

How To Stop Dating Jerks For Good

Because "bad boy" is not a valid type.

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So you're going through *another* breakup with *another* person who flaked or cheated or couldn't commit, and you're wondering what the hell is going on. Unfortunately, the problem may have something to do with your picker—that little part of your brain that tells you to go for it with someone new. "Many of us pick the same kind of people over and over, and we fall into a pattern even though those relationships don't work out," says relationship expert Terri Orbuch, Ph.D., author of *Finding Love Again: 6 Simple Steps to a New and Happy Relationship*. "Even though you might be attracted to these qualities, they aren't the ones that will work for you."

So how do you know if your picker is broken or if you've just had a string of bad (like, seriously bad) luck? Be open and honest with yourself as you read through the following list to see if you have a pattern of dating the wrong type of significant other; then, learn how to reset your internal compass so you can start choosing the *right* ones.

You change when you're in a relationship.

If you feel like you have to adapt every time you're with a new partner—whether it's changing your wardrobe, your vocabulary, or who you hang out with—that may be a sign that you're dating the wrong type of people. In this case, people who don't already respect and adore you for who you are.

"You need to look for people who are kind to you and who make you feel good about yourself," says relationship coach Danielle Harel, Ph.D.; not partners who pressure you (even subtly) to change things about yourself. This can start a cycle of depending on your partner for your self-esteem, which can drive you to date even *more* jerks. Instead of dating guys or gals who make you feel like you aren't good enough, Harel says to "keep your eye out for people who make you feel good about yourself for being exactly who you are and who stick up for you when others are putting you down." That guy friend that's always got your back? Give *him* a second look.

Your friends and family *never* approve.

The people who love you know you better than anyone, and they want what's best for you. So if it seems like your dates can never gain their approval, it's a pretty good sign that you're choosing the wrong people, according to Orbuch. Even if your friends have never raised a complaint about your past boyfriends, Orbuch says to pay attention to whether or not your friends and family want to spend time with him. If they constantly avoid hanging out with you as a couple, it could be because they don't think he's right for you.

"I'm a strong believer in letting your friends fix you up," says Orbuch. "Our friends and family often know us and who might be best for us. So allowing them to choose a guy is great." Basically, if your friends can vouch for him, then you have at least one vote of confidence that he's a good guy. He might not be the same kind of person you'd choose yourself, but that might be exactly what you need. Check out all the [pros and cons of letting your friends set you up](#).

Your relationships are passionate—but short-lived.

New relationships are always so exciting in the beginning, but if your bonds tend to fizzle after a few months, you're likely dating partners who you aren't deeply compatible with. Harel explains that we're often attracted to jerks because at first, they seem confident—but later on, the relationship turns sour.

This commonly happens when couples don't have compatible values, like their views on religion, finances, or health, says Orbuch. "Often times, women choose their opposites, because they think that's more exciting. But I've found in my long-term research that similarity in those underlying attitudes are what keeps people together." Take a minute to think about what's most important to you in terms of your faith, your family, your finances, and your future. Then find someone who

agrees with you on those things, since those are the values that you're least likely to compromise in the long term.

You only date musicians/athletes/blonds/super-tall men; etc.

Everyone has preferences—and that's totally okay. But if you're always dating one "type" of guy or girl and your past relationships have failed, it might be time to try out a new type, or at least not limit yourself to the one mold, says Orbuch. If you're picking partners based on superficial qualities—like their height, job, or color of their hair—you're probably letting that cloud your judgment when it comes to other, more crucial, qualities. That guy at the bar scores super high on the tall-brooding-poet scale, but how does he stack up on things like personality, responsibility, humor, and compassion? If you're too wrapped up in certain details, you'll miss the big picture.

Orbuch recommends sitting down and making a list of ten qualities that you want in a partner. If they all look the same as your past relationships, it might be time to mix them up. Then, highlight all the non-superficial ones to make sure you give those the most weight.