

# The 4Cs of Relationships



B. Yvonne Lee

## **The 4Cs of Relationships**

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*This book is dedicated to both of my grandmothers,  
Pauline Yvonne and Barbara Yvonne. These two  
women came from very different places yet had quite  
a bit in common, including their middle name! I  
only hope that as I carry their name forward, my life  
will continue the legacy they left for our family.*

“IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO  
ALONE.  
IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO  
TOGETHER”

-African Proverb

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B. YVONNE LEE

## INTRODUCTION:



WHAT  
ARE THE  
4Cs  
OF  
RELATIONSHIPS?

How do you date? Who do you date? When do you know if you do or don't want to go on another date with someone? How do you know if someone is THE ONE? What does all of this mean? Dating has gotten progressively complicated as our world has transitioned from a society where you were defined by your family into one where you are defined by your profession. From a society where men and women had clear, understood, society-endorsed roles in the world, to one where equality is much more prevalent. Now, I'm not suggesting that we go back to the 'good ole days' for one second! What I am suggesting is that we need a new way to date. A new way to assess whether or not we *like* a person enough to move forward. As much as we move around for the sake of our careers, getting the background check that your family (mom, aunt, grandma) used to do for you is now a matter of

‘Googling’ your potential date. No longer can we easily assess a guy’s background, values, and intentions. We’ve gone from a world where courting was the norm to one where ‘Friends with Benefits’ is a common relationship status! How do we navigate these changes?

Unfortunately, we cannot rely on the wisdom of elders anymore because the rules and rituals are so different in today’s dating game. Any advice they offer would lack relevance. Between time and money, the average woman in 2015, has experienced greater financial independence and reached higher career status all while having an overwhelming amount of demands on her time. Our grandmothers lived simpler lives. Given such demanding careers, many women are wondering if they even have time for the commitment of dating. However, with the age of first-time moms higher than it’s ever been as stated in 2014 by the CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, some of us feel desperate to get down the aisle expeditiously (darn that biological clock!). For these reasons, the *4Cs of Relationships* aims to lay out a clear, concise decision-making framework to help you navigate this

labyrinth of the new age dating world. The purpose of the content is not to tell you how to date or who to date. It's simply to give you the tools to start a personal dialogue as well as discuss with friends and most importantly, between you and your dates. Now let's get to it!

When you think of 4Cs, diamonds are probably what come to mind first. Cut, Clarity, Color and Carat are the 4 'C' words used by diamond specialists to determine a diamond's value. Diamonds are also associated with relationships as the stone of choice hopeful men present to their girlfriends when asking for their hand in marriage. As important as diamonds are to the fanfare and pomp that is associated with engagements and weddings, the 4Cs of relationships are even more important when assessing the sustainability of a relationship. Chemistry, Compatibility, Circumstance, and Choice comprise the 4Cs of Relationships. These four small words represent concepts that have the ability to help couples objectively address whether their relationship has what it takes to go the distance and experience the happiness, joy, strength,

and overall satisfaction levels that they should be receiving from their relationship on an ongoing basis.

Chemistry is defined by Webster's Dictionary as 'a strong mutual attraction.' It is the spark you feel when you initially meet someone that makes you want to see them again. It cannot be explained or understood. It just is. Chemistry is usually fortified as you continue within the relationship and get to know the person better. You listen to the same music, or had similar adversities in your childhood, or enjoy the same types of foods or support the same sports teams--all of these little things reinforce that spark. Chemistry is essential for you to be in a relationship with someone. Without it, no matter how much you actually like, respect or want to be with them, it won't work. While chemistry creates wonderful feelings that make you want to be with a person, the spark is not enough...

Compatibility is defined by Webster's Dictionary as 'capable of existing together in harmony.' It is being aligned on the non-negotiable factors that govern your life and therefore your relationship. To be com-

patible means you agree on the values, behaviors, and ultimate creed you will live by as a couple. Compatibility can be broken down into two areas, objective compatibility and subjective compatibility.

Having objective compatibility with someone means you are aligned on the easy to see items. For example, do you align on religious beliefs? Political affiliations? Do you both want to get married and have kids? Establishing whether or not you are objectively compatible with someone is rather easy. You can ask them a range of questions or observe their behavior and quickly uncover if their values align with yours.

