

THE \$10,000 DATING MAKEOVER

america's top dating coach will change the way you approach men forever

By Joanna Goddard



the coach



the student

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK DEUTSCH

Liz Talley, 29, knows how to close a deal. A powerful executive at a large New York firm, she lands multimillion-dollar contracts every week, winning clients over with her wit and confidence. But though she's used to getting what she wants in the office, her assertiveness hasn't translated to her love life.

"I'm in a rut," Liz sighs. After breaking up with her last boyfriend almost two years ago, she hasn't dated much—and hasn't been impressed with the dates she's been on. "I don't really put myself out there. When I walk around the city, I'm in my own world. Even when my girlfriends and I go out at night, I don't talk to men; we just get a bottle of wine and chat among ourselves."

The decidedly single woman has become a cliché in the new millennium. *Bridget Jones* and *Sex and the City* have achieved cult status, chick-lit books fly off store shelves and women everywhere wonder, "Where are all the men?"

Believe it or not, smart, funny, amazing single men *do* exist. The difference today is that our lifestyles force us to find them ourselves. Our parents and grandparents fell in love over Coke floats and football games, but now many women seek to establish independence and launch careers before settling down. If we don't meet The One in high school or college, many of us wake up in our late 20s and 30s with a topnotch career, fabulous friends, a nice home—but no mate in sight.

Tired of waiting around for that elusive knight in shining armor, we set out to find a fresh set of rules that would allow us to take our dating lives into our own hands.

We enlisted premier dating expert David Wygant to teach us a new approach for meeting men. He flew from Los Angeles to New York City to take Liz on his innovative **Three-Day Dating Challenge**, for which grateful clients typically shell out a whopping \$10,000. David promises his course will change the way you think about dating, improve your confidence and help you date people of a higher quality than ever before.

With Liz as the brave student and me as the trusty reporter (also single and searching), we traipsed around the city having fun, enjoying delicious meals and, of course, scoping out the men.

Thursday, 1 P.M.: Lunch

We first arranged to meet for lunch at a bustling Mexican restaurant. "You've got to go where groups of guys go," David had told us on the phone. "None of the pretty little brunch places you go to with the girls—think pizza and burger joints, steak restaurants, typical male hangouts."

When I walked into the restaurant, I scanned the sea of men and spotted David flirting with a woman in the corner.

"You must be freezing," I heard him say to the coat-check attendant, who shivered as the cool air came in through the front doors. I tapped him on the shoulder, and he turned to greet me. Overflowing with charm and charisma, he seemed like the kind of guy who had been president of his college fraternity—at once a guy's guy and a ladies' man, exactly what you'd want in a dating coach.

A moment later, Liz breezed into the restaurant, having finished an important client meeting. "I'm ready for adventure!" she said, shaking hands with David. A hiker and surfer, successful career woman and all-around cool person, Liz is clearly a catch.

We weaved through the crowd, sat down in a booth and munched chips and guacamole. As the waitress took our orders, David engaged her in a lively conversation about the relative virtues of chicken and beef fajitas. When the waitress left, Liz, laughing, launched her first question at David: Apart from his remarkable ability to flirt with any and all women he came across, what had led him to such an unusual profession?

"My business came about naturally," David explained. "I was constantly meeting women wherever I went: restaurants, shops, random places. My friends would tease me, asking, 'Who are you going out with tonight? The elevator woman? The grocery-store woman? The walk-in-the-park woman?' They begged to follow me around and learn my secrets. I realized I could change the way people thought about dating, help them open up and vastly improve their love lives.

"Today women are realizing they can approach dating in a new way," he continued. "They're powerful; they have control. By taking an active approach, you choose who you date instead of waiting for men to choose you."

We listened attentively, barely touching our salads. "Let the games begin," Liz smiled.

David's Lesson #1: Being Open to Meeting People

Change Your Outlook

- Don't go out thinking, 'I'm going to meet my husband today.' Instead, make your primary goal to have fun, interesting conversations with all types of people. Chat with coworkers in your office, people sitting next to you in the dentist's waiting room and salespeople at the mall. If you talk to everyone, everywhere, not only will you relax and have a better time, you'll meet new friends as well as new men.
- Being open will make you more confident in other situations as well: with your family, friends and even at work.

Just Do It

- What's the major difference between people who date all the time and people who stay home on Saturday nights? The daters just do it. If they want to meet someone, they take the risk, approach the person and start talking.



- Your attempt to connect may not work perfectly the first time, maybe not the second, but it might work the third, fourth, fifth or sixth time. Don't waste any opportunity to meet someone; you'll always wonder what could have happened.

Work the Numbers

- It's all a numbers game: If you want to meet the right man, you have to meet a lot of men. If you meet ten people, maybe you'll like one. But if you meet 200, think how many you'll like.
- Network: Make friends with everyone. You'll become known for being nice and friendly. It's the six degrees of reputation: People you meet will introduce you to their groups of friends, who'll introduce you around, and you'll end up meeting someone you really like.

David turned to Liz: "You're obviously great at your job. If you approach dating with that same go-get-'em approach, you'll have

your pick of men.” She scanned the crowded room. “I’ll take him,” she laughed, pointing to a tall guy in a well-tailored suit.

We finished our lunches, and as we walked out of the restaurant, David winked at the waitress. “You were right about the fajitas. They were delicious.”

Thursday, 6 P.M.: Happy Hour

That evening, the three of us headed to happy hour at a popular steak restaurant. “Happy hour is a great place to meet professional men,” David explained. “After work, get together with friends at restaurants in the business district of your city. You can even call bars first to ask when the most men come in and what the scene is each night of the week.”

“TO MEET SOMEONE, YOU NEED TO GET HIS ATTENTION, YOU MUST INVADE HIS PERSONAL SPACE AND CREATE A MOMENT.”

Apart from two women in the corner, the room was completely packed with guys in dark suits holding briefcases and beer. “Looks good so far,” remarked Liz, who was dressed in a stylish navy suit and cream silk shirt.

“The number one thing to remember is that people are wrapped up in their own worlds,” David told us as we edged into a spot at the bar. “To meet someone, you need to get his attention. You must invade his personal space and create a moment.”

David’s Lesson #2: Getting His Attention

Check Out the Scene

- When you first walk into a bar, take fifteen seconds to look around. Pretend you’re looking for a friend as you actually observe the scene.
- Use your cell phone as a cover as you scan the room. Call anyone—even your voice mail—while you set your mark.

Brush-By and Look-Back

- The most important thing is to break the bubble that people walk around in. Once you pinpoint the man you want to meet, walk by him, softly brush his arm with yours and look back. Or touch his shoulder and say, “Excuse me.” By invading his personal space, you’ve created a moment. Keep looking over at him—even brush by him again—then go up to the bar alone.

Separate Yourself From the Pack

- The biggest mistake women make is huddling up with a group of girlfriends and closing themselves off. If you see someone who looks promising, separate yourself from the pack. Walk to the bar by yourself to order a drink or glass of water. He’ll never approach

you if you’re surrounded by ten friends, but he’d probably love to talk to you one-on-one. Give him that chance.

Body Language

- Notice how men stand at a bar: They face everyone—they’re open. Notice how women stand at a bar: generally facing into the bar or toward their friends with their arms crossed. Instead, turn toward the room, put your arms down and be approachable. You’ll be amazed by the change in the way you feel and the way others perceive you.

Look at Him

- You have to make eye contact—not merely a quick glance, but

long looks so he gets the message and feels comfortable coming over. You can smile or even wave him over.

- If he keeps looking at you, you can always approach him. Don’t wait too long, though; the situation gets more intimidating the longer you wait.

Position Yourself

- Place yourself between men at a bar when you order a drink. When you put yourself in their immediate area, it makes it so much easier for them to talk to you. You can use a point of entry to start a conversation—and squeezing in gives you an excuse to say, “This bar is so crowded!”

After we finished our beers, David challenged Liz to a brush-by and look-back. Targeting a cute man in a red sweater, Liz headed over, bumped his shoulder and glanced back for a second. As she circled back to us, David and I were smiling.

“That was more of a collision than a brush-by,” teased David. “You have to go slowly, so he knows it’s deliberate. You want to create a moment, not give him bruises.”

Liz laughed good-naturedly. “The Collision—that can be my signature move.”

By the end of the night, Liz had the method down cold. She had brushed by three men, looked back at two and scored one seven-digit number.

Friday, 8 P.M.: Dinner and Drinks

“There are some great-looking men in here,” Liz noted as we waited for our table at a beautiful French restaurant crowded with people laughing and drinking, from starry-eyed couples to Wall Street traders to European hipsters.

David asked us to look around the room and pick out whom we’d want to approach if we were men. Liz and I both chose a red-haired woman in her 30s who was chatting with her friends. She wasn’t as dramatic as the languorous model type by the door, or as well dressed as the three blondes clustered around the bar, but there was something relaxed and friendly about her. “She seems genuine,” I said. “Fun and approachable,” added Liz.

“You see? Concentrate on having a good time,” said David. “You’ll attract everyone around you—including the men.”

Finally, our table was ready. As we sat down to grilled salmon and spicy bouillabaisse, David gave us pointers on the art of conversation.

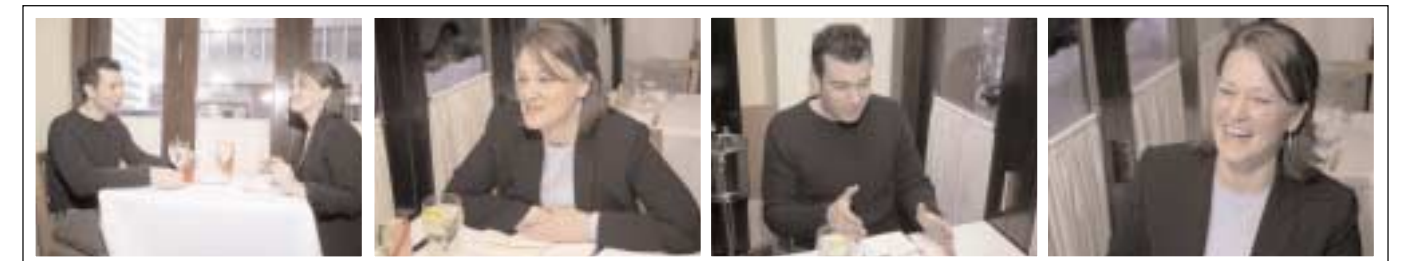
David’s Lesson #3: Talking to Him

Say Something

- Talking to men is like talking to 5-year-olds, according to David. They just want to meet you; they’ll talk about anything. Have you ever listened to men having conversations with each other? You don’t have to make some amazingly witty, intelligent comment; just say something.
- Most people think, ‘I could say this, but that would be lame,’ ‘I could do this, but that’s weird.’ Even if you think the moment isn’t right, or the place isn’t perfect, you’ve got to go for it.

Find a Point of Entry

- An “in” helps get the conversation going. Anything works: Remark on his tie, his college sweatshirt, his motorcycle helmet.
- A gadget is also a foolproof point of entry. You’d be amazed by how much a man can say about his cell phone.
- If he’s doing something interesting, comment on it. For example, if he orders triple espresso, you can say, “You must have a big day ahead of you,” or tease him by saying, “Late night?”



Keep the Ball Rolling

- Read *USA Today’s* Life and Sports sections to get an idea of what’s going on. For instance, if you know the Super Bowl is on Sunday, you can strike up a conversation about his weekend plans and ask him what sports he played in high school.
- Ask him open-ended questions. The longer he talks, the more relaxed you both become.

Later that night, we headed to an elegant wine bar to try out the techniques. As David greeted the hostess with an extra-

warm smile, Liz scanned the scene for fifteen seconds and picked out the most interesting-looking guy: a man in his 30s sitting alone with a glass of wine. Sidling up next to him, she asked him, “What kind of wine are you drinking?” (“Excellent point of entry,” David whispered to me.) David and I watched the man ask the bartender to pour Liz a taste. After chatting for a couple minutes, Liz returned to give us the scoop. Her verdict? Nice but boring.

“I’m so glad I made that move, though,” said Liz. “If I hadn’t, I’d have looked at him all night, wishing he’d come over. At the end of the evening, I’d be upset that we hadn’t talked, wondering what would have happened.” Now, ten minutes later, she was moving on without any regrets. “It’s a great feeling,” she said. “Very empowering.”

Next, David pointed out two older men at the opposite end of the bar. “See Stripes and Turtleneck over there?” he asked. “Go in between them and order a drink.”

“I feel like I’m in a *Seinfeld* episode,” Liz laughed. She headed down the bar and cut in between the men. As she flagged the bartender, she asked the men to recommend a good drink. David and I watched them flirt, and in a few minutes, Liz returned with a big smile. “They told me all about their martinis,” she said. “It was so easy.”

Saturday, 11:30 A.M.: Breakfast and Bookstores

“Girls go to brunch. Guys go to breakfast,” said David as we walked down the sun-drenched street toward a casual eatery celebrated for its apple pancakes and fluffy omelets. “Men love their diners—the greasier the spoon, the better.”

Once inside, we ducked through groups of men in baseball caps, babies tucked into strollers and waitresses balancing trays of eggs and sausages until we reached our table.

Our first order of business? The weekend rendezvous.

David’s Lesson #4: Working the Weekend

Pick Three Magic Places

- Pick three places you go all the time—from a museum to a bookstore to the gym—and start treating them as places to meet men. (This way, you can seamlessly incorporate dating into your life while enriching your own pastimes.) Constantly look for opportunities to engage people. You’ll feel comfortable in your familiar surroundings, you’ll immediately have conversation topics and you’ll be more likely to meet men who share your interests.

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- Places like Barnes & Noble, Blockbuster and Whole Foods Market are especially good because people are lingering, not huddling in groups or moving toward a destination. This makes it much easier to start talking.

Approach Him

- “Warm up” by initiating conversations with people at grocery stores, the bank, on buses and in the street, whether or not you’re attracted to them. Then when you see a man you’d like to meet, you’ll be much more comfortable approaching him.
- People today rush around talking on cell phones and staring down at the ground. Break the bubble! If you’re too nervous to say something, lean around him in a store to grab something off the shelf, drop something when he walks by and say “Excuse me,” or simply walk up next to him.

Flirt While You Walk

- If you see a cute man walking down the street, take advantage of the moment and say hi. If he’s interested, he’ll most likely stop or turn toward you. This signal will give you the go-ahead to smile and wave him over.

Stuffed with pancakes, coffee and advice, we paid the check and headed to our first stop: Barnes & Noble. We strolled around and found the fiction section. “OK, Liz,” David said. “Go get ‘em.”

A tall, bearded man was flipping through the book *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, so Liz sauntered up next to him. She reached across him and grabbed a copy. “Have you read anything else by Sedaris?” she asked.

David and I took a lap around the store, and by the time we returned, Liz had acquired both a new book and a phone number.

Our final destination was Circuit City, which, as David predicted, was packed with men. “I told you men love gadgets,” David said as we perused the flat-screened TVs, entertainment systems and blue-jean-clad men roaming the aisles. “It may not

be the most liberated idea,” he said, “but a really easy way to start chatting is to ask a man about technology. Ask him to help you choose a great digital camera or recommend a laptop computer.”

At the end of the afternoon, Liz thanked David for his dating advice and promised to let him know how her dates went. We all waved good-bye, and I headed home through a nearby park. The Three-Day Challenge had been hugely successful—from David’s Machiavellian strategies to Liz’s rapidly filling social calendar. I was even surprised by how much my own perspective had changed. In only three days, I’d gone from lamenting my lackluster dating life to seeing romantic possibilities around every corner. The city now seemed less like a cold, unforgiving metropolis than a community full of those legendary smart, funny, amazing single men. I smiled to myself as I walked, the sun shining, the breeze blowing, the birds chirping...and a cute guy walking right toward me.

David Wygant has appeared on *Dateline NBC* and MTV’s *Made* and has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *New York Magazine*. To learn more about his programs and products, visit www.datingsteps.com.