**An Interview with Toby Lieder, Dating Coach.**

Embrace:

“What is a Dating Coach, and what exactly do you offer?”

Toby:

“I became a Dating Coach while making Shidduchim for people, realising that many of the singles I work with, have a hard time articulating what the most important qualities they are looking for in a spouse are. After doing Shidduch coaching for over 40 years, I developed a formula which is called ‘The 5 Majors’, to be used to help the singles gain confidence and navigate through their Shidduch search. This helps them identify what their non-negotiables (deal breakers) are and what requirements are negotiable.

By the end of our coaching session, they have gained much clarity and understanding of not only themselves but identifying their real core values what they really need and want in a spouse for their future!

Embrace:

“Can you give me an example of a coaching session you most recently had with a single. What was their concern and reason for calling you? How did you help them?”

Toby:

“Just this week I had a young 26-year-old girl share with me the following puzzling situation. She explained to me that she’s been dating for 5 years now and she cannot articulate what it is that she may be doing wrong if she is doing anything wrong at all. She said that for some reason, all the boys she’s dating are all the wrong boys for her. It’s happening over and over again. She doesn’t know if she has unrealistic expectations or they just aren’t the right type of boys for her. She wants to identify the blockages as she would call it. “Something is blocking, and I need to know what it is. Maybe I’m doing something wrong. Can you help me figure this out?”

She explained to me in desperation.

Embrace:

“Do you get this type of question often? And what did you advise her? What is your process in coaching her through this puzzle?”

Toby:

“I praise her for taking responsibility for her future and recognising that she may need room for improvement and introspection, and that is very impressive. Many singles blame the ‘system’, and lack of good quality possible candidates, yet few are prepared to look at themselves to analyse where they can do things differently, and perhaps use some advice and guidance from a coach to recognise their ‘blind-spots’, that can easily make all that difference.

The single is often wondering if there is a formula or technique that can help them identify if they’re on the ‘right path’ in seeking their spouse. After dating quite, a bit and not finding one’s bashert, it can be very frustrating and exhausting to the point that one starts to wonder if they are perhaps part of the problem, and seek out a third party to help point out maybe their ‘blind spots’.

Embrace:

“How do you do this coaching session?”

Toby:

“We arrange an appointment from anywhere in the world and set a time that suits us both to go on WhatsApp video, or we talk by phone.”

Embrace:

“Toby, when did you first start getting involved with Shidduchim?”

Toby:

“Let me take you back to 1977 when we were newlyweds, my husband and I would have a notebook with one page titled ‘boys’ and another page titled ‘girls’.

Since we both knew many eligible young singles, we matched them as we inserted their names into our notebook, and amazingly enough, made over a dozen Shidduchim that first year!

The years following that, we became actively involved, making even more Shidduchim, also as we moved onto Shlichus in Sydney then to Melbourne Australia, some 38 years ago, 14 kids later!

Embrace:

“That must feel very accomplishing, knowing you are making a difference in people’s lives!” “How does that feel?”

Toby:

“An exhilarating feeling knowing that Hashem chose us to be the Shaliach to help bring these two half Neshomos together and all the future generations that will come from this Shidduch.“

Embrace:

“That’s an incredible privilege and an awesome feeling of accomplishment! But what about the many hours a shadchan spends trying to get one successful shidduch happening? Doesn’t it ever get you down? How do you still keep going after all these years?”

Toby:

“It is bittersweet. Sweet because you know that it is bringing the person’s shidduch one step closer to the ‘right one’. Sweet, when you actually witness the coming together of two souls, and openly see the hands of Hashem. And bitter, because it is very frustrating that not only a tremendous amount of time was spent on just one shidduch and nothing came of it, no acknowledgement or incentives, let alone any pay for the ones that didn’t work out!”

What keeps me motivated? It is focusing on the ones that DID work! Remembering that all shidduchim are all part of Hashem's plan, and when one couple gets engaged after 20 didn’t, it is like finding a diamond in the rough. It is so absolutely worth it all.

I must add, that coaching young singles, through the process of recognising what their **5 Major values** are, and for me as a shadchan, now being equipped with the knowledge of these selected 5 values they now seek in their future spouse, gives us all a tremendous sense of satisfaction, confidence and expertise to seek out the right match for them”

Embrace:

“What message do the singles come out with after having a dating Coach session with you?”

Toby:

CLARITY:

I hear each and every time. They gain a sense of confidence which they didn’t have before. Clarity and confidence in entering the shidduch scene.

