

## INTIMACY, SEX & RELATIONSHIP

# Dating Newly Divorced? It Pays To Check Baggage



### DR. SANDRA SCANTLING

**I**f it's true that "all the good men are already taken" (or at least have been taken once), you'll probably wind up dating your fair share of divorced (or soon-to-be-divorced) men if you're out there searching for your soul mate.

Marlene, 51, found Peter, 47, at her cousin's wedding. He's a good guy with a decent job and a nicely developed set of biceps and quads (he's training for a half-triathlon). He just has a little baggage: He's an NDM, a "newly divorced male." He also has two young children and an ex-wife who either texts or calls him daily with continual requests for his capable fix-it-man assistance.

"I can handle this," Marlene thought, but eventually she lost her patience, and Peter:

Dating an NDM is more complicated than you may think. To begin with, they have a woman in their recent past who also may be the mother of their children and will be the other parent forever. Knowing his child (or children) emerged from this woman's "sainted" body isn't an experience that ever will be replaced, no matter how many babies you both decide to have together. NDMs also may have rejection issues, residual anger, child-support payments and something important to prove the next time around.

Sex with this guy may be glorious, but going the distance isn't as easy as finding the man who gives your goose bumps goose bumps. Your orgasms may be cataclysmic, but you can't be naked all of the time.

If you're dating a divorced guy, there are some special problems you might want to be on the lookout for and nip them in the bud.

I'm not saying that we should brand every divorced guy (or woman, for that matter) with a scarlet "D"; none of us is perfect. But let's accept that newly divorced partners are different in some key ways. Make sure you do your homework, or you'll probably wind up in my office complaining that your second marriage is worse than your first.

Kari and Daniel met at an office picnic. Kari, 39, never married, and had two long-term relationships that never quite made it to the "finish" line. Daniel, 43, has maturity, a sense of humor and just about everything Kari has been looking for, including great chemistry! Soon they were living together. The problem is that his divorce was not final, and she didn't know it. Actually, the court date kept mysteriously moving, with no formal end date in sight.

Kari knew Daniel had children, but didn't fully appreciate what it meant that his children "always came first." Soon she found herself competing for their dad's time — soccer, events, camping — and even their love. He felt so guilty about the divorce, he spent every free moment with his kids. She couldn't take it, and they split.

So if you're like so many dating women looking for a good man, be careful about dating an NDM. Ask the right questions from the start. Find out when he got divorced (legally divorced). Try not to be the rebound relationship if you can help it.

If he says he's separated, it just may be that his wife is in the next room. Be careful of men who have "gap" relationships (filling in the space until the divorce is final). Some of these men just want reassurance that they're still marketable. And don't be his therapist, mommy surrogate or cheerleader. Giving is part of the process, but it can't be the whole process.

Make sure he's over his marriage before you invest your heart, mind and body. If he's still angry, compares you to her in bed, or still refers to her as his "wife," his divorce is still too new.

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