

love edition

How to find your soul mate

- ▶ Several successful couples tell us it's possible
- ▶ Step No. 1: Be true to yourself
- ▶ Step No. 2: Realize this isn't going to be easy
- ▶ Good luck out there

The idea of a soul mate is a polarizing concept: While some wholeheartedly embrace the belief that there's a single person they're destined to be with, others regard it the same way they would a unicorn or a troll — ideal for fairy tales, but too improbable for everyday life.

Regardless of where you fall on that spectrum, there's something to be said about the universal human desire to find deep and meaningful love.

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With Valentine's Day just around the bend, we asked those lucky enough to claim they've found their perfect match just how they managed to do so — and what steps you can take to find your own.

 **CRISTINA VELOCCI**

METRO WORLD NEWS

1 GET YOUR OWN LIFE FIRST. “No one wants to be with someone who doesn't have passion — something that makes them tick,” says Jessica Barrutia, 23, a publicist from Chicago, Ill., who met her boyfriend of five years, Ryan Bumgarner, at a friend's party after her high-school graduation.

“I was really focused on my goals when I met Ryan. I didn't care if he talked to me, I didn't even care if he looked at me; I was sure of myself

and knew I would be more than fine if he wasn't interested. Confidence is attractive.”

“The work starts inside,” notes Erin Hessel, 30, a licensed acupuncturist who believes that self-acceptance allowed her to find her fiancé, 30-year-old artist Jason Borbet, at a bar four years ago.

“Taking this time [for introspection] gets our attention really clear so that we can feel this connection when it comes into our lives.”



▶ Erin Hessel found her love, Jason Borbet, once she knew herself better.

2 LOOK INTO YOUR PAST. “Late-in-life romantic reconnections are all the rage these days, made easier by Facebook and e-mail,” says Isadora Alman, 70, a psychotherapist and writer from Alameda, Calif.

She speaks from personal experience: The week her marriage ended in 1975, she visited the public library to comb through major city directories in search of her college love, Morton Chalfy, now a 72-year-old publisher.

“Mort, and my relationship with him, had always been my touchstone for the best of what feeling loved was



▶ Alman and Chalfy, then and now



like,” explains Alman.

Despite a reunion, their locations and lifestyle prevented them from being together.

But in 2009, when Chalfy e-mailed Alman to promote a website for his books, “a correspondence ensued, and in less than three months, we were living together and have been, very happily, for the past year,” she says.

The lesson learned? “If there is someone in your life who has remained in your memory for decades and who represents something positive and thrilling to you, then reach out,” advises Chalfy. “You may be incredibly surprised at the result.”

3 DON'T SETTLE. Jason Coleman, 43, of Washington fell in love with Brandi during high school and got engaged before he took off to boot camp for 16 weeks. “Several months after I returned, we were trying to make our relationship work but, there was a disconnect that we couldn't figure out. I broke off the engagement. I just knew in my gut that this was not the girl for me.” Less than a year later, Coleman met his wife of 21 years, Debby, at an all-city dance.

4 BE OPEN TO CHANGE. For Barack Levin, 40, author of “The Diaper Chronicles,” the realization that his wife of 14 years, Michelle, was his soul mate didn't come until a life-threatening illness. Just a year into dating, Levin learned that he had a terminal kidney disease, with five years to live. “Until this very day, I have no idea why she didn't leave me back then: I was arrogant, a show-off, a macho man.” He changed. And he survived. “Michelle is my guide in life, inspiration and role model.”

5 IF IT'S EASY, IT WORKS. “From the moment we met, we couldn't stop talking to each other,” recalls Rosie Pope, 31, New York-based founder of clothing line Rosie Pope Maternity, of when she first met her husband, Daron, in an elevator on the way to a rooftop bar. “There was this subconscious need to keep spending time with one another. When you meet the right one, things just are effortless. Being with them, making sacrifices for them — all of it is easy.”