

Sex Love and Lies: The 21st Century Romance
Chemistry.com Live Chat with Dr. Helen Fisher
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Chemistry.com: Welcome to Chemistry.com's live chat with Dr. Helen Fisher, world-renowned biological anthropologist, author and expert in the science of human attraction. Dr. Fisher has spent the last three decades figuring out why love makes us go weak in the knees and causes our hearts to skip a beat. And, that's why we recruited her as the brains behind our personality profile and the chief scientific advisor to Chemistry.com.

This chat is for entertainment purposes. Match.com owns all rights to the chat and derivatives thereof. Dr. Fisher is ready to answer your questions about love in the 21st century - so ask away!

Dr. Fisher: I'm delighted to be here and that you're here. I'm ready to talk about sex, love and lies and romance in the 21st century.

So, let's get going!

Lisa: Dr. Fisher, I just took the personality test on Chemistry.com and learned that I am an Explorer/Negotiator. It seems as though I always end up choosing the wrong man to date. What types of men should I be looking for that match well with my personality?

Dr. Fisher: First of all, I'm also an Explorer/Negotiator. It's a very interesting personality type. You clearly are a risk taker, you're spontaneous, you're curious and creative. You're probably attracted to people like yourself - people who are exciting and interesting. And if you can find one who's mature, he or she would probably be a very good match. I don't know who you've been choosing, or how old you are, or what you're looking for. But I can say that the Builder will give you a more stable lifestyle, the Director may give you more intellectual stimulation, and the Negotiator would be a soul mate. So, you need to establish what you're looking for. On Chemistry.com we try to give you quite a choice. Good luck to you!

Marcello85: Do you think it's possible for "bedroom chemistry" to evolve over time?

Dr. Fisher: Yes, I do. I presume you mean sexual chemistry. I think we evolved three different brain systems for mating and reproduction: the sex drive, romantic love, and feelings of deep attachment. And over the course of a relationship, any one of these systems can trigger any of the others, stimulating lust. In my case, I once had a long-term, deep friendship with somebody, which actually turned into mad romantic passion and a lot of chemistry in the bedroom.

LLN: Hi Dr. Fisher. I have a tendency to have sex too early in the relationship. Do you think that signals later issues? Should I just not have sex on a first date anymore?

Dr. Fisher: That really depends on who you are and what you want. I'm not moralistic about when people have sex. Sometimes people use sex to trigger romance, or feelings of deep attachment. And they want to get to know the person fast so as not to waste time. Other people, use the Darwinian strategy of the waiting game. But if you feel uncomfortable with having sex on the first date then you should change your strategy. Sex is really only good when you're comfortable with it.

Lucillio: Are there differences between the way different races date?

Dr. Fisher: I don't really know. But I study human beings, not races. And when it comes to sex and love, we are very much alike. Gays, straights; blacks, whites; old, young. We're studying the same brain systems. But customs of courtship will vary from one community to another with different expectations and traditions. So, courtship varies by culture not by the color of your skin.

Sealset: Why do couples lie to each other? Do you think there's anything wrong with telling your significant other a "little white lie?"

Dr. Fisher: It depends on what that little white lie actually is. Some very small lies can really represent big and important issues. I generally try to tell the truth so that people trust me, but there are times when I feel it's just rude to tell the honest truth. On those occasions, I try to say nothing at all. Not everybody in the world is as interested in honesty as Americans are. In many cultures, they're more interested in being polite. So, you have to choose your moment, and try to do what's best.

tmasbc: I'm a shy person, and therefore, I never take the initiative to meet a girl. I always wait for her to take the initiative, which means that I go through long periods of waiting. Are there any suggestions that you could give me for meeting women?

Dr. Fisher: You do have to get over your shyness, or at least find ways that work with your shyness. Because women do expect to be courted, not only in America but around the world. Most women are shy, too. Perhaps you should practice finding opening lines, things you can do and say that you feel comfortable with that can start a relationship. As Mae West said, "It's better to be looked over than over looked." Love is important and you do need to jump in and try. Good luck!

antrebos: Are there different types of chemistry? Does chemistry with your partner evolve over time and if so, how?

Dr. Fisher: This is a huge question. I could write books on this, and perhaps you could too. I study the brain chemistry of romantic love. This is a very ancient brain system that we share around the world. That intense romantic passion probably does not change from one person to another. But why you click with one person and not another is going to depend on myriad other things, and the chemistry between two people will be triggered by different forces in different people. For example, I tend to like adventurous people and creative people. Others are looking for stability, or something else. So, this brain system will be triggered in different ways by different people. But when you fall in love, it's always the same brain circuits.

