

Introduction: Not *Another* Learning Experience!

Perhaps you've seen the bumper sticker: "Oh no, not another %#@ learning experience." And maybe, like me, you've lived it.

In 1997, I was closing in on a doctorate in psychology. My specialty wasn't relationships, but memory. If you were worried about it, wanted to know what changes are and aren't normal with age, wondered what causes memory decline, or needed to regain what you'd lost, I was your woman.

My unofficial occupation—what I spent at least as much time on as research--was finding Mr. Right. Like some of you, I knew unreservedly that I wanted one Love O' My Life, and I figured it was worth investing a lot of time and effort. *I was working hard. But I was not working smart.*

In fact, I was succeeding in my career while failing (flailing?) at love. I actually had an emotional sensation of groping around in a dark room, hoping I'd latch onto the right relationship and keep it. Somehow. Maybe. ?

One night, after a devastating break-up that Little Debbies, chocolate, and the charity of friends could not console, I was standing in a bookstore nursing a broken heart—because as a nerd, I go to bookstores when I'm feeling heartbroken—and I had The Moment: the epiphany that transformed the way I lived my love life, and led me to verifiable, objective answers to all my questions.

Questions like:

*Is finding love just luck? And even if I find it, can I hold onto it?

*Why are the guys I'm not into, into me, and the guys I'm into, aren't? Am I doing something to attract men I don't want and repel men I passionately desire?

*Am I asking for too much—being too unrealistic in my standards? Or are my standards too low?

*Where are the best places to meet Mr. Right? Or will he show up if I just stop looking?

*How can I find out what I need to know about someone before getting too involved?

*How long should I keep dating around once I've met someone I like?

*How soon is too soon for sex?

*If I have to dump someone, what are the two simple phrases that will make breaking up not quite so hard to do?

*If I'm the dump-ee, how can I heal my own broken heart?

*How can I get a stagnating relationship to move off dead-center and towards commitment?

*What is the meaning of Life?

Okay, the last one is beyond the scope of this book. But *The Moment* really did lead to answers to the other ones.

The Pain That Led To Gain

We'll get back to *The Moment*, but first we've got to backtrack to the mistakes and pain that led me there. Like other people, when things go easily, I don't question them too much. But when there's a lot of pain, I start wanting to prevent more.

And like other people, I made the same mistakes, repeatedly. In my case, some huge problems were knowing whom to date, whom to trust, and when to cut and run. My standards were like a bad play on the *Three Bears* story; I didn't know whether they were too low, unreasonably high, or just right, and everywhere I turned—friends, family, therapy, books, pop culture—seemed to have a different answer.

So I gave the wrong men too many chances, discounting my own experience and seeing things so much through their eyes that I forgot to use my own. Because what if I let this one go, and nobody better was out there?

I remember one man I dated who seemed to have it all. He was sexy, funny, well-educated, steady, employed, wealthy, smart, handsome, tall, interesting, and came from a famous family. He was honest and represented himself exactly as he was. At core, he was an excellent human being; I respected him mightily.

But he couldn't tell me anything more intimate than what I might reveal to my dentist. He loved me as much as he could love, and told me as much as he could

tell, but it wasn't enough for me. I thought I was an officially horrible person for feeling that way, but that's how I felt.

We went on a vacation together and I called my friends back home just to have someone to talk to. I actually spent several months debating with myself whether I should hang in there. Was it an okay standard to want emotional intimacy, I wondered? Ultimately, I left because I was less lonely alone! And actually, that didn't just happen with one man in one year, but with three, across ten.

I also had a habit of letting myself get too involved with men I didn't know enough about. Under the heading "Embarrassing but True," I got engaged to a man who said he was a lawyer when actually, he was a paralegal. As the wedding date neared, it turned out he was \$90,000 in debt, had no plan to pay it down, and wanted ownership of half my house. He was full of stories of people who had done him wrong and mistakes that weren't his. He wouldn't let me meet his friends—whose existence I began to doubt-- and when I at last met his sister, she dropped broad hints that I would soon be supporting an impoverished man-child who got along with nobody.

I began having panic attacks, including one that happened during a dream in which I heard my own voice say: You CANNOT and MUST NOT marry this man! I guess my right-brain intuitive function got tired of hinting around and finally got the conscious left hemisphere to club me over the head. Fortunately, I heeded that directive, broke up with him that very afternoon, and never had another panic attack.

Another pattern I had was being hard-to-get as soon as I lost interest in a man. Strangely, I received several marriage proposals—from the men I didn't want to marry.

