

Are You Dating a Soonicorn? And If So, Should You Dump Them?

SMART INVESTMENTS SPAN TO DATING, TOO



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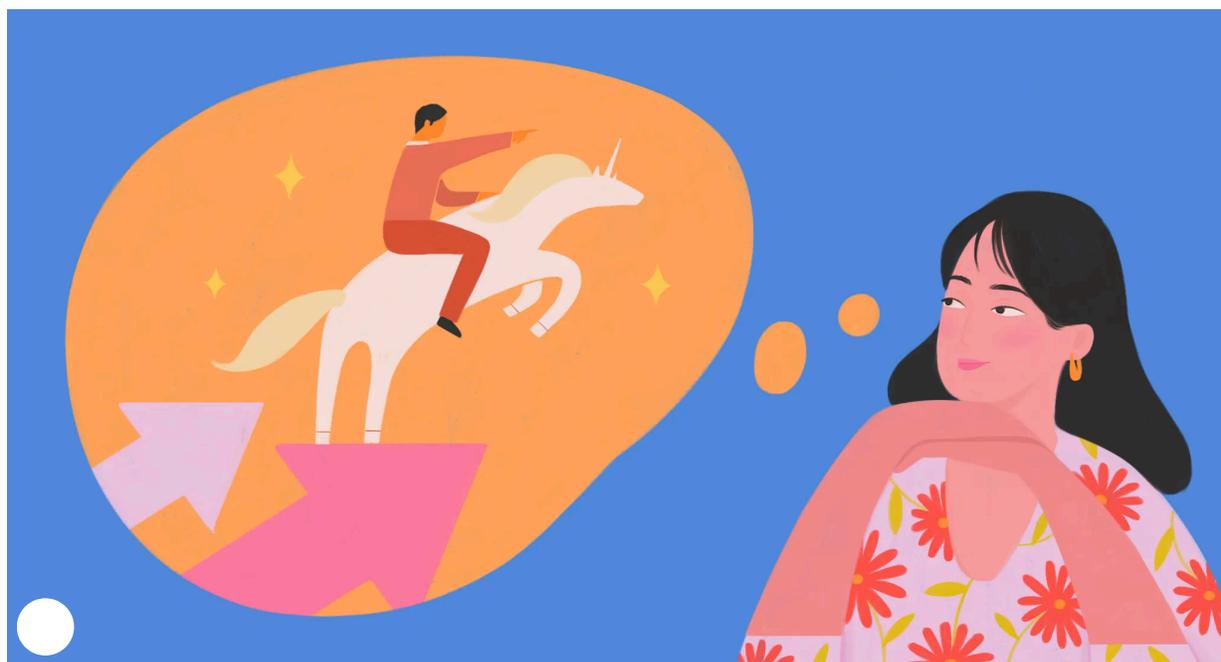


IMAGE BY DASHA BUROBINA

Break-ups are rarely regarded as a baby step towards marriage. Yet, in my parents' case it was. They met when they were 21 at a bar on the Upper East Side called "Spanky's," and one week later, my Mom was picking up my Dad (who had his license suspended at the time) from his childhood home on Long Island. Needless to say, the timing wasn't great—they broke up about four months after that.

My parents see-sawed like this for about a decade. They'd get back together for a few months, only to break up at Stardust diner (I can't make this stuff up). It wasn't until they reached the ripe old age of 28 that they finally tied the knot. And by now, you're probably wondering, *what was the point?* Why go through the sad songs, bad haircuts and sh*tty first dates with people you know you're not meant to be with?

Since my Dad is a Wall Street bro—and in New York, time is money—the answer can be traced back to a term I've plucked from the finance world: He was a "soonicorn."

What is a Soonicorn?

