

# The dating doctor

LOVE 101  
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ONCE upon a time, there was a smart, savvy and beautiful young professional matchmaker called Linda Prescott.

After starting her career at age 21 in 1992, our heroine bought her own city dating agency called Ideal Introductions in 1996 and, just like magic, has helped dramatically transform tens of thousands of people's lives by helping them to find true love.

But this story is no fictitious fable – it is real life. Ideal Introductions is Australia's first national personal dating, introduction and matchmaking service with offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Linda, director of Ideal Introductions, Brisbane, performs in equal parts the role of a pseudo psychologist, detective and dating doctor.

Her aim is to help some 1500 active clients, aged from 23 to about 65, profile what has worked and not worked in their past relationships so that they can ultimately go on to meet their "perfect" match.

About 80 per cent of clients are professional or semi-professionals.

Her business is now one of the state's largest and most respected dating agencies. In addition, she's achieved an amazing 900 weddings since she opened.

"I totally feel like a psychologist at times. People have to learn from their mistakes, people know what they want in a partner, but not what they need," Linda says.

“When you're 70 or 80, your partner is not going to be fantastic looking anymore, but if they are your friend, that's the most important thing.”

— LINDA PRESCOTT

"They keep going for what they want and that's why it doesn't work."

"I've interviewed more than 10,000 people over the years (clients) and you very quickly work out what doesn't work in relationships."

"The problem is, these days people don't pick the right kind of partners. If you start with a foundation that isn't solid, you're set for disaster in the long run."

Linda says her greatest joy is educating people and helping them to find love.

"When people join, they get a mini manual on dating. A lot of people don't know how to date and they might come across the wrong

Trying to find love in all the wrong places? Meet veteran matchmaker Linda Prescott, whose thriving city dating agency Ideal Introductions has some 1500 active members and more than 900 weddings to its credit. Linda, who is in the process of writing her first dating book, shares how to make love last in the noughties.

## Linda's top dating tips

>> You've got to be true to yourself. If you're compromising your core values to please someone else, stop.

>> You're never going to find the "perfect" man or woman. If you find someone that fulfils 70 per cent of your ideal, you're doing pretty well.

>> Learn that your partner may express love differently to you – some show it

verbally or physically, while others show love by their actions, such as washing your car. Find out if you and your partner's love languages are compatible.

>> Take time out once a long-term relationship has ended, to find yourself and learn from your mistakes.

>> Cougars are generally women who are having a mid-life crisis. And it's the

same deal for men in their 40s looking for women half their age. Age differences should be minimal – women can be three to four years older than men, whereas a guy can be up to seven years older.

>> Find out what makes you tick – what do you want and need in a partner? Once you know what you're looking for, focus on that.

way, and never know how to correct this," she enthuses.

"There are so many great people out there who should be in a happy relationship but they might meet someone and they don't give them a second chance.

"I always say to my clients – don't just wait for the 'wow factor' – chemistry takes time. The wow factor is generally just lust. Don't write people off straight away and remember – you never meet the true person on a first date."

Linda is a pocket rocket – a fast talker with seemingly boundless energy, enthusiasm and passion for her craft.

"He hates me telling this story – but then after eight weeks I went 'wow, I really like you,' because we'd built that solid friendship and respect.

"If you have friendship and respect, I think you can work through anything, but if you don't have that, you may as well not even bother.

"When you're 70 or 80, your partner is not going to be fantastic looking anymore, but if they are your friend, that's the most important thing."

And while she concedes she gets the occasional dating disaster, Linda's confident her agency can match anyone with good prospects; provided they play by the rules.

The agency has only had to ever "expel" a few members for disobeying the rules, in recent years.

"I've accidentally introduced ex-husbands and wives to each other!" she whispers, in mock horror.

"But you don't get a great deal of disasters because relationships are about two people and timing and compatibility and because we've profiled someone, they're never going to have a truly terrible experience.

"Relationship factors that come into play include intelligence, appearance, geographic distance, kids and smoking is a biggie nowadays.

"Often you'll get a male client who would rather meet a partner with a child than one who smokes. It's crazy, really hard.

"If I have ladies in their 50s who smoke or who are very overweight and who come in wanting to become members, I can't take them on.

"Not being rude, but there are a lot more

women in their 50s than men looking for partners and men have become much more visual.

"Whereas in the 20s and 30s, women always have it all over the guys (when it comes to choice) and then men in their 40s become more visual in their choices."

Linda says she will not hesitate to refuse membership to men in their 40s looking for 20-something trophy wives, but she says most prospective clients have their heads "screwed on right".

"We also turn people away if they're not emotionally available. We have counsellors we refer them to, instead. If people are really bitter or teary, they need to work on themselves first.

"If you can't put 100 per cent into a new relationship, it's never going to work.

"It's very scary for a lot of people to take that leap to join the agency, especially if they've been badly hurt in their past relationship and it means they have to open themselves up to the possibility of getting hurt again, but you have to be able to take that leap if you want to find love again."

Linda says Ideal Introductions teaches and preaches a return to "old-school romance". "A lot of guys out there are confused about the dating rules. Do they open the door or not open the door?"

"We educate men on how to be gentleman again and women, ladies. The guys have to pay for the first date and we say to them that it doesn't have to be flash, so long as they put thought into it, that's OK.

"Women know they have to offer to pay half but then relent when the man insists.

"Also, if someone wants to cancel a date,



LOVE GURU: Linda Prescott, with, inset, husband Aston and son Oscar.

they are not allowed to text – they must either phone their date or us at the very least.

"If something really bothers one of our members about the rules they can tell us. There are two pages of strict rules, but if people pay our fees, they're serious (about making it work)."

Linda hates the "sleazy" on-line dating sites currently available, and to combat this, she wants to set up an online component to her business in the future, based on the old-school dating "rules" her agency plays by.

Above all, she says you've got to be

prepared to take risks and get outside your comfort zone to find love, whether it's via the internet, joining her agency or just taking up a new hobby.

"If you're not looking for love, you're not going to find it. If you're spending all your free time having dinner parties with couples, you're not going to find it," she says.

"You've got to put yourself out there. "We employ all sorts of professionals to help run our lives, so why would we leave the most important thing in life – finding a partner – to chance?"