

METAMATING SERIES

How to Build a
Happier and Happier Relationship



Book Four
Troubleshooting Courting

Metamating Series: Book Four — *Troubleshooting Courting*

<http://www.HappierRelationships.com>

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(Nobody likes to read this kind of stuff. We wish we didn't have to do it.)

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You will notice a number of strange words throughout this book. I use these words to describe functions that occur in your mind. These functions have not been given names by science or other students of the mind, so, I created words to use, and often I used words that suggest the meaning. For example I use the names "Importancizer" (giving importance to something) and "Comparator" (comparing one thing with another).

Sometimes I used acronyms, such as "TWIPI" (The Way I Perceive It) and "TWISB" (The Way It Should Be" according to at least one part of my mind).

Until real scientists name these functions, I guess you and I will have to be stuck with this odd vocabulary. I'm sorry that you are put to the task of using and recalling this rather unusual set of words.

See also: www.Sagery.com

Table of Contents

Preface: How to Use this Book	i
Introduction to Courting	ii
Chapter 1: You're Ready for Exclusivity; Your Partner Isn't.....	1
Chapter 2: You Want Intimate Communications; Your Partner is Closed.....	3
Chapter 3: Your Partner Has Violated Your Trust	5
Chapter 4: You Say "No" and You're Partner Pushes	7
Chapter 5: Sex is the Biggest Issue in the Relationship	11
Chapter 6: Your Partner Won't Make a Commitment	13
Chapter 7: You Have Several Possible partners and Aren't Ready to Choose One.....	15
Chapter 8: You Want to Know More People and Get More Experience	17
Chapter 9: Commitment: You Aren't Sure Yet; You Need More Time	21
Chapter 10: Commitment Would Lead to Sex; You're Not Ready for That.....	23
Chapter 11: Bad Reasons for Making a Commitment.....	25
Chapter 12: All Your Friends are Making Commitments	29
Chapter 13: You May Lose Your Partner Unless You Do	31
Chapter 14: You're Getting Older; It's Now or Never	33
Chapter 15: It's a Secret; You Don't Want to Declare	35
Chapter 16: Your Partner Courts You, But It's All Wrong	37
Chapter 17: You Think Courting Seems Silly at Your Age	39

Preface — How to use This Book

Note: There are four books on the subject of Troubleshooting, in the “Metamating” series of books:

- Book Three: Attraction
- Book Four: Courting (the book you are about to read)
- Book Five: Infatuation
- Book Six: Bonding

It’s important that you’ve already read Books One and Two in the “Metamating” series, before you read any of the Troubleshooting books.

Troubleshooting starts when you identify a problem, so that you can do something about it. Sometimes you can solve the problem by just identifying it. But, sometimes you might need to change something.

For example, you might have a strong reaction to something you read. Make a note of it. That reaction probably signals a strongly-held belief that may be giving you problems. If you can get your problem solved without changing it, then don’t worry about it. If you find yourself stuck on either identifying your problem, or on solving it, then go back and examine each of those strong reactions you made a note of. It may be helpful to review the concepts in Book Two: “The Sage Model.”

When you’re ready, use the Table of Contents for this book, to check off the subjects that are of interest to you, or seem to be troublesome. Read the Introduction that follows, then read any of the troubleshooting chapters that you wish.



Introduction to Courting

Courting is an engaging and charming activity. To see it in its purest form, watch twelve to fourteen-year-olds. After that age the same activities are there, but they become more subtle and more polished. Long after you have found a partner and are out of the courting arena, you'll find a certain delight and charm as you watch young people go about it.

Courting

Here are some of the activities to look for:

Flirting: sending signals of attraction.

Ignoring: seems to follow flirting — it's as though now that you've sent the signal, you want to deny having sent it.

Focusing: paying a lot of attention to the person you're attracted to; watching him or her, looking for signs from that person; paying less attention to others.

Primping: paying inordinate attention to your own looks, hair, facial blemishes, cosmetics etc. (primping is a signal of its own).

Posturing: being aware of how you present yourself; acting taller, older, more vigorous, thinner, heavier; being more aware of how you walk, talk, act.

Initiating: taking the lead sometimes in interactions with the one you are attracted to; calling, inviting, inquiring, pushing, shoving, touching as if by accident; arranging to be in the way of the potential partner.

Withdrawing: being hard to reach; acting as though you're not interested; acting occupied; pretending an interest in others that you may not feel.

Matching: agreeing with, liking the same things; discovering an interest in anything that interests the object of your attraction.

Teasing: attacking, accusing, acting as though you are upset or hurt or annoyed; tickling, hitting, bumping into.

This list should give you an idea of some of the activities that are bound up in the courting process. By the way, these identical items are found in virtually every culture. They have different appearances, depending upon the culture, but they seem to be innately human activities.

Chapter 1: You're Ready for Exclusivity; Your Partner Isn't

There are a number of plateaus in the courting process. The courting process moves at different speeds for each party. Therefore, it's common for one person to reach a plateau before the other. That may be the case for you.



You're ready for exclusivity and your partner isn't.

Windows

Another possibility is that you or your partner — or both — have closed windows. When your window is closed, it's wise (but not easy), to avoid exclusivity. Becoming exclusive gives a big boost toward infatuation. Infatuation — while your window is closed — puts heavy pressure on you. So, another possible reason for your partner resisting exclusivity is that your partner's window is closed and your partner is resisting becoming exclusive as a way of avoiding pressure and possible hurt.

If you know that both of your windows are open, then it's best to be patient and wait for your partner to be ready. Pushing, or forcing a step your partner isn't ready for, may give your partner the impression that you are only interested in your own needs and not willing to consider your partner's needs.

Strategies

The most considerate and caring strategy is to deliver two equally important messages to your partner. The first is your willingness or eagerness to become an

exclusive couple. The second is your willingness to be patient until your partner is ready.

Once delivered, it's best to avoid pushing or manipulating your partner. You may periodically reaffirm the two messages. This has the effect of demonstrating that you are still very interested, and that you respect your partner's wishes.

