

DATING SOMEONE NEW THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?

WRITTEN BY JULIANNE CANTARELLA



It can be tricky to navigate your way through the holidays if you're in the early stages of dating. Check out these guidelines. **There's no need to make things awkward!**

Defining the relationship is a big step in the dating process. The holiday season can get a little more complicated if you haven't had "the talk." Typically, this conversation about exclusivity comes a few months into the relationship. Regardless of whether you've had this chat or not, you must avoid making any critical mistakes around this time of year. I would caution you not to rush or force a relationship. Let it unfold naturally while enjoying the company of your date. The last thing you want to do is scare her off and ruin the chance of your relationship advancing naturally. If you're looking to enjoy the season and start 2015 on the right foot, look no further.

Appropriate Gift Giving

First and foremost, it's important not to go overboard. Making a grandiose gesture can make you appear too serious, and you could run the risk of scaring her off. On the other hand, ignoring the holidays could disappoint her and put a damper on the whole burgeoning relationship. Be thoughtful. Pay attention to what she likes and dislikes. Does she have a hobby? Is there a particular artist or musician she really enjoys? A book by her favorite author is a great pres-

ent. I would suggest starting with something like that when you're looking for a gift.

Managing Relationship Expectations

The holidays can make us feel all warm and fuzzy and the eggnog isn't always behind it. Be careful. That warm and fuzzy feeling can cloud your judgment and inflate your expectations. I've seen more relationships implode when one of the players assumes the relationship is more than it is. Enjoy that feeling and your date but don't let it influence your expectations and push you to define a relationship that is just getting started.

Holiday Invitations and Attendance

Don't expect to get an invite to all the holiday festivities. Meeting her family, friends or coworkers during this time can be a bit awkward and it can put stress on a new relationship. Expectations should be kept real during this time. Don't assume that because you have had several dates that she is ready to incorporate you into her life. If you are interested in bringing her along to a holiday event of yours, be sure to discuss it with her. She might not be ready to meet Aunt Clara or Uncle Joe just yet.

Julianne Cantarella, MSW, LSW is New Jersey's Premier Relationship Expert. She is a former therapist turned matchmaker and dating/relationship expert. A Bergen County native, Julianne is dedicated to helping mature singles in New Jersey & Rockland County find love. She offers matchmaking and date/relationship coaching through her company, New Jersey's Matchmaker, LLC. You can find out more at www.newjerseymatchmaker.com.