It may take a bit longer to understand whether or not you and your potential partner are *subjectively* compatible as this is a more complex aspect. Spending copious amounts of time with a significant other and experiencing a wide range of emotions and situations will expose subjective compatibility. Do you both agree on the role of a man and woman in a relationship? Are you aligned on what information should be shared with friends/family vs. what stays within the

confines of the couple? Are you clear on the priorities of your lives? Do you value money in the same way? What are your life goals? These items, while they may seem a bit wishy-washy, are equally as important as your religious affiliations. It is possible to work through them, but their subjective nature makes them difficult to a) understand b) diagnose c) fix and d) not have them resurface. These issues plague lots of relationships and cause their downfall because it is very difficult to identify them until they become a huge issue and by that time it may be too late. Kudos to you if you have found someone with whom you share chemistry and compatibility, unfortunately these two are still not enough...

Circumstance is defined as ‘a condition, fact, or event accompanying, conditioning, or determining another.’ In the context of this subject matter, these conditions, facts or events will determine the outcome of your relationship. Do you live in the same city as your potential partner? Are you both in the same stage of life? Are you both single? Having chemistry and establishing compatibility with a person that lives in

another country or is married will not make for an ideal relationship. These issues are circumstantial which means that as time goes on, they may fall away and clear the path for an awesome relationship. However, at the current moment, the relationship is destined for failure or at the very least, set up for significant challenges.

Relationships are hard enough without challenging circumstances. Perhaps, the best decision would be walking away from the relationship until the circumstances change versus trying to work through challenging circumstances and possibly ruining the chance at a successful relationship altogether (albeit later). Think about it this way, how many times in life will you have chemistry and compatibility with someone? Don't you owe it to yourself and your partner to allow the relationship to blossom in fertile soil? Hopefully, this isn't an issue and you have hit the sweet spot with a person that you are head over heels for, have established both objective and subjective compatibility with and share ideal circumstances. Believe it or not, even these three aspects are not enough...

Choice is 'selecting freely and after consideration'. I've been surprised by the number of people in good, solid relationships that do not realize the power of choice. Choosing to make a relationship healthy and stable is up to the two individuals. It's akin to running a marathon and getting to the finish line and deciding not to finish. It would be completely absurd to run 26.2 miles and not take the last step across the finish line. However, people do it all the time in relationships. Choice is the most important part of sustaining a long-lasting, fun, loving, positive relationship. Regardless of how good or challenging your relationship is, the love will intensify and fade, the circumstances will get better and worse along the way, and you will continue to learn more about your partner that will strengthen or lessen your compatibility. You will both evolve and grow and the environment around you will create good and bad times. What will sustain your union is a profound commitment to the relationship. Not the commitment to the other person...the commitment to *the relationship*. Consider your relationship a living, breathing, intangible be-

ing that was birthed the moment you met this person. It has matured throughout the getting-to-know you phase into something that has drawn you in and made you curious to see where things will go. This intangible organism will give you both what you give to it. A relationship is nourished by a couple's commitment to its presence and purpose in their lives. Proclaim it, love it, do things for the sake of it, and never ever ignore its needs.

So, you've gotten an idea of the 4Cs decision framework. Similar to grade school, it is a linear process and you cannot skip over any Cs. To work effectively, you must start with Chemistry and end with Choice. Included is a pictorial view of the framework.

# THE 4Cs FRAMEWORK



## **WHY DO WE NEED A DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK FOR RELATIONSHIPS?**

This framework is not about analyzing a person or yourself. It is about the journey of the intangible yet all important 3rd entity that is the relationship. It will force honesty from both individuals when assessing where the relationship is, where it is not, and most importantly--why.

There are several decisions made between the all too dreaded pick up line, the nerve wrecking 1st date and the point within the relationship where you decide to meet family, move in together, or get engaged. There are several how-to books on maintaining healthy relationships and attracting a man. But what about this awkward in-between phase when you need to assess the truth of your romantic dynamic while high on endorphins because you're falling in love? Many couples wake up from the hang-over of intense attraction only to realize that while they may have had strong feelings for one another, the relationship was not ideal or sustainable for many reasons. The 4Cs framework aims to provide clarity

and objectivity during this hazy, yet all too important, decision making phase.

