

# Dating & Shalom Bayis

## Tips and Tidbits

Parshat Devarim, 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, 5779 / August 10, 2019  
Vol. 1 Issue. 41

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### Ready for Marriage? (Part II)

While there are several aspects of a man's life that will ready him for marriage, the same is true for a woman. The qualifications are different and unique to her as a woman, yet just as necessary to be in place in order to ensure a well-balanced and successful relationship.

*Maintain high and healthy self-esteem.* It is important to define self-esteem and differentiate it from self-image, as they are terms that are often thrown around and mistakenly interchanged. Self-image refers to your feelings of *confidence in your own skills, talents and abilities*. Self-esteem relates to your *feelings of self-worth*, which is something that every person has by virtue of being human and alive. Intrinsic and interwoven into your very being and essence as a human being is worthiness. You don't need to do anything to prove yourself. Your successes or failures do not elevate or diminish your self-esteem, only your self-image.

The incredible importance of understanding this can be seen by simply observing those people in the world who are incredible successful in their careers, but suffer miserable lives. They have extraordinary accomplishments, but they feel worthless. How can that be? Because they have a great self-image, but a terrible sense of self-esteem. If you were to dig deeper into their personal thoughts and feelings, you would find intense self-loathing and low appreciation and regard for themselves as a person. A crucial cognitive reframing for people to experience healthy self-esteem is to understand this distinction between self-esteem and self-image. It allows a person to fail and still feel wholly intact within. They realize that neither their greatest accomplishment nor their worst disappointment defines their true worth.

For a woman, self-esteem (or as is now better understood as *self-worth*) is particularly important. It colors every aspect of her life and determines the success, productivity and fulfillment she experiences. How, though, can self-worth be enhanced, if any? Through *full self-acceptance*. This means that no matter what you have done in the past or will do in the future, you accept yourself as you are.

Once again, this does not relate to your accomplishments or failures, but your defined self as a *person*.

Before even addressing why it is critical to have your self-esteem intact and maintained before getting into a relationship, it is important to note how its absence or near absence will impact a number of your life's components.

For one, low self-esteem will determine a woman's *relationship with herself*. Does she trust herself or consciously doubt herself and struggle to make her own decisions? Does she love herself, which means specifically, does she take care of herself? Does she accept herself, in that she can fail and still feel just as good about herself as before?

Secondly, it will affect her *sense of priorities*. Does she live in accordance with what is important to her? A woman who doesn't place high value on herself will not attach great importance to finding out what is truly important to her and living in sync with those things. If, however, you appreciate your worth, you will determine your life priorities and direct your focus and attention on them.

Thirdly, it will impact her ability to *accomplish in her life*. With low self-esteem, and your priorities not set, you will wind up settling in life and not achieving what you could. Low self-esteem essentially inhibits you from fully pursuing what you deeply desire and are driven after.

Lastly, it does not allow you to be the *role model* you would like to be. Low self-worth translates into not believing you have much to offer other people. You therefore do not lead your life in such a way which you believe will positively impact people. Your own inhibiting self-beliefs translate into shortchanging others by withholding from them valuable gifts (in the form of support, encouragement, inspiration etc.) that you have to offer.

When any or all of these self-negating aspects play into a woman's inner world, it is very easy to fall into a

relationship which is not deeply and completely satisfying. If a woman does not fully accept herself, she can end up settling for less than she really is and deserves. She will tolerate and accept a man who will not suit her best, because she doesn't believe she will find someone better for her. The rule: high-caliber and quality women are selective in dating and do not need a man to feel good about themselves. They do not need to get married and have a husband to feel all the worth that they are. Their inner self-worth brings them all the confidence they need, and they do not need to be the damsel in distress, lean excessively on someone or be approved of to feel worthy.

Moreover, self-acceptance is a prerequisite for marriage, because if you do not accept yourself, how can your husband accept you? He may attempt to make you reflect on how special and worthy you are, but you will either not believe him, or even if you do, it will be partially, tentatively and with great reservation. In other words, your husband's compliments and flattering statements should not create your self-esteem, but *confirm* it. Otherwise, you will be hungry for approval and praise and not be able to stand on your own two feet in a relationship. Additionally, don't assume that your husband will solve your problems of low self-worth. Marriage never masks problems; it magnifies them. Make sure that you feel whole and complete before marrying.

*Embrace your feminine nature.* A masculine man wants to marry a feminine woman. The colloquialism "opposites attract" has been taken out of context today and been applied in many ways that are untrue and misleading. It does not mean that you should marry someone who has a different personality than you. The more similar you are, the smoother and easier your relationship will be. Unfortunately, many people are guided into marriage by being reassured that differences are not a problem and "opposites attract," so dating someone who has a different lifestyle or way of being than you is no problem. The truth is that the phrase "opposites attract" was meant to reflect the powerfully attracting masculine and feminine polarities in a relationship. The more masculine the man is, the more feminine the woman can be. Otherwise, the masculine/feminine energies collide and the relationship can become unbalanced. Feminine grace, charm and elegance are those qualities that complement a man as both a caring, thoughtful lover and firm, assertive leader.

*Express and release past hang-ups to be open to new love and leadership.* Any area of life in which a woman feels "stuck" should be dealt with prior to marriage. As mentioned, marriage is not a dumping ground for old problems to be resolved. It will only create more issues. The first step is to objectively look at yourself and gain sufficient self-

awareness. Once that is in place, it is important to let those undesirable parts of yourself and your behavior go which do not enhance your life. You want to unencumber yourself of everything which weighs down on you. At this point, you can begin to see your true self and embrace who you are. You will be seeking your husband's love and leadership, and in order to be open to receiving and experiencing that, you must accept those very aspects of yourself which he does. You will only let him into your life to love and lead you if you love and lead yourself.

*Befriend and trust other women.* Although your husband will be your confidant, he cannot replace a deep friendship that you as a woman will experience with another woman. There is a unique spiritual and emotional connection that binds women and enables them to tap into their feminine nature and power and express their full feminine selves. Having an honest friend whom you trust and take comfort in will prove to be an invaluable asset not only in your overall life, but in your relationship too. Just as men need other men in their lives, women need other women in their lives. You do not want to depend on your husband for every problem that comes up in your life. Having a friend to share your sorrows, struggles and successes and mutually be there for her will nurture your self-esteem and provide you with the social, emotional and spiritual opportunity for self-care. As healers, nurturers and peacemakers, these types of friendships have the power of keeping a woman buoyant and in touch with herself.

There you have it. Four key components that will place a woman on track for being ready for marriage: *Maintain high and healthy self-esteem; embrace your feminine nature; express and release past hang-ups to be open to new love and leadership; and befriend and trust other women.*

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