

*Temptations of the
Single Girl*

The Ten Dating Traps You Must Avoid

a modern fable

NINA ATWOOD

Temptations of the Single Girl: The Ten Dating Traps You Must Avoid

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This book is dedicated to Mark, my Soul Partner and husband:
*Thank you for all of the love and joy you bring into each and every day
of my life.*

Books by Nina Atwood:

Be Your Own Dating Service: A Step-by-Step Guide to Finding and Maintaining Healthy Relationships (Owl Books, 1996)

Date Lines: Communication from 'Hello' to 'I Do' and Everything In Between (Owl Books, 1998)

Soul Talk: Powerful, Positive Communication for a Loving Partnership (Sourcebooks, 2003)

As a woman, one of the most important decisions you will ever make in your life is your choice of life partner. Make a poor one, and the consequences could be devastating for years, even decades. Make a good one, and you have the foundation for a lifetime of happiness. Read on if you want to make the right choice.

Prologue

“Would you like another glass of wine?” Randy asked. Kelly shook her head “no.” He cleared his throat. “How is your food?” he asked.

“It’s great, really it is,” Kelly said, lifting another forkful of pasta to her lips. Inwardly, she fantasized about curling up in bed with the newest Perri O’Shaughnessey novel and a cup of tea. She felt guilty but she couldn’t help it. Randy bored her.

He was cute enough, in a clean-cut kind of way, and definitely polite and nice. But he was trying too hard, and there was *no chemistry*. Kelly craved that heart-pounding, bone-melting, skin-tingling kind of passion. With Randy, the conversation was strained, like they were actors struggling to remember their lines. She could scarcely refrain from indulging the compulsive urge to check her watch.

The drive home was endless and awkward. At the first sight of sanctuary, she jumped out of the car, waved good-bye while thanking him for a nice evening, and practically ran into the lobby of her building. Once again, Kelly walked away wishing she’d stayed home and painted her toenails.

* * *

Kelly closed her front door and leaned against it with a sigh of relief. After a moment, she shook herself off and went to the kitchen to make hot tea. She fed Trixie, her calico cat, who loudly purred and rubbed against her ankles. After changing into her favorite pajamas—silk leopard print pants and matching camisole—she curled up on her chaise lounge and opened her laptop, taking a sip of steaming peppermint tea. Her left hand petted Trixie, who rolled onto her back with paws in the air, delighting in the belly rub.

As the computer booted up, Kelly gazed out of her living room window at the sparkling nighttime Dallas skyline. She'd bought this high-rise condo unit primarily for the spectacular city view. Mornings often found Kelly sitting on the balcony watching the sun rise. At the moment, however, she felt overcome by disappointment. How many more dates like tonight's would she endure?

"We have more control over the process of finding Mr. Right than we think."

Once online, Kelly checked her email, scrolling rapidly and deleting the Viagra and mortgage ads. She ignored several messages from clients and colleagues and instead opened an email with an intriguing and rather unusual subject line: "Sharing the Temptations with You—a Gift."

Dear Kelly,

I hope this finds you well. Specifically, I hope you've found "Mr. Right" and are wildly happy. When we met two years ago at Susan's wedding that seemed the only thing missing in your life. I remember our long conversations about the lack of great men over too many glasses of that wonderful Napa wine!

I'm wondering—have you met someone special? If so, catch me up right away with the good news. But if not, please read on. I know this seems odd, but I urge you to take what I have to say seriously.

First, my good news—I'm engaged and getting married in just a few months! I couldn't be happier—Ethan and I are truly soul mates and finding each other is the best thing that's ever happened to me. The truth is, it didn't just "happen" to me; I had to do some serious work on myself so that he could come into my life at the exact moment that I was ready for him. It's not just a coincidence. I discovered that we have more control over the process of finding Mr. Right than we think!

I feel so fortunate to have found real love that I want to share what I've learned with you. I'm referring you to a consultant of sorts who offers a one-on-one program for women like us. She helped me totally shift the way I look at dating, men, and rela-

tionships. The time I spent with this woman was life-changing and invaluable. She taught me about the “temptations of the single girl”—but now I’m getting ahead of myself. You’ll find out all about that soon enough.

She charges a rather large fee but don’t worry about that because I’m paying yours. I’m offering this to you because someone else who saw my potential did the same for me.

