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## 'Marry Him: The Case for Settling for Mr. Good Enough'

Why 'Mr. Good Enough' may just turn out to be the man of your dreams  
 By [Cindy Sher](#) On 03/23/2010



Jewish author and dating veteran ([Lori Gottlieb](#)) is telling single women everywhere to "break up with the list." You know what the list is...That running checklist of attributes in your head that your future mate must possess and don't ask you to settle for less.

But ([Gottlieb](#)), who is in her early 40s, says maybe settling for less isn't such a bad thing. As a single mother—who at age 37 decided to have a baby on her own—she's come to realize that perhaps she's had unrealistic expectations of what the man of her dreams should be like.

In her new book "Marry Him: The Case for Settling for Mr. Good Enough," (Dutton Books), ([Gottlieb](#)), a Los Angeleno, outlines her case for she and other single women to stop searching for a fictional Prince Charming and, instead, to look for Mr. Good Enough, who could turn out to be a great guy, even "the one," if given the chance. She examines the Catch-22 that women face: how to reconcile the desire for a husband and family with such a long list of must-haves that potential men who could make wonderful life partners are rejected right off the bat.

The book comes two years after her controversial article on the same subject ran in "The Atlantic." In her book, ([Gottlieb](#)) interviews marital researchers, matchmakers, dating coaches, couples therapists, and clergy, plus hundreds of single and married men and women.

Recently, ([Gottlieb](#)) sat down for a phone interview with OylChicago about why the number 80% may be a better percentage than we thought, the differences in dating deal breakers for men versus women, and why we should give guys who do "Austin Powers" impersonations a second chance:

**OylChicago: Why did you write this book?**

((Lori Gottlieb)): Like a lot of women, I was wondering why I hadn't found the right guy. As I got older, when I would listen to my married friends talk about what they really love about their husbands and what was making them happy in their marriages, it had nothing to do with the things that my friends and I who were single and out there dating still would talk about when we were talking about the guys we were dating. [My married friends] would say things like, 'Oh, he made me tea,' and 'he programmed the Tivo.' And we [single women] would be like 'Oh my god, did you see the way he buttered his bread on the date.' It was like these completely unrelated worlds and yet the whole point for us, because we happen to want to be married, of dating was to find the person that we wanted to spend our lives with. Yet, we were looking for things that had nothing to do with whether we were going to be happy in marriage with these people.



**What are the important commonalities to look for when dating?**

One question I always asked married women was is your spouse like the person you thought you were going to marry. And so many times, they'd say, 'Not at all. I thought I was going to marry someone who is like this, this, and this. But in the core things that I wanted, yes.' It wasn't like they had the same taste in music necessarily or they both loved hiking and sushi or whatever. If they do, great, but it was more that they were similar in the way they viewed the world—they had similar values, they liked and disliked the same people, they wanted the same things in life, they had similar ideas about what would make them happy in life, they were both flexible and able to compromise, and [shared] basic things like kindness and humor.

**In the book, describe the difference in deal breakers between men and women in dating.**

There was a survey where men and women were asked what would be a deal breaker for going on a second date. Men named three things that I thought were very legitimate—she has to be cute enough, she has to be warm and kind, and she has to be interesting to talk to. Women named 300 things that would rule out a guy for a second date. They were things that, again, had nothing to do with whether you're going to be happy in a marriage with that person. So why not go on a second date? This is given that they were attracted to the guy, they thought that he was cute, they thought that he was smart, they thought he was personable, and they had a decent time. Some of the deal breakers were, 'Oh, he did that Austin Powers impression, forget it,' or 'He's not stylish, no thanks.'

**You say women are storytellers. Can you explain what that means?**

Women tend to make these judgments so quickly about a guy because women are more natural storytellers and we do want to know how the story will end or at least progress. We're sitting there across from someone on a first date and we're thinking is this somebody I can imagine myself in a relationship with as opposed to is this someone I can imagine myself having another two-hour dinner with and there's a big difference. Some women say that's smart because I don't want to waste my time with someone that I'm not going to end up in a relationship with. But you have no idea who you're going to end up in a relationship with. We get ahead of ourselves. Because the bar is so much higher for that relationship question than the second date question, we're using the relationship criteria to decide whether we want to go on a second date with him, but really we need to use the second date criteria.

