

# UTAH'S DATING COACH SAYS

## You can't win if you do

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**M**ost people don't like the idea that dating is a game, but Alisa Goodwin Snell says that's what it is.

"If you think about it in terms of a dating game, then it's not you who's failing — it's your technique that's failing," said Snell, of South Ogden. "If we change our technique, we'll have more success."

Snell bills herself as "Utah's Dating Coach." Through her book "Dating Game: Secrets for Marrying a Good Man" (Bonneville Books, 2008), at conferences and workshops, on television and radio, and in private sessions, she trains singles to get in the game and be successful.

"She knows the desire and interest of every human being to have a relationship and someone to love," said Val Baldwin, a life and relationship coach from North Salt Lake. "She was divorced, and went through that and was able to find love again, that's why I think she wants to help others find happiness."

Baldwin has sent some of her clients to Snell.

"My forte is finding out who you are, what's important to you, and knowing what the right partner would be for you," said Baldwin. "She teaches you how to find them, how to get out there and how to start dating."

### **Coach vs. counselor**

Snell teaches women how to flirt, men how to handle rejection, and both sexes how to quickly weed out people who aren't ready for loving relationships.

Those with deeper issues and fears, she says, should see a licensed counselor.

"Coaching is more education-based," Snell said. "We're just teaching them principles and sending them on their way, so to speak, to practice those principles."

For example, a person with anxiety or shyness might stand by the door and feel self-conscious at a singles event.

"If this was a counseling approach, I would probably try to

work through their anxiety and find out what's holding them back, what happened in their childhood that they thought and felt these things," Snell said. "From a coaching approach, I just give them specific things to go out and do. ... I would say, 'OK, you need to accomplish or do five flirting techniques before you can leave.'"

personal experience.

"I became a licensed marriage and family therapist before I got married. Then I was married for three years, and I had a son, and things just weren't good, so I became a divorced marriage and family therapist," she said.

When she decided to start dating again, she wanted to do it right — for herself and her son.



Amber Togsala photo

Alisa Goodwin Snell and her husband Eric Snell work together to help her clients.

If those goals aren't met, she imposes a financial penalty to be paid to a favorite charity.

### **Most valuable coach**

Snell says her background, research and experience make her a valuable coach with a solid training program.

"Usually, you either see laypeople going from their own personal experience, or you see professionals who have done a ton of work with married people trying to make a stab at dating issues," she said. "They're coming at it being married 20 years ... and I don't think they've done a great job of bridging the gap."

Snell, 37, majored in psychology and family studies at Weber State, and has a master's degree from Northeast Louisiana University (now the University of Louisiana at Monroe) and 15 years experience as a licensed counselor. Her dating theories are a combination of what she learned in school, and from per-

Analyzing her past relationships, and those of her marriage counseling clients, Snell created lists of behaviors that indicate someone is ready for a loving relationship, and those that give away potential abusers. Then she put her theories to the test.

"When I was dating my husband, I was really paranoid ... and scrutinized everything he was doing and saying," Snell said.

Eric Snell showed empathy, not just for her, but her son. He also demonstrated self-control and personal responsibility — all on her list of healthy behaviors.

"Because of that, I trust and respect him," she said, noting they've been married about six years.

Snell says she's more effective in this relationship because she made a careful study of male psychology.

"I think she does understand," said Eric Snell. "Several times since the beginning of our marriage, I've wanted to say some-