If you decide to accept this offer, you must agree to complete the entire program, start to finish. Secondly, you must agree that if it works for you, you will give it to someone else that you believe it will help. That means that you’ll pay the fee at the end, for someone else; trust me, it’s paltry when measured against the gain in your life, and you’ll be more than happy to refer someone else.

I can’t give you the details. You must make the decision based on faith: faith that I’m telling you the truth, and faith that you can accept a huge challenge with a lot of your happiness at stake.

Oh, and one last thing: don’t discuss this decision with anyone. You have to make it on your own by looking at your life and examining your heart. I swear there’s a reason for doing it this way. It will all make sense later.

That’s it! Once you decide, let me know either way. You have 24 hours; otherwise, the program goes to someone else.

Good luck, Kelly, whatever you decide.

Best wishes,

Donna

Kelly slumped back in her seat feeling annoyed. How dare Donna presume so much about Kelly’s life and what she needed?

Donna had been one of the other bridesmaids in the wedding of an old college friend. They’d laughed over the atrocious pink dresses they knew they’d never wear again and bonded over wine and long talks about men. Though they had promised to stay in touch, time had slipped away. She hadn’t heard from her since Susan’s wedding.

Kelly’s mind raced. Though happy for Donna, a part of her was envious. Donna had obviously gotten lucky and met the right guy.

How could anyone possibly teach Kelly how to make it happen any sooner than it was meant to be?

Kelly mentally took stock of some of her past relationships. She thought of her college boyfriend, Stan, whom she'd dated for three years. They'd talked about getting married, but when graduation came, Kelly had found herself restless and longing to explore her options before surrendering her freedom forever. Stan had reluctantly agreed to Kelly's wishes. Then she met Ian.

* * *

Ian was the complete opposite of Stan—exciting and passionate and full of adventure. He took her dancing and lured her into dark corners for wild kisses. They impulsively flew to Las Vegas for a weekend, exploring the casinos late into the night, finding clubs and dancing close for hours. They made love over and over. Swept away by Ian's intensity and passion, she broke up with Stan when they returned, convinced that Ian was her soul mate. Stan was angry and hurt. She felt guilty, but she was in love and happy with Ian.

A year later, Kelly longed for Ian to "pop the question," but he never talked about their relationship and she was afraid to bring it up. Suddenly, everything changed. Ian withdrew emotionally and became distant. He partied with his buddies instead of coming over. He insisted nothing was wrong. Finally, she confronted him with an ultimatum: either we work on this relationship or I'm moving on. Ian opted for moving on, claiming that he wasn't ready to commit.

"You're wonderful," he said as Kelly sniffed back tears. "Really, Kelly, it's me. I'm not ready for what you want." Kelly was devastated. She cried for weeks, unable to recover on her own. With the help of a good therapist, slowly she pulled out of the funk of loss.

When Kelly heard that Ian was engaged, six months after their breakup, the grief re-surfaced with the same intensity. How could this happen? Ian had adamantly declared he wasn't ready for a commitment, that it wasn't her. Yet six months later, he was marrying someone else!

* * *

After that, Kelly had held a part of herself back. Over the years, she'd swung between the men she either drove off or broke up with because she didn't really want them and the guys she was wild about but couldn't pin down. There were other chapters in Kelly's love life, too, but some things were just too painful to think about.

After Ian, Kelly had devoted herself to her career. After years of climbing the ranks of a Fortune 500 company, she'd quit and founded her own consulting company. Within a couple of years, she had three employees, freedom with her schedule, choices regarding the clients she worked with, and twice the income of her last job. She traveled when she wanted, gave time and money to her favorite charities, and enjoyed wonderful friendships. Life was good.

Four years ago, Kelly dated Ryan. She hadn't exactly fallen madly in love with him but that was probably healthy, wasn't it? After all, that head-over-heels, weak-in-the-knees stuff had left her numb and broken in the past. Ryan seemed to embody most of the qualities she wanted and they'd had fun together, at least in the beginning. But two years later, after lots of struggling, they'd thrown in the towel.

In many ways dating Ryan had been a re-hash of the relationship with Ian, without the intensity. Their breakup had disappointed Kelly, but hadn't devastated her. She'd convinced herself that she didn't have time for a relationship anyway.

Since then, Kelly occasionally yearned to find someone special but felt powerless. She told herself that going through life solo wasn't bad, in fact it was quite good, and that it was enough.

Kelly rose and walked onto her balcony, her mind churning. She felt unsettled. The part of her that insisted that she didn't need a relationship with a man to feel complete argued with the part of her that wondered if it was true.

She thought of her single girl friends. Though successful and financially secure with plenty of adventure, at the end of the day, usually after that second or third glass of wine, they spoke wistfully of what it might be like to share life with a special man. Later, they rationalized their feelings away with declarations about the impossibility

of finding a really great guy and the evidence of past bad relationships as proof.

At Susan's wedding, Kelly had stifled a secret envy of her friend. Susan had glowed and her new husband Mark hadn't been able to take his eyes off her. Kelly had returned from the experience resolved to put more energy into her dating life. She'd joined a couple of on-line dating services and since then had had frequent dates but no real results. There had been a brief fling with a cute guy named Jason but she was so over that.

One sentence in Donna's email resonated in Kelly's mind: "you have more control over the process of finding Mr. Right than you think!" How? She was smart, successful, attractive, and out there on a regular basis meeting new men. Didn't the self-help books tell you that all you have to do is get out there and it will happen? Didn't they tell you that trying to control the outcome was a mistake? She'd learned over and over that wanting it too much was a formula for not having it. She'd read all the books and done all the things advised in them. What more was there?

She had abandoned the idea that she had control over the process when she'd realized that she couldn't make Ian love her the way she loved him. If she were honest, she had to admit that Stan hadn't been able to make her love him either.

All of this left her convinced that love was something you either got lucky enough to stumble into or you didn't. Control had nothing to do with it.

Kelly stalked to her computer and clicked "reply," quickly typing a refusal of Donna's offer. Her finger hovered over the "send" button, and there it stalled. Though she felt tempted to send the email, something held her back. She saved it in her "draft" folder and sighed. She shut down her computer and crawled into bed with Trixie. After lying there for an hour, her mind working, she fell into a restless sleep.

* * *

The next morning, with a steaming mug of coffee in her hands, Kelly sat on her balcony watching the sun rise. She considered her options carefully. *One, I could hit the "send" button and forget about*

this—but that didn't feel right or she'd have already done it. *Two, I could do nothing and let the opportunity pass*—but it wasn't her style to shrink from a challenge.

Three, she thought, I could take a chance and do this. Why not? My way hasn't gotten me what I want. It's a coaching program, it sounds like, and I've considered hiring a life coach. If Donna could do it, then so can I.

Besides, if there was one thing she knew about herself, and she knew this down to her toes, it was that she welcomed challenge, even thrived on it.

Ultimately, curiosity prompted Kelly to push the “send” button with an entirely different message than last night's. She thanked Donna for thinking of her, accepted the offer, and asked for her next steps.

Ten minutes later, Kelly's laptop dinged, signaling an incoming email. It was Donna's reply.

Dear Kelly,

Congratulations! Martha, the consultant, will be in touch with you shortly.

I wish you all the very best, Kelly! I can't wait to hear back from you when your journey is completed.

Good luck and take care,

Donna

Kelly closed her laptop and wondered about the ultimate outcome of her decision. Would she be glad she had done this? Would she regret it? Would it be a huge waste of time, not to mention the “rather large fee” she owed at the end? She didn't even know the amount of the fee! Suddenly, Kelly felt shaky, literally trembling inside. What had she done?

Kelly ordered herself to calm down and take it step by step. That was how she'd gotten through big challenges in the past. She thought of that silly old saying: *How do you eat an elephant?* The answer, of course, was: *one bite at a time.* Kelly took a deep breath. After all, what did she really have to lose?

The First Temptation:

Denying Your True Desires

Chapter One

Kelly sat at one of her favorite restaurants, a chic neighborhood place that specialized in Mediterranean food, as she awaited Martha's arrival. At last, a woman approached her table.

Martha was tall and slender, with light olive skin that was striking with her short, wavy silver hair and blue eyes. She wore wide leg black pants, gold sandals, and a silk turquoise blouse. Her earrings dangled with a bit of sparkle, and she smiled warmly at Kelly as she sat down. Martha could be in her late forties or her early sixties. She glowed with that ageless yet mature, youthful yet sage look that some women were blessed with as they grew older.

"Kelly, it's so good to meet you," Martha said as she took Kelly's hand. When she smiled, her face lit up. It was a face with a model's sculpting, just the right angles and curves, with only a hint of crinkling next to her eyes. Kelly felt a stirring of hope.

