

Singular sensation

Can you be happily single? Is your life significant without a significant other? Say “yes” to singledom and complete yourself by being your own better half.

WORDS / CAROLINE ROBERTSON





In the past we paired for progeny, social status and security. Today, with growing financial independence and declining family orientation, there's less pressure to partner up. Plus, with high divorce rates and abundant dating options, we're picky about whom we settle for. So, if you're single, you're not alone — you're in the majority. In 2011, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 51 per cent of adults over 15 years are single. Why is this? Rather than settling for substandard relationships, many people are rocking solo time, prioritising profession, family, friends, fitness, hobbies and casual sex over a romantic relationship. They're getting their act together and leaving love till

the last performance. This can lead to a fulfilling life overflowing into a partnership or a satisfying single life.

However, thanks to fairy tales and the media, if the ideal of mythical love fails you can feel like a failure. Even though romantic love isn't always ideal and happily-ever-after is rare, we still expect it. Happy couples are put on a pedestal in our society and singles pitied, but both have their highs and lows: there's no superior status. You can be happily single or happily married. Or perpetually discontent if you suffer from the grass-is-greener syndrome, envying happy couples when single or envying liberated loners if committed.

Whether you're single or coupled, the grass is greenest where it's watered. Satisfied people are at peace with their status and make the most of all their abundant blessings. Love is all around — if you choose to open your heart to it. You miss your grace if you get fixated on finding a mate. As author Mandy Hale advises, "Don't ignore the love you do have in your life by focusing on the love you don't."

SOLO SERENITY

Can you see that you're meant to be single at the moment? Whether single by choice or circumstance, you'll find serenity by accepting your situation. Your attitude determines how happily single you are.

If you see the purpose and positives to being "available", you'll embrace it. If you see being unattached as unacceptable, you'll feel miserable and possibly desperate. And nothing repels a prospective partner like the smell of misery and desperation. Once you make peace with yourself, you'll attract a partner who mirrors your inner peace.

Having a healthy relationship with yourself is the well that waters all relationships. Relish valuable "me" time before you become a "we". Cherish it as a chance to savour yourself instead of waiting for a saviour; to support yourself rather than hoping for someone to support you. Why wait for someone to turn up and turn you on? Turn up and turn yourself on. Love yourself and you'll magnetise a loving mate. Like a moth to a flame, your vibrancy will be irresistibly attractive.

As Einstein said, "Everything is energy and that's all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want and you cannot help but get that reality. This is not philosophy; this is physics."

SINGLE MINDED

Is it really sad to be single? Were you honestly happier in a relationship? Questioning conditioned beliefs creates a new reality that is based on realisations rather than society's clichéd assumptions.

Find freedom from limiting beliefs by examining them with an open mind. As author Byron Katie says, "An unquestioned mind is the world of suffering."

To reveal your beliefs about being single, answer the following questions:

- Why do I believe being single is bad?
- What good can I see in being single?
- What are the reasons I'm single?
- How could a relationship be detrimental to me now?
- How could a healthy relationship be beneficial to me now?
- Am I ready for a relationship?
- What have I learned from my past partnerships?
- Have I healed from past pain?
- What qualities did I lack in my past relationship that I can cultivate now?
- What qualities did my past partners lack that I need in my future mate?
- Do I know what I desire and deserve in a relationship?
- Am I able to accept myself and a partner as well?
- Do I believe I can have a healthy and happy relationship?
- What do I need to do before I can have a healthy relationship?

Reflecting on your responses, ask if they are true and supportive beliefs. If not, explain to yourself why they're false and then replace them with empowering alternatives. After doing this exercise, many people realise they're happy with things just as they are: that they've created their reality for a good reason and it's perfect for this time and place. As Mandy Hale writes, "There are some places in life where you can only go alone. Embrace the beauty of your solo journey."

A SINGLE STEP

Some people are so scared of being single or having a bad breakup that they'd rather suffer an unhappy relationship. This fear is fed by anxiety about others' opinions and the idea that commitments need to be life-long.

Why is being single stigmatised? The many myths about being alone include that it's lonely and that it shows undesirability, vulnerability and selfishness. The truth is that in



a bad relationship you can feel even more lonely, undesirable, weak and self-centred. Parents have the extra pressure to stay together as kids could be irrevocably traumatised. However, if divorce is handled delicately, children can be happier with peaceful single parents than warring married ones.

If you're in an unhappy partnership, there are many considerations when deciding whether to do a Gwyneth Paltrow and "consciously uncouple". If you're unsure of your decision, read Mira Kirshenbaum's classic book *Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay*. Answering her 36 questions brings clarity. Counselling and communication also help to reveal and resolve issues.

However, even when they know it's unsatisfactory, some people stay in dysfunctional relationships because of codependency and countless fears. It seems to be a case of "better the devil you know than the devil you don't". Relationship addicts often suffer low self-esteem, anxiety and depression, traits that bind them in an un-dynamic duo. The escape route from a codependent relationship is independence so, if this is you, build confidence by pursuing personal

goals, securing finances and exploring options with child support, government assistance, housing, career and education. These are all stepping-stones to a happy separation.

