him confused as to why relationships haven't worked out or have been short-lived, he might learn that the person told a partner that they loved them after only a week or two, or made another move that felt too serious too soon, like blowing up their date's phone or expecting to see them every day. And these behaviors can seem artificial or scare a person whose feelings are still developing.

The fix: Take your time and focus on getting to know someone, recommends Wilson. "Avoid jumping into the relationship and allow things to naturally develop," he says, noting that it's better to err on the side of "a bit slow" versus too fast. Ultimately, you want to make sure you aren't outpacing the other person and that initiation of interaction is somewhat balanced.

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9. You don't actually want a relationship yet.

After a year of loneliness and isolation, plenty of single people are beyond ready to get out there and start dating again. It's easy to talk yourself into believing that you should be in that same boat. But Virginia says it's worth doing a self-check to understand if you're actually perfectly happy being single. It could very well be the case that what you're feeling pressured by friends, family, society, your biological clock.

"Be honest with yourself," says Virginia. You can do this by asking yourself what the top 10 disadvantages of getting into an amazing relationship might be. From there, you should be able to gain quite a bit of clarity around why you're actually single — and whether or not you genuinely want to stay that way.

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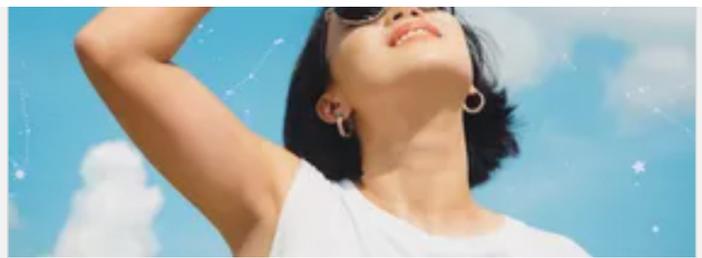




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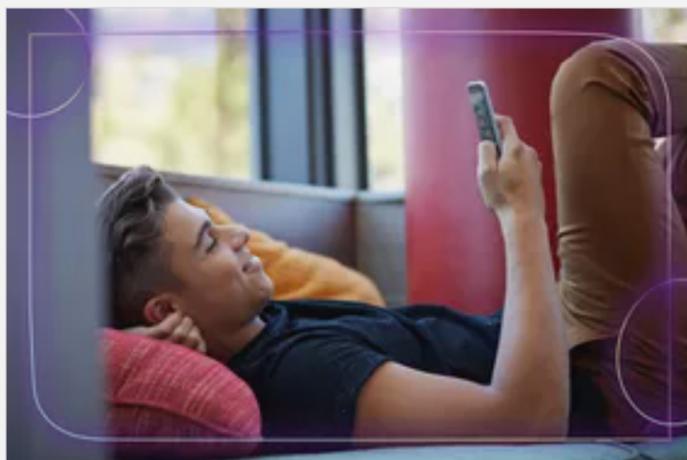
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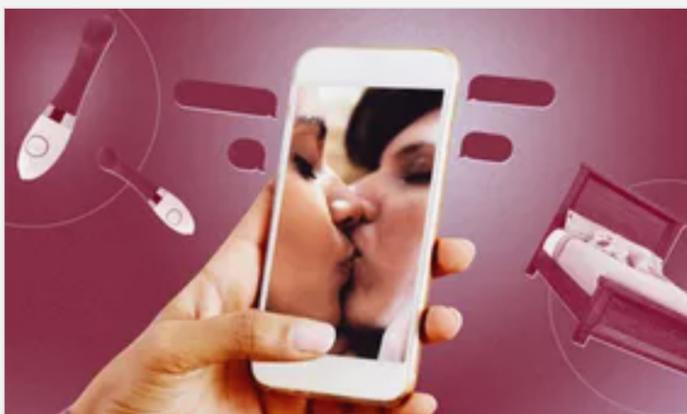
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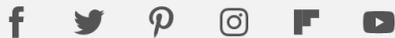
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