

Yes, no or perhaps ... The dynamics of a date

by Dr Victoria Lukats MBBS MRCPsych MSc

There are 15 million single people in the UK, many of them looking for the love of their life. You'd think there really must be someone for everyone.

But meeting new people can be hard work and it can take a number of dates before you meet someone who could be right for you.

Making your own luck

You might be lucky enough to bump into your potential partner by chance, but most of us will need to be a little more active in our search. You could start off by being a little more open and receptive when meeting new people in your daily life (even if they are not on your radar as potential partners). It might mean making more effort to socialise or even, to coin a cliché, taking up a new hobby. Nowadays, of course, the internet offers new options and online dating has become part of everyday life.

'Thanks, but no thanks'

However you choose to meet new people, the dating process has its ups and downs and at some point most of us have to deal with rejection.

The thought of rejection might not even occur to us until a first date approaches – or even until the moment we get the brush-off. If you sense a real connection and some potential for a relationship, then it makes sense that the other person should be feeling it too. To some extent this is true, but dates often end up with one person being keener than the other for a variety of reasons. If this happens, one person will probably end up giving the brush-off if they are not really interested.

Basic instincts

We can make the situation less painful by being as honest as possible with ourselves and by learning to truly trust our instincts. During any emotional interaction our feelings give us vital clues as to what is going on at a deeper level. For instance, if you feel surprisingly anxious or uneasy, then this should tell you something. It's important to tap into your experience of the way you normally react to other people. This allows you to distinguish between a) emotions that grow from your typical response to others and b) emotions that result from the feelings projected unconsciously onto you by the other person. With practice, we can learn to rely on what our instincts are telling us and really understand how well we are getting on with someone.

The best intentions

Confusion can sometimes arise from the social rules of dating. For example, at the end of a date hardly anyone would say: 'Thanks for the date ... but I don't think you'll be hearing from me again'. We generally want to be polite and spare the other person's feelings. But if promises such as 'Let's do it again soon' or 'I'll call you' don't materialise, the result can be feelings of rejection – even if the person being let down was not really bothered in the first place.

Making it work for you

If you're the one who has been let down, it is vitally important to stay positive. You should banish any self-destructive and demoralising thoughts ... 'This always happens to me', or 'No-one ever wants a relationship

with me' are sweeping generalisations. It's far healthier for you to examine your instincts and ask yourself if you truly *did* feel that vital two-way excitement, attraction and spark. Replace those over-generalisations with something more *rational*: 'These things happen to everyone sometimes. At least I know I'm getting out there and meeting people.'

And if, at the end of a first date, you're saying goodbye, not really sure if you want to see the other person again, why not try saying 'Thank you for a lovely evening' and leaving it that. It's polite and you won't run the risk of letting the other person down. After all, if the other person is really listening to their instincts, then the chances are that they probably feel the same.

Do you have any questions that you would like to see discussed in future editions of the PARSHIP newsletter? Then contact Dr Lukats at drlukats@parship.co.uk.*

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If you want to meet the love of your life, visit www.parship.co.uk and take PARSHIP's free compatibility profiling test.

*Any reader questions that appear in the PARSHIP.co.uk newsletter will do so anonymously. Unfortunately, PARSHIP.co.uk and Dr Victoria Lukats cannot enter into personal correspondence on relationship issues raised by readers.

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