"Let me congratulate you on your first step toward growth, the leap of faith you took by choosing to do this program. A huge part of the program is learning to take healthy risks." She smiled again.

"We'll go over the questionnaires I sent you later," Martha said, nodding at the paperwork on Kelly's side of the table. They stopped their conversation briefly and ordered hot tea and a light meal.

After the waiter left, Martha continued. "Today's focus is on our relationship and our contract, but first, I want to get to know you better." She paused again, looked directly into Kelly's eyes, and then asked, "So, Kelly, what *are* you looking for?"

Kelly didn't hesitate. "Love!" she declared.

"And what is love?" Martha asked.

"It's that warm and tingly feeling when you think about him, that I-can't-wait-to-see-you-again kind of feeling. It's wanting to be with him and no one else. It's love! Doesn't everyone know what love is?"

“Everyone has a *feeling* about what love is,” Martha said. “But the reality is it’s different for each person, and each relationship, like a fingerprint.”

“So why are there so many books about what real love is?”

“People want to understand it better because it’s so central to our happiness. I’ve learned that there is a kind of love that is pretty consistent with most happy couples. Right now, though, it’s important for you to articulate what it is for you. What is love, in your experience, after being with a guy for a significant period of time—a year or longer? Not what you *think* it is or *should* be, but what it actually felt like for you in the past.”

Kelly’s smile drooped. “Disappointing,” she answered. “It was wanting something I couldn’t quite have. It was frustrating, trying to make relationships work, and realizing I couldn’t do it.”

“How did you get from warm and tingly to disappointment?”

Kelly thought for a moment. “I’m not exactly sure. When I think about my ex, Ryan, for instance, I remember talking about all the things we’d do together, all the fun we’d have. But after dating for a year, he still wasn’t ready for a real commitment.”

“Okay, let’s take it slower,” said Martha. “In the beginning, what did you and Ryan agree to in terms of future commitment?”

“In the beginning?” Kelly echoed, confused. “We just wanted to get to know each other. No strings attached, you know?”

“No strings? What does that mean?”

“We wanted to date and just let things happen. We didn’t want the pressure of thinking about marriage anytime soon.”

“So, you agreed to NOT have a commitment?”

“Of course not! I would never... I mean...” Kelly stammered. Her fingers tightened reflexively around her tea cup.

“We’ll come back to that in a minute. For now, tell me what happened after a year of dating, how you felt, what you did. I don’t want every single detail, just the essence of it.” Martha watched her closely, as if listening to more than the words.

“I was frustrated,” Kelly said. “I loved Ryan, and I wanted to plan a life together, but he just shut down.” Kelly gazed into her tea as she reflected.

“And?” Martha prompted.

“I thought he needed more time; that I was pushing too hard. But the more time I gave him, the more he backed away. He broke up with me and married someone else a few months later. I just don’t understand it.” Kelly swallowed over the burning in her throat.

Martha spoke gently. “Kelly, I want you to take a deep breath, and then I want you to listen very carefully. Okay?”

“Yes.” She breathed deeply and felt the tension ease.

“The way you discuss your relationship in the beginning sets the stage, the context, the tone of everything that happens afterward.”

*“The way you discuss your relationship in the beginning sets the stage, the context, the tone of everything that happens afterward. You gave Ryan permission to not work toward a commitment when you said *no strings attached*. Later, when you changed your mind, you changed the rules of the game. You wanted something entirely different and you couldn’t understand why he didn’t give it to you. But here’s the rub: *you set things in motion from the beginning to work out that way.*”*

First Temptation: Denial of Your True Desires

Martha paused, allowing Kelly to absorb what she said, then continued. “You didn’t really change your mind, did you? If we’re totally honest, you hid your true feelings from yourself in the beginning. You wanted a committed relationship leading to marriage, but you didn’t acknowledge those feelings or communicate them.”

“It wasn’t like that,” Kelly said defensively. “I really *didn’t* want a commitment at first... I, um. I just...”

“Kelly.” Martha spoke gently but firmly. “If I allow you to re-inforce your old belief, nothing will change, you won’t change. You hired me to take you somewhere new, and I will. But you must get *comfortable* with the discomfort of having your beliefs challenged, do you understand that?”

Kelly lifted her gaze from the tabletop and nodded. After a moment, she spoke.

