

2020

THE IT'S JUST LUNCH
GUIDE TO DATING



Chapter 2
Where to Begin

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WHERE TO BEGIN

With your new positive outlook on dating, a rough idea of what you'd like in a partner, and confidence beaming all over your face, you're ready to take matters into your own hands and venture out to find Mr. or Ms. Right.

So where do you start looking?

Here's what we tell all of our clients: Try everything out and see which option works best for you. Take every opportunity... you never know where it could lead. Try everything! By saying YES to all dating opportunities, it gives you the chance to experience all different types of people and see characteristics you really connect with and find important, and those you don't. Either way, how do you really know unless you try! Each approach to dating has its pros and cons, and we'll take a look at those a little later in this chapter. For the most part, it's vital to just get out there and start exploring your options.



With that in mind, here are four ways you can improve your dating odds no matter where you go:

Be proactive.

Most people know exactly what they want out of their careers and have a clearly defined set of goals. But when it comes to finding a partner, it's often left to chance - and face it, you'd never wait around for your dream job- you'd work towards it with intention! If you really want to find that special someone, make dating as important as your career.

The first step is to tell everyone you know that you're available and interested in meeting someone. Tell your friends, your co-workers, your hairdresser and the neighbors. Get the word out. Don't make a big deal of it, