

Kissing Frogs

Tall Tales and Insights from the Dating Pond

Introduction

There are 95.9 million unmarried people in the United States and 53% of those are women. Most of these unmarried ladies find themselves in the dating pond, surrounded by frogs, as they search for their Prince Charming. The statistics above don't even include the divorced princesses who are starting over again. The reality of single lady life is that dating is difficult, but the adventures it leads to are funny, terrible, embarrassing, and mind-blowing. And, at the end of the day, a woman must kiss a lot of frogs – and maybe even a few toads – before they find one prince.

As young girls, we couldn't get enough of Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel. Those damsels in distress were our heroines, saved by the handsome and romantic Prince Charming. We grew up playing with Barbie, Skipper, PJ and Ken. Did Ken ever peel off in his purple corvette with Skipper or PJ? No, Barbie always dated Ken. Period! That sort of planted the seed in our minds that a "certain type" of woman always got the guy. We needed to be "perfect".

With the invention of Photoshop and the billions of dollars spent to attain ageless beauty, we work harder than ever on our physical attractiveness to land our prince. Our distorted ideology—that Prince Charming will save us and love us for our beauty—rules our society. Thus, the dating pond is murkier than ever. To survive, a woman must know the difference between fairytale and reality. We must be cognizant not to project our dream of a prince on a frog that, no matter how well we kiss or love him, is really only a frog (or worse, a toad). So, we date, date, date, date, date...

I am a divorced woman with no tadpoles (though, I do have two small dogs). Being successful, I thought my “resume” would be enticing enough to attract a prince. I mean, I’m a financially stable, college-educated (with honors and a full-ride scholarship) former tennis professional. With twenty-one years in sales and marketing, I’m a top-producing realtor. I’m a blogger, speaker, radio host for my show, “The Dating Pond”, and I have appeared on HGTV’s “House Hunters”. My Catholic parents raised me with proper manners, a high drive to achieve, and to treat people well. I own my own home. I bathe every day. I donate to worthy causes. I have served in Rotary Club and volunteer for various charity projects. I have a heart, even though I possess lots of sass and sarcastic humor. I kind of thought I was sort of a catch! But, even with all that I had to offer, it took me 41 dates to meet a knight in shining armor.

Yes, I went on 412 dates in the course of five years! Four-hundred-and-twelve dates with frogs of all shapes, sizes and intellect (or lack thereof). My criteria for a date was: Divorced or single males, kids or no kids, some type of education, some type of success in life, some kind of belief in something higher than themselves, and they had to be taller than 5'11" (because I'm 5'10"). I did not get specific on political orientation, religious background, body art or piercings, hygiene or financial wealth. My initial intention for dating was to meet people without having a long checklist of super-high expectations.

For the record, my definition of a "date" is a planned, face-to-face meeting. Also for the record, dating does not mean screwing. I titled the book *Kissing Frogs*, but I can tell you right now I have not kissed 41 frogs. Some of my dates lasted all of five minutes, and many more ended with only a handshake or hug. Out of 41 dates, only three frogs made the cut to a second date. Actually, one of those three made it over a month, and the other two frogs made the "relationship cut", which I define as six months or more. I know, the odds sound terrible. Those odds may even depress you (they had that affect on me at times), but putting you into a state of despair is not the intention of this book. My true opinion, after all, this is that dating is a numbers game. If I had to go through 41 dates again, my guidelines (which are outlined in Chapter 9) would have been my "screening" filter prior to meeting face-to-face.

Most of the chapters in this book will give you a glimpse of the dating scene from my point of view. I've even included a chapter from a man's point of view to give you an idea of what a guy might really want from his potential princess. Some chapters reveal my actual dating experiences with frogs. You would think there would be 41 chapters, but many of the dates I went on were not long enough to fill a paragraph, let alone a full chapter. The frogs' names have been changed to protect their identities, and their dismal dating habits. But I sincerely appreciate these frogs, because they ended up giving me a seventh sense I call "toad-ar". "Toad-ar", toad radar, is the ability to sense when a date possesses behavior that ruins any long-term potential. And, to be fair, I'm sure some of those frogs thought I was a tad too "high-octane" for their needs. I am anything but perfect, but pretty close. HA!

I'm sharing the pathetic dates I've experienced and witnessed with you because, just perhaps

- ❖ You need a little laugh...
- ❖ You are experiencing a terrible dating situation right now and need reassurance to jump back into the dating pond...
- ❖ You need to burn your fairytale books and come to the conclusion that no prince is perfect...
- ❖ You will realize that the frog you are with right now is truly a prince...

