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School for singles

By JOSHUA HAMERMAN
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The 'Dating with a Difference' course helps women take control of their relationships.

Sometimes single women, while successful in other areas of their lives, can unknowingly make certain mistakes in the dating realm. To help women understand what they can do differently, relationship and marriage therapist Micki Lavin-Pell and dating coach Linda Bezalely are teaching a six-week course entitled "Dating with a Difference." A free lecture about the program will be held on June 22 at 8 p.m. at the Kehillat Yedidya synagogue (12 Rehov Lifshitz in Baka).

Lavin-Pell originally developed the course for seminary students but found they did not have enough dating or life experience to absorb the information and put the lessons into practice. She then retooled it.

"This course is for mature women who are professionals and are quite self-assured and have really been dating and out in the world," says Lavin-Pell. "They have identified that they might be successful in some areas but, for some, reason are getting stuck in dating and haven't identified what point they're getting stuck on."

The course explores attraction, dating history, relationship needs, communication, relationship roles and other concepts. Dating with a Difference is recommended for women between the ages of 25 and 45, though some participants in the previous session were in their 50s.

"Many women feel that 'If only the right man was around, I'd be married.' But a lot of the work I've done with women is to help them see where they can take control of their dating lives," says Lavin-Pell. "I have them go inside themselves and see what changes they can make to attract the right kind of men and keep the relationships going."

The course runs from June 29 to August 3 and will be taught in English. Lavin-Pell and Bezalely are also working on procuring a partner who can teach future classes in Hebrew.

Each class lasts three hours and is held at Kehillat Yedidya. This is the second session of the program; the first was taught from October through December.

Not all women who want to sign up are accepted. “There is work involved – it’s not like you pay money and get this magic potion,” says Lavin-Pell, who also serves as director of singles programming for the International Young Israel Movement. “It requires introspection, openness, honesty, hopefulness and intelligence. They have to be open enough to know that no one has all the answers and they might need help to find what they’re looking for.”

Lavin-Pell’s role as a marriage and family therapist has helped inspire her to help singles.

“With so many of the couples I work with who have been married a long time, they say, ‘If only I’d known certain things about myself when I was younger or if only I knew how to communicate or do other things, then my relationship would be different today,’” she says.

Last week, one of the women who participated in the first session of Dating with a Difference announced her engagement.

“We’ve been in touch with all the participants, and they said it has changed their lives,” says Lavin-Pell. “They are much more in control of their dating lives and don’t feel they are at the whims of other people.”

Lavin-Pell and Bezalely are also developing a Dating with a Difference course for men, which will be offered in October.

The fee for Dating with a Difference, which includes one coaching session before and after the program, is NIS 1,500. The cost is NIS 1,350 if you sign up before June 22. For more information, call Lavin-Pell at 052-528-2757 or Bezalely at 052-636-3424 or e-mail info@datingwithadifference.org.

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