

25 Ways Not to be a Desperate Housewife

Bree, Gabrielle, Susan and Lynette are fun to watch, but would you *really* want to be in their shoes? We didn't think so...

By Tracey Porpora

Despite the popularity of ABC's *Desperate Housewives*, these characters are far from role models for women today. For this reason, CW talked to top experts to find out the best ways to be successful in your love life, career, family, friendships and finances.

Love Life

1. Don't Be Desperate: Men often view insecure women as weak. So when you're looking for love, be confident in yourself. "Find things that make you interesting to yourself, and then you'll be interesting to other people," says Adina K. Neufeld, author of *Making It In the City* (M. Evans & Co., \$14.95).

2. Be A Team Player: Work with your significant other—instead of against him—to create the relationship you desire. "Gabrielle and Carlos on *Desperate Housewives* spend all of their time retaliating against each other," says Tina B. Tessina, PhD, a Long Beach, CA-based psychotherapist, and author of *It Ends With You: Grow Up and Out of Dysfunction* (New Page Books, \$21.99). "You have to figure out how to be partners."

3. Grow Up! You need to be an adult to carry on a successful relationship. If you act like a child, your spouse will treat you like one. "'My way or the highway' doesn't work in relationships," warns Tessina.

4. Know Him Before You Love Him: Before you start dreaming of your wedding day, make sure you know all you need to about your Prince Charming. You don't want to learn down the road that he has a secret past, like a criminal record.

5. Don't Marry For Money: When looking for love, make sure that's what you're really searching for. "Many women never plan for what would happen if the money was no longer there. Would you still be in love?" asks Joshua Estrin, author of *Shut Up! and Listen to Yourself* (Angel Mind Pub., \$9.95), and CEO of Concepts In Success, a business/personal development consulting firm.

Career

6. Find Your Passion & Pursue It: Whether it's illustrating children's books or selling real estate, choose a career that will infuse you with the ambition to succeed.

"If it's work or a hobby you spend an hour a week on, nothing can replace that feeling of accomplishing something you're passionate about," says Neufeld.

7. Strive To Be The Best: Whether you aspire to be a company CEO or a PTA mom, put your best foot forward at all times. "When we don't honor our inner expert that's when we become resentful and desperate," says Estrin.

8. Don't Just Make Money: High-paying jobs aren't always the ones that will make you the happiest. "What would you do if you weren't getting paid? How would you spend your time? Do what is going to make you the most fulfilled," instructs Neufeld.

9. Be Productive: Never stay in a dead-end job, or one that no longer motivates you.

“Women who aren’t productive, stunt their growth in business,” says Tessina.

10. Don’t Be Afraid To Make A Career Move: A new career can be the remedy to burnout, or what you need to help you adapt to a new lifestyle.”

Finances

11. Forge A Financial Partnership: Gone are the days when husbands made all the decisions regarding household spending. “Too many women today go from daddy taking care of their finances to having their husband do it,” maintains Tessina. “Women have a responsibility to be an equal partner when it comes to finances.”

12. Don't Rely On A Man For Money: Even when you're married, you should retain your own financial identity. Giving up this freedom can leave you in the poor house if the marriage ever dissolves. “Make sure you have credit cards, and three months worth of living expenses in a savings account in your own name,” suggests Tiemann.

13. “Insure” Your Future: While no one likes to think about death, it’s an inevitability. “Know how much it will cost you to live five years after the unfortunate demise of your husband,” says Estrin. “A \$500,000 insurance policy sounds huge, but it could take \$5 million to run your household.”

14. Plan For Retirement: Make sure you have cash stashed away in a 401K plan or IRA to cover living expenses during your “golden years.” Remember: If you become a stay-at-home mom, you’re not incurring social security in your own name, warns Tiemann.

15. Decrease Debt: Before making any big financial decisions, clear up any credit card debt you’ve incurred. “By using your debit card instead of a credit card, you’ll spend less because you’ll see money coming directly out of your checking account,” contends Neufeld.

Family

16. Initiate Proper Family Planning: “Family planning used to be about birth control and condoms,” admits Estrin. “But today it’s about the type of family you want to create, and what you’re going to do when you have a family crisis.”

17. Make Your Spouse A Top Priority: “Don’t let your emotional intimacy get transferred entirely to your children,” instructs Tiemann. “If you put your relationship on the shelf until the children are older, you won’t have a connection to come back to.”

18. Share The Same Values: You don’t want any surprises--like finding out that your husband has a secret fetish for S&M--because you failed to talk about the things that are important to you. “All the hot topics: politics, sex, family, religion and money must be discussed,” says Estrin.

19. Maintain Your Own Identity: Be your own person separate from wife and mother.

“*Desperate Housewives*’ Bree is a perfect example of why you need to maintain your own identity. She has no life except her family; she tries to live through them, and it comes out as resentment,” contends Tiemann.

20. Schedule Time Alone: If your daily routine mirrors that of Lynette Scavos, nothing is more important than time for yourself. “Have at least one--if not more--dates with yourself on your calendar each week,” suggests Mary Byers, author of *The Mother Load* (Harvest House Publishers, \$10.00). “This can be as simple as getting up 10 minutes early one morning, or reserving a lunch hour for yourself.”

Friendship:

21. Graduate From High School Friendships: While it’s great to maintain old friendships, it’s good to make new friends. Try to expand your friendship-base through various activities—book clubs, exercise classes, cooking classes, seminars, night school—to stay fresh!

22. Maintain Female Friendships: It’s great if your husband or boyfriend is truly your “best friend,” but your girlfriends will see things from a female perspective—especially when it comes to issues regarding your romantic relationships. “Good female friends aren’t a luxury; they’re a necessary lifeline,” says Tiemann.

23. Make Time For Friends: Whether it's extending a shoulder to cry on, or babysitting for a stressed-out mother's kids, good friends should be there to lend a helping hand.

24. Respect Your Friends: You can't have healthy friendships if you don't have mutual caring and respect. "It's better to have a few friends who truly care, than a lot of friends who don't," says Tessina.

25. Steer Clear of Toxic Friendships: A backstabbing relationship is not a real friendship, warns Tessina. Get rid of friends who cause you heartache!