PERSPECTIVE:

 This list of 5 essential values that we come up within the coaching session will come to use in many important ways. For example, once married, when life gets challenging, or we start to see our spouses ‘weak spots’, we will always have this list that I call ‘gold’, our spouse's valuable core values, that we were attracted to in the first place…this list of essential qualities that qualifies our spouse as an amazingly awesome person with incredible strengths.! It makes the “weaknesses” fall to the wayside, as to reflect on their real vital advantages, which puts everything back into perspective again.

RESEARCH:

 I am a firm believer in being well prepared with all the ‘specs’, like when purchasing a house, car, or cell phone, we don’t just take anything off the shelf, just because it looks good, or is on sale. We usually make thorough research till we are satisfied and ready to make the purchase. I encourage the singles, to do extensive research, till we are confident we know that this shidduch qualifies. How much more so with seeking a spouse, to raise our family with, we must know what we want and verify if this candidate actually qualifies according to our required list of 5 Majors.

THE LIST:

 Throughout dating in coaching singles, I highly recommend the singles, to review their list before and after each date. This helps keep them on track, to observe and discuss with their date, in many conversations, checking in if they actually fit the bill.”

Embrace:

“Please tell me, from your vast experience, what can parents do to prepare and play a proactive role in their child’s shidduch?”

Toby:

“Parents can play an extremely vital role in helping their kids get the right shidduch. Let me share with you my few best tips that I personally highly recommend.

The more you put in, the more you get out.

Therefore, here are small investments one can make that can make a huge difference!

**Professional Profile Presentation:**

The more professional the profile and photo look, the better your chances are that it may get acknowledged and looked into seriously. When I receive profiles that are sloppy or extremely short with minimal effort, I encourage the parents to redo the profile. A well-presented thought out a professional looking profile will make a far more significant impact than a quick fix one.”

**Shadchan:**

Hire a qualified, sincere, intuitive, dedicated Shadchan with experience in dealing patiently, with people. If the shadchan is also a Coach, that would even be more helpful.

**Fee:**

 Be upfront with the shadchan before starting a new shidduch and make a mutual agreement on the cost involved.

**Tip:**

I was once very touched by a bochur who asked me for my PayPal after I arranged a date for him. He said he gives $100 to a shadchan every time they send him out on a date. I started doing that with my own children. I was very impressed. I now encourage other people to do the same. If money is too hard, then even a card of thanks or a box of chocolates will do. This is a beautiful gesture in recognising and acknowledging the shadchans hard work, which also encourages them to work further with you.

**One Thing A Day:**

Do one thing a day, towards your child Shidduch!

It could be one phone call to one shadchan or talk to a friend you meet in the shop or say a special Perek Tehilim.

Anything that is for the sake of the Shidduch, **just one thing a day!**

The Rebbe said, we should play an active role in our child’s Shidduch searching, just as we have to talk about the chinuch of our children a half hour every day (Rebbe Rashab)”

**Listen:**

Pay attention with all your heart, to what your child is really

saying, what they really want in a Shidduch, and not what ‘we’ want as

parents.

It is their life and their own choice, after all.

We need to learn to Let Go! As I once heard from a wise man, “At this

point in our adult children’s life, we have to change the gears and

become our children’s’ mentors, coaches and their advisers.

I say if they’re old enough to get married, they’re old enough to make

 their own decisions with our gentle guidance.

 **WhatsApp Blast:**

Every month or so, send out to ONLY people you are close to (close friends and family) a WhatsApp profile and photo with a short introduction that says “Please would you be so kind to think for one minute and have my child in mind if you may know of any suitable possible candidate.” I know of quite a few Shidduchim that eventuated because the mother of a single would send this gentle reminder out once a month. She said it was so well worth the effort!

**Reminder:**

 As a Shadchan, I highly recommend to all my clients, to be proactive, and send me a one-word text once a week, that says ‘available’. I will think for a few minutes when their text pops up, who I may possibly have for them! It is just one word once a week and can totally make that difference of a Shadchan noticing and acting upon it. (As a shadchan we cannot call and chase up 100s of people on our database).

**Role Model:**

Your child is looking up to you, reading your body language, in the way you react to anything regarding Shidduchim. Especially when a Shidduch doesn’t turn out the way we expected it to, or when yet again we get declined (‘not shayich’) and have to start the search all over again.

