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### Dating Isn't a "Battlefield"

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ, DIVORCE COACH



**D**ATING IS ONE OF THE TOP "PRIORITIES" WHEN PEOPLE come to see me after they are divorced. People talk about dating as if it is one thing, but actually, dating post divorce is multifaceted, and each issue needs to be addressed one by one and with patience. How long do I wait to start dating, when do I sleep with him/her, how long do I wait to introduce the kids, when should I kiss him/her? The rules have changed. Should I date someone younger or older? The barrage of questions keeps coming at rapid speed.

One of my clients posed this exact question and I share it because I found it interesting that she views dating as a "battlefield." So, I found myself wondering how many divorced people carry this view around and are then confused as to why they don't have dates?

*"I am so frustrated being out in the dating world again. It appears so much has changed while I've been married. Any sage advice on how to navigate this battlefield?"*

Funny how you use the word "battlefield" to describe the dating world. If that is how you perceive it, then that is what it will be to you. No doubt, dating is a challenge due to where you are in your life at present, but choose to look upon it with excitement and find the humor in it (God knows, there is plenty of that in the dating world).

My "sage" advice is quite simply to be yourself and be smart. When I'm out at happy hours, I can't help but notice women of all ages striking up a conversation with a complete stranger, and then promptly pulling out her business card and handing it over. Not smart. You wouldn't give him your home address, but it's ok to let him know where you work? I never quite understood the logic there.

Don't make this a competition. It's not about you vs. a 20 something. It is about you being you and happy in your skin. Accepting that you are 40 something with the demands of work and children. Yes, there is someone out there who will be thrilled to be part of your life, but first *you* have to be thrilled to be part of your life.

Be true to yourself and don't settle for someone just because he's a warm body. Know your deal breakers and don't compromise on them because you're afraid this is your last chance at love. Remember, everyone has some baggage, but you don't want to take on someone with steamer trunks and a valet to carry them. Don't feel pressured to give more than you are ready to give. And last but far from least, for God's sake, use protection. STD's in older people are more prevalent than you think.

While dating in your 40's, 50's and 60's is not the walk in the park it was in our 20's and even 30's, it isn't a battlefield. The only "battlefield" in dating is your own mind... change your perspective.

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*As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. She brings her formal training and life experience into her coaching practice to empower and educate clients through their divorce journey and onto new beginnings. You can contact Debbie at [debbie@thepowerofdivorcecoach.com](mailto:debbie@thepowerofdivorcecoach.com).*



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