

Many sex and love addicts rush through—or skip over—two important aspects of dating, which undermine the potential for a healthy romantic relationship. These two aspects are 1) choosing an appropriate partner and 2) a healthy dating timeline. A sound Recovery Dating Plan includes these two basic components that clearly outlines a suitable (as well as unsuitable) partner and then plans out an appropriate timeline for healthy dating behavior. Also, remember that just because you *feel* close and comfortable with someone and that you have chemistry and rapport, does not necessarily mean they are safe. Part of slowing down is not making "heavy" commitments before the relationship can reasonably sustain them. Dating is a process; take your time to learn about who the other person is and determine *as you go along* if that person is a good match for you.

Part I. Who's a Good Partner For Me?

This portion of the exercise is to assist in the selection of an appropriate partner. In the grid below, list ideal qualities (**GREEN**), warning signs (**YELLOW**), and deal-breakers (**RED**). Be specific as well as general with your list. Parameters to consider are integrity, consideration for others, wreckage, addiction, age range, interests, hobbies, relationships, family, etc. The more qualities you identify, the more useful your plan will be. If you identify a deal-breaker in a person you are dating, then this person is not a good match for you and you should discontinue seeing that person romantically. The goal is to find someone with as many ideal qualities as possible, with hopefully with very few warning signs. Feel free to use another sheet of paper to expand your list.

GREEN (ideal qualities)	YELLOW (warning signs)	RED (deal-breakers)
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Part II. What Does a Healthy Timeline Look Like?

The timeline is to help with pacing so that a relationship may develop in a healthy way. Many sex and love addicts move very quickly to sex and other intimate activities, therefore this timeline may feel very uncomfortable and slow for you. Remember, you are resetting your expectations and experiences for the healthy progression of a relationship. List appropriate dating behaviors for each time period in the grid below. There are examples on the next page to assist you. Ask yourself questions such as, when is kissing appropriate? When should I show my home? How much should I spend on a first date? How many emails, phone calls and text messages are appropriate? When should I introduce my family? When do I reveal my recovery? When is sex okay? Remember, this is meant to be a guideline, not a rigid set of rules.

Dates 1-4 (~1 st month)	Dates 5-8 (~2 months)	Dates 9-15 (~3 months)	Dates 16-20 (~6 months)

Example Timeline

The following is a list of examples for behaviors that may be considered appropriate along a slow-to-moderate dating timeline.

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Dates 1-4 (~1 st month) 1. Talk on phone, IM or email, 1-2x/week max - no long conversations 2. No text messages (except logistics, "running 5 mins late," "will call you at 7pm to confirm our plans," etc.) 3. Dating others OK 4. No serious talk about your history, trauma or past relationships 5. Hug, kiss on cheek	Dates 5-8 (~2 months) 1. "Light" petting, above the waist (hands), outside clothes 2. French kissing 3. Talking on phone, IM or email, >2x/week 4. Text messages used sparingly, if at all 5. Seeing each other's house/home 6. Physically affectionate	Dates 9-15 (~3 months) 1. Discontinue dating others before having intercourse discussion 2. Disclosure about sexual history and addiction (before intercourse!) 3. Discussion about STDs 4. Intercourse with condom only 5. Oral sex 6. Sleep over at each other's house	Dates 16-20 (~6 months) 1. Unprotected sex (no condoms) only after STD testing 2. Longer vacations (7+ days) 3. Introduce to family members 4. Ok to discuss long- term plans of relationship
trauma or past relationships	house/home 6. Physically	5. Oral sex 6. Sleep over at each	