

# RECOGNIZING PATTERNS WORKSHEET

In order to identify your patterns, let's start with an exercise to help you recognize your habits – good and bad.

## STEP ONE: Identifying Key Relationships

Write down the name of your parent who is the same gender that you would normally date (e.g. heterosexual men, write down your mother's name), and the names of (up to) five people you have dated. If you have dated more than five people, please choose the five with whom you have had the longest or most meaningful relationships. We will use these six people going forward with the following exercises.

1. (Mother/Father) \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

## STEP TWO: Identifying Positive Traits

For each of these people, write down the traits about the person that you like the most. Write down the qualities that make them uniquely who they are. (E.g. Nurturing, excellent listener, problem-solver, optimistic, etc.) For your parent, obviously you did not choose him or her, but pull some memories from your childhood, teenage years, and young adulthood that you observed and admired in your parent. For those people who you dated, pay special attention to the qualities that you think most attracted you, along with any qualities that helped you weather hard times together.

1. (Mother/Father) \_\_\_\_\_
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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. \_\_\_\_\_

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Review what you have written above. Do you notice any patterns or trends emerging from your relationships? Do the people you choose to date have traits that mirror your relationship with your parent, or are they almost the complete opposite of your parent?

Often reviewing what we tend to gravitate toward in the positive qualities of others can shed quite a bit of light about our own insecurities or desires. For example, we may choose someone with certain positive characteristics not because such qualities are our perfect complement, but because we have some deep need driving us resulting from some emotional stability that we lack.

Alternatively, we may also be gravitating toward certain positive characteristics (e.g. great sense of humor, positive outlook on life) because we truly love those qualities in another person. Keep this in mind as you review what you've written above, and then create a short list below of the traits that you really want to find in another person – the characteristics you *want* in Your Match.

Characteristics I WANT in My Match: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **STEP THREE: Identifying Negative Traits**

Similar to what you did in Step Two, you will write characteristics here of each of these people. This time, however, you are writing the person's *negative* characteristics – at least those that relate to his or her relationship to you. For your parent, list any characteristics that made you feel insecure, fearful, or unhappy as you grew up. For people that you dated, what qualities did each have that caused strife in your relationship? (E.g. Belittling, argumentative, condescending, intimidating, cocky, bitter, etc.)

1. (Mother/Father) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. \_\_\_\_\_

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Once again, review what you write for any emerging patterns or trends in your past relationships. If you begin to see a pattern of traits (e.g. choosing men who are particularly picky or fussy, or tend to put you down; choosing women who are clingy and needy) think about what this may say about you. For example, choosing people who tend to break you down suggests that you may have self-esteem issues, and that you can accept "love" (not *real* love) from these people because they say negative things about you that you already believe about yourself. Choosing people who are clingy and needy suggests that you don't believe someone who is a happy and whole person would want to stay with you; you are feeding off of the other person's insecurities which *inevitably* leads to trouble down the line. From any patterns you see emerging, write a statement that encapsulates what you *do not want* in Your Match (and highlight what you need to be especially vigilant to avoid):

Characteristics I DO NOT WANT in My Match (and need to be watchful for):

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#### **STEP FOUR: Identifying Emotions**

When you think of each of these people, what are the emotions that come to mind? Are they generally positive or negative? Do you feel happily reminiscent, or can you feel anger and bitterness rising to the surface? Are your feelings still very raw, or have your past wounds healed? In order to move forward in healthy ways with new relationships, it's important to recognize where you are in the healing process from the loss (whether it was your choice or not) of past loves.

1. (Mother/Father)\_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. \_\_\_\_\_

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Reviewing the emotions you feel toward each of these people will help you to understand where you may still need to do some work or healing. Learning from the pain of your past experiences and understanding why you sought or stayed with such people will help to guide you away from making similar choices in the future.