There are several strategies that are best avoided. They almost always have poor outcomes:

1. Avoid displaying jealousy toward others that your partner may be involved with.
2. Do not attempt to make your partner jealous of you by inventing a supposed interest in someone else. If you have a genuine interest in another, go with it. Avoid games or pretenses; they are certain to have poor results.
3. Avoid displays of bad humor (sulking, pouting, withdrawing), as attempts to manipulate your partner into becoming exclusive.

The single most important capacity you can display in this situation is patience. Patience on your part keeps the pressure off of your partner. Your partner will not necessarily appreciate your patience, but it is quite probable that he or she may resent it if you apply pressure.

When you display patience, you demonstrate a respect for your partner and a willingness to accept your partner the way your partner is, without forcing your needs onto your partner. Patience is a mark of maturity, and a demonstration that you are indeed a candidate for a mature relationship.

Patience is difficult. You're ahead of your partner and you want your partner to catch up. The one ahead is always eager for movement on the part of the other. However, pushing or game playing will probably not have the outcome you intend. It seems as if they should work, yet quite often they have the opposite effect.

If you are feeling terribly pressured by time, and you want to force your partner to either go with you or go away, then pushing and forcing a decision may get you an answer. On the other hand, it might not hurt to be patient, *and* to keep an open eye for other, possibly more rapidly developing relationships. This is not a suggestion for you to start up another relationship to force the first one. However, if you are in a hurry and your partner is moving too slowly for you, then it might be prudent to have more than one non-exclusive relationship.



Chapter 2: You Want Intimate Communications; Your Partner is Closed

Intimacy in communications means being open and straight about your feelings and thoughts. Being closed means either not communicating your honest feelings and thoughts, or communicating feelings and thoughts that are designed to manipulate the other person.

Discovery

The courting phase is the time to discover important things about you and your partner and how you communicate. Wide differences on important issues like intimacy are indications that the relationship may be on shaky grounds for the long term.

If you are both rather closed and avoid honest and open intimate communications, then coping will be difficult, but possible. If you are both open and honest and seek intimacy in your communications, then coping will be easier and you will have the key tools for it. The worst difficulty is when one is open and seeks intimacy, and the other is closed and avoids intimacy.

People can and do change as they grow and mature. It is also true that they most often do not change. Many a person has married with the secret hope of changing his or her partner. Most have been severely disappointed.

If you seek openness and intimacy, and your partner shuns it and has little interest in developing it, then you have a decision to make. A long-term relationship can succeed in these circumstances, but the open person will often find himself or herself making all the concessions and accommodations. A one-sided relationship can be deeply frustrating and painful.

In Chapter 4 of this section, there's an exercise in open communications. This exercise may help you and your partner in understanding intimacy and openness. By working together on the intimacy exercise you can determine whether your partner is willing to work to become more open. If the answer is 'yes' then you have a rewarding joint project. If there is considerable resistance, then you have a decision to make.



Chapter 3: Your Partner Has Violated Your Trust

Trust is a very volatile issue for twosomes. A relationship without trust is a relationship filled with pain and torment. The following thoughts about trust are among the most important things you'll discover in this book, and the most important beliefs and strategies that you can learn about pairing.

Trust is a Gift

First, grasp the idea that trust is something very separate from the acts that violate trust. For example, Sally lies to Bill. Bill could stop trusting Sally. However, the lie is an *act* and it may or may not ever be repeated. Trust is trust; it can be given or withheld. Trust is a basic *belief* about someone else. Even though Sally has lied, Bill can choose to trust Sally in the future.

Trust is a gift. It is given to another. It does as much for the giver as it does for the recipient.

So, trust is a gift you give your partner. It is a gift of love. A gift is always best when it's given without strings. For example, Tom gives Mary a watch. If it's truly a gift, then Mary may do what she chooses with it. The watch is now Mary's and if it was truly a gift without strings, then it is hers to do with as she pleases. If Mary gives the watch to her friend Ann, then Mary has done with it as she chooses. If Tom chooses to feel bad about Mary's use of the gift, then Tom must have put strings on the gift.

So, here are several thoughts for you that all run counter to conventional wisdom.

- A gift is only a true gift if it is given without strings.
- Trust is a gift — a gift of love. Trust, when given without strings as a gift of love, does more to enrich the giver than the one it is given to.
- If you allow any act of the recipient to make you withdraw the gift, then it was given with strings, is not a true gift, and does not enrich the giver, but hurts the giver.

Example

Fred and Sara are a twosome. Sara trusts Fred. Fred spends an evening with another woman. Fred lies about it to Sara. Now, what is Sara to do?

Sara is wise to consider the actions or acts. Fred spent an evening with another woman. Fred lied to Sara about it. These are acts that need to be dealt with. They are best dealt with by talking openly about them. Fred and Sara need to have open discussions about the events and they need to come to some resolution about them.

Let's assume that Fred and Sara discuss the events and Fred takes responsibility for what he did and apologizes to Sara for violating his agreement and for lying about it. Fred affirms again his commitment to Sara and pledges to honor his

commitment in the future. Sara considers everything and decides to forgive and forget. Now, the acts are dealt with.

What about trust? If Sara withdraws her gift of trust in Fred, then what will happen? Sara will not trust Fred. Sara will find that she is miserable. Fred will feel the lack of trust and be miserable. The relationship will be uncomfortable for both Fred and Sara.

The best advice to Sara would be to continue her loving gift of trust to Fred. That trust may or may not be violated. That's up to Fred. Sara can only give her trust and be nourished by it, or withdraw her trust and feel pain.

If the acts that threaten the relationship continue, then Sara will have to make her own choices about continuing the relationship. The future of the relationship will depend on the acts that threaten it, not the trust or lack of it that Sara feels.

So, acts can threaten a relationship. Withdrawing trust can threaten a relationship. If one person acts in a way that threatens the relationship and the other withdraws trust, the question arises "Who is responsible for threatening the relationship?"

If Sara were to withdraw her trust, the relationship would be threatened. She would say that Fred was responsible. Fred would say that Sara's lack of trust was responsible. Both would be "right" from their point of view. But the relationship would be destroyed.

