

# REAL LIFE

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# LOVE & DATA

Does author's use of spreadsheet to find a spouse take the romance out of courtship?

## VITALS

### Making Monday (and Family Day) Better

**HERS ONLINE** • Our Making Monday Better blog post today is looking ahead to the Family Day weekend, with a great idea from Heritage Park to keep everyone busy and happy. Check out the blog post — and add your own ideas for the upcoming long weekend — at calgaryherald.com/hers.

### Smooch W. Brett Wilson for your heart

**HEALTH CLUB ONLINE** • Until Feb. 15, when you plant a virtual kiss on W. Brett Wilson's cheek, the Calgary philanthropist will donate 50 cents to the Heart and Stroke Foundation to a max of \$10,000 — which is how much he donated in the same campaign this time last year.

There's an easy link to Wilson's website on our Health Club blog post today at calgaryherald.com/life. — Yvonne Jeffery, Calgary Herald



### Travel together for romance

**VALENTINE'S** • A getaway with your sweetheart this Valentine's Day will do more for your relationship than a box of chocolate or jewelry, if the results of a survey commissioned by the U.S. Travel Association through TravelEffect.com are true.

The survey, based on phone calls with 1,100 U.S. adults, revealed that couples who travel together enjoy a happier, healthier relationship — having better sex and getting a romance boost long after they return from their travels. Eighty-three per cent of travelling couples said romance was still alive in their relationship, and 72 per cent thought that travelling alone together sparked romance. On the other hand, of the couples that didn't take a trip together last year, nearly a quarter said they do not have enough time for intimacy and sex.

LISA EVANS  
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

Match-making websites may seem like a great way to meet your mate, but what do you do if all of your online matches are duds? Make a spreadsheet, of course.

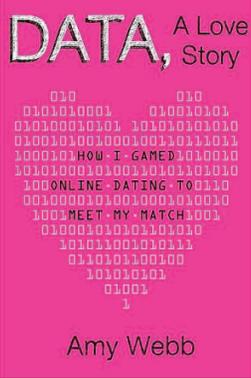
After a series of bad Internet-found dates, 30-year-old digital-strategy expert Amy Webb realized if she were to find Mr. Right, she needed to evaluate the right data in potential suitors' profiles. Her new book *Data, A Love Story* tells how she cracked the online dating code to find her husband. I caught up with Webb to discuss how she "gamed" online dating.

**Why did you decide to take your search for love online?**

I was having a terrible time in the real world. My friends and family were setting me up on blind dates, which I certainly appreciated. But the dates were awful. ... Online dating seemed more efficient and effective.

**What was your first impression of online dating sites?**

I was shocked at how many questions I was forced to an-



Amy Webb drew up 72 requirements for a mate.

swer about myself. Why didn't the sites ask questions about the type of man I wanted to meet? The sites seemed to make assumptions about what would be best for me, when clearly, the matches they delivered couldn't have been more wrong. An algorithm set me up with an orthodox rabbi, a football player ... people who have totally different world views than me.

**What prompted you make a list of what you wanted in Mr. Right?**

After a date that ended tragically, I called my sister. I threatened to quit all the dat-

ing sites, when she reminded me of a scene from *Mary Poppins*, one of our favourite movies. It was the part about firing all of the nannies, when Jane and Michael start singing about the perfect nanny. My sister told me to make a perfect husband list ... and that perhaps the right man would appear. I didn't know about him magically appearing, but it made perfect sense to start out with a specific list. ...

**You made a pretty detailed list, highlighting 72 requirements ranging from smart and funny to must enjoy *Les Misérables*. Were**

**they all equally important to you?**

Ultimately, I parsed that list into 10 top-tier attributes and 15 second-tier attributes. Not everything on the list was of critical importance, though I did want to ensure that I was putting emphasis on the things that mattered to me, even if they seemed insignificant.

**At some point during the process, did you think, OK, maybe it isn't that important that he doesn't enjoy *Les Misérables*?**

Well, the thing is that marriages sometimes end because not because of one big problem, like infidelity or disagreements about child rearing, but because of many small things that in aggregate cause incompatibility. If someone insisted on listening to certain Broadway show tunes all the time, if I didn't like that music, it would probably escalate into a bigger issue someday.

**Your approach doesn't seem all that romantic.**

I totally disagree. Using math and data, or developing a strategy to find the right partner for you doesn't remove the romance. Remember, the dating part of online dating happens in real life. I just needed to search through the dating

sites to find the right man. Our courtship lasted for several months, and the dates were unbelievably romantic.

**What tips do you have for online love seekers?**

The good news is that you don't need to use math or data to land the perfect partner. It's about developing your own framework, and that's something anyone can do. You need to know exactly what you're looking for, which means being honest with yourself and writing down as many attributes as you think are important. In my case, it was 72. In your case, it may be 32 or 102. Once you have your list, prioritize it. Then set some benchmarks. Instead of a numerical scoring system, you can use colours or even emoticons.

**You actually managed to find your husband, Brian, through this process. Did you tell him about your list?**

I did, very early on in the process. He writes about his reaction in the epilogue of my book. He often says that he was shocked at just how well I was able to describe him, without having met him first. And of course, he appreciated the beauty of a well-crafted spreadsheet!

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