Annie: I have been on Match.com for a while and because I don't have a picture on here, guys won't answer my e-mail at all. Why is that?

Dr. Fisher: It's very understandable. For millions of years, men had to look at a woman to size her up to see if she could give him healthy babies. Men are built to look, and when they don't see a photograph they have a harder time responding. You should find some photographs of yourself that you like and send them in. Good luck to you!

LonelyInNY: Is there a specific personality type that has a harder/easier time committing?

Dr. Fisher: Very good question. Some day I'll know the real answer, but from my research on this topic it appears that the Builder and the Negotiator tend to be most interested in a long-term, deep, committed relationship. But we're built to fall in love, and that's the right time and under the right circumstances. Just about everybody on this planet makes the commitment. In my study of 97

societies, 92 percent of men and women married by middle age. And today in America, about 90 percent of men and women will marry.

curtains: Is there a personality type that is most common among women? Men?

Dr. Fisher: We're collecting a lot of data on Chemistry.com, which is entirely new data. I recently looked at 28,000 men and women and found that more Directors were men and more Negotiators were women. I was thrilled to see this because I'm studying the testosterone system when I study Directors and the estrogen system when I study Negotiators. So, these data help to prove my understanding of human genetics. There are just about the same number of men and women who are Builders and just about the same number of men and women are Explorers. I rather like the fact that there are just as many Explorer women as there are men. But we find a lot of men in the Negotiator category and a lot of women in the Director category. I can't wait until you read my book on all of this. Good luck to you!

Freesiagal: I'm 43 and have been divorced twice. Both of my ex-husbands were very different, but they were what I was looking for at the time. Do you think my personality type changes over time?

Dr. Fisher: Scientists know that personality is most stable in middle age. When they give personality tests and then retest the person again, they find that teenagers' personalities change more often, and that very old people have a more flexible personality. But basic things about temperament, the biological part of your personality, does not change dramatically during the course of your life. For example, if you were curious when you were young you will continue to be curious. If you were loyal when you were young, you will remain a loyal person. Scientists now think that much of temperament is stable. P.S. I like your attitude about your marriages. Margaret Mead once said, "I had three marriages and none of them was a failure."

StanL: I joined Chemistry.com after I saw their recent ad campaign. As a gay man, it bothered me to learn that eHarmony doesn't accept gays because they claim they don't know enough about gay and lesbian relationships to do same-sex matching. In your opinion, is there a difference between the way homosexuals and heterosexuals fall in love?

Dr. Fisher: I don't think so. We match gays just the way we match straights. I don't think this brain system is any different at all. It's like the fear system in the brain, it's the same system whether you're gay or straight, black or white, old or young. In the same way how you feel when you love will not vary from one person to the next.

pegatoid: As a 50 year old newly single, my lover of 31 years died, how should I proceed in the new gay world of when beauty is only young, and it's all about a the me-me-me attitude? I'm hopeful to meet someone meaningful. I feel like I have a lot to offer and am still very much alive. Thanks Dr. Fisher.

Dr. Fisher: I'm sorry your mate died; that is very painful. In my opinion, 50 is still young and I think there are a lot of gays looking for meaningful relationships. Just like there are straights. You just have to get out there and start the process and you will attract people who also want meaning in their life. Good luck to you!

SingleGuyNH: Dr Fisher, typically I'm only interested in women I'm attracted to? Is this normal or am I too picky?

Dr. Fisher: You're normal. In a study of 37 societies around the world, the first thing that men and women want is chemistry. Somebody who they are in love with. In past generations, people tended

to marry the "right" person from the "right" background, the "right" kin, and the "right" economic conditions. Today, we marry for love. 91 percent of women and 86 percent of men would not marry someone unless they were in love, even if that person had every single characteristic in a partner they were looking for. This is why we put such an emphasis on chemistry at Chemistry.com, we're trying to help Mother Nature do her job.

Vix the OEN: Do you think it's true that in relationships one of the people is "the lover" and the other is "the one being loved"?

Dr. Fisher: The best relationships are balanced relationships. We naturally lie in bed at night and size up where we stand, whether we're expending too much metabolic energy, time and money for what we're getting. Like all creatures we must make adaptive decisions about our lives. It's called exchange theory, we must feel that the exchange is fair to proceed happily. In my case, I would like the other person to love me just as much as I love him. And I probably share this with all the members of Chemistry.com.

