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The Art of Dating Yourself

Why you should make time to try new things and pursue old passions—whether you're coupled or single, a proud parent or happily child-free.

BY [DIANA BAND](#) / FEBRUARY 12, 2018



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Why Date Yourself?

Dating is an essential part of nearly all our relationships—it's how we get to know potential romantic partners, nurture existing long-term relationships and friendships, and even for many parents, a way to spend quality one-on-one time with their kids. Though we nurture many relationships in our lives, there's one we tend to neglect—the relationship with ourselves. While girls' nights out and dinner dates with

our partners are essential and fun, it's the time we spend doing things on our own that allows us to stay connected to our individuality which keeps us vibrant, happy, and interesting.

Jennifer Taitz, a board-certified expert in cognitive and dialectical behavioral therapies and author of *How to Be Single and Happy*, explains the importance of investing in our own growth and joy. "In addition to having a clear sense of your values and a life filled with actions that align with those values," Taitz says, "it's also important to experience both pleasure and mastery." Pleasurable activities are those we passively enjoy, such as seeing a movie, savoring a meal, or shopping. Activities of mastery, on the other hand, are those where you "continually challenge yourself and grow," such as learning a new skill, studying a new subject, or practicing mindfulness. Following this kind of life balance is essential, no matter your relationship status.



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Treat Yourself with Respect

When you make a date with yourself, it's important you give yourself and the activity the same full attention you'd give to another person. That means powering down the phone, taking out the earbuds, and yes—leaving the book at home. We spend so much time attached to our devices and keeping ourselves distracted that many of us have forgotten how to be simple. Treating yourself to a meal and then scrolling through social media, or flying solo and then standing yourself in a corner at the party or bar enviously watching couples have fun, entirely misses the point. There's no room for FOMO or self-deprecating comparison when you're out on a date with yourself. Practice mindfulness on your dates and you'll be worried a lot less about what you think is missing from your life.

Expand Your Horizons—or Stick with What You Love

Just as you might on a date with another person, encourage yourself to try new things. You don't need to wait for someone else who wants to try that new restaurant or see that new exhibit—just go! If you're single, Taitz gently warns, you may feel tempted to force yourself to do things “that don't feel like you because they're socially prescribed ways to meet people. If you don't like clubbing at 1 a.m.,” she says, “that probably isn't a great way to meet a like-minded person.” However, it's totally okay to do something just because you're curious or you like it—dating yourself doesn't have to be about meeting new people. You don't have to take yourself out for exclusively new activities either. Whether you have a demanding job, family obligations, or both, it's still important to prioritize your existing passions, too.

Learn What Makes You Happy

If it's been awhile since you've made a date with yourself and you're a little lost on where to begin, that's okay. Taitz suggests sitting down and using the following two questions to help generate a list of activities you'd like to do:

1. What gives you pleasure?
2. What actions might you take to increase your sense of mastery?

After generating ideas in both categories, start loading up your planner or calendar. If you've got a lot of obligations, sign up for a regular class that you can more readily fit into your schedule, or set dates several months out so that you can better build your schedule around them. You wouldn't neglect to schedule activities with a spouse, friends, or your kids, so don't put yourself at the bottom of your list either. Happy fulfilled partners and parents make for happy fulfilled spouses and kids, just as being well-rounded, self-confident, and dynamic attracts people worthy of your time and your love.

No matter who you are, investing in yourself is the best thing you can do for your health. Taitz says, “Not only is participating in life good for your emotional well-being but researchers have also found that for people with physical pain, positive activities reduce discomfort.” So get out there and start dating yourself—it’s good for you in more ways than one!

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