If the relationship is to be destroyed, let it not be the lack of trust that does it. Let it be destroyed by acts.

Notice that acts come and go. They are one-time things. Trust is ongoing. It must be there always — continuously — in order to nourish a relationship.



Chapter 4: You Say “No” and Your Partner Pushes

Ellen Goodman dealt with this issue in her column of April 18, 1984, headlined “Deciphering Language of Courtship.”

BOSTON Two weeks ago, in writing about three separate rape convictions, I noted that a new definition of rape was finally taking hold of the public consciousness. Juries in three separate cases had determined that, “If she says no, it’s rape.”

In that same column, I also asked whether that same change of mind was part of our daily lives. Rapists after all, came out of a culture in which men were supposed to persist and women were supposed to resist. Many men grew up believing that a woman could say one thing and mean another.

Since then, I have heard from any number of men, both in private conversations and in the mail, relating their own experiences with the yes-no-maybes of sexual relations. One lawyer told me about the time he took no for an answer, only to discover later that she wanted persuasion. Another friend was convinced that many of the negative messages he received were actually mixed.

Three of the letters I received were in some ways typical of the response from many men, angry or thoughtful. One came from a Virginia husband and father of two who wrote, “You are wrong when you assert that if she says no it’s rape. By your definition, I could have been guilty of rape a dozen or more times. But...all of those ‘victims’ went out with me again, and many remain warm friends. By fostering such a broad definition you water down the true meaning of the word. You are lumping ‘not tonight dear, I have a headache’ into the same category as the truly violent and brutal rapes that do occur.”

Another man in Miami tried to sort out the messages he had been dealing with since adolescence: “I, in no way, mean to excuse the all-too-often brutal response men have to the demurring female. But, honestly, young boys grow into men hearing of the sexual conquests of other males who ‘didn’t take no for an answer.’ Quite often the gentler male is left to suffer through the exploits of another who ‘scored’ where he didn’t That scenario of our male world is closer to everyday experience than most of us like to admit.

Finally, a retired 80 year old Floridian sent in a sexual riddle of his youth. “Question: What is the difference between a diplomat and a lady? Answer: When a diplomat says ‘yes’, he means ‘perhaps’. When he says ‘perhaps’, he means ‘no’, and when he says ‘no’, he’s no diplomat. When a lady says ‘no’, she means ‘perhaps’. when she says ‘perhaps’, she means yes, and when she says ‘yes’, she’s no lady.

These three messages are not isolated. They are messages along the continuum of ingrained beliefs and real-life experiences. They re-tell the cultural story of the ‘forceful man’ and the ‘reluctant lady’.

The Virginian is not the first man to believe he was rewarded for his aggressive pursuit of a demure dozen. The Miamian is not the first to wonder if his

gentleness was foolish, even unmanly. The riddle was not the first teaching tool for ladies who might be foolish enough to risk their reputations with an eager 'yes'

I believe that the actual number of double-messages are exaggerated in men's minds. Nevertheless, not every woman who says no means it. Not every woman who means yes, says it. The yes-no-maybes of our culture can produce an elaborate courtship dance to refrains of uncertainty, and frustration.

But that doesn't mean that an ambivalent or even coy woman is equally responsible for the atmosphere that ends in scenes of sexual pressure After all, if a man accepts her "no", what harm has been done? There are no destructive consequences, no violence, no cries of rape.

If "no" is ignored, though, a woman, even one who cares for the man, learns that what she says doesn't matter. That SHE doesn't matter. At least, not as much as the scoreboard. The consequences are enormously destructive.

We seek a great many things in the act that we call making love. Approval and affection as well as sex. Making love can edge easily into a power struggle. But denial and force are not equally weighted in this struggle. There is simply stated, much more harm in aggression. In the end, the man doesn't take no for an answer is only proving one thing that he can take.

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Ellen Goodman's column illustrates some of the ambivalence and frustration that is involved in the yes-no-maybes of sex in courtship. The issue is complex and difficult. The solution, however, can be rather simple, if both parties are willing to be open to discussion.

A man (in our culture) is caught between his desire to allow his lady to say 'when' and his fear that he isn't being 'manly' if he doesn't persist. He also has the fear that maybe he is missing the message; maybe her 'no' means 'maybe,' or even 'yes'. The woman is caught between her desire to please her partner and her fear that she will be 'just another score' or considered 'easy.'

The answer is possible, if both parties are able to discuss it. One answer may be to read this section together and discuss it.

Discussion Exercise — Part 1

Here are some questions that might get a good discussion going.

1. First of all, is there any chance that we might share each other sexually before marriage?
2. If yes, under what circumstances?
3. Will it depend on my pushing for it?
4. Will you say no when you mean maybe?
5. Will you say no when you mean yes?
6. If we wait for you to decide will it be never?

7. If I push and push will it happen sooner?
8. Do you expect a man to prove himself manly by persisting?
9. If I say yes, will it mean I am easy?
10. If I say yes, will you respect me in the morning?
11. Etc.

The first part of the exercise is to dialog about these questions. The second part of the exercise is to go inside and get a sense of what you're feeling. Do you feel any certainty? Are you ambivalent? Are you confused? Do you have a lot of mixed messages?

If you feel very certain, and very comfortable with the dialog, and you have a good sense that you both have reached an understanding on this issue, then you're finished.

If you feel uncertain, fearful, uncomfortable, then it's best to consider the matter unsettled. Either it will take another dialog in the future, or it is possible that the issue is so emotionally laden that it won't be settled at all through dialog.

Discussion Exercise — Part 2

If you decide to leave the issue unsettled, you can come to a sense of closure by choosing one of the following resolutions:

1. The issue is still unsettled, and that's okay. We'll deal with it again some time in the future. In the meantime, let's continue as we have been.
2. The issue is still unsettled, and that's okay. We'll deal with it again some time in the future. In the meantime, I want agree on one of these guidelines:
 - a. When I say no, I mean no. Please don't persist.
 - b. When I say no, I don't know what I mean. I really mean yes, but not now.
 - c. When I say no, it really means yes, but I am afraid of something. When I stop being afraid, I'll let you know.
3. When *you* push and I say no, here's how you react:
 - a. I'm glad that you react that way.
 - b. I'm not happy that you react that way.
 - c. I feel like you are trying to manipulate me, and don't really care about my needs wants and wishes.
4. When *I* push and you say no, here's how I react:
 - a. I like it that you handle it that way.
 - b. I don't like the way you handle it.
 - c. I feel I'm getting mixed messages, and I want to know exactly what you're communicating.

