

Half of married adults surveyed said credit scores and financial responsibility rated right up there with “physical attractiveness” and “career ambition” when choosing a spouse, according to a survey of married couples taken by the credit bureau Experian.

Source: Experian Consumer Services



Daily Living

Dos and Don'ts of Dating

IF YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR LOVE, the place to look is online. That's what many television ads would have you think. But the truth, according to the Pew Research Center, is that the majority of couples in a relationship did not use a dating site to find love.



For many, the dating process can seem elusive and anxiety-forming. Perhaps the best place to start is by giving some thought to what relationships and partners have or have not worked in the past and why. When you are ready to meet Mr. or Ms. Right, consider some of the following tips:

DO look for love in all the right places! Explore a variety of options when it comes to meeting people. For example, look at activities as a way of expanding your horizons, having fun and meeting a variety of interesting people. If you meet someone special, even better.

- Try taking a class in something that interests you, whether it's fencing or photography. Check out your local adult education program or a community college catalog for classes.
- Be a sport! Ask at the YMCA, your gym or a local sporting goods store about recreational sports leagues.
- Lend a hand! Volunteer for a charity that's meaningful to you.
- Get involved in community events that appeal to you such as politics, theater or book clubs.

DO let go of any preconceived notions of what your “perfect” partner should be like. You may be basing your expectations on the opinions of family, friends or past dating experiences, but doing so may set you up for disappointment. Don't expect to change the other person to meet your tastes, either. Go with your gut and see how the relationship feels.

DON'T forget to be very careful if you do decide to try online dating. Chat on the phone with the person first. Meet briefly in a public place and let someone know where you are. Don't give out personal information at first.

DON'T be afraid of rejection. Not every match is a love connection! Whether you are ending the relationship or the other person is ending it, try to stay positive and realize that rejection can be part of the entire dating process.

Financial

Credit Check

WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS like mortgages, car loans, insurance policies, employment offers and — apparently — your appeal to a potential mate, your credit score is vital. Have you checked yours lately?

There are three main credit reporting companies that track your information: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. This information includes where you work, your payment history as reported by creditors, as well as information regarding collection activities against you, personal bankruptcies and court judgments.

You're entitled to one free copy of your credit report every 12 months from each of the three reporting companies. You can order them online from annualcreditreport.com or call 1-877-322-8228. You will need to provide your name, address, Social Security number and date of birth to verify your identity.

“If you find it in yourself to care for somebody else,
you will have succeeded.”

– Maya Angelou

The Pressure Is On

YOU PROBABLY KNOW that February is American Heart Month. What you may not know is that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and its Million Hearts initiative have set a goal of preventing 1 million heart attacks and strokes in the United States by 2017.

How can such an ambitious task be accomplished? It's all about blood pressure! All Americans are urged to take control of their blood pressure.

The number of people with high blood pressure continues to grow, exceeding 67 million. This condition frequently offers no warning signs, which is why it is so important to get your blood pressure checked regularly. It's easy: You can get it checked at your doctor's office, a local drugstore, or in the comfort of your home with a home blood pressure monitor. Your doctor can tell you what your blood pressure should be. Keep track of regular blood pressure readings with a wallet card or blood-pressure log.

If you have high blood pressure, there are many things you can do to get it under control. Think of it as teamwork — your doctor, nurses, pharmacist, health coach and YOU! Here are some ways to make healthy living a priority.

- If you smoke, quit! Check with your doctor for tools to help you quit. Visit www.smokefree.gov for additional support.

- Make healthy choices when it comes to your diet. Get in the habit of reading food labels, especially the sodium content. Choose foods lower in sodium to help lower your blood pressure. Limit the amount of



prepared and fast food that you eat and choose more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Need some inspiration? Check out The Million Hearts Healthy Eating & Lifestyle Resource Center for heart-healthy recipes, meal plans with shopping lists, and useful articles to help you stay motivated.

- Make exercise a part of your routine. Fit it into your day by taking a brisk walk before and after work or at lunchtime. Consider using the stairs instead of the elevator.

- Mind your medications. Use a pillbox or smartphone app so you don't forget to take your medicine. If you experience side effects, talk to your doctor. Never stop taking medicine on your own without talking to your doctor first.

Check Your Chocolate IQ

The average American consumes an estimated 11.7 pounds of chocolate each year. How much do you know about this sweet stuff?

True or False?

1.) Hershey's makes more than 10 million chocolate kisses every day.



2.) The world's first chocolate bar was made by the British company Cadbury.



3.) German chocolate cake is named for American Sam German.



4.) About 70 percent of the world's cacao is grown in Africa.



5.) About 100 cacao beans are needed to make one pound of chocolate.