The 4Cs framework is theoretically designed to help you spend less time in relationships that are not right for you (or your partner) and move you towards the right one. After all, the less time you spend in the wrong situation, the longer you have to spend in the right one. Think about the 4Cs framework and a past relationship and identify the breakdown. Did you love each other? Did you enjoy spending time together? Were you compatible? Were you subjectively compatible? Were the circumstances ideal? If so, did you both acknowledge the intangible entity that was the relationship and make the conscious choice to be present and commit to it? After understanding the 4Cs theory, problems and misalignments from past relationships should be apparent. More importantly, you can determine with greater speed and accuracy whether you should stay or leave a current or future relationship. After walking through the framework, if you find you're in a successful, happy, and healthy relationship,

congratulations! Cheers to you and to great relationships everywhere!

## **WHO AM I?**

I am a heterosexual, Christian, Black American, unmarried woman with no children from Atlanta, GA who was born in the 1980s. I've lived in Tallahassee, FL, Philadelphia, PA, Pittsburgh, PA, New York City, NY and up until a year or so ago, Johannesburg, South Africa on an expat assignment with my job. I've noticed there are a lot of single people in New York City and a lot of married folks in Johannesburg. I am a bit of a pessimist when it comes to relationships as I've seen quite a few fail. I've concluded that from the many romantic relationships you have in your life, only one will succeed... the others are practice and will surely end in failure. However, with every one that I see succeed, my outlook becomes a bit more optimistic. That optimism has enabled me to find invaluable insight from every failed relationship that I've encountered, be it my own or someone else's. That being said, although I do have a lot of experience dat-

ing in various areas and cultures, I do not now, nor have I ever professed to be an expert in dating, relationships, or men. With this book, I am attempting to begin a dialogue about the current state of dating. It would be great if we (daters) could acknowledge that the world has changed a bit since our parents and grandparents dated and therefore we may be forging different norms, practices, and rules for this delicate dance. The evolution of dating is happening; it's up to us to ensure that we understand what that truth means for our individual situations.

*“New York City’s population is 53% female and 47% male. This is a widely cited statistic that often supports an argument that the gender imbalance makes it more difficult for some women to find a partner.”<sup>1</sup>*

According to the 2011 census, men between the ages of 20 and 44 made up 26% of the Johannesburg population while women only made up 24%. Although these statistics would suggest the very opposite scenario for women in Johannesburg vs. New

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation analysis of NYC census data.

York City, anecdotally I can attest that the dramatic variances in socioeconomic status of the Johannesburg singles creates quite a similar situation to that of NYC. Said simply, there aren't enough *eligible* bachelors to go around in Jo'burg. Quite frankly, it's a global phenomenon.

The demographic dynamic in metropolitan areas creates a bit of anxiety for women and a slight disregard for the courting ritual that is responsible for so many successful relationships, when it comes to the men. Considering today's reality, an objective tool is needed to assist men and women through the unclear and uncertain path within relationships. A tool that determines if someone should be returned to the friend zone or become a romantic partner.

In *The 4Cs of Relationships*, I've endeavored to answer such questions as, 'Is love enough?', 'Can long distance relationships work?', 'Does he have to have a lot of money for it to work?' and 'If he isn't ready now, should I just wait it out?' Through conversations with couples and single women and men from around the world, I've crafted a clear, objective framework that

can be applied to any romantic relationship at any phase. The 4Cs framework can determine whether a relationship should progress from casual dating to a more meaningful connection that is worth the energy and effort to maintain.

I've discussed this decision-making framework with thousands of people and am always amazed at the level of debate and conversation it produces. The longer we walk this Earth, the more experiences we have in life and relationships. Therefore, the notion that we can bring all of those experiences into a relationship seems daunting without alignment on what it takes to yield success. Simply said 'we best play the game or have the game play us.' So within these pages are some helpful tools to take the guesswork out of the game. Let's begin!

## THE 4CS OF RELATIONSHIPS