## STEP FIVE: Your Old Personals Advertisement

Imagine that you were to write a “want” ad for the kind of person you were looking for. In this ad, you would describe the characteristics of the person, and you might even include how you would want to feel when you were around him or her. In steps Five and Six, that’s exactly what we’re going to do. You won’t necessarily *use* either of these in crafting your online profile (you’ll learn more about the best way to craft a profile in the book) but you will see the kind of message you have been putting out to the world and work toward creating your NEW message to broadcast to help Your Match find you.

In this step, you’ll actually be crafting your “old” personals advertisement; you’ll be describing the kind of person it seems like you have been looking for *in the past* based on the negative characteristics you tend to have been dating regularly. To do this, go back and look at the negative characteristics that showed up more than once and then craft your paragraph below. In the end, it’s helpful to be able to have a sense of humor about some of the choices you’ve made in the past because – and this is the BEST news – you’re on a NEW path toward *never making these choices again!*

To help, I’ve given you the example of what mine looked like six years ago before I began the development of the process through which you WILL find YOUR MATCH!

*My Old Classified: 23-year old woman seeks man of questionable to poor moral character. Need not be respectful of my feelings or interested in my goals for the future. I enjoy needy, insecure men, or those who could be described as “Broken” or “Damaged”. Bonus points if your insecurity leaves me feeling as though you always have one foot out the door of our relationship. I am religious, but you not only don’t have to share my religious views, you need not be religious yourself, nor accepting of my views, nor even respectful of my fundamental belief system. Cheaters welcome – especially if you’ve cheated with a married woman. I am looking for a passive-aggressive, non-communicator, commitment-phobe with no goals for his life beyond planning his next trip to Vegas. Men with mommy issues are a big plus. If this sounds like you, let’s go for coffee and let the mind games begin!*

Are you feeling inspired? (Or maybe sorry for me? If so, don’t feel too bad, it all worked out in the end!) Take a moment to write a paragraph for your own *old* personals ad.

Your Old Personals Ad: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STEP SIX: Your New Personals Advertisement

Writing down your old personals ad can be challenging and perhaps even a bit embarrassing as you have to truly face yourself and the choices you've made. Years ago, I felt quite angry at the way I had been used and hurt by men *I had chosen to date*.

With time, I realized that what I was really most upset about was having stayed with these men too long. Have you heard the phrase, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me?" I let the men I dated fool me time and again, and it was hard to face that my lingering bad feelings stemmed from my realization that the pain was largely *my fault*. Although that epiphany is a hard pill to swallow, it brings strength because with it comes the truth that each of us has the power to choose who we date and for how long.

The good news is that as hard as it is to own up to your role in your own sordid dating history, it will be that much more joyful and exciting to create a new role for yourself as you go forward. It's time to make some *different choices!* Take a moment to review the positive qualities you're looking for, and the emotions you want to experience in a relationship and begin crafting your *new* personals ad. This ad will be a great description of Your Match and will set you up well for the next tasks in this section of the book.

Here is an example that I wrote when looking for My Match and – not coincidentally – it matches him perfectly!

*My New Personal Ad: 27-year old woman seeks man of highest moral character. He should be a true optimist, a romantic, and be looking for an emotionally healthy woman with whom to share the rest of his life. He should love God, and be on a constant journey of religious and theological exploration. After God, his first priority will be me and our families. He will dream of being the best father and husband possible, and strive to live each day better than the last. He will be my best friend and, with him, I will always feel a secure connection and deeply loved for exactly the person I am. He will have his own interests and be a best friend to his buddies – the one who can be counted on in the most difficult of situations. If this sounds like you, then send me an email and let's begin our new journey together!*



Ready? Review what you've already prepared and then write Your New Personals Advertisement.

Your New Personals Ad: \_\_\_\_\_

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Keep this in a place where you can see it daily. Remind yourself what you are looking for, and make sure with each date that you are not veering off course toward your old path, but keeping your eyes set on your new path toward the love you've always imagined.