



Heart & soul

Cate Mackenzie, our resident love coach, helps readers open their hearts to relationships they never thought possible

From mate to date

Cate Mackenzie reveals how to move out of the friend zone for good

Crossing the great divide from friendship to relationship is an enormous emotional leap, and the thought of it can often leave us in a state of paralysis. Sometimes we feel so frozen we wait for years to say something, only to find out that they felt the same for a long time but have now moved on with someone else.

When I was a teenager, I had a dear friend, Jack. He was my soulmate. We shared a kiss but it didn't go any further. When I went to study in Manchester and he went to Cardiff, we stayed in touch as friends. Somehow, I had built him up as such an important person in my mind that I couldn't tell him how I felt. I was scared of losing him if I did say anything. It was terribly painful, and I was really caught up in wanting to please him and hoping he would

notice me as a potential girlfriend. One year, I happened to be close to a bomb that went off in Manchester and that experience gave me the urgency to express myself. I rang him and I asked him if he wanted to meet me and get together. I asked him what he thought and he said, 'I don't know.' For two days afterwards, I felt like a helium balloon that had just been burst, but it was the beginning of an important journey. It took some time, but I had my romantic dreams back, and they were no longer focused on him. I still know him and love him as an old friend but I realise now that he would not have suited me.

Once I started to let go of him and the dream I had about us being together, I started on my journey to becoming a love coach, running my workshops and teaching all over the world. So I suppose what I'm saying is that it's worth the risk finding out whether something can go further – because if it doesn't,

you will gain more of yourself and your energy.

And sometimes it can really work out. Two dear friends of mine, Trina and Bob, met 10 years ago through a mutual friend in London and ended up being friends for over a year, hanging out and going to the theatre and the cinema. He was 15 years older than her, and was divorced with children, and he was shocked when she suggested they became romantic. He really liked her but wasn't sure about the age gap, but he agreed to give it a go – and they married three years later and are still very happy together.

So if you want to turn a friend into a lover, here are some tips:

- ♥ **In the mornings, give yourself a grounding routine** to help you feel open and ready to love. Studies have shown that when we feel more present we are more able to take risks. You could read a page of a book on opening your heart each day, such as *Soul Love* by Sanaya Roman (£12.50, H. J. Kramer), or *Opening Your Heart* by Anne Jones (£10.99,

Pratkus), which will help you trust in love again. Then sit for five minutes gently stroking your heart area.

- ♥ **Find another friend to be your anchor.** Ask if you can text them before and after asking the person out, so that you know you have some support. Talk to them beforehand and practise saying to them what you want to say when asking your mate out.

- ♥ **Make a list of fun things you can do on your own.** Do this before you ask your mate out, and again afterwards. Dating can be scary, and it's good to give yourself treats to help you feel calm. I used to have massages or go to a spa to relax before certain dates.

- ♥ **When you're asking the person out, try to do it when you feel calm and present.** Approach it in these three stages:

- ♥ I appreciate...
- ♥ I'm wondering...
- ♥ I would like...

For example, you could say:

I appreciate that we're friends/colleagues/neighbours and that you may not realise that I think you are great.

I'm wondering whether you might like me too.

I would love to take you out for a drink sometime.



'I appreciate you as a friend, but...'

'... are you thinking what I'm thinking?'

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? Cate Mackenzie is a love coach and couples counsellor with more than 20 years' experience. For more information about her work, visit catemackenzie.com