

Do not say that 'I may as well start dating because it will take me years until I find the right one'. Neither should you say, 'I should start dating because that will help me figure myself out.'

Once you start dating, you should work with the assumption that this shiduch might very well be the one. You may just find that the first person you date is the one you want to marry.

So, are you ready to get married? Here are some things to really honestly think about. It might be worthwhile to review these questions with your mashpia or good friend who really knows you and can be forthcoming and honest.

After reflecting on these questions, you may recognize that you have a few areas to work on before you are ready for marriage. Work on those before you begin dating (see above).

- I am comfortable (enough) with who I am. I know my strengths. I know and accept my limitations, and am OK with asking for support.
- I have a clear picture of what I want for my life (in regards to home life, community involvement, parnassah, and religiosity) and I am working toward that end. (At least a somewhat clear picture.)
- I have self-confidence in my decisions and take responsibility for myself and the consequences of my decisions. I do not blame others for things that I did (or didn't do that I should have).
- I am emotionally stable and resilient; I am able to cope with changes in the environment without an intense emotional reaction.

If you are not ready to get married, then you are not ready to date.

- I am stable in my religiosity; my views have been stable for at least 6 months.
- I have humility. I take influence from others. I am OK with not everything (not even most things) going exactly the way I want them. I accept others for who they are, even if it isn't exactly how I would do things.
- I am emotionally mature; I am able to draw strength from myself; I don't rely on others for validation.
- I am mindful of my own and other's feelings. I use my own emotions and those of others as a guide for how to conduct myself in that situation.
- I am willing to be vulnerable and share my 'less good' side, failures and mistakes, fears and anxieties, embarrassing moments, concerns, dreams and perspectives - no matter how offbeat they are.
- I express my gratitude and appreciation to others.
- I have a feeling of responsibility to other people. I am able and willing to put someone else's interests before my own. I am able and willing to give of my space, time, money, effort for others.
- I am ready to care for the physical and emotional welfare of a spouse and future family.
- I understand that marriage takes continual investment and effort. I am interested in always learning to deepen and grow our relationship.
- I respect the other gender. I recognize that both genders are different and that I will never fully understand my spouse.