If these dialog starters don't work for you and your partner, make up your own. Be certain to cover these points:

1. Here is what I think and feel. Here is what I think I hear from you.
2. Tell me what you think and feel. Tell me what you hear from me.

One important point. If your relationship is to succeed in the long term, it must be built on a much broader base than sex. Long-term relationships are built on mutual respect and trust. They are also built on caring and concern for the feelings and choices made by each other.

Also, a solid relationship cannot depend on sex. A solid, long-term relationship must be big enough to allow for disagreement and differences in opinion on who decides what and when. If one party is willing to end the relationship if his or her sexual needs are not satisfied, then that is a good indication that the relationship is not yet broad enough to build on. (That person's Me-part is more deeply involved than that person's Us-part.)



Chapter 5: Sex is the Biggest Issue in the Relationship

It's normal to have sex be a very large issue during courting. If, however, sex becomes the dominant issue, then it isn't a relationship — it's an affair. If you both simply want an affair, that's one thing. If you wanted a relationship, then you have to broaden the issues.

Intimacy, Exclusivity, Commitment

The other issues that are important are intimacy, exclusivity, and commitment, and the resolution of the internal dynamics such as domination and deference.

If you both have achieved a satisfactory level of intimacy (openness and trust), you've become exclusive one to the other, and you each have made a determined commitment to each other, then it is probable that sex will be the biggest issue.

The problem comes however, when one party makes sex a major issue before there is a satisfactory *commitment*, or before you are both declared to be *exclusive*, or before you have achieved a satisfying level of *intimacy*. The difference between an affair and a relationship is that a relationship is entered into by the Us-part and includes those things. An affair or dalliance is entered into by the Me-part and the goal is largely sexual and social.

A person expecting a relationship — not willing to participate in an affair or dalliance — has every right to expect that the relationship issues be resolved before making a complete sexual commitment.

On the other hand, two people with closed windows, neither willing to commit to a relationship, will often find that sex is the dominant issue.

Teenagers often find themselves blocked in. Their windows are closed. That is, they have decided to either continue their educations, or to wait until they have entered adulthood and have financial autonomy before being ready for marriage. Yet, they feel compelled to attract and be attracted to a partner.

If the teenage pair both have their windows closed, and they become an exclusive pair, and have begun to experiment with the openness and trust that builds intimacy, they run head on into the sexual issue. They are unable to make the commitment and open declaration that would allow for complete sexual commitment. So, the issue quickly becomes “Is it okay to have sex without commitment to a relationship?”

Each person must answer this question for himself or herself. Parents, ministers, teachers, and other authority figures can only advise. Each person is on his or her own.

A Strategy

Here's some advice on this issue in the form of a strategy for resolving the issue in your own mind. The strategy is to call a meeting of your parts. You will find

instructions on how to do this in Book Two, Chapter 5. After roll call, when all interested parts have agreed to participate, ask for input on these questions:

1. Am I fully confident — in all parts — that I have:
 - a. made as much of a commitment to my partner as I am free to make?
 - b. determined to be exclusive with my partner until either the relationship ends, or is made permanent?
 - c. given my best efforts to achieve an openness in my communications with my partner so that we may have a high level of honesty and intimacy?
2. Am I fully ready for sexual experience?
 - a. Have I made strides toward maturity?
 - b. Am I really being dominated by my Me-part and its quest for sexual gratification, or is my Us-part ready for a sexual relationship with this person?
3. Am I fully confident that my partner:
 - a. has made as complete a commitment as my partner is free to make?
 - b. is determined to be exclusive with me until either the relationship ends, or is made permanent?
 - c. Has given best efforts to achieve openness in our communications so that we may have a high level of honesty and intimacy?

In a meeting of your parts, each part must to respect the needs and concerns of each other part. To proceed, each part must be willing to support your decision without further protest or later attacks which produce guilt.

If the meeting produces a decision to proceed with full support, then you can feel free to enter into a sexual relationship without remorse or guilt. If, on the other hand, your parts will not fully support sexual involvement, then your Me-part can enter into the sexual relationship only at the risk of regret, remorse, guilt, and internal turmoil. Whichever decision your parts reach, you will be best advised to keep their counsel and abide by their decision.

Your decision need not be permanent. In either case, you can re-decide when and if the factors change. If your decision is no, and your partner will not honor your decision, then it seems evident that your partner does not respect you and your right to make free choices. The signs would indicate that you are dealing with your partner's Me-part, not Us-part.

The benefit in this strategy is that it makes you wholly responsible for your decision. Taking responsibility for your decisions is one of the basic components of maturity and good mental health.



Chapter 6: Your Partner Won't Make a Commitment

Commitment is the last great stumbling block to the full development of a relationship between two people with their windows open. There are many reasons for people to hold back on commitment. In this section, we'll examine some of the best reasons for holding back, and some of the worst.

Good Reasons to Hold Back, if your Window Isn't Open

Other parts of you have priority. It may be your Work-part and interest-part getting more education. It may be your interest-part and Sage-part seeking to travel and see the world before you settle down. It may be simply that you have beliefs and learnings that have convinced your parts to wait until you are older and more mature. There are many reasons for having your window closed, and if they are good enough for you that is all that counts.

To make a commitment while your window is closed is to attempt to move in two directions at the same time. It splits you into warring camps within your one mind. Wise people have discovered over time that it's better to convene a meeting of your parts and decide which direction to take. Then, once you are decided and all parts have agreed, you can follow the direction you have chosen with peace of mind and full commitment.