 Let us try to remember to be sympathetic and acknowledge our child’s feelings and not brush them aside saying, “Big deal, you didn’t lose anything anyway”, but rather feel ‘with’ them, mirror their feelings, and recognize their pain.

We, as parents, have the privilege to empower our children with embracing Hashem’s will. We need to role model to our children a pure Emunah, a real sense of Bitochon, that whatever Hashem does is for good, instilling in them the faith needed to keep going.

 **First Impressions:**

You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

When getting ready for a date, we can bring to our child’s attention to be dressed the finest that they can look. Our responsibility is to provide them with that special outfit and makeup, hairdo, etc. and make sure they are polished up to the max they possibly can. Not to be someone else but be the best they can be.”

Embrace:

“That is really practical and helpful Toby. Can you now share with us what the singles can do to prepare themselves for dating?”

**Toby:**

**Forgiveness:**

Think if perhaps in the past, someone in Shidduchim may have been offended. The Rebbe says to think hard and if there’s a slight chance that someone may have had their feelings hurt, that one should apologise, to clear this possible blockage.

**Friends and Family:**

They all have good intentions. However, it is essential to pay attention to the person being suggested to you without ‘filters’ and advice from everyone who has either dated that person or says they know them well. Please be ‘melamed zchus’ and give everyone a fair chance “if” this suggestion qualifies your 5 majors.

Too many Shidduchim are lost and not given the benefit of the doubt by random friends that judge too freely. Let one or two people do the research seriously.

**Dress Code:**

Your dress code represents you. Look your best. Clean, organized, presentable outfits make a difference.

Allow enough time before a date to relax and make an effort to look the best you possibly can. “You never get a second chance to make a first impression!

**Open-minded:**

Think ‘out of the box’ to allow possibilities that weren’t suggested before. Sometimes we get carried away by stereotypes that have been ‘programmed’ in our minds since we were youngsters, yet we didn’t allow change of thinking to happen, to think broader, more open-minded, as we mature and shape who we are today. Allow the possibility to listen intently to what is being suggested to you without dismissing it right away. Allow yourself to be ‘surprised’.

**The Gemorrah Says:**

If one prays for another person, that which he himself needs, then Hashem will listen to his prayers first. Pray for and try suggesting ideas of possible candidates for your friends as well. I suggest taking this a step further, and when possible, to help a friend physically and emotionally when they are preparing for their own engagement or wedding.

**Tehilim and Tzedakah:**

A great spiritual investment for their Neshoma. It is recommended to do some extra spiritual so that the 2 Neshomos can recognize each other. Before Shma every day to meditate and ask Hashem to help you find your Zivug easily.

 Embrace:

“How can we distinguish what is an acceptable ‘weakness’ and what is not an acceptable ‘weakness’?

 **Toby:**

 “This is exactly what we do when I have a Dating Coach session. Together with the single, we come up with a strong set of core values that I call THE 5 MAJORS. It is a guide to help us filter and recognize what those main qualities are that speak to us ‘most’, thereby becoming our guide, our compass, knowing what our deal breakers are.

So, when a ‘weakness’ appears, we always check in with our golden list of 5 major qualities. In other words, knowing what our major non-negotiables are, allows us the safety and security that we can now recognize the weakness as they appear”.

That’s where I come into the picture. I have a particular method that I use to help ‘break down’ what it is that they are REALLY looking for, and by the end of a session the client has gained tremendous confidence, insights into themselves and more clarity in what they’re looking for.

This young 24-year-old girl discovered by the end of a session of coaching that she has created an unrealistic list of too many requirements that the boy must meet for him to fully qualify. So, she would be dating forever looking for Mr Perfect with all the requirements and qualifications that she wants not just in one man, but she would need several husbands to fulfil that list of requirements!

By the time we finished the session, she confidently walked away with a list of **5 non-negotiables** and was extremely happy if she was able to now find a person that had just those top 5 qualities! It made her realise that the rest can be negotiable and liveable and weren’t after all, ‘deal breakers.”

Embrace:

“Amazing Toby, so do you find that these singles get engaged pretty soon after having a coaching session and clarifying, and identifying where their “blind spots” were?”

Toby:

They are now aware of how they can be more authentic with themselves and with their expectations. Many idealistic singles have no training or preparation from anyone to hold their hand and guide them through the dating process. With a bit of coaching and support that I provide, one can date with more confidence and assurance that they can now go out there and find the right Zivug, that they really need and want, hopefully really soon.”

Embrace:

“Thank you for your time answering our questions and the amazing service to all those that need you.”

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