There are many reasons to end a relationship but the overwhelming reason is if it's making you unhappy. Nobody deserves to be unhappy. As Robert Louis Stephenson said, "There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy." A relationship should empower and enhance your life, bringing out the best in both partners. It shouldn't squash or overshadow your smile.

If you've tried all avenues to make a relationship work, don't drain your energy by dragging on a dissatisfying relationship. Kenny Rogers was on to something when he sang, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know

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when to fold 'em." You're holding onto something that's cracked and will eventually shatter. A dysfunctional relationship will only depress and decapacitate you: it won't give you confidence, credibility or joy. Don't feel you've failed others or God. This is a rite of self-empowerment, not of failure. Staying unhappily ever after is a failure.

Everyone has a right to rejoice in their life. First, believe you deserve to be happy and embrace the change needed for that. Next, determine what you want and strategise moves. Reach out for help. But don't rush into another relationship until this one has closure. There's plenty of singles buzzing around; blossom in yourself and they'll be drawn to your nectar.

You may struggle in the parting process but this is a bid for long-term happiness with short-term discomfort. Grieve the loss, tend to your kids and deal with your ex with dignity. Most importantly, forgive yourself and your ex. Say to them and yourself out loud or silently, "I'm sorry, I forgive you, I love you, thank you." Chant this whenever you're feeling bad to clear your consciousness like an internal shower. It takes time to find your feet again but at least you're on the positive path you've chosen, dancing to your own soul's song.

DEEPER LONGING

Even with a lovely single life you may still long for a soulmate by your side: someone to share magic moments, support you through tough times and enjoy sexual intimacy with. Love and lust makes us feel alive, desirable, connected. Having a co-pilot gives us a sense of strength and security, too.

Yet is a partner enough to make you feel whole? Even in a relationship you may pine for an unconditional, inclusive love. Could this desire to merge with a mate be part of a larger longing to unite with the universe? To reconnect with our essence? To experience *agape* (spiritual love), not just *eros* (erotic love)?

The call to connect with an omniscient power is revealed in the words religion, from the Latin for "to bind", and yoga, "to yoke". Would your hankering for wholeness be satiated by divine union? Mystic Rumi felt so, saying, "Only union with you gives joy."

Many philosophies preach that longing for a lover is really the desire to feel that everything is part of us and that we're part of everything. We're always a part of all and never apart,



Enjoy uninterrupted bonding with your kids.

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according to saints such as St Francis of Assisi. Separation is an illusion that unravels when you see the inextricably interconnected thread weaving through everything. Tuning into this pervasive tapestry is the summit of all spirituality.

Practices such as meditation plug you into this energetic circuitry, attuning you to the enlightened channel of uninterrupted communion. This switch can flick on in a split-second shift of awareness. Blurring barriers, you can blend with the beauty around in unbounded bliss. There is only fullness and flow. Feelings of longing and lack disappear. People in this pure presence have a contagious energy that lifts others to the same serene frequency: merging with the matrix of oneness they never feel alone, only overwhelmed with love streaming through all cells.

PARTY FOR ONE

We're all born alone and die alone, so we need to make friends with ourselves and draw on inner strength for true security. If you don't enjoy your own company, you're in trouble, because you're stuck with yourself for life.

Being single is a chance to cultivate contentment from within; to draw on inner resources and show yourself what an amazing person you are in your own right. Solo time is an opportunity to

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channel energy that you would otherwise put into a relationship into other things, a time to be totally yourself without having to compromise or censor yourself for a partner. Fly in your own free sky with these singular pleasures:

- Reflect on past relationships and realise why they didn't endure.
- Recover and clear negativity from your past relationships.
- Learn from them and let go.
- Clarify qualities to attain and qualities of your perfect partner. Repeat these as daily affirmations in the present tense.
- Deepen connections with friends, family, animals, nature, teachers, workmates and the divine. These loving exchanges can satisfy your heart.
- Set yourself character-building challenges such as eating a meal in a restaurant alone. Eventually you'll find it fun.
- Work on your weaknesses.
- Advance your career.
- Fine-tune fitness, health and routine.
- Develop a hobby.
- Travel.
- Watch, eat, enjoy whatever you want, whenever you want.
- Enjoy uninterrupted bonding with your kids.
- Flirt without having to worry about a jealous partner.
- Dance around your house.
- Sing as loud as you like.
- Leave the bathroom door open.
- Look daggy but feel fantastic whenever you want.
- Change your look to your taste.
- Enjoy the whole bed to yourself.
- Volunteer for charity.
- Grow a beard or hairy legs.
- Repeat affirmations such as "I'm serene and secure in myself" and "I'm content and complete in myself."
- When you're feeling down about being single, keep your "problems" in perspective by watching the news or realising that some relationships bring more pain than pleasure.
- Recall relationship hassles you don't have to deal with.
- Date without expectation but high standards for your "final selection".
- Get excited about the true love coming your way. 🍀

■ *The author gives thanks to Mandy Hale, author of The Single Woman: Life, Love and a Dash of Sass.*

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