The *Frog Notes* at the end of each chapter are my own little “Confucianisms” for women in the dating pond. They are my “words for the wise”. The *Frog Notes* are not meant to be preachy but “catchy” and simple lessons. We spend hours and hours educating ourselves on finance, sales and marketing, or social media, but many of us have not spent much time on what to look out for and how to navigate the dating world. My *Frog Notes* guided me, and I hope they will guide you or perhaps push you in a different direction if your date is truly a toad.

For those of you still knee-deep in the dating pond, please allow me to suggest that you read my book and immediately:

- ❖ Get out of your house and start meeting frogs.
- ❖ Let go of the fairytale ideology that may be messing up your head.
- ❖ Love who you are and what you have to offer.
- ❖ Get out of your house and start meeting frogs.

PS: If you have dating stories you would like to share, send me an email at kris@thedatingpond.com or visit my website, www.thedatingpond.com. I would love to interview you on “The Dating Pond” show, or share your story in my blog or future books. Let’s talk. You need to be heard!

SO, NOW WHAT?

The walls seemed to have closed in on me. Three months after my divorce was finalized and my house was still sparsely decorated due to the division of property from our settlement. The appearance of my home reflected how I felt—somewhat empty. So much was gone and I had yet to figure out how to replace what was missing. It was a rough learning curve. Divorce usually is.

My first misstep was that I opted to be my own attorney for what was supposed to be an “amicable” divorce. Mind you, I didn’t have a law degree and soon realized why attorneys charged so much (negotiating a divorce feels a little like Chinese water torture). I had survived a year of counseling with a great psychologist, trying to stay positive while going through this special hell. I had lived through my spouse’s attempt to hire an attorney in his quest for “spousal maintenance”, and groveling back to the judge twice for my final decree because I was missing one piece of paper needed to finalize my divorce.

I really didn’t like being my own lawyer, and was happy I majored in Communications in college and skipped law school. I love my career in real estate. I love to challenge my mind, problem solve, and earn money. My workaholic behavior was one of the reasons my ex had problems with me. He would complain that I would hide in my work to avoid social situations. Quite frankly, if I hid in my work, it

was to avoid dealing with the problems in my marriage. And, yes, it was easy for me to lose myself in my job. So, if I didn't want to be single forever, I was going to have to make time away from my career to enter the dating pond...and that was going to be a challenge.

The questions that kept me frozen were: How do I go about dating again when I had been in a monogamous relationship for over 7 years? How do I act? What do I say? Where do I go to find a date? What do I wear on a date? It was enough to make me not want to date. Being curious by nature, I thought I would research all I could on modern-day dating. I scoured the internet, purchased a cornucopia of self-help books, and read endless magazine articles. I attended lectures on the subject of being single (like we needed to be lectured on that) and listened to my single friends' advice. And here is what I learned:

- ❖ The definition of dating: "A form of courtship consisting of social activities done by two persons with the aim of each assessing the other's suitability as a partner in an intimate relationship, up to and including marriage." My thought: OMG...STREESSSSSSSSSSSS. The whole idea of being intimate with someone new? No thank you very much.
- ❖ From my girlfriends: "Kris, divorce has really helped you lean out. Have you thought about Botox?" My thought: SUPER. Now I appear as emaciated with wrinkles and the only cure is a toxin that causes shiny

forehead. And I happen to like being able to lift my left eyebrow to appear inquisitive.

- ❖ From self-help books: "Put a vision board together with a picture of your ideal mate. Subconsciously, you will manifest your prince." My thought: Bradley Cooper, Hugh Jackman and Richard Branson will be the perfect cut-outs for my board. I wonder who I will meet that will combine all three babes into one man-god?
- ❖ Magazine articles: "If you are a woman trying to find a man in dating land, you must be a size-one, weigh less than 100 pounds soaking wet; have long, blonde hair (below the shoulders with NO bangs), reverse your age to 30 (better yet, reverse your age to 1), have flawless skin, act clueless and be a D-cup (better yet, a double-D and still be a size-one)." My thought: I am a size 6 or 8 (depending how many chips I eat with my bowl of salsa); I have short, spikey, highlighted, dishwater-blonde hair. My skin has hundreds of freckles and, at 40+ years of age, my ass is definitely grooving toward the dirt. Clueless? Hell, I am the master at the board game named CLUE. I think people could hire me as a private investigator. I possess small boobs and a "sporty" physique. And when I have an opinion, pray that you can handle the heat!
- ❖ The lectures: "The more attracted you are to the opposite sex, RUN in the opposite direction." My thought: And if I am not attracted at all, run to my car!