“You’re right. I wanted a commitment. I just thought it would work out that way on its own.”

“Let’s take a hard look at this—it’s critical. This is the **First Temptation** that you must learn to avoid: *denying your true desires*. Why would you choose that?”

“I didn’t, not consciously,” Kelly started to say, battling back the tears she felt stinging her eyes.

“Okay, let’s get a couple of things straight.” Martha leaned forward slightly, her eyes soft yet intense.

“In order to help you change, I’m going to push you to examine your thoughts and beliefs, and to interrupt them. The goal is to help you *think, believe, and, most importantly, behave* in an entirely new way so that you can have the life you say you want.”

Martha sat back and sipped her tea. “You say you want a loving, committed relationship that leads to a happy, lasting marriage and a family. I’m fully aligned with you on that intention. *I am on your side*. Please keep that in mind. But I need your permission to push you, to make you uncomfortable.”

Kelly closed her eyes briefly and absorbed Martha’s words. Yes, it hurt, but she believed Martha was truly on her side, that she was there to help her.

“I really do want your help. I can’t promise I won’t argue with you occasionally, but I am trying. I want you to know that.”

“That’s fine by me, but I will interrupt you when I see you going down a pathway that reinforces old thinking. Agreed?”

“Agreed!”

The waiter arrived with their food. “Let’s eat, and then we’ll talk more,” Martha suggested. The food was delicious, and they ate quietly for a few minutes.

“Now, there’s one more thing we need to agree on,” Martha said, “and that is the question of conscious vs. unconscious behavior. My purpose is *not* to help you address your choices and behaviors as unconscious, or stemming out of your painful childhood, and therefore not your responsibility.”

As Kelly opened her mouth to respond, Martha held up her hand. “Hear me out first, please.”

“I believe our choices and behaviors are conscious on *some* level, even when we feel that they’re not. It’s hard to accept that because it means taking responsibility for making poor choices in our lives. It means questioning our own motivations and emotional drivers, not to mention values and beliefs. That can be a very uncomfortable journey, but it’s absolutely necessary for real change.

“Are you ready for that, Kelly? Take a moment and reflect. Don’t say what you think I want to hear. Take your time and answer honestly.”

Kelly put down her fork and sat back, eyes downcast, gut clenching. After a minute or so, she looked up, taking a deep breath.

“I feel like my insides are re-arranging. It is uncomfortable. But I’m finally getting the truth, with no room to side-step and make excuses.

“I don’t think I can afford NOT to do this. I’m afraid if I keep going down the same old path I’ll end up very lonely. I’ve accomplished all I have so far because I hung in there when other people quit. This is new territory for me and it’s scary, but I want to see this through.”

“Good. Now,” Martha went on, “I want you to take a look at why you made choices in a relationship that kept you from getting what you say you really want. Think about it carefully, and ask yourself: *what would I gain from that?*”

“I guess I was afraid that if I talked about commitment too soon it would push him away. Men seem to run from women who talk about that, especially early on.”

“That’s a good start. But I think there’s an even bigger reason you set it up that way.” Martha paused. “I’ll give you a hint: can a person who’s afraid of commitment ask for it from someone else?”

Kelly frowned. “Well, I guess not, but I’m not sure that really ap-

“Our choices and behaviors are conscious on some level, even when we feel that they’re not. To accept that means taking responsibility for making poor choices in our lives, and questioning our own motivations and emotional drivers, not to mention values and beliefs.”

plies to me. I mean, it doesn't make sense, does it? If I was afraid of commitment, why would I ask for it from Ryan?"

"My experience is that people *yearn and ask* for commitment because they know deep down that it isn't available, yet desperately need to believe that it is and that it's what they want. All of this, without an understanding of what real commitment is."

"I don't get it. Are you saying that I didn't really want it, so I asked for it knowing I couldn't get it?"

"You tell me. Imagine that Ryan is the one pushing *you* for marriage. Imagine him telling you that he wants a real family and he's tired of waiting for you to decide that you want the same thing. Just picture that, and tell me how you feel."

Kelly imagined the scene and shuddered.

"God, all of a sudden, I remember all the things about him that I didn't like: how he started drinking beer on Saturday afternoons and didn't stop until late that night, the whole time watching sports on television and ignoring me. He wasn't interested in concerts or music or reading books together. We stopped going out on dates pretty quickly; all we did was hang out. It drove me crazy! We weren't on the same page about *anything*."

