

Suzie's DIY dating guide

Searching for love led Suzie Wilks to write a book

Snuggled up to her pet dogs Junior and Lilli in her warm, inviting Melbourne house, Suzie Wilks seems to have it all – an enviable TV career, cover-girl looks, close family, good friends, financial security and a beautiful home.

Yet the former *Changing Rooms* favourite sadly admits there are two voids in her life – the loss of her adored mother Ann and the lack of a loving partner.

SINGLE IN THE CITY

'I'm looking for a relationship that I'm deeply connected to,' confides smart, successful Suzie, 38, who now hosts the Victorian edition of Nine Network lifestyle series *Postcards*.

So the glamorous, enterprising star has put her thoughts about relationships to paper. With her good friend, PR whiz Deborah Gray, Suzie has turned author to write a witty, commonsense dating guide called *RUEA? Are You Emotionally Available?*.

'I don't just want someone to take out the garbage and pay the mortgage while I do the cooking!' she continues. 'For me it's about meeting someone I truly love, ▶



'She was my best friend, who taught me everything I know,' says Suzie of her late mum Ann (above). The TV-star-turned-author shares her life with her furry friends Lilli, 10, and Junior, six (right).



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Suzie has always kept her private life precisely that, so it's surprising to see a heartfelt dedication to her ex-boyfriend Ben Cooper included in *RUEA?*.

'He's a beautiful man and we're wonderful friends,' she says. 'We were together for about four years and certainly...' She hesitates. 'My work did interfere with that.'

CHANGING PRIORITIES

At the height of her fame – having hosted six different prime-time programs out of Sydney – Suzie walked away from yet another three-year contract with the Nine Network and moved back to her home town of Melbourne.

She wanted to spend more time with friends and family, especially her mum. 'She was my best friend, who taught me everything I know,' Suzie says.

So it was all the more devastating when 67-year-old Ann was felled by a sudden brain haemorrhage only six months later, on Good Friday in 2005.

For a long time afterwards, Suzie was too emotionally bruised to cope with a relationship.

'You can be unready, or the timing isn't right,' she says. 'You can find yourself single for all sorts of reasons. But you have to be proactive. There's nothing wrong with saying: "I'd love to meet someone and have a great relationship." Be proud of it.'



and who wants to share life with me. It's not about the house and the suburb. It's about nurturing and growth. I'm not looking for a Porsche or a Ferrari. I'm looking for heart and substance and depth.'

But that, as too many singles have discovered, can be hard to find, and romance is doubly difficult when you're seen as a celebrity.

'When you work in TV I think people can have a picture of you that's not accurate,' she laughs.

HOME GIRL

A DIY tomboy who made shorts and T-shirts sexy on shows such as *Changing Rooms*, *Our House* and *Renovation Rescue*, down-to-

earth Suzie says: 'I prefer my jeans to red-carpet events.'

She dreams of one day living in the country, keeps in shape walking her dogs, loves spaghetti bolognese as much as fine dining and lists cookies-and-cream ice-cream as a guilty pleasure.


'I'm a bit of a homebody,' Suzie says. 'I love being with friends and family, and being in love, although I've been single for a year.'

Which brings us onto her new venture with Deborah.

'We'd had lengthy discussions on the subject, so the idea came from there,' she smiles. 'I've been single and in long relationships and

'I know I will meet my life partner. I just know it'

That's pretty much where Suzie is now, right down to a special RUEA? ring she wears, signalling her availability.

'I'm enjoying going on dates again. This is the best time of my life,' she says. 'I know I will meet my life partner. I just know it. There's no way I'm not going to fall in love again!' 

• RUEA? Are You Emotionally Available? (Blue Angel Publishing, \$22.95) is available from bookshops or from www.ruea.com.au. The RUEA ring (see picture at left) is also available from the website.

By Jenny Brown
Pictures: Lisa Saad

Suzie has written her dating guide *RUEA?* with friend Deborah Gray. 'I've been single and in long relationships and Deb's been married three times, so our book covers all the bases!' she says.