I can totally understand why there are over 500 businesses worldwide that offer dating coach services. But, being cheap, I decided to

coach myself as I waded through the dating pond. My dating strategy was simple:

- ❖ Get out of my house.
- ❖ Shut the office door and turn off my cell phone so work emails and texts would not distract “meeting” possibilities.
- ❖ Say hello and smile at members of the opposite sex.
- ❖ Limit my love of cursing (not everyone appreciates the “f-word” like I do).
- ❖ Watch my intensity meter (I am super passionate about so many subjects and I was raised in a household that fostered debate as a hobby; I’ve found that not everyone is a fan of debate, or a woman that gets “fired up”).

Ok, I was fresh and open to dating. I had studied all I could on the rules for meeting men and I had given myself my own guidelines for navigating the dating pond. I also realized that I did not want my first night out to be alone. I figured I would need a girlfriend to help me on my first night out of my little, single prison.

Missy was my first call.

Frog Notes: No matter how much crap you have endured, it is best to open your heart to the dating pond. How bad can a frog be?

A MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Ken has been a friend to me for years. We met in college when Ken was a geek. As great a guy as he is, I've just never been physically attracted to Ken. He resembles Gandhi a little. Along with his good heart, he has a great mind, truly respects his mother and he was the one man I knew who was honored for his service to the school.

Today, Ken has emerged from geek to stud, and is a world leader in sales and marketing. Ken's savvy, smart, fit, classy, rich and FUNNY. I reached out to Ken for a male POV on dating because, let's face it—every woman needs a man's perspective to comprehend the male species.

"Kris, watch my mouth slowly," Ken said. "Men can be summed up in five words: Men want to get laid. Repeat after me: Men want to get laid."

I had forgotten how this was Ken's college mantra. Like a broken record, Ken had affirmed what my Irish, Catholic father would say to me at dinner as a young girl, "Boys do not care about you, Kristi. Even if they buy you roses or give you jewelry, they just want to get in your knickers. Remember my words: Boys will be boys and they just want to get in your knickers."

As off-putting as it might have sounded, Ken's dating dogma became my gospel. I would hang onto every word he would utter as he would lecture me about men's thoughts. I was a

sponge for knowledge. I figured if I could gain insight to a man's way of thinking, I might avoid bad dates and disastrous relationships.

Ken offered me his Men's Ten Commandments:

1. Men NEVER see your brains from across the room.
2. Men DO NOT care if you are financially stable.
3. Men DO NOT care if your IQ is over 160.
4. Men DO NOT fixate on you during the day. (Seriously, they are busy in business—-you are not crossing their minds.)
5. Men DO NOT really hear what you say.
6. And when you get really emotional and talkative, men DO NOT understand WHY you are sniveling.
7. Men DO CARE how you look.
8. Men DO CARE about your boob size.
9. Men WANT to get laid. Drunk, sober, happy, sad, mad, THEY WANT TO GET LAID.
10. Men WANT to get laid again and again and again. And if you will not sleep with them, they will find someone who will.

I always felt a bit downhearted and outright infuriated with Ken's commandments. There had to be more substance in a man. A man cannot be this simple—so basic, so unfeeling. I am the eternal optimist coupled with debate queen. I tried to force logic into Ken's commandments:

Me: "But, Ken, what if the gal has a great body, great mind, and she is financially independent, and – most importantly – she offers him 'KEEPER' characteristics?"

Ken's retort: "He just wants to screw her..."

Me: "But, Ken, what if he's in a car accident and on life support? She's there for him every day, nurses him back to good health and proves she's there for him all the way."

Ken's reply: "After he is back to fine health, he will want a good romp. And if Florence Nightingale has gained 10 pounds, he will play mattress mambo with another nurse."

Me: "But, Ken, what if they are soul mates? They just get each other and are right for each other..."

Ken's smug reply: "Do you really believe in soul mates? Some drop dead, gorgeous woman with a killer body seduces him at some party...forget his soul mate; he will have sex with the seductress."

JESUS! At that point, I was pissed, totally baffled, offended, and ready to smack Ken.