Chapter 7: You Have Several Possible Partners and Aren't Ready to Choose One

It's both frustrating and exciting to have more than one possible partner, and not be able to select just one. Many have discovered that this situation produces a very high level of excitement as well as a high level of tension and strain. It seems the most successful strategy requires patience. Given time, you may discover that one of your possible partners becomes clearly favored by your Us-part. When that occurs, your decision is easy. It also sometimes happens that none of your possible partners is a clear choice. That may be a sign that none of the existing possible partners is the right person for you.

If that happens, you may also get pressure from one or more of your possible partners to make a decision. That may force a decision before you are ready. Consult with your parts (especially your Us-part). If your parts haven't reached consensus, resist the pressure, even if it means losing one or more of your possible partners.

Different Parts with Different Views

It sometimes happens that you have several possible partners, each sponsored by a different part within you.

Alice

For example, Alice had two suitors. One had his own business and was very successful. The other had more modest prospects, but shared more interests with Alice. When she consulted with her parts they split this way. Her Me-part favored the successful one for the status and money that would be available. Joining in was her Family-part who saw benefits to her family, and increased status within the family if she committed to the successful suitor.

Her Us-part favored the second suitor. She felt more comfortable with the image of living with, and growing older with the second fellow. Joining in was her Interests-part who shared more interests with the second fellow. Her Work-part, and Beliefs-part had no particular preference, while her Children-part sensed that the second fellow would make a better father for the children she wanted to have.

Choosing between possible partners is difficult when your parts are split. Advice is difficult on this kind of choice. Each person must make his or her own decision.

The Sage-part might go with the choice that the Us-part makes. The Sage-part generally keeps the parts working as a team by allowing the part with the greatest stake in the issue to have priority. Since each part knows that its needs will be considered and it will not be overwhelmed by any other part, then it will feel good about supporting choices made by other parts when their issues are at stake.



Chapter 8: You Want to Know More People and Get More Experience

Your Interests-part and your Sage-part often are curious to meet and know a wider selection of people before being ready to settle down with one. The Me-part and Us-part are frequently ready to decide much more quickly than the rest of the parts.

Parts Meeting

A meeting of your parts will allow all parts to have their say. You can find out what each part wants. If your parts are split, then it is best to wait until they can reach agreement.

Quite often the Me-part will be responding to the possibility of meeting immediate needs, without much regard to the longer term. Also, your Us-part may be infatuated with your partner and lose its ability to make reasoned and rational judgments. This combination often gets teenagers into marriages that they wouldn't make if they were listening to all of their parts.

If some of your parts want to know more people and get more experiences, and you're rather young or relatively inexperienced, then it might well be wise to listen to the parts that have reservations about commitment.

Another situation is the situation where you are no longer a teen, and have your window open, but you keep hearing the questions "Have I looked far enough?" or "Perhaps I could find a better partner if I took my time."

It's important to determine which part is voicing these questions. Here is what you want to distinguish between.

A. The Wise and Prudent Parts

The wise and prudent parts have real reservations about some aspect of your possible partner. Listen to these parts and check out the validity of the concerns.

Phillip

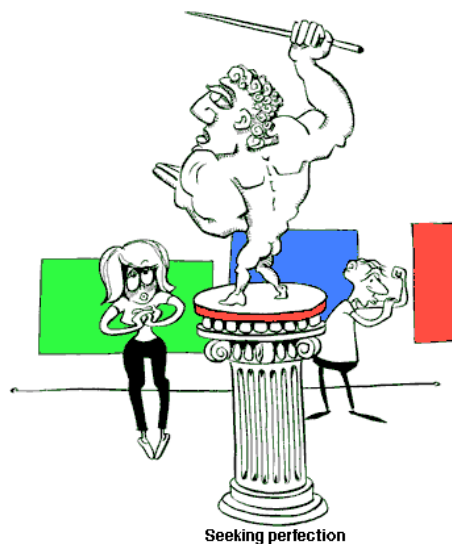
Phillip was through college, had a good job, and was ready for commitment and marriage. His Me-part and Us-part were all for commitment to his partner. His Family-part, Beliefs-part, and Interests-part all had reservations because his partner was of a different faith, and faith was important to both of them. His partner's family and his family were both opposed to marriage because of the different faiths, and in addition, his Interests-part was aware that they didn't share many common interests.

It is sometimes easy for teenagers to be more impulsive and take risks, but Phillip had reached a level of maturity where his other parts had blossomed more fully and he really had mixed feelings. Each person must make his or her own choices in this situation, however, Phillip kept having meetings with his parts until

they were in total agreement on the decision he made. Whatever you decide, if you reach agreement between all of your parts, you'll have no regrets or reservations about your decision.

B. The Parts That Are Seeking Perfection

Some people get stuck in this problem because they have a part of them that's looking for perfection in their choice of a mate, and they are unwilling to "settle" for less. Chip said, "I'm only going to marry once, and so this is the most important choice I am ever going to make. I'm not willing to commit until I find the perfect girl for me." Patricia said, "I'm in no hurry. I can afford to wait until 'Mr. Right' comes along."



The problem with seeking perfection is that perfection is impossible to find. Many people have lost their true loves forever because they held off waiting for someone even better, or someone even more perfect.

The challenge, then, is to determine whether you have sincere and valid reservations or whether you are hung up trying to find the ideal or perfect partner. The question can be phrased this way "Do I have real and valid reservations or am I simply being too picky?"

A Strategy for Answering the Question

First, get acquainted with your parts and hold a parts meeting. The goal is to find out where the reservations stem from.

1. Do they come from parts of you that find your partner unacceptable and are unwilling to go along with the rest of the parts?
2. Or, do the reservations come from your TWII or your TWISB?

In the first case, you'll be unable to reach a consensus of your parts. They will not all agree on going forward with commitment.

In the second case, your parts may all be willing go along with commitment, but you're hearing from your TWIPI or your TWISB about the imperfections in your partner.

Now, here's the important distinction.

If your parts are in disagreement, then it's prudent to do nothing until they reach full and harmonious agreement, one way or the other.

If your parts agree — that's really important — and the TWII and TWISB can be changed to bring you peace of mind about your partner.

