

After Hello

MATCHMAKING +



The Intentional Dater's Guide

10 Questions To Ask Yourself for Better Dating Results

By Ann Parnes, Co-Founder, After Hello Matchmaking+



INTRODUCTION

Start With Better Questions

In my experience, the quality of an outcome traces back to the quality of the questions asked at the beginning. I learned that first in law, where a matter can be settled long before anyone reaches a courtroom, in the questions a person did or did not think to ask. The same holds true in dating.

Dating today asks a great deal of us. There are more ways to meet someone than at any point in history, and that abundance carries a cost. Psychologist Barry Schwartz called this the paradox of choice, the way an excess of options can leave us less satisfied and less decisive. Sharper questions do what added effort cannot.

At After Hello, my co-founder Maria Murray and I work with people who have accomplished a great deal and who bring that same seriousness to their personal lives. The questions below draw on the way we think about compatibility, through vision, values, and the more elusive matter of vibe. They are meant to be answered honestly, in writing if you can manage it, before your next conversation or your next date. Take your time with them.

QUESTION 01

What am I actually looking for, and could I describe it to someone else?

In my experience, describing what you do not want comes more readily than describing what you do want. A matchmaker cannot help you find something you have not defined, and neither can you. Write a description of the partnership you want in three or four sentences. If you cannot do that yet, that itself is useful information.

QUESTION 02

What do the relationships that did not work have in common?

This is the question people would rather skip, and the one that reveals the most. Look at your last few significant relationships, the ones that ended well and the ones that did not, and find the thread that connects them. In my experience, the thread is seldom the other person. It is something in what you were drawn to, or in what you were willing to tolerate.

QUESTION 03

Am I evaluating for chemistry, for compatibility, or for both?

Attraction isn't always the best predictor of compatibility. We're often drawn to what's familiar, even when those patterns haven't served us well in the past. Sometimes what people call "the spark" is really anxiety or emotional familiarity. Don't overlook the quieter feeling of peace. In my experience, that's often where healthy relationships begin.

QUESTION 04

What does an ordinary week with this person look like?

A relationship is lived in its ordinary hours far more than in its memorable ones. Picture a regular Wednesday evening with this person. Picture the end of a hard week. Picture a disagreement and how it resolves. Grand gestures are easy to imagine. Ordinary texture is where compatibility actually lives.

QUESTION 05

What am I treating as non-negotiable, and is it truly non-negotiable?

There is a difference between a genuine deal-breaker and a preference wearing the costume of one. Make two lists. The first holds what you will not compromise on. The second holds what you would prefer. Be honest about which items belong where, because confusion between the two narrows your field for no good reason.

One exercise I often use with clients is this: Imagine you meet someone at a restaurant bar. The conversation is effortless. You laugh for two hours. Then you discover they're 5'9" instead of 6 feet, have young children, or are a few years older than your preferred age range. Would you still give them your number? If the answer is yes, you've probably identified a preference, not a true non-negotiable.

QUESTION 06

How do I tend to show up on a first date?

There is a version of dating that resembles an interview, where one person assesses and the other performs. That version of dating works against connection. Ask yourself whether you arrive curious or guarded, present or already deciding. The way you show up shapes what the other person is able to show you.

QUESTION 07

Am I choosing from a sense of abundance or a sense of scarcity?

Both scarcity and abundance can sabotage dating. Scarcity makes us hold onto people who aren't right because we're afraid someone better won't come along. The illusion of endless options makes us dismiss good people too quickly, convinced someone perfect is one more swipe away. Healthy abundance means trusting that there are enough compatible people out there that you don't have to settle, but also giving the person in front of you a genuine chance.

QUESTION 08

What story am I telling myself about why this has not worked yet?

Each of us carries an explanation for our dating history. Sometimes the explanation is accurate. Sometimes it serves to protect us from examining our own part. Notice the story you tell. Then ask whether it is the truth or simply the most comfortable version of events.

QUESTION 09

What version of yourself do you become in their presence?

The most important metric of compatibility is how you feel when you are with someone. One of the questions I ask clients after a date isn't just, "What did you think of them?" It's, "How did you feel when you were with them?"

Did you feel relaxed? Curious? Funny? Comfortable enough to be yourself? Or were you overthinking everything you said, trying to impress them, or wondering whether you were enough? The right relationship should make it easier to be the best version of yourself.

QUESTION 10

What's one pattern I'm committed to changing?

Awareness is valuable, but change is what creates different results. After answering these questions, ask yourself what one habit, belief, or behavior has been holding you back.

Maybe you dismiss people too quickly. Maybe you ignore red flags. Maybe you mistake intensity for compatibility. Maybe you stay too long when you know someone isn't right.

Choose one thing to change. One intentional shift can change the trajectory of your dating life.



A NOTE FROM ANN

Slow Down, and Ask Better Questions

You don't need a matchmaker to answer these questions. You just need to be willing to answer them honestly.

If, after working through them, you realize you'd like someone to help you identify blind spots, challenge your assumptions, and introduce you to people who truly align with what you're looking for, that's exactly what we do every day at After Hello.

If nothing else, I hope this guide encourages you to slow down a little, ask better questions, and make decisions that are based on more than a great first impression.

After nearly a decade of helping people navigate dating, it has become very clear to me that the people who have the best experiences are the ones who know themselves, stay open-minded, and make thoughtful decisions along the way.

I hope these questions help you do the same.

THE NEXT STEP, WHEN YOU ARE READY

When you would like a partner in the search, After Hello is here, from the [free Private Registry](#) to full personalized matchmaking. Visit afterhello.com to begin.

REFERENCES

Sources

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