"And how did you handle the fact that you weren't on the same page?"

"I constantly nagged him to change. He hated that; we fought about it all the time. But what else could I do? He needed to grow up! I wanted to help him. If only he'd listened to me." She sighed. "I guess his wife puts up with his immaturity and bad habits now. That's probably why he married her!"

"What's wrong with that?" Martha asked.

"What's wrong with that?!"

"If Ryan is happy with the woman he married, and she's happy with him, what's wrong with that?" Martha persisted.

"I just don't see how that could be! He's too immature to make a marriage work. I should know; I spent two years trying to change him."

Martha let Kelly stew for a couple of minutes, then spoke gently. "Is that what love is to you, Kelly? Working to change someone?"

Pushing him into a commitment that he doesn't want? Where would you be today if you and Ryan were married?"

Kelly thought, and a pained look came over her face. "To tell the truth, I don't like that picture. He'd still be doing all the same things and I'd still be nagging him to change. I'd still feel unfulfilled, only I'd be trapped in a bad marriage with only one way out—a divorce." She sighed again deeply. "I guess I'm really better off without him. We just didn't match."

"Now you're getting it," Martha said gently. "You and Ryan *didn't match*, Kelly, and that means that you couldn't give him what he needed and vice versa. What do you suppose he needed from you that he never got?"

"I guess he needed me to love and accept him for who he is."

"Can you imagine what it feels like to be with someone who doesn't accept you for who you really are? Imagine dating someone who insisted that you lose ten pounds, color your hair, and stop eating meat? Otherwise, he wouldn't really love you?"

"I wouldn't put up with that."

"I wonder why Ryan put up with it for as long as he did," Martha said quietly.

Stunned, Kelly slowly answered. "I never looked at it like that. I guess he really did try in his own way. I remember when we broke up he told me he felt that he couldn't satisfy me. I tried to argue with him about it at the time, but he was right. I wasn't satisfied with him. It wouldn't have worked. Even with the ring and the wedding..." she sighed.

"What did you need from Ryan that he couldn't give you? What do you need to be happy in a marriage?"

"I want a guy who goes in the same general direction as me, without me having to push him. Someone who has the same picture of what our lives should be and who is interested in working it together."

"Love is about acceptance. It is seeing someone for who and what he is, and for who and what he is not, warts and all. When you date, you have to look for someone who is easy to accept into your life just the way he is."

Love is Acceptance

“Okay Kelly, I think you’re getting it. Love is about acceptance—it is seeing someone for who and what he is, and for who and what he is not, warts and all. When you date, you have to look for someone who is easy to accept into your life just the way he is. *Acceptance is easy when you match.*”

“Dating is about trying on different relationships for brief periods of time until you find someone who feels like a real match. When you fall into the first temptation of denying your true desires, you set yourself up for relationships that don’t fit. Then you attach yourself to the wrong people and waste months and even years of your life.

“Most people date whoever shows up next in their lives, choosing them based on attraction, emotional neediness, and little else. Hungry for a relationship, they grab whoever is in front of them and try to force it to work. They either try to change the person, or they ignore the miss-match and forge ahead into marriage. They wrestle over the issue of commitment instead of admitting that they’re not a true match.

“Real commitment flows naturally when two people fit together, heart, soul, mind, lifestyle, goals, chemistry, and values.”

“Real commitment flows naturally when two people fit together, heart, soul, mind, lifestyle, goals, chemistry, and values. The only reason two people who match might hesitate about commitment is because one or both of them slips out of the heart and into the head where fear rules, but that,” Martha concluded, “is a lesson for another day.”

“It all seems so obvious now. I never stopped to ask if Ryan was right for *me*. I tried to fit a square peg into a round hole and it hurt both of us.”

Kelly went on. “So how do I do this the right way next time? How do I know early on if someone is my match?”

“That, my dear, is the next phase. But first, let’s define the terms of our agreement. I have a few rules that I ask my clients to follow, and it’s vital that you consider these rules and decide if you can truly agree to them.”

