

Trick Or Treat – Is This Make–Believe Or The Real Thing?

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By Toni Coleman, LCSW

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"I'll call you this week". "Yes, I'd love to see you again". "I had a great time". "I'm not interested in dating anyone else". "I think I'm falling in love with you."

These are a few of the phrases passed between singles as they move through the stages of meeting and dating. At the time, they are uttered with what feels like true emotion and honesty. No wonder the person they are directed to is so confused when the call never comes, the person becomes unavailable, or it soon becomes evident that the speaker is dating or deeply involved with someone else. Can we ever believe what we see or hear? How can we be sure?

Dating is a process of getting to know someone. It begins with an attraction, which is formed by that first impression. Often, this first meeting occurs by chance at a social gathering, at work or in the course of one's daily life. More and more, it happens through a response to a personal ad and the emailing and phone calls that follow. Both in–person and email or voice contact give us a sense of the other individual– but this is only a brief snapshot of who they may be. It takes real time together to create a larger and clearer picture of this other person and their rightness or wrongness for us. During this time we assess for friendship, attraction, shared interests and values, and a willingness and ability on the part of both individuals to move forward in a relationship.

Given that this is a process, it has stages. A first date helps the couple to learn more. It is a fact–finding experience, which involves not only the information the other provides, but our feelings and reactions to it and to them as a potential partner. We show our best selves and attempt to make an appropriate connection with someone we find desirable. In the best scenario, everything clicks for both people and conversation is natural and easy. More often, there may be questions, doubts, and/or mixed feelings. Seeing each other again is often suggested by one or both people and is a good way to learn more about each other and resolve any questions. But the doubts and negative feelings go unstated in a desire to either give the other person a chance or to let them down easily. It's also an easy way out for someone who is uncomfortable with this level of emotional honesty.

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So, how do we know what the other person is truly feeling? You have several options for getting this information.

* You take them at their word and wait to see if they follow through with what they have said they would do. Nothing speaks louder than behavior. This option is the most common choice and can leave you in that all too familiar holding and wondering pattern.

* You attempt to address the situation openly and candidly. This one requires a bit of courage and an ability to be vulnerable. State how you are feeling in a thoughtful but honest way. Ask them to do the same for you. Let them know that you want to hear their honest thoughts about how the date went and if they would like to get together again.

* The third option should be used regardless of what you do with the other two. Pay attention to their non–verbal communication. How do they look at you? What quiet responses do you get after you have shared something about yourself? What do you see in their facial reaction, posture and eyes? Do you FEEL interest or just politeness? Are they really WITH you, or somewhere else? If you learn to listen to the non–verbal language, you will HEAR much more than what their words have to say.

Listening to the whole person applies throughout the stages of dating and relationships. It is also important during this time to pay attention to their behavior and note inconsistencies or mixed messages. Too often people don't and are stunned when a relationship "suddenly" ends or they find out they are seeing someone who was not the person they thought they were. Trust your instincts and listen "with a third ear".

Remember also that the responsibility for honesty is also on you. Don't say what you think the other person wants to hear because you don't want to be impolite or hurt their feelings. If you really think about it, it is more hurtful and in poor taste to be dishonest with someone who has a true interest and is trying to learn yours.

Toni Coleman is a licensed therapist and relationship coach. She specializes in working with singles that want to create lasting, intimate relationships. Toni has over 20 years of post–masters experience in relationship counseling and coaching with singles and couples. She has written numerous email classes for singles on all aspects of meeting, dating and relating. She is the author of the email newsletter, The Art of Intimacy, which goes out to thousands of subscribers monthly.

Tips For Fun–Filled Trick–Or–Treating For Your Kids

By Susanne Myers

What's a child's favorite part of Halloween? Going trick–or–treating, of course. What could be more fun than dressing up, and then walking from door to door collecting plenty of candy along the way? Best of all, this fun tradition takes place at night. Make this the most fun trick–or–treating experience for your child with these simple tips.

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Location, Location, Location

Pick a good neighborhood with plenty of people who are prepared for and welcome trick–or–treaters. If you are new in the area, talk to other parents in your neighborhood about where to go trick–or–treating. Usually neighborhoods or subdivisions that decorate a lot are a good choice as well.

Chaperone

You may be tempted to send older children out on their own to Trick–or–Treat, but unless you know everyone on the street they are walking on, and have them go in a group, it's just not a safe option. Instead, send at least one adult along with them. Having an adult will make sure the trick–or–treating stays a fun experience for your children.

Trick–or–Treat in a Group

Kids have even more fun trick–or–treating if they get to run around in a group. Get a few families in the neighborhood together, or ask the cousins over to go trick–or–treating with you and your kids. Just make sure you bring several adults, especially if the kids are young, to keep up with everyone.

Don't Overdo It

Start early, right at or even before dusk and don't overdo the trick–or–treating. How long you end up trick–or–treating will of course depend on the age of your children. Just keep an eye on how they are doing and take them home when they start getting tired. The whole evening will be more memorable if you end it on a good note.

By implementing these tips, you and your kids will have a great time Trick–Or–Treating this year.

Would you like to quickly make creative Halloween costumes that you and your children will be proud of — for a fraction of the price of store–bought? Susanne Myers has co–authored a book to show you how — no sewing involved. Visit

to learn more.

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