Chip

Chip found that all of his parts were in agreement, but he discovered a rule in his TWISB that said “A man ought to have at least five deep relationships before he is ready for marriage.” In his third significant relationship, Chip found a wonderful partner that all of his parts were in agreement about. Since the parts were in agreement, and the reservations were in the TWISB, it would be prudent to do what the parts agree to.

The TWISB rule can be replaced by a revised rule. For example, “A man ought to have at least five deep relationships before he is ready for marriage, unless he finds a wonderful partner earlier.”

Sandra

Sandra found that her parts were not in agreement. Sandra had a good education and strong career ambitions. She was considering commitment to a fellow with less education and modest career goals. Most of her parts favored marriage to him, but her Work-part and Interests-part were opposed and were not willing to support the decision. They had strongly-felt reservations. Sandra decided to make no decision until she could reach consensus. Without commitment, her relationship soon faded away and she found another person she then married with no reservations.

If you are in this difficulty, the key to solving it is the parts meeting. A consensus will give you peace of mind and conviction to any decision you make to commit, or not to commit. If you have consensus the TWISB and TWIPI can be adjusted to rid you of the little niggling doubts.



Chapter 9: Commitment: You Aren't Sure Yet; You Need More Time

The issue here is that you're moving up the level of feelings more slowly than your possible partner. Your possible partner is ready to commit, and you aren't. You can't hurry yourself. If you need time to find out whether this relationship is going to develop fully, then you must take the time.

Carol

Carol was in this situation. She had a parts meeting, and they agreed that they weren't ready to make a commitment yet; they needed more time to allow the relationship to either blossom or fade away. She felt comfortable with the consensus and told her possible partner of her decision. In Carol's cases her possible partner was understanding and respectful of her right to an un-pressured choice. She later said that the way her possible partner handled her resistance convinced her that he really loved her and respected her. Given the time to become ready to commit, Carol soon felt completely ready and made her commitment with confidence and sureness.



Chapter 10: Commitment Would Lead to Sex; You're Not Ready for That

In this situation, you're ready to commit, but you're holding off commitment because it would lead to sex and you aren't ready for that.

This strategy may work, in that it delays the sexual issue, but it has two built-in problems. The first is that you are not being honest with yourself, nor are you being honest with your possible partner. The second is that it discounts your ability to handle the sexual issue, and it discounts your possible partners' willingness to support your reticence.

If you are truly ready to commit, but are reticent to have the relationship become sexual, then that is the most honest and open communication that you can give your partner. Being open and honest in your communications with your partner is necessary if you are to develop mature intimacy. It confuses you and your partner if you pretend the issue is 'commitment,' when it really is 'sex.'



Chapter 11: Bad Reasons for Making a Commitment

Sometimes people make commitments but they don't really feel them. In these cases people are being dishonest with themselves and their partners. This kind of dishonesty stands as a very real barrier to achieving intimacy. So, the very act of making a commitment that's not truly felt is a very real barrier to ever achieving the feeling of being committed. Here are some of the reasons that people use in justifying an unfeeling commitment.

Your Partner Has Made One and is Pressuring You for One

It seems a natural part of the pairing process that once one person has reached a certain level of intensity of feelings, that person wants the other person to be there with them. No one wants to be very far ahead of the other. Yet, the nature of human beings is that they follow these paths at different speeds. So, it is natural that one will reach a plateau or level before the other.

The unfortunate result of this situation is that sometimes a person makes a commitment that isn't really felt, because of pressure from the person who is somewhat ahead. When people do this, they may do this, thinking that they'll soon be ready anyway and what's the harm in pretending they're ready now.

The harm is the internal dissonance that is created by being dishonest in a relationship that only really works well when people are being honest. The harm is that the premature commitment actually acts as a barrier to really discovering and feeling the readiness to commit. The relationship becomes one of pretense and not of intimacy.

Your Partner Has Made One and You Want to Please Your Partner

Of course you want to please your partner. You discount your partner by thinking that a pretense will be the equal of a real commitment. You also do damage to your partner by putting up a barrier to giving the real commitment that you might eventually feel if you give yourself time.

Commitment is only one of the issues that need to be resolved during the courting phase. Intimacy is just as important. Intimacy is the ability to be straight and honest with your partner about what you feel and what's happening with you. A premature commitment often does two real damages to the relationship. First, it makes a real commitment improbable, and second, it violates the honesty that is so vital to achieving intimacy.

You'll please your partner more by waiting until you feel the full force of a real commitment. If you wait until you're really feeling commitment, then you will have a real gift to please your partner — and yourself. If you have not yet discovered the magic of feeling ready to commit yourself to another, then you have a wonderful

experience ahead of you. If you make the commitment before you're truly ready, you lose the magic of that experience.

You Won't Get Any Sex Until You Do

Ladies, please bypass this problem. The following is aimed straight to the men. (If you're a woman with a partner who is withholding his sexual favors until you make a commitment, then feel free to read this.)

For the Men

Sir, if this is the situation you face, please read this with great care. It may be the most critical issue you have to face if you are to achieve a truly satisfying long-term relationship.

Novels, poems, songs, and lawsuits are full of the results of men who've made a commitment they don't truly feel, in order to get the lady to surrender sexually. You are truly not the first. Indeed, you are the most recent in a long line of men reaching back into time eternal.

You're feeling the incredible seductive power of your raging hormones inviting you to "do anything" necessary to have your way with her. It may be tempting. Indeed, it may be the greatest temptation you ever have to deal with. It may be a "rotten" or awful thing to do to someone; however, raging hormones care not for niceties.



Novels, songs, movies, and poems eloquently catalog the tragedies that have occurred, and the lives damaged or ruined. However, very little has been written about the damage that it will do to you if you succumb to the temptation.

If you are a typical male, you want sex. You need sex. You feel compelled and driven to have sex. That's understandable since sex is truly marvelous. Beyond the physical release, there is the affirmation of you as a person, the recognition that you are desired and desirable. You may have grown up in a culture that applauds those

who are successful sexually. You have seen films, read books, listened to songs all supporting your need and desire for sex.