After some discussion, Kelly agreed to their rules of engagement:

- Meetings would be monthly on weekends, once on Saturday and again on Sunday; phone calls and emails as needed between face to face meetings.
- They would continue meeting until Kelly's goals were accomplished, however long that took.
- They would create action plans and Kelly would execute them; even if she floundered, she would follow through.
- Kelly would refrain from discussing the program with others—girlfriends, family, anyone—so as to avoid confusion over conflicting advice; Kelly agreed to hash it out with Martha if she disagreed with the advice she gave.
- Kelly agreed not to work with another coach or a therapist during the program; if she felt the need for another person's advice, they would stop the program.

"It's inevitable that another advisor will tell you things that are different from my philosophy," Martha said. "It's not that one is right and the other wrong; you simply need to choose one path and follow it through."

"One more thing," Martha added. "I won't make your choices for you—you have to choose your own path. I will, however, challenge some of your choices. It's vital that you don't withhold from me along the way, even if you choose something you think I won't support. Agreed?"

"Agreed."

"All right. Now I want to give you some pointers that will help you get the most value out of what we do. First, whenever you're faced with an important decision that you feel hesitant about, call me and we'll discuss it. Start using a journal to record the specifics of your dates: what hap-

Tip: "Use a journal to record the specifics of your dates: what happened, significant points in your conversations, your thoughts and feelings afterward, and red flags that you spot."

pened, significant points in your conversations, your thoughts and feelings afterward, red flags that you spot, and so on. Spend time reviewing your notebook before our sessions and zero in on the two or three most important issues for discussion.”

Martha went on. “Bring a notebook and your journal with you each time we meet. I’ll coach you in new directions that are unfamiliar, so taking notes is vital.”

Martha finished by having Kelly sign off on their basic agreements in a simple, one page form.

Next, Martha asked Kelly to review her personal history, specifically her significant relationships, how long they lasted, who ended it, and why it ended. She asked a few questions along the way, but didn’t delve deeply into the stories.

Lastly, Martha reviewed the concept of practice. “For me to guide you, you must be in motion, out there, dating and relating. This doesn’t work in *theory* but in the actual playing of the game, so to speak. Imagine a football player studying the game on the sidelines but never actually running with the ball. The coach wouldn’t have much of a job, would he?” Martha asked.

“Therefore,” she continued, “we’ll brainstorm ways for you to increase your dating activities. Our goal isn’t a race to find Mr. Right and get you to the altar. Rather, we want to put you on the field more frequently, in the game, playing with all your might. The real objective is to increase your *emotional muscle*, meaning your ability to communicate powerfully and make excellent choices. Any questions so far?”

Kelly had none, so they focused on her online dating and other ways to meet men. Martha suggested changes to some of the aspects of her online dating profile (focus on statements about your values, not so much your personal data) and pictures (no short skirts or low neckline shots—it sends a confusing message to men.)

Finally, they wrapped up and scheduled Sunday’s meeting. Kelly felt exhausted but hopeful. She really liked Martha’s style—she sensed the tough love approach stemmed from genuine caring. She admired Martha’s absolute focus on keeping things straight and truthful.

But Kelly couldn't help but wonder if she was truly ready for the challenge. *Will I really be able to do this, or am I just destined to live my life without a relationship?* She sensed her biggest obstacle would be conquering her own self-doubt.

What's Next for Kelly?

What happens next to Kelly? Does she face up to the ten temptations – dating traps that she's fallen into in the past? Does she overcome them? Or does she continue to fall into the same traps that have held her back from a truly great relationship in the past? How does Martha's coaching help her? **More importantly, how will it help you?**

Single women everywhere are discovering the ten temptations and how to overcome them. Kelly's story shows you in rich, vibrant illustrations of life scenarios exactly how these dating traps can take you off of the path of true love, and what to do about them. Through Kelly's struggles and triumphs, you too can discover how to get on the path of real love and attract the love of your life!

If you are ready to transform your approach to dating and relationships – and thus, your life path – buy the book, join our community, and put yourself solidly on the road to real love today. Here are the links you need to get started:

Buy the book at our [Singlescoach® aStore](#)

[Sign up for our newsletters](#) (be sure and select “Temptations reader” as one of your interest groups)

* * *

From Nina Atwood, The Singlescoach®:

Congratulations on beginning your journey to a wonderful life and relationship! I am very confident that if you read the material and follow the coaching in the book, you will begin to make substantial changes that will lead you to entirely new and better results in your love life. I hope that you will join our learning community by signing up for our newsletter so that you can continue to receive advice and coaching along the way.

Yours in life and relationship success,

Nina