

Living Alone In Happiness

Decided eternal love is a myth? Here is one man's take on how to be loved, get laid and have a kid without having to sign your life away

THE GRAVE NEXT TO MY GRANDFATHER is reserved. He lies six feet under, in a coffin of reasonable pine with earthworms and soil in every direction. Soon though, he'll be getting a permanent visitor. The space next to him is reserved for my grandmother. She's alive and remarried, but she'll get plunged next to "the love of her life" when she dies. The new husband is getting cremated, I think. For my grandfather, sharing a plot means he'll double his grave visits, but the 40 turbulent years of marriage – to me at least – don't seem worth it. In reaction to this I've made a pact (with myself) that I'm going solo, bachelor until death do me part.

Of course I still want the benefits. The twenty-first century is all about pros with no sacrifice. I want to be in love, to make love, maybe even have a kid. I want the plus side of this so-called matrimony and nuclear family while retaining my eternal bachelorhood. Many men have tried and failed, but I reckon I've figured out how to overcome the top seven obstacles of being perpetually single. You can get a life of intimacy and at the end a king-sized coffin to yourself. Use this information at your own risk.

OBSTACLE 1: NO SEX ON TAP

Sex is really the fail-safe of a relationship. You can shag when you're angry or happy, to show appreciation or domination. And to watch a movie together you don't even need to talk. But sex, just by its nature, builds a bond over time. All thanks to a neurotransmitter called oxytocin. It's synthesised by the hypothalamus and floods the body with chemicals during sex and childbirth. It's the molecule that for thousands of years has made us want to have sex face-to-face, adore each other and live in permanent, monogamous couples.



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But you can overcome your biology. It's true: intimacy doesn't happen after a quick snog and a shot of tequila, but it's also not exclusive to putting in the hours (or years) with one person. If you're going to be having one-night stands and you want to up their emotional impact, you need to indulge the idea of being intimate – even when just wandering around. Daydream like you're back in high school. You probably think you already do, but most men in their twenties

and beyond rarely imagine fully-fledged sex scenarios. Equal to mental training for athletes, the more your mind gets used to it then the less you have to practice. "When it comes to the actual sex, actively focus on the connection with the person you are having sex with," says *Men's Health* specialist sex editor Tanya Robinson. No matter how flimsy this connection is, the more you can stoke this fire the better. "What you think (rather than what is exactly happening) plays a

bigger part in sex than you think." As for working up the courage to ask for your favourite fetish, communication doesn't need to start after you "know" each other. "You're in an intimate space already. Tell her your needs (gently) the first time and she'll happily reciprocate. Just be ready to hear hers too." **Read the book** *Intimacy* by Osho (R110 from Exclusive Books)

OBSTACLE 2: NOT HAVING KIDS

Kids are still monopolised by women. We're a generation of men raised by women, and even though we're equals in the workplace, they are still – last time I checked – giving birth. So men feel like they need a woman to have a family – a person with the bits capable of bearing a kid and mothering it. "The overarching template for a successful relationship is still one man, one woman and a child," says clinical psychologist Umesh Bawa. In practice this isn't necessarily true. "Men are just as nurturing," says Bawa. You don't raise an emotionally stable child by being tearful but by being consistent, focused, involved and available – traits

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available in equal measure to both sexes. All you're missing is a womb. You can get a surrogate (where you pay a woman to carry the baby with your sperm) or adopt. Visit www.adoptionsa.co.za. **Watch the movie** *Kramer vs Kramer* (R95 from www.take2.co.za)

OBSTACLE 3: AFFORDING A HOUSE

You meet a girl in a pub, you might buy her a gin and tonic, but would you split your whole life savings with her? Based on her boobs, kindness and sense of humour, are you going to share hundreds of thousands of rands with her? The girl of your dreams tends to become your property partner – mainly because a heavily mortgaged home is an unhappy home and with an escalating property market, sharing is the quickest way to get in the game. However, if you're on a mission to be independent, you don't want to sacrifice your property ambitions. Gregg Sneddon, the financial coach, crunched the numbers on how to buy a house on a single salary and it's not easy. "If the house costs R943 000 and you borrow



the money at prime and get a 100-percent bond (so you don't put any money down upfront) there will be a monthly repayment of R11 386," he says. To qualify for this you need to show the bank that you have a gross income of over R37 500. "The average salary in Dec last year was about R8 700 (and that includes bonuses)," adds Sneddon. Even if you manage to wangle one percent below prime (12.5 percent), then it is R10 714 per

month and a gross income of R35 356 for a 100-percent bond. So the majority of us could do with a partnership when buying property – but it doesn't have to be a spouse. The average amicable divorce can set you back R97 000 (that's 10 percent of a property), so consider a sibling or parent. **Read the book** *A Guide To Buying Or Selling a House In South Africa* by Jill Fish (R119 from Exclusive Books)