HOTTIEE: OK I am gay, I'm 18 and having trouble coming out to my parents! Is this normal!? I usually tell them everything!

Dr. Fisher: That's a tough question. I would guess you're suffering a good deal over this. You have to weigh all the angles and choose your moment. It's an important decision and when you think it through carefully, you'll find the right moment and it should work. But don't do anything until you feel that you really have thought it through. Good luck to you!

RJA: Are some of us meant to live alone?

Dr. Fisher: Some people need a great more autonomy than others do. The Director type and the Explorer type particularly admire freedom while the Builder and the Negotiator are more comfortable with interconnections. But the human animal is a social species. For millions of years we lived in groups. We're also a species that forms pair bonds. 97 percent of mammals do not pair up to rear their young, but people do. So, most of us are not built to live alone all our lives.

leah: Can a woman be deeply in love with 2 or more men?

Dr. Fisher: I don't think so, if you're talking about romantic love as opposed to feeling some deep attachments. I think we can feel deep attachment to many partners, but one of the primary characteristics of human romantic love is that it's focused only on one person at a time. As an Indian poet once said, "The road of love is narrow. It includes only one."

Spenc: I want to win back my wife's heart, we've recently separated. What should I do?

Dr. Fisher: I would need to know much more about the situation to be truly helpful. I don't know whether she's taking certain anti-depressants that might affect her brain systems for romantic love and attachment. I don't know the problems in the relationship. I don't know how long you've been married. But I do think it's possible to win somebody back. And if you think carefully about how to do it, you might find a way. I wish I could be more helpful. But if you can't get her back, I'm pretty sure you'll find what you need in someone else. Good luck to you!

urbabibluz2007: Hello, Do you think that the older we get, the less likely we are to find "love"? I have been on a number of online dating services, and I find myself getting jaded by the process...I'm just not finding "love."

Dr. Fisher: I'm sorry you haven't found what you're looking for, and my prayer is that

Chemistry.com can succeed for you. I am positive that it's possible to find love as you get older. In my study of 800 people in America and Japan, people over 45 showed just as much romantic passion as did those who were under 25. The brain systems can be triggered at any age, but you do have to keep trying. I'm rooting for you.

krmcleaneasternnc: How can you tell if the significant other is lying?

Dr. Fisher: There are lots of studies of lying, and even people who are trained to catch liars, such as people in the police force are often very poor at it because we have no practice. We don't give a lie and then ask our partner "How was my lie? Did you believe it?" So, we often have a hard time, but one way is to look for inconsistencies. If their face is saying something with a smile while their foot is tapping, for example. Often when people lie they don't lie with their whole body, so there are inconsistencies.

Paul Ekman writes very good books on lying and how to carefully look at somebody's face and see tell-tale signs and instant responses. Then, of course, one can look for other inconsistencies. People who come home too late, can't remember basic things, change their style of dress, other inconsistencies. Trust your instincts. If something's wrong, if you don't feel right about someone, you're probably picking up inconsistencies and lies.

Mitchel: What do you do when the "romantic phase" goes out of a relationship, how do you stop that from happening?

Dr. Fisher: We are currently studying people in long-term relationships who report that they're still in love. We are putting them in a brain scanner and studying their brains. And we are coming to know that it is possible to remain in love long-term. We don't yet know what these people have in common, but I do know this: the brain system for romantic love is associated with dopamine and when you do exciting novel things with a partner you trigger this brain system. So, I would recommend doing new things with him or her. Good luck to you!

jan: I've just begun dating again after being widowed for 5 years. After a short period of dating, we began having sex (very good sex). Now we are having a hard time doing other things as we seem to just want to get naked. Any suggestions on how to get back to a place where we have other activities in common?

Dr. Fisher: If it's not bothering you, have fun in bed. If you feel you're missing other things, make plans for them. In the beginning of romance the sex drive is very high because dopamine triggers testosterone, the hormone of sexual desire. But eventually that will recede a little, and you will naturally add some more activities. And if you really love each other, you will naturally find other things to do. But having sex is not just having sex. You're learning a great deal about each other that will be valuable as the relationship matures.

eel: Dr. Fisher, I just ended a seven year relationship with a man that cheated on me four times throughout the relationship. Can you give me some advice on how to regain trust in people when dating, and maybe some types of people to stay away from?

