

# The PICK a Partner Program

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**PROGRAM:** How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette). Also referred to as the PICK a Partner (or PICK for short--Premarital Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills). The website is [www.lovethinks.com](http://www.lovethinks.com) The contact person is John Van Epp, PhD. He is the developer of both programs and may be contacted at [john@lovethinks.com](mailto:john@lovethinks.com) for questions.

**TARGET POPULATION:** The program was developed for singles and singles-again of all ages (youth, emerging unmarried adults, and single and single-again adults). The program and the format of the program is extremely flexible and can be adapted depending on the population that is being served. This program is for use with any age as well as any racial or ethnic background and any education level.

**CONTENT:** The goals of the How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette) program are two fold: first, to teach singles and singles-again the key areas to get to know about a prospective partner that are predictive of what they will be like in a marital relationship. And, secondly, to teach singles and singles-again how to pace a growing relationship in such a way as to avoid becoming over-attached and subsequently overlooking key problem areas in the developing relationship. The five bonding areas that singles must pace are conceptualized in the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM). This model illustrates how these key bonding dynamics (knowledge, trust, reliance, commitment and touch) can become out of balance and lead to vulnerabilities in a relationship. Overall, this program aims at empowering singles with the tools necessary to be more deliberate in their romantic relationships as well as equip them with a plan as to how to develop their relationship in a healthy way.

**FORMAT:** The program has several versions and is formatted in either five or ten lesson workbooks. The classroom time is between 8-10 hours, although the ten lesson format could take longer. An advantage of this course is that it is easily adapted to an overview that can has been frequently used to market in High School assemblies/campuses, college and university settings, and many other settings. The overview is very well received and leads to including the course in most situations.

There are secular versions: young adult versions, an adult version, a military version; and also a Christian version with the program material integrated with a Bible study.

When teaching the program, instructors have a choice as to how to format the delivery. The course sessions can be spread out over weeks, divided into two 4 or 5 hour blocks, conducted as a weekend retreat or even over the course of one day. Again, the format of this program is incredibly flexible and the delivery timeframe and method is completely up to the instructor. It can even be used as a mentoring program.

**PROVIDERS/TRAINING:** Anyone can become certified to teach the program by purchasing the instructor's certification packet, watching the instructor's certification course and taking an online test. The instructor's certification course is approximately 8 hours in duration. Also, Dr. John Van Epp is available to perform live trainings of future instructors. Providers do not need to be mental health professionals. In order to become certified to teach the PICK program it is necessary to purchase the Instructor's Certification Packet, watch the instructor's certification course and then take an online test. This certification allows instructors to purchase future workbooks at a discount as well as to have access to inserts that are available on our website ([www.lovethinks.com](http://www.lovethinks.com)). If this method is not appropriate to serve certain grantees purposes', Dr. John Van Epp is available to perform live trainings of instructors.

**COMMENTS/OTHER:** How To Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette) has certified instructors in all 50 states, seven countries, thousands of churches, single organizations, educational settings and agencies and by over 3,000 certified Army Chaplains.

The program has been taught in a retreat format to military couples as an approved Army Strong Bonds course, and is taught to all Chaplains in their Basic Chaplain Officers Course in Fort Jackson, SC. It has also been written into several grants. This program is grounded on established research principles of how to safely build a healthy attachment and assess the qualities of a dating partner.

In addition, the Ohio State University conducted a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of the program among single Army soldiers. Program participants were evaluated using a retrospective pre-post test design and were compared to non-program participants. The study found that overall, the single soldiers placed more importance on getting to know the key areas that are predictive of

what a partner will be like in a future marriage as well as felt more knowledgeable and confident in their abilities to pace and develop a healthy relationship.