

Practice Safer Dating: Tips To Help You

(NAPSA)—Safer dating means more than physical safety. There's your emotional safety to consider. You need to create and maintain a relationship that encourages feelings of being protected, nurtured. Here are hints on how:

- Use discretion when sharing stories about yourself. You might not want to tell about "mooning" the high school principal until you know whether your partner would find this amusing. You may also want to avoid stories about past relationships.

- Wear something comfortable that makes you feel good about yourself. Wearing your smallest pants will not change your weight on the date.

- Create realistic expectations.
- Think before you act on your feelings. Use common sense so you don't say or do something in the heat of the moment you'll regret later.

- Create an environment for healthy communication. Even if you are highly compatible, at some point there will be a misunderstanding or disagreement.

- Avoid disrespecting your partner. It will only backfire. No matter how angry or hurt, refrain from cutting him or her off. Instead, take five minutes to cool off, even if you have to say, "I need to take a break from this before I get too angry."

- State what you need. Ask what they can give. This avoids blame, an ineffective way to resolve issues. Rather than "You didn't call—you don't care," try "In the future—can you call me if you're running late or have to cancel. If you don't get me, leave a voice mail. Otherwise, I worry something happened to you."

- No raising voices, screaming or yelling.

- No name calling. Don't make critical remarks about yourself or your partner.

PHYSICAL SAFETY—ONLINE AND OFF

All methods of meeting people you do not know (online, bars, work, blind dates, etc.) pose an element of risk that can be reduced by using common sense and this safety checklist:

- Do not give out your real name, address, place of employment or phone number until you have met the person and feel comfortable about who they are.
- Use e-mail first to establish contact and receive a reply.
- Use chat rooms for your first "date." Get a good feeling about the person before meeting.
- Request a picture. This serves as a means of identification.
- Avoid suggestive language and jokes. Convey your wit about topics that really matter.
- Make your first meeting at a well-lit public place like a coffee shop. Lunch is also a great venue. At the end of your first meeting, if you feel good about the other person, then you can decide if you want to give them your real identity and exchange phone numbers.
- When going out on a date, always tell someone: whom you're going out with, their number, your cell number, where you're going and your estimated time of return.
- If possible, carry a cell phone, coins for a pay phone and taxi money.

This safety checklist was created with help from Bill Rathburn, a security expert with more than 30 years of law enforcement service, including as deputy chief of police in Los Angeles and a member of the TRUEBeginnings™ Advisory Board.



- Refrain from profanity. Respect and kindness are of paramount importance.

- No interrupting. This is exceptionally challenging when emotions run high. If you need to, take a break. Your partner is more likely to "hear" you when you talk if you listen in return.

- Validate that you're listening, especially when discussing volatile subjects, because it's easy to let

emotions dominate and focus on what you're going to say, not what your partner is trying to tell you. Repeat what they said in your own words, e.g. "I think what I heard you say is that you were hurt when I didn't call and cancel our date, and it left you confused and wondering how I felt about the relationship," and then add your comments, without being defensive.

- No "Kitchen sinks." Stick with topics relevant to the discussion. Don't let past arguments creep in—or worse, old resentments you never voiced.

- Ask for forgiveness—don't say you're sorry. This is one of the best techniques for resolving an issue. If you ask for forgiveness, your partner must reach the place where he or she can honestly say "yes" and mean it.

- Accept an apology and be done with it. If you're not ready to accept an apology, say you need time to consider it. If you have an interest in rebuilding intimacy, take the initiative after you have spent the time, tell your partner "yes, I forgive you" and move on.

This advice comes from the experts at TRUEBeginnings™, an online relationship-building service established to help singles in the U.S. find a compatible partner with whom they can establish a meaningful and successful relationship. Because it believes the most important factor for such a relationship is compatibility, the company invests millions of dollars in research and development to create its TRUE Compatibility Test™, a proprietary patent-pending analysis and its TRUE Compatibility Index™, which helps members discover themselves as well as find compatible partners. In addition, it's the only site that offers members peace of mind with criminal background screening for all communicating members. You can learn more online at www.truebeginnings.com.