Me: "Ken, you're meaning to tell me that all men think this same way?"

Ken's grin-and-bear-it response: "Kris, all men want to get laid. It's all about getting off."

Ken shared his dating ordeals with me on a routine basis. Ken had tried online dating, hired a matchmaking service, and he even went on blind dates. His mantra was, "It's just sex." And he would flash his smile.

Ken actually BRAGGED to me about how, in one day, he had bedded five different HOT women.

Sidebar: Have you ever noticed that when the male species tells you about a woman, they always describe her as hot, sexy, attractive and/or built? Ken's stories NEVER involved some homely girl who resembled a beagle puppy, a woman missing a tooth, or a gal with a less than perfect body. Need I continue?

Ken told me about his romp with five different women in the same day and I had to ask, "Did you do all five at an orgy?"

"Kris, five girls all on the same day, all in different places," he boasted. "And it was all INCREDIBLE sex."

He continued to tell me his rules:

- ❖ Always carry condoms.
- ❖ Have sex with women, but do NOT indulge in giving or receiving passionate kisses.
- ❖ No matter what, limit the alcohol intake. (Ken reasoned that alcohol lowered the libido and he needed to be in control in the bedroom.)
- ❖ Get to bed by midnight. (Ken needed his beauty rest, as he's a triathlete and, even though he is getting laid, he needed his strength to train.)

As Ken droned on and on about his rules, I resisted the urge to puke. Ken was serious as a heart attack on this subject, like a mini-Buddha spewing his male philosophy to me. I found his views to be absolutely pathetic and completely wrong.

“Ken, I think we need to see the Wizard about giving you a heart,” I sputtered, hoping that would snap this Tin Man out of his rather cynical spirit.

“Kris, you wanted me to give you the straight truth, and this is as honest as it gets. Seriously, I am having the time of my life. I have hit my stride. I am a chick magnet getting laid 0 times a week, and I’m at the top of my career – my life is AWESOME! I am free and having fun. I am the ‘K’ man,” Ken bragged, like a gorilla beating his chest.

I didn’t recognize my friend anymore. Who was this impostor? Finally, I couldn’t take another word and I ripped into him like I never had before.

“You wait, K-Man,” I started. “When the right woman comes along and sweeps all those stupid Ken rules away, you’ll see. There will be a woman that gets under your skin. No matter what she does or says, you will be smitten. And, one day, when that woman creeps into that tiny, little tin heart of yours, you will actually miss her when she’s not around. You will think about her even when you are making your gazillion-dollar deals. She will wake up with bed-head and bad breath, maybe even gain ten pounds, but you won’t even notice because she actually makes your world a better place. In fact, you’ll realize she’s the person you want around every day, and not just for the lay. And when that day comes, remember it was me who said, ‘Told you so.’”

I got up and left Ken there, mouth hanging open. Months went by before we spoke again. I

ignored Ken's calls, texts and emails. I didn't need any more of that man's perspective. No, thank you. Then, ten months after the K-Man burial, I received a voicemail on my cell phone.

"Hey, Kris. This is your tin-hearted friend, Ken. You were right, Kris. (super long pause) I met this great gal and, yes, she is beautiful, smart, and funny, and I can actually see myself wanting a family with her. I hope you will talk to me. Please, talk to me. You are one of my only true 'girl' friends and I really want you to meet her. It would mean the world to me."

Eleven months later, I was a guest at Ken and Emily's wedding. It was a beautiful ceremony with a fantastic reception, but the best part was seeing K-Man have that special look in his eyes when he glanced at Emily. I knew it was not about sex. His gaze was one of respect, love, honor and trust. The Tin Man got his heart after all! Ken had found his life partner, friend, lover and confidante.

Today, Emily and Ken have two beautiful girls. I wonder what kind of advice Ken will give his daughters when they start dating? And will he tell them his Men's Ten Commandments? I'd be willing to bet he'll be the kind of dad sitting on the front porch with a shotgun across his lap!

After learning all I could from Ken, I needed to get out in an environment with two people I know have my back at all times. I needed to know that it's possible to be out in the dating pond without having to score. Who better to call than Mom and Dad? Perhaps they

could help me gain some perspective on the dating scene.

***Frog Notes:** Just because a frog has “ten commandments” he lives by does not mean he is Moses. Keep in mind that Moses wandered the desert by himself for years and spoke to a burning bush.*

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