Dr. Fisher: I'm sorry to hear your story. I've studied adultery in 42 societies, and it is quite common. But it is always exceedingly painful. It's happened to me, too. It's hard to build trust again, but when you find somebody who really is trustworthy I think you'll sense it, and you will naturally renew your feelings of warmth and intimacy with that person. Good luck to you!

debi1kanobi: Why is there sometimes a huge difference in regard to how you feel when you chat or talk on the phone versus meet the person?

Dr. Fisher: The visual signals are huge. For millions of years we lived in little hunting and gathering bands. We didn't talk on the phone, we looked at people, we heard their voice in the context of the way they moved and smiled, what they wore, and how they behaved. A phone can't tell you hundreds of valuable things that meeting somebody can. This is why we encourage people at Chemistry.com to meet as soon as possible. That's the natural way. Good luck to you!

Cheri: I am an Explorer/Builder. Is it normal to have a hard time committing?

Dr. Fisher: Explorers have a hard time committing until they find just the right person, but Builders are very good at committing once they've made the choice. So, when that moment comes, you'll know. I will say this to an Explorer, you really want somebody who constantly opens doors for you, rather than closes them. But once you can find that excitement and the freedom in a person, you'll be able to commit quite easily. Good luck to you!

WillianW: I have met an amazing woman off of Chemistry.com, we have only been out a few times but I am afraid I am going to screw it up. Is this normal thinking or is it a sign of low self esteem?

Dr. Fisher: It's a basic part of romantic love. It sounds to me as if you're beginning to fall in love. When people are in love, they are a combination of thrilled and scared. They see something so precious that they know how much they would lose if they lost it. So, it's a very common and healthy response; it will simply galvanize you to take the right steps to win her. It's nature's way. I'm rooting for you.

superstar18: Do most people end up with their physical type or their personality type? I am a lesbian and having a difficult time finding my match on both levels.

Dr. Fisher: Scientists know that we tend to fall in love with somebody who is the same level of good looks as we are. They know nothing about personality matching. In a recent study, a scientist looked at 470 articles on matching and found no pattern at all in terms of personality types. I think they've been looking at the wrong data. At Chemistry.com I've had the opportunity to look at different aspects of personality and actually am finding some patterns. All this will be discussed in my book, but we are already using this in our algorithm for matching. I hope we can finally give you what you're looking for.

urbabibluz2007: I am making a point to meet people but I am concerned that my profile may not reflect me. Can you give me pointers as to what I should put in it?

Dr. Fisher: Yes, people respond to details. So, rather than saying I had a good day, say I got up early, took a run in the park, listened to the birds, came home, etc. Details are colorful. You probably also want to explain as much as you can about what you're looking for. How you feel, what interests you. Just be personal, authentic, clear, and detailed. I hope this helps.

siv: How can anti-depressants affect your brain systems for romantic love and attachment?

Dr. Fisher: Great! You've either been listening to our chat or read some of my articles. I thank you. I have come to believe that anti-depressants that boost levels of serotonin in the brain, such as Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft, jeopardize the brain systems for romantic love and feelings of deep attachment to partners. If you want to know more about this, go to my website, www.helenfisher.com, go to the Articles link and find my academic article on this, published in a

book by MIT Press. I'm very concerned about the use of these anti-depressants. There are good reasons to take these drugs under some circumstances, but a lot of people are taking them for no good reason and I feel they're hurting their chances at finding love. Thanks for asking!

Jeff: What do you think of relationships that span country borders? Can they work?

Dr. Fisher: I find long-distance relationships very interesting. People have all sorts of creative ways of remaining happily together. For example, long distance truck drivers, or people married to someone who works overseas in the military. Or many other situations that require couples to be away from each other for long periods of time. I think it's entirely possible to sustain romance and marriage. You just have to be creative. I know one couple in which the woman lives in the Philippines and the man lives in America and they arrange a time to stay on the phone and also watch a movie together in their separate lodgings. This way, they share experiences in real-time. Love is very strong, you can sustain it under all sorts of difficult circumstances.

Chemistry.com: Dr. Fisher, thanks very much for being here today to answer so many questions! Do you have anything you'd like to add, before we have to end the chat?

Dr. Fisher: I'll just say that romantic love is one of the most powerful brain systems on earth. People have celebrated it for centuries all over the world. It will always be with us. At any age we can feel it and it's worth getting out there to look for. You will find it. Thanks for talking with me.

Chemistry.com: Thank you for attending Chemistry.com's live chat with Dr. Helen Fisher. Remember to visit the Great Mate Debate <http://chemistry.typepad.com/> to read more about relationships in the 21st century. For more information about Chemistry.com or to take Dr. Fisher's personality test, please visit Chemistry.com!

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