**Your dating coach in the book tried to get you to "break up with the list" and be more open to different types of guys. Have you changed your dating ways since writing the book?**

It was very hard for me in the beginning. It's hard to adjust our perceptions a little bit and be a little more open to the idea that what we think of as our type might not actually be the kind of guy who will make us happy...There was a woman I talked to who is engaged to a guy she met on Match.com because she didn't notice the guy checked the "has kids" box. She said she never would have gone out with him if she had noticed that he had kids because she didn't want to get into a relationship with somebody who already had kids.

**Why do many women have "the list" in the first place and unrealistic expectations of men?**

We don't realize that we do this. I didn't realize I was picky. I think a lot of women have the same attitude as I did and thought, 'I'm not picky, I just know what I want and I have high standards.' I'm not saying to anybody to lower your standards. I'm just saying have high standards about what really matters in terms of making you happy...It's not about looking for the perfect person, it's about looking for the perfect partner for you. Who do you want to go through life with?

**You say in the book that men have more realistic expectations in dating than women. Why?**

...Men are much better able to compartmentalize. Women think that the guy that they find has to be everything. Men think, 'I have to be in love with her, but she doesn't have to be everything.'

**Your book has sparked a lot of controversy. Why do you think this book strikes such a chord and, sometimes a nerve, with people?**

I got two really mean letters. One said that the reason you are still single is that you are ugly. Hooray for feminism, right? The other one said that I was a sorry excuse for a human being or something like that. It is striking a chord or nerve, but most of the mail that I get, other than those two, has been extremely positive. The bloggers are the ones who are saying, 'I've never read this book, I'm not going to read it, but I hate it anyway.' It's kind of like reviewing a movie based on the movie poster. The irony of that kind of thinking is that they're doing the same things in their dating life. They're judging the book by its cover and that's the same thing as looking at a guy on a first date and saying, 'He's wearing a brown belt with black shoes. I know I don't like him.'

**Where does the provocative title come from?**

The title is based on a survey in the book where men and women were asked if you got 80% of all of the ideal qualities you want in a partner, would you be happy? Ninety-three of women said, no that is settling, I'd be very unhappy with just 80%. And most of the men, said 80%? Yeah, I'd be thrilled—that's a catch. The question is can we be happy with less than everything? And [the answer is] not only can we be happy, but the people who aren't looking for everything, the people who are looking for that 80% are the people who are happiest in life and in their relationships.

**Explain the "Mr. Good Enough" part.**

What it means in the title is we're all Mr. and Ms. Good Enough. Evan, my dating coach, told me to forget, for a second, about what I was looking for. He asked me to write down a list of all the things that a guy would have to put up with to spend his life with me. It never crosses our mind that someone else is going to have to compromise because we're all [taught] that we're such a catch and every guy would be lucky to have us and you go, Girl. But, we're less than ideal in some ways to whoever picks us even if he's totally in love with us. We're all imperfect, we're all good enough. But once you fall in love with someone, they're Mr. and Ms. Right. It's not about some mythical Prince Charming. It's about finding the guy that you're totally in love with and the guy is going to be this good enough guy who happens to rock your world.

**You say good first daters don't necessarily make good husbands. What do you mean?**

Just because a guy isn't the smoothest first dater doesn't mean that he's not going to be the husband you're going to fall in love with and spend your life with. And just because a guy is really smooth and charming on that first date doesn't mean he's going to be a great husband.

**How is dating a better experience for you now than before you went through this journey?**

I'm so much happier now in terms of my dating life than when I was doing it the other way. Dating used to feel very out of control in the sense that one day destiny will bring him and [until then], you feel helpless. When am I going to meet the guy that I'm going to connect with? I was making it so much harder on myself by restricting myself to all of these little things that would disqualify a guy early on. Now, the glass half full: I really like all of these things about this person and then you can see if there's chemistry. And, people are more attracted to you as a person because you're much more appealing when you're more open-minded, less rigid, more flexible, and less judgmental.

Last Edited by [Lindsey\\_1](#) at 3/24/2010 8:58 AM

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