

THE LOVE COACH

Relationship Expert JANET O'NEAL takes the finest ideals of the 60s and blends them with 90s reality

a profile by RON KAYE

It was 1970, and the San Francisco Bay area still swayed to the rhythms of the "Summer of Love". Locals debated the virtues of wines from nearby Napa Valley and a place called "Boone's Farm" as they gathered around the ironing-board tables at "The Drinking Gourd". We collectively fell in love with the sweet, clear voice of a pretty young lady named Bonnie Raitt. And Leopold's, an old mansion-cum-record store deep in the heart of Berkeley, had every album ever made. The sixties were chronologically over, but you'd never convince anyone here. To them, the decade wasn't dying, but changing and being reborn.

To those who clung to each note of the siren song of the decade just passed, it was a time of near-desperation, of mourning broken strings of beads and wilted flowers. Yet for so many others, it was a time for the birth of dreams. **JANET O'NEAL** was just such a dreamer.

The Bay Area had long been looked upon as a harbinger of new trends. Before neon spandex and designer waters had burst upon the nation's consciousness, Janet was co-owner of the Golden Venus Health Spas which dotted "The City". Along with her partner, author Dr. Bob Schwartz (presently of *Diets Don't Work* and *The One Hour Orgasm* fame), she transformed the business into a flourishing operation, cutting her professional teeth and honing her business instincts to razor sharpness.

As the seventies passed (some say quite ungraciously) into the eighties, an altogether new consciousness began to arise. Paisley shirts and aging VW beetles were supplanted by power ties and BMW's. O'Neal migrated to Houston, Texas, where she co-founded a main-frame computer brokering firm. It was here that she proved her business prowess, by greatly improving the company's bottom line, and doubling their line of financing in only one year. The company continues to thrive to this day.

For Janet O'Neal, however, a passionate consciousness, dormant for a decade, continued to burn. She had seen the hunger in the eyes of hundreds of clients at her health clubs. She felt the elusive element so obviously missing from the lives of her associates in the decade of success and excess. The eighties had delivered affluence and power to a generation, but frequently at the cost of happy personal lives. A multitude of lonely movers and

shakers, possessing significant disposable income, was, as the song said, "Looking for love in all the wrong places." It was thus that Janet O'Neal, recognizing the trend which would soon sweep the nation, founded the video dating service, Friend Connection.

O'Neal owned and ran the video dating service for more than ten years, blending her polished business acumen and her personal priorities into a thriving concern which benefited all parties (a unique concept in the '80's!), and went on to become the largest independent video dating service in the country. During the course of business, she had occasion to interview thousands of individuals and couples, learning their hopes and fears, cheering with them as they shared their tales of success, and empathizing with them as they vented their frustrations. After over a decade of acting as CEO, counselor, mother confessor, and friend, she needed a break. Locating a buyer for the thriving business proved to be no problem, and with the stroke of a pen, Janet stepped into the fast lane of the management consulting industry (What do you do to relieve stress?!).

Her interest in helping people succeed in their personal relationships would not be denied for long, however, and in January of 1995, she began work creating a tape series titled *Secrets To Finding Real Love With The Right Person*. This series combines the fruits of O'Neal's ten-plus years of experience in the relationship business with her unique ability to engage the listener in warm, trusting dialogue.

The series is based upon what O'Neal claims are the six crucial principles of finding and developing an ideal relationship, with each tape devoted to a single principle. The principles are:

1. **Conceiving.** This tape is about knowing what you want and need, not just within the framework of a relationship, but at the very deepest levels. Along with the lecture, O'Neal guides the listener through several exercises aimed at helping them determine *exactly* what their individual needs are. By sharing the results of thousands of interviews, she helps listeners realize that their needs are not all that weird, and helps them suspend judgment as to the "correctness" of those needs.

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2. **Contentment.** In this tape, Janet gently guides men and women in effective ways to assure that their own needs, and the needs of their partner, are met. She explains how your success at meeting your own and your partner's needs determines the ultimate success or failure of the relationship. According to O'Neal, the woman determines the level of happiness in a relationship! Before you get up on your high horse of indignation, answer one question: Have you *ever* known a man who was blissfully happy, living with a woman who wasn't? I rest my case.
3. **Connecting.** This tape effectively highlights the difference between game-playing and establishing a meaningful link with another person, and helps you spot those "red flags" of potential problems early on in the relationship, before you've invested too much energy to escape without pain. I really wish that I (*and my ex-wife*) had heard this tape many years ago. We could *both* have been spared a great deal of pain.
4. **Chemistry.** Here, Janet unblushingly describes the difference between a platonic relationship and a romantic one: sex! Though highly informative, this is one tape that is best listened to with someone you love. Pour a glass of wine, dim the lights, and let it rip! If you can make it through the entire tape without any snuggling (or groping), you have far better self control than I.
5. **Conviction.** No, this isn't about listening to tape four with the baby-sitter! This tape takes you through the perilous and frightening process of deciding whether you and your new love are compatible. O'Neal effectively wipes away the illusions borne of hopes and lust, to help you really see what potential exists in your relationship. I believe that couples considering marriage or any form of long-term commitment should be *required* to listen to this tape and pass a comprehensive test on its contents before being issued a license or being allowed to cohabit. The inevitable result would be a decrease in the profitability of public posturing about family values!
6. **Commitment.** AARRGGHH! The big "C"! Having gone through the process of listening to, thinking about, and discussing the information on the other tapes, you begin to perceive commitment as a natural state, not a terrifying sacrifice. This tape helps you decide whether you (and your partner) are really ready to pledge yourself to each other. My perspective, after listening to this tape, is that *nobody* is incapable of or unwilling to make a commitment. Some people are simply deeply committed to things they might not be aware of.

The tape series includes a workbook full of valuable exercises for those of you who are anal-retentive enough to require a testament to your having done this powerful inner work. I realize that a workshop just isn't a workshop without some form of written assignments, but I'll forgive O'Neal her acquiescence to form, because her total product is so damn good!

Rumor has it that Janet O'Neal has completed a companion book to this tape series. If it is *half* as informative and engaging as her tape series, I won't even wait for a review copy. I'll actually *buy* the thing! (Note to all those friends and ex-friends who have lent me books: 1. You can't have your books back yet. I'm not finished, or I haven't fixed the leg on my coffee table, and the book is just the right thickness. 2. *This* book, you can't borrow. But if you're nice enough and of the right persuasion, gender-wise, you can come over and we'll listen to tape four together.)

I have been frequently accused of living in a time warp that prevents me from acknowledging any date after December 31, 1969. It's not the truth. I rejoice in the advances humanity has made in the last quarter century. I do continue, however, to cling to the more noble aspects of human consciousness which arose during that tumultuous decade. I still believe in the concept of universal love, even if it doesn't show its face very often. I still feel a longing for the relaxed sense of intimacy we touched back then (and I don't mean the "if it moves, make love to it" attitude. I mean real intimacy. Caring about your brothers and sisters, and sharing what you felt.).

I'm not even too noble to admit the desire to be prosperous. That's why I love a story of someone who has carried those ideals into a materialistic world and kept them intact. Janet's is just such a story. She's a powerful woman, whose "summer of love" has never passed into autumn. Far Out! 

Janet O'Neal's audio tape series, *Secrets to Finding Real Love With the Right Person*, and her book, *Cracking the Love Code: Six Proven Principles for Finding Real Love With the Right Person*, are both available.

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