Now, here is something new. You have two different parts of you that want and need sex. You have a Me-part part that wants and needs sexual release and especially likes variety. Your Me-part may fantasize about group sex, about orgies about every kind of sex possible.

You also have an Us-part, a separate and distinct part of you that wants and needs a pair bond, a part that wants and needs a mate, a partner to share your life with.

It's vital that you understand that each part is different, and each has different needs. Both like sex. The Me-part isn't very particular. It can enjoy sex with almost anyone. Your Me-part can enjoy sex with prostitutes. Your Me-part can enjoy masturbation. Your Me-part can enjoy one-night stands or recreational sex with people you scarcely know.

Your Us-part however is different. Your Us-part wants sex, but only wants it with your very special one-at-a-time partner. Your Us-part has sex very differently than your Me-part. Your Me-part wants sex when it wants it, and the way it wants it, and to heck with the needs of the other person. Your Us-part, however, wants more. Your Us-part wants to *share* sex. Sex becomes something between two people, something that is more than sexual release: sex that responds to the other person's needs as well as your own. Your Us-part wants more than sex; your Us-part wants to "make love." Your Us-part wants sex that forms strong bonds with another person.

It's difficult to find words to describe the difference. You have to feel it to understand it. If you haven't truly felt the difference between sex with "just someone," and sex with *someone you love*, then perhaps you can't get a sense of this concept.

Here is one way to tell the difference. Sex with 'just anyone' starts out exciting and good, and then tends to become ordinary and go downhill. Sex with someone you truly love gets better over time. It gets richer, and means more. It may have its ordinary moments, and isn't always socko, but it always means something.

Okay, you have two parts that want and need sex. The issue here is the temptation to make a commitment to a possible partner, before you really fully feel that commitment, in order to have sexual access to her.

What if you do? What if you don't?

If you fall victim to the temptation, then you stand to lose the whole game. First, you make a commitment you don't really feel. What you lose there is the opportunity to feel what it's like to experience that full sense of commitment. You may think you can "fake it till you make it." You may think that you can fake it

until you really feel it. That's the trap. If you make the commitment before you really feel it, then *you won't feel it*.

You have been seduced by your raging hormones to be dishonest with yourself and with your partner. That dishonesty will stand between you both as you strive for an honest, open communication that achieves intimacy. So, you give up intimacy. At that point what you have is a relationship without intimacy (or pretend intimacy), and a relationship without commitment (or pretend commitment). What you have is sex from your Me-part.

The three key things that make up a loving relationship are intimacy, commitment and loving sex. You have none of them.

Maybe you think that they will come. Well, maybe they will, but you are bucking strong odds. It just doesn't seem to work that way. Maybe it will be different for you. Maybe you can pull off the miracle. Zillions of men before you have hoped they might be exceptions. They were wrong. Maybe you'll be right.

You have something now that they didn't have. You have a complete awareness of the situation. You've learned that you have two parts that want and need sex. You've learned that they each have different needs.

You're in a position to do it differently. All it takes is enough will power to resist the temptation to make a commitment you don't really feel.

Give your Me-part the sex it needs. Masturbate. Find ladies who are willing to have safe recreational sex. Whatever you choose to do, though, follow your values.

Then, allow your Us-part to have what it needs. Allow your relationship with your partner to progress at a rate that allows you to have it all. Be open and honest with your partner. Work at developing an intimate relationship with her. Work through the courting ups and downs that it takes to resolve the domination deference issues that seem to be required. Wait until you feel the full force of wanting (even needing), to make a commitment, then wait until your partner is willing and eager to make a commitment too. Then slowly, with love and patience, explore your partner sexually. Share yourself with her. Open yourself up to her. Discover what 'making love' is and how it differs from 'having sex.'



Chapter 12: All Your Friends are Making Commitments

It's frightening to be without a partner. You think, "Maybe I'll never find one that is right for me." The pressure gets worse when your friends are pairing up and you fear you'll be left behind.

When you want something so important as a partner, and you see all your friends getting what you don't have, it creates tremendous pressure to "hurry" the process along.

A key question to ask yourself is this: "Am I responding to the desire for commitment, or am I responding to the desire to commit to my partner"?

If you make a commitment before really feeling wholly ready for it (all parts concurring), then you chance losing the opportunity for commitment to develop fully, on its own, *and* you reduce the chances of achieving intimacy in your open and honest communications with your partner. Both losses impair the ultimate relationship.

Just remember this: imagine any happily married couple that you know. The day before they first found each other attractive, they both worried about never finding the "right" partner.

You may be only a day away from either finding the "right" partner or feeling like fully committing to your present partner — and if not tomorrow, then another day. The ultimate success will make the waiting worthwhile.



Chapter 13: You May Lose Your Partner Unless You Do

Many people find themselves in this box: “Either commit now, or I go.” Think for a moment about two things.

First, you’re not under the gun; your partner is. The situation isn’t that you must make a decision; your partner evidently feels required to make one. So, the best strategy is to leave the responsibility with your partner. A response like this will keep the situation straight: “I’m not ready to make a commitment right now. I don’t know when I will be, or if I will be. If you decide you must make a decision before I am ready to make mine, I will miss you terribly, but I will understand.”

Second, give your partner a copy of this book and point out this section. Any partner who would force you into a decision, knowing the risks and dangers might not be the kind of person who will work with you to build the kind of relationship you want. Use this section of the book as the basis for a discussion about what you both want from a relationship. Sometimes the process of working together through a relationship crisis like this will be the key to bringing you both closer together.



Chapter 14: You're Getting Older; It's Now or Never

People who remind you that you're getting older — and that it's now or never — really mean to help. Even the part in you that says that to you has good intentions. If you're not ready, then wait until you are. It might only take until tomorrow.

