

## Just Breath - He's coming!

We've all heard the term "waiting to exhale." That's when a woman figuratively holds her breath until the right guy comes along. Problem is, holding your breath creates two problems: first you suffocate. Then you die.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but waiting to exhale doesn't sound like a good idea, physically or figuratively. Holding one's breath in anticipation focuses you on the anticipated, but the best thing about holding one's breath is *releasing* it and gaining relief. After all, you're preventing your body (or emotions) from functioning normally. Holding your breath isn't meant to be done for extended periods of time.

But girls, isn't that what we do to ourselves? We hold our breath in anticipation of a man and forget that to function normally, we *have* to keep breathing. We have to keep on living. Life does not consist of *just* that one significant, intimate life-long relationship of marriage. Not that I'm downplaying the importance of the institution and the emotional security and joy found in it, but if we're looking to it as the answer to all our problems and the fulfillment of all our desires, we're seriously mistaken. If we hedge all our bets on finding Mr. Right to the point we're not making the best decisions for our lives and careers (because *what if* they don't jive with *him* when he does come along?), we're in for years of disappointment.

Not every woman is waiting to exhale. Ruth says she's never felt happier or more peaceful than when she gave up waiting for Mr. Right (notice I didn't say gave up on *meeting* him; she just gave up *anticipating* him). It wasn't easy and in fact took years, but since then she's enjoyed life more. And if Mr. Right finally does come along, great! But she's not basing her life on an event which may never happen. She's too busy breathing deeply of life. On the other hand, Michelle is waiting to exhale as she jumps from one relationship to the next. I lost count of how many boyfriends and fiancés she's had over the years. She hasn't discovered the secret to being content *alone*. She's suffocating.

It's a physiological fact that deep breathing helps slow down your heart rate and relax the muscles – it's a stress reliever. Of course, we all know prolonged lack of oxygen causes brain damage, but did you know holding your breath causes blood vessels constrict in your arms and legs (cold hands – always nice to feel) and CO<sub>2</sub> levels to increase which trigger defense mechanisms, a.k.a. fight or flight?

Can you imagine the emotional defense mechanisms which are triggered by waiting to exhale? Some of us don't have to imagine them. With live with them every day we continue to hold our breathe. No wonder we have problems with relationships. This constant state of tension is wearing us down. We're slowing suffocating. We're slowly dying.

So let's exhale. Let's breathe. Let's live.