Too Late 5 ways to keep it going if you've already tied the knot

- 1 ADMIT TO BOREDOM** "The single biggest sexual problem in long-term relationships is boredom," says sensual expert Jonti Seal. "People do the same, often limited, things again and again." Before you can get to what's exciting, you need to admit to yourself (and each other) that something is wrong.
- 2 PASSION HELPS** Rekindling enjoyment in bed is not only about sexual passion, but passion for life, for living, learning and growing. You can't get this by popping a pill (or reading a magazine article) but if you're

- miserable or stressed don't be too hard on yourself if you have become crap in the sack.
- 3 BE SELFISH** Keep a sense of your self. "You are responsible for your own pleasure and your own happiness, if you are married or not," says Seal. The moment you give her this responsibility, you're finished.
- 4 SHARE THE LOVE** "Communicating" isn't only blow-job directions. It's a conscious sharing, both mentally and emotionally. The emotional side is the sharing of feelings, which requires

- vulnerability. The mental side involves actively thinking about what you want, becoming aware and making it happen.
- 5 BUY HER STUFF** Once you have established her sexual likes and dislikes you can introduce some fun and games. "If you are uncertain about being the one to do this and how, why not take her for a Champagne lunch and suggest that you pop into an erotic store to 'see what they have'", says Shannon Delporte, owner of Kink, an adult boutique. Shopping together can be great foreplay.

OBSTACLE 4: COMPANIONSHIP WHEN YOU'RE OLD

The crux of this lifestyle choice is refusing to tolerate decades of ups and downs with one other person. You're avoiding the necessity to stay the same, because let's face it: in a long-term relationship there's a propensity for us to stagnate. Of course, there's no guarantee that she won't change into someone who's bitter, twisted and who hates all your jokes. And if you do change it could be into a hateful misogynist – but like my dad always said: misogyny takes two. What is guaranteed though is both men and women change (in old age) towards the same androgynous gender – because the testosterone eventually fades in all of us. You might need someone to have sex with you in your twenties, but you need someone to cut up your food in your seventies. So if you're not going to get married, how about retaining a friend into your old age who just happens to be a girl?

“It can only happen if you place firm boundaries within the relationship,” says Robinson. “Even when it is tempting and both of you are lonely remember that overstepping that line can ruin the friendship.” The trouble with relying on this woman is she could get snapped up by some other bloke, so how about a servant? The average student rate is R22 per hour – so it's going to cost R65 000 per year to employ one for eight hours a day. This will seem more like a bargain when you're 80.

Watch the movie *When Harry Met Sally* (not the last act where they have sex and get together). R99 from www.take2.co.za

OBSTACLE 5: IT UPSETS YOUR MOM

Parental approval is never easy. “It's important to sit down with your parents and give them insight regarding your dreams, goals and plans. This will help them understand your view and hopefully there is an understanding,” says Robinson. If that fails, go right ahead and blame them for how you turned out.

“The main problem is men are socialised from an early age with a double bind,” says Bawa. We get taught to take control and be leaders in one breath, and settle down with good values in the next. “This conflict leads to resentment and problems with being satisfied,” he says. There are of course benefits to being selfish, but a stack of guilt that comes with it. Your best strategy is to recognise your conflict and find a way to enjoy it, because it's not going away in a hurry.

Read the book *A General Theory of Love* by Thomas Lewis (R147 from Exclusive Books)



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OBSTACLE 6: YOU COULD FALL IN LOVE

Pop songs, soap operas and rom-coms since you were a kid have drummed into you that if you don't fall in love (at least once) then you're a bit of a freak. It's true: staring into a girl's eyes and wondering how she could want to do the same with you is a truly remarkable experience (and far cheaper way of spending the evening than dinner or even renting a DVD). So don't scratch this. But what you should try and do is delegate. What you need is several relationships, you can't expect one woman to be your lover, friend and companion. Kurt Vonnegut, the late, great American author said that when a man is screaming irrationally at a woman, what he's really trying to say is “you are not enough people for me”. The added problem of one person filling all these roles is that when you break up with

your girlfriend, you not only lose a partner, you lose your best friend as well. What kind of gamble is that? You should diversify.

Read the book *Timequake* by Kurt Vonnegut (R133 from Exclusive Books)

OBSTACLE 7: BEING THE ONLY SINGLE GUY LEFT

That dreaded note on invitations “guest + partner” starts as early as twenty-first parties, and only gets more feverish. When all your friends are couples how do you survive? Once you lumber into your late thirties, to be in a singles' crowd you're probably going to need a few friends younger than you. That said, if you're avoiding marriage because of your “freedom” to party, then you need a rethink.

If all you're after is a chance to get pissed with your mates until 6am a few nights a week, there are plenty of women who will let you do that – and do it themselves. If you want to party you just need to look for that perfect girl a little harder (preferably towards closing time). As for the social stigma of being alone and feeling like a failure – it's rubbish. “Buckling from a long-term relationship is not a weakness, it's a choice,” says Bawa. “One that is mixed with possibly regret and occasional liberation.”

Buy the box set *Seinfeld* (series 1 to 7) each season R266 from www.take2.co.za. **MH**