Ethyl

Ethyl, an 83 year old lady in a boarding home in Florida tells this story. “I was 22 when I committed to marry a man I didn't love. I told myself ‘You're getting older; it's now or never.’ When I was 39 he died, and I wasn't too sorry to see him go. I never loved him like I wanted, or he wanted. Then I met another man when I was 40. He gave me a whirlwind romance, and pressed me to make a decision before I was ready. I told myself ‘You're getting older; it's now or never.’ I married him, and quickly found myself in the same situation. He died two years ago, and I realized after he died that I never loved him the way I wanted to love a man. Now, I am seeing several of the men who live in this home. One has asked me to marry him. I heard the voice in my head sayings ‘You're getting older; it's now or never.’ I know that voice means to help me, but this time I am going to wait until I'm sure.”



Chapter 15: It's a Secret; You Don't Want to Declare

The completion in courting is the public declaration. After commitment, it somehow is important to make a declaration. Somebody on the outside has to know.

In this situation, one or another of you is unwilling to go public with your partnership and your commitment. There is a huge range of reasons. Here's a sampling:

It's too soon after the divorce — people will talk.

He just broke up with my best friend — she would be hurt.

My folks would be crushed — they think I'm too young.

We both work at the same company. If they find out, one must leave.

My partner is separated, but still married. If his 'ex found out, she would take him for everything in the divorce.

He still lives with his mother, and wants to tell her first. He's waiting for "the right time."

In each of these examples, the commitment of the Us-part is overshadowed by a stronger need from another part. It might be the Work-part threatened at work, or the Family-part fearful of upsetting family, or the Affiliation-part concerned about the neighbors. One or another of the parts is unwilling to have the commitment made public.

This situation frequently causes frustration and a sense that something isn't the way it should be. In the ideal situation the time of commitment is the time of the full blossoming of the Us-part. This is a time when the Us-part takes its place as a full partner in the team of parts. If all is going well the Us-part has a brief period where it dominates all of the other parts (infatuation), and readiness for full commitment is a sign that infatuation is well under way.

Yet, when the commitment must be kept secret, the full development of the Us-part and its brief period of dominance must be suppressed. That is what gives rise to the feelings of frustration and the sense that something isn't the way it should be.

What's occurring is a conflict between the Us-part and the other parts that are agreeing to keep the commitment a secret.

The risk to the relationship is that the full blossoming of infatuation will be inhibited, and the dominance of the Us-part may not occur. This is a problem that can be overcome in the long run, but it will take extra capability in coping to do it.

In the ideal situation, the Us-part becomes dominant over all the other parts during the period of infatuation. When that subsides, the Us-part takes its place as a full partner on the team. If that period is suppressed and other parts are dominant over the Us-part, then later on when the Us-part is to be a full member of the team,

there's a risk that it will still be dominated by the part or parts that are now suppressing it.

You and your partner will be protected against these risks by knowing and understanding the parts and the way they work together to bring harmony and peace of mind to each of you, and to your relationship. Knowing the risks and the potential problem, you can take steps to assure that the Us-part in each of you is given a full and equal role with the other parts later on in the relationship.

Knowing about these risks in advance may also make it possible for you and your partner to delay your mutual commitment until the way has been cleared of obstacles. In some cases it will be possible to hold back on reaching the point of commitment until the path is clear for a full and open declaration.



Chapter 16: Your Partner Courts You, But It's All Wrong

There are styles of courting, and often each partner has a different idea of what's "right" and what's not.

A Variety of Opinions

Paul: "She's always touching me, and wants to hold hands in public. That's not comfortable for me and I don't like it."

Rita: "He never brings me flowers, or gifts, or anything. If he cared to please me, he would bring me some little thing every once in a while. Just so I would know he was thinking about me."

Carole: "He smothers me with sloppy kisses. I feel suffocated. I wish he would kiss gently and with feeling."

Andy: "She knits me things. I have a drawer full of sweaters, socks and even a jacket that she knit for me. I don't wear them, and I feel like I should."

Willa: "He never calls me on nights we can't be together. I call him and he sounds irritated and can't wait to get off the phone. I need to hear from him when I can't see him."

If you have problems in this area, then the Sage model can help you sort them out and handle them effectively.

This is the kind of difficulty that any two people are going to have as they merge their different personalities and strategies. The process of coping is covered fully later in the book, and will be helpful to you in working through these kinds of difficulties.

Helpful Strategies

If you are NOT getting what you want, need, or wish for, then ask for it. This is basic to developing open, honest communications and a satisfying level of intimacy.

If you are getting things you *don't* want, and they seem important to your partner to give them, then learn to take them in good cheer as signs of caring and love from your partner.

If your TWISB is telling you that what your partner is doing is wrong, then check out your TWISB. Work toward shifting your perceptions of how your partner 'should' court you. If you can't make that shift, then work toward changing the strategy you use to respond to mismatches. You can learn to reframe a 'wrong' move on your partner's part from something that causes you upset to something which gives you good feelings.

An overactive TWISB can be a severe detriment to getting through the courting process. Courting is a time for joyful giving and joyful taking. It is a time for learning new ways of expressing feelings from your partner. It's not a good time for correcting or shaping your partner into your image of what "should be."



Chapter 17: You Think Courting Seems Silly at Your Age

This problem is common with people who have been married once and divorced or widowed.

Sam: “She wants flowers and dancing and all that stuff. That all seems silly at our age. I’d rather just watch TV together or read a book quietly. I’ve been through that kid stuff once already, and that’s enough.”

Angela: “He writes me love notes. He nibbles at my ear. He calls me silly names. I get embarrassed. We’re grown adults; we should act like it.”

If you have this problem, there is new information for you. It seems that the Us-part doesn’t age very much. People can be romantic and get infatuated and go through all the courting steps at virtually any age.



It’s an ageless process.

Often this problem stems from some old learnings or beliefs about how people *should* act (in other words, an overactive TWISB). If you wish, read the previous chapter about the problem of courting wrong.

Some recommendations for you would be to work hard to lighten up and let it happen. Just let go a little. Allow your Us-part to come out and do some kid stuff. If you’re seeking a good relationship, and care for your partner, then just allow your partner to do what comes naturally. It probably won’t last too long, and then you’ll be through the courting phase and into coping.

You can use your embarrassment as something with which to practice coping.



Note: there are three more troubleshooting books in the “Metamating” series. They cover Attraction, Infatuation, and Bonding.