In the realm of venture capitalism and startups, a "unicorn" typically refers to a privately held company that's achieved a valuation of one billion dollars or more. It's often used to describe a firm that's experienced rapid growth—and is considered to be highly valuable in the eyes of investors. That said, a "soonicorn," is an offshoot of the term, used to

illustrate a company that's very close to achieving unicorn status. It denotes the expectation or anticipation that a company will *soon* reach the one billion dollar mark, based on its current growth trajectory, market potential and other promising factors.

What Does a 'Soonicorn' Look Like in Dating?

Let's use my parents as an example (sorry, Dad). When he was 21, he was fresh out of college, bursting with ambition and eager to make a name for himself on the floor of the NYMEX. In reality, however, he was living in a studio downtown that had a shower next to the kitchen sink. Let's just say Mom had dreamt of a more, uh, established Prince Charming as a girl. Nevertheless, the chemistry was undeniable—and she could see that his work ethic wouldn't keep him on Ludlow street forever. It was only a matter of time before he'd reach his full potential (or so she told herself).

Mind you, this was in the late 80s. Yet, decades later, I'm still seeing the dynamic on repeat with my twenty-something friends. They meet a guy who makes butterflies feel like a state of being. The conversation is amazing, the connection is palpable, and the dreams of two kids and a white picket fence *finally* seem feasible. But then, something happens. The guy doesn't text for a week—he doesn't have enough on his debit card to foot the bill—or his apartment looks like it's been extracted from his frat house at Ohio State. Suddenly, the reality of the relationship starts to trump its promise.

In that sense, **I think of a soonicorn as anyone who's not ready for a relationship, despite the fact that they have tons of potential.** They're funny and warm and you feel like you can be yourself when you're with them, but much to your dismay, it's too soon for a commitment. Whether it's their financial situation, emotional unavailability or an ex-beau they're not ready to let go of, this person isn't in a place where they can give you what you want.

What to do about this? Mom and Dad had the right idea when they hit the diner. While there was no question of whether they were compatible, poor timing seemed to act like a boomerang that would inevitably take a toll on the relationship. As it turns out, you can't force a soonicorn to turn into a unicorn—it's something that has to happen naturally with growth and maturity.

And while some people are out here dating golden retriever boyfriends who are eager to please and emotionally available, others are stuck circling the block with a black cat boyfriend—charming, mysterious, and just elusive enough to keep you wondering if he's really meant to be yours. Spoiler: He might be, but just not yet.

Still, this doesn't mean that a promising connection is necessarily doomed to fail. The best thing you can do is take a page out of Warren Buffett's book by doing something called **value investing**.

What to Do if You're Dating a Soonicorn?

According to Investopedia, "Value investing is best for [anyone who's] looking to hold their securities long-term. If you're investing in value companies, it may take years (or longer) for their businesses to scale. Value investing focuses on the big picture and often attempts to approach investing with a gradual growth mindset."

In terms of dating, however, "big picture" is the operative phrase here. If you feel you've found someone who *could* make a great partner down the line (not to be confused with

someone who's stringing you along), it's best to let them go for the time being. Value investing is all about playing the long game—and since there's no guarantee that your soonicorn will live up to their potential, you'd be wise to broaden your portfolio in the meantime. (Translation: go on other dates).

To that end, prioritizing yourself is the key to keeping this dynamic afloat. Instead of holding on to your soonicorn like Lenny from *Of Mice and Men*, give the pup a chance to reach his potential on his own. While waiting around for your 'soon' to become a 'uni' might *feel* like the right play, it's actually an act of sacrificing what you want (which can border on martyrdom if you're not careful). If this person is as worth it as you think they are, they'll want an equal partner when the time is right.

The TL;DR? If you stick around and agree to "keeping it casual" while secretly hoping for more, that's the impression your soonicorn will be left with. They won't remember your connection when you first met and they won't applaud your loyalty while they figure things out. More often than not, they'll wish that you took some time to reach unicorn status for yourself, too.

After all, if a connection is meant for you, it'll find you. (And at the very least, you'll have a great story to tell your kids one day.)

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