I'll never forget the heartbroken face of one who, having flown across the country to propose, seemed genuinely confused that I wasn't receptive. I felt awful about somehow misleading him; hadn't I made myself scarce? He was so upset, he hired a cab for the 100-mile journey to the closest airport where he could change his ticket and fly back that same day.

Another time, an ex-boyfriend happened to call just as I was getting serious with someone else. We hadn't dated one another in over half a year, but I'd avoided him so I could move on with my life. At this point, though, I was over our break-up, so his call was surprising but welcome. He told me about his new girlfriend, in glowing terms, which I was fine with. So when he asked me how I was doing, I didn't think there would be any harm in revealing how happy I was in my own

love life. I kid you not, the next words out of his mouth were, “Will you marry me?” He was dead serious; had a date picked, repeated the offer several times, etc. My next thought was something along the lines of What The Hell, but more strongly worded. Where did this come from?!

I am not proud of such moments, nor the moments leading up to them. Yet I didn’t make the connection between my behavior and the outcome; each time, I thought there was something wrong with *them*.

On the flip side, I habitually tried courting men I wanted—you know, calling them and making them meals and being available whenever and wherever, and slathering on the love and sex. I mean, that kind of behavior got my attention, right? So it should work with them. Nope.

Instead, I lost chances with several men who could have been The Man. The worst heartbreak was Evan (*not his real name—except for me and my husband Vic, or authors and people referred to by first and last name, the innocent/guilty in this book are all protected by pseudonyms and random alterations of identifying details.*). He was my tall, dark, handsome, whip-smart literature professor boyfriend, who initially pursued me with white-hot ardor. He said he loved me, he wanted to introduce me to his mom, and he’d never met anyone so perfect for him; he dangled the idea of marriage.

But very soon in the relationship, I admitted I was madly in love with him, and I started calling to ask when I could see him again, and whether he’d like to spend an evening with my mom, my little girl, and me? His ardor quickly cooled and his attitude morphed from discussing a future to asking “whether this needs to go anywhere.” I pulled the plug, but only because the relationship had already crossed to the Other Side.

And I went and cried. A lot.

It seemed like my friends were right: Relationships were all about luck. And I just wasn’t too lucky.

Finally, The Moment

Or was that it? There in that bookstore, I wondered: Why am I stumbling around in this most important area of my life when I am so good at, if not so humble about, my job? Hasn’t some other nerd already studied all of this? Why don’t I know about it, if they have?

I mean, I was and am in the social sciences. And those sciences—psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.—well, they’re like other sciences because they apply the same methods, but they use those methods to study social things. Might they have reality-based information about finding and keeping love?

Because let’s face it, my own biased brain, my friends’ biased brains, and others’ biased brains were...biased. The human brain is not logical. It creates beliefs and then seeks to confirm them, instead of doing the rational thing of collecting data and then analyzing it; that’s just how it works¹. So all of us, no matter how smart we are, or how well-educated, or how well-intentioned, wind up believing stuff that isn’t true. Then, we act on it and mess up our lives.

Science is the only route to objectivity. Was anything objective known about love? And if so, would it help me?

Yes. And yes.

Why This Book?

The book you are reading presents all the information I needed in 1997, and 1998, and...well, every year up until I met and married my beloved Vic in January of 2008. It is the guide I needed and didn’t have. Although I have enjoyed numerous other relationship books and share those in the Recommended Reading list, they tend to focus on opinion-based advice, or to present science on its own without showing how to use the information.

None of them combine research with practice to give you the full story -- From Before You Meet Until You Get Engaged. And even though I’ve spent five years as the author of [LoveScience](#)², a relationship blog that gives advice from a social science perspective, it’s too scattered for the whole point-by-point picture.

There might’ve been a time I would have feared being turned off by a scientific approach to love. But just as understanding digestion hasn’t put me off eating, knowing factual information about human mating and relating hasn’t ruined romance for me. On the contrary—knowing how love works has paved my path to happiness, and has drastically reduced my pain.

This book is the one I yearned for, giving practical advice in a step-by-step, easy-to-use way that is firmly rooted in science without being a science book. This is a love book that uses science. It represents my best efforts to do something I

haven't found elsewhere: give you verified tools you need to find and keep the love of your life.

Who Are You?

Believe it or not, you've been on my mind since 1998, the first time someone asked me to write this book. Some folks believe women are the only ones who read about relationship advice, but I've seen otherwise: A third or more of *LoveScience* blog readers are men. As we'll see in this book, both sexes want, need, and deserve lasting love. So I picture you as someone who is single or at some stage of dating or cohabiting, whether you're male or female. Fewer of my readers are gay or lesbian, and most relationship research is about straight couples, but if you're lesbian or gay, most of the book will fit, too—and where it doesn't, I'll make a note of it. Regardless of your gender or orientation, you are welcome here. By the end of this book you'll know a whole lot more about yourself and successful dating, as well as the mating psychology of both genders.

