

What Ms. D Must Deal with in Seeking a Husband

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Ms. D had a possessive mother who undermined her desire for independence so that the child would remain of service to her. ([Click here](#) to learn more about her.) As a result of this possessiveness, Ms. D as a child had very little contact with her father. As Ms. D progressed in her therapy, she started dating men with an eye to finding a husband. We will briefly examine her situation to ask whether pathogenic beliefs could inhibit her desire to become a wife and mother.

In trying to imagine what types of pathogenic beliefs may have been spawned by childhood experiences, the technique is to think as a child would under those circumstances. Ms. D's father probably kept away from his daughter because any contact with her would have enraged his wife. A little girl, however, would not make this connection. Children are very self-centered. If a parent does not act as they would like, they invariably suppose that they are at fault. The cause must be something that they said or did or are. Ms. D as a young child needed to interact with her father in order to develop normally, and it would have been natural for her to suppose that if her father had truly loved her, he would have found some way of being with her more. To explain why her father did not try harder, Ms. D as a child would have invented a host of reasons out of thin air. These would be pure leaps of imagination, but they would have possessed the same power of pathogenic beliefs more grounded on fact, nevertheless. As with most pathogenic beliefs, these suppositions would have persisted over the years and would have affected Ms. D's relationships with boys and young men.

These pathogenic beliefs would lead Ms. D to mistrust men who were attracted to her. She would suppose unconsciously that they were aware of the "faults" that had repelled her father, so she would tend to assume that they may be lying when they praised her beauty or winning personality or other traits. Her pathogenic beliefs would in this way lead her to think that the men were merely trying to trick her to get something from her, possibly money or sex. Another way she might misinterpret male interest is by supposing that there must be something wrong with the men who seemed to be genuinely interested in her, that their problems made them so desperate that they were willing to overlook her faults. Yet another tact would be for her to suppose that they are interested in her because they don't know her well enough, and that they will reject her upon knowing her better. These are just a few ways in which a commitment to pathogenic beliefs can distort a person's perception of reality.

Her therapy helped her combat these pathogenic beliefs long before she was ready to start dating. The help was provided indirectly in that her therapy afforded her the opportunity to have a close relationship with a man, her therapist. Here was a man who got to know her quite well and found her likable and attractive nevertheless, yet had no ulterior motives and wasn't desperate for company or for the money her fee payments provided. She unconsciously tested the therapist's ulterior motives early on in the therapy by being as clingy and dependent with him as she had been with her mother. Her pathogenic beliefs predicted that he would want her to be that way and would take advantage of her vulnerability somehow. He, however, did neither, which helped disconfirm her

pathogenic beliefs to a degree. The disconfirmations of her pathogenic beliefs during therapy undoubtedly contributed to the courage she eventually mustered to start dating men.

Therapy, however, is like a halfway house, in that it provides a structured supportive environment. When Ms. D ventured out on the dating scene, she may have been temporarily set back by becoming involved with men who did confirm her fears. She may have had to confront other problems as well. She was initially clingy with her therapist only partially because she wished to test him. Another reason was that she simply didn't know any other way of interacting with people. During a relationship with a man, she would need to constantly second-guess her behavior and make adjustments in the direction of more independence. This may be misinterpreted by the man as mixed signals, which may leave him confused as to her commitment to the relationship. It may also be that a man is initially attracted to Ms. D because of her clinginess and that he becomes turned off by her attempts at independence. The latter is not really a problem because a man who wants her to remain clingy is exactly the kind of man she should shun. Yet initially she will tend to be attracted to such men and will seek to break up with them only at great emotional expense.

People who are clingy who don't want to be that way tend to hold off having relationships because of their pathogenic beliefs and because of the way they know they will tend to react with a member of the opposite sex. While it would be a mistake to jump into relationships before one is ready, it is also true that one will never become ready by sitting back and analyzing one's feelings. There will always be a need to take a deep breath and simply jump into a relationship with a sink-or-swim attitude. Experience with relationships is really the only way to establish a new way of relating to people.