

# SUMMER LOVING

THE ARCHETYPAL WARM-WEATHER FLING: EMBRACE THE JOY, LET GO OF EXPECTATIONS

BY LAILA ELISE

**A**h, the magical season of summer, when the days stretch longer, temperatures soar higher, and even the most tightly wound among us feel finally able to unwind. Amid this sun-kissed ambiance, the air thick with love and nostalgia, the stage is set for summer flings, romantic escapades, and butterflies in the stomach. But are all of us equipped to handle the highs and lows of a summer romance? Here are a few quick tips from relationship experts on whether or not a summer fling might be worth considering.

**Check in with your heart before determining your adventure level.** Just like having one too many glasses of wine, while on vacation and removed from our regular routines and environments, we tend to lower our inhibitions and become more open to experimentation. This can include pushing personal and sexual boundaries, as well as engaging in more adventurous activities. This experience can be exhilarating for those who are emo-

tionally stable and in a positive head space. It allows us to explore and gain insight into our own identities and desires. However, if we are in a vulnerable or unstable emotional state (perhaps due to a painful recent breakup or major life change), the situation becomes more complex. Certain conditions can impair our judgment and hinder our ability to listen to our own needs and instincts, and we might end up doing something we regret or aren't currently equipped to emotionally process. That's why, during the early blooms of your budding summer fling, it's necessary to take a step back and ruminate on what you are capable of at the present moment. The answer, of course, will be different for everyone.

**Set realistic expectations.** Randi Gunther, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and author of *Rediscovering Love*, explained that, in some ways, a summer fling (or other short-term romance) can start off just like any other type of relationship in that we won't know what the outcome will be until we jump in

and get to know the person better. In the beginning stages, posing questions to ourselves like, "Am I strong enough to endure disappointments if it doesn't work out?" and, "Am I capable of loving and moving on if the other person is ready to end the relationship before I am?" are healthy places to start in order to keep our expectations realistic moving forward (Dr. Gunther noted this exercise is helpful for any type of new relationship).

**Be honest and open with your communication.** Lastly, experts across the board generally agree that open communication and honesty are crucial throughout a summer fling. While it might be tempting to mask your intentions (for fear of "scaring off" a potential match, for instance), it is more important for both parties to communicate their hopes and expectations for the relationship. This can help to mitigate future misunderstandings and emotional distress, and to ensure you and your summer partner know where the other stands. **■**