You might be a *LoveScience* blog reader. Or someone who never heard of it. You might be a student. Or a friend. Or a student who has become my friend. You might be a client. Or a family member. In a few years, you might be my daughter, who will find this book on her nightstand when the time is right. I love her with all my heart, and if I could solve just one problem for her, it would be for her to have one happy, stable, life-long marriage.

There are people this book isn't for, though: the married and the permanently partnered. If that's you, it may be time to stop asking yourself whether you are in the right relationship, which is a courtship question, and ask yourself instead how you can improve the relationship you've got, which is a commitment question. Most unhappy marriages can be turned around and made joyful again³. Unless, that is, you're in a partnership with someone who has habitual issues with any form of abuse, addiction, or adultery—the Three A's. In that case, divorce may be the best response; you need a different book and I'm happy to guide you there if you email me at Duana@LoveScienceMedia.com.

What's In This Book? 10 proven steps to get you from I Wish to I Do:

In this book, we're going to answer the thorny questions that keep people single and hurting—and find solutions to the common problems of preparing for love,

finding the right partner for you, falling in love with them and having them fall in love with you, and making a joyful, total commitment.

Do you have ambivalence about love, or shame about seeking it? A lot of people do. In **Step 1**, we'll examine why so many people are afraid they won't find love—and then again, why they're afraid they will. If you have hesitations, we'll figure out where they're coming from, and why we have to begin by acknowledging your uncertainty and the dating myths that are holding you back.

Step 2 is all about your standards. Are you too picky—or not picky enough? And how can you tell? How can you create more opportunity for real love, and stop dead-end relationships before they begin? And what two standards should be at the top of your list? Believe it or not, you can quickly use factual information to answer all this and more. Possibly the most important work I do with my clients, Step 2 is not to be missed.

Turns out, some things everyone told you are true: You can't love another person more than you love yourself. And in a world that can seem shallow, it's important to not only find the right person—but to be the right person. Does character count? You bet. And as you'll see, odds are you can count on yours. **Step 3** lays the groundwork for loving yourself more, and setting boundaries on who you'll let into your life.

Steps 4 & 5 may not be politically correct, but they're empirically true. These steps take you inside the games people play—and why there is and always has been a battle of the sexes. Enough with being irresistible to partners we don't want, and being all-too-resistible to those we yearn for. How can you leverage the mating mind to attract the most, and most desirable, mates? What signals can you give to attract women—and which signals are woman-repellent? What are the top two signals men look for in a life partner? And why, oh why, does being hard-to-get give women an edge?

By **Steps 6 & 7**, you're ready to meet Mr. or Ms. Right. But where? Research offers at least four proven places. Have you tried them all? And once you've met a Mr. or Ms. Possible, what are five ways to leave them wanting more? Thorniest of all, most of us have secrets, things it's hard to tell or admit. But if they will impact the relationship, eventually we've got to come out with it. When's the best time, and what's the best way to deal with these monsters under the bed?

Step 8, breaking up, is infamously hard to do. But you can't say yes to the right one if you're stuck with the wrong one—or can you? What are five ways you can tell you're with Mr. or Ms. Almost-But-Not-Quite—and what can you do if you're

still unsure after that? Can you still be friends? And when moving on is called for, what's the one phrase (okay, two) you can use to set yourself free—as quickly as possible for you, and as painlessly as possible for them?

Men and women tend to have different views on the decision to commit, and **Step 9** not only tells why, but how to respond. What if you've found The One, and he's not proposing? Should you move in to test the waters? If you're already living together, how can you find out whether he ever wants to get to I Do? Ultimatums are ugly, but should you issue one? This step is commitment 911.

Finally, in **Step 10**, we discuss the three most important dating strategies of all: Persistence, persistence, and persistence. By the time you reach this stage, you know everything you need to for finding and keeping The One. But you'll make mistakes anyway, and maybe get tired or lose heart. How can you aim for progress, not perfection—and heal your own broken heart to love again if you're still reeling from a break-up?

Turns out, science knows a lot about moving from I Wish to I Do. And although I'd like to spare you the bumper-sticker reality, reading this book won't guarantee an end to your "learning experiences." We're emotional creatures, and sometimes even when we know what works, we go with what feels good in the short run, or we let baseless hope overrun probable realities.

That's okay. Change is a process. Finding love is a process. I made mistakes even after I knew everything in this book, too.

But I made fewer. I got better. And I found the love of my life. I've been happily wed for six years to the man I will be with until we are parted by death—of natural, non-homicidal causes. And now, when I make mistakes in love, they're small ones that will stay small if I just fix them right away, like not listening closely to how Vic's day went, or not thanking him for something he's done. Not the kind that require changes in geography and retaining of attorneys and breaking of hearts.

So the book you're holding is the answer to my own desire. I wrote it for the past me. For the present you. And for the future joy that will ripple out into the rest of your world when you're happily partnered.

Like the bumper-sticker says, life provides us with plenty of learning experiences. But they don't all have to hurt. We deserve happily-ever-after. Wise Readers, let's find it for you.

Duana C. Welch, Ph.D.

This has been an excerpt from *Love Factually: 10 Proven Steps from I Wish to I Do* (2015; copyright Duana C. Welch, all rights reserved). To order the full first edition in e-book, audiobook, or paperback, please click the appropriate link:

[e-book/Kindle edition](#)

[Paperback edition](#)

[Audiobook at Audible/Amazon](#)

[Audiobook at iTunes/Apple](#)

Advance Praise, *Love Factually: 10 Proven Steps from I Wish to I Do*

“Finally we have a research-based guide for how to sensibly select a partner. A must read for all those of us seeking a lasting love.”

~Dr. John Gottman, author of *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

“If you are going to read any book about love – make it *Love Factually*.”

~eHarmony

"*Love Factually* is a great book. It's anchored in solid science. It brings key principles to life with gripping real-life mating stories. And importantly, it brims with practical advice in the form of concrete actions everyone can take to improve their love lives. If you plan to read one book to improve your mating life, this is the one to read."

~David M. Buss, Ph.D., author of *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating*

“*Love Factually* is a real treat: a smart, funny page-turner, full of heart and based on the best science. If you're at any stage of the dating process, you'll get the clear, doable steps you've needed all along to find and keep the right life partner. And if you're already happily wed, you'll be entertained by all the sage advice you can pass on to others. I was hooked from the first chapter, and I'm married and know the research inside out!”

~Dr. Linda J. Waite, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, and author of *The Case For Marriage*

“This book is a ray of hope in a world of cynicism. Even better, it's hope founded on fact. *Love Factually* is a helping, healing journey.”

~Susan Page, author, *If I'm So Wonderful, Why am I Still Single?*

"If you want to transform your dating life into an *effective* search that significantly increases your odds of meeting the right person, *Love Factually* is a must read. Dr. Duana Welch is like having a kind, gentle, funny, and firm love guide/guru beside you as you traverse the rocky trail of being able to fully embrace a healthy, deeply fulfilling, satisfying and enriching relationship. I recommend this book to my clients, and to men and women who are serious about investing in themselves in order to become, and attract, the person they want and deserve."

~Carrie Lynne Pietig, LPC-S, using Gottman Method Couples Therapy in private practice

"*Love Factually* is like having Malcolm Gladwell and Brené Brown gene-splice with Dear Abby and The Rules. The Steps here are fantastic, and it's a great, fun read we highly recommend!"

~Ellen Fein & Sherrie Schneider, authors of *The Rules*, *All the Rules*, and *Not Your Mother's Rules*

Advance Praise, *Love Factually for Single Parents [& Those Dating Them]*

"Terrific, scientifically sound advice; every reader will finish wiser."

~David Buss, Ph.D., author of *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating*

"The must-read for single parents in the dating arena. Brilliant."

~eHarmony

"A wise, hopeful, and yes, factual guide for everyone who has loved and lost. This book will heal your heart and help you love again—this time, for life."

~Susan Page, author of *If I'm So Wonderful, Why Am I Still Single?*

"AT LAST--a superb research-based, reader-friendly guide to dating and mating after a significant romantic relationship has ended."

~Everett L. Worthington, Jr., Ph.D.

Author of *Couple Therapy: A New Hope-Focused Approach*

"Don't sit back and hope love happens. Instead, get the facts for you and your children. You will love reading this book!"

~Dr. Terri Orbuch (PhD), author of "*5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage From Good to Great*" and "*Finding Love Again: 6 Simple Steps to a New and Happy Relationship*"

"We don't get this mating training at home growing up....Add children to the equation and people definitely need this wonderfully specialized book."

~Joan Norton, attorney-mediator, family law

“A must read....provides all the knowledge, skills, and tools single parents need to succeed at the complicated task of creating lasting love.”

~Tim Cole, PhD., author of *Broken Trust: Overcoming an Intimate Betrayal*

“Find laughter, healing, balance, and a partner to fearlessly love. As a counselor and a single parent, I highly recommend this book!”

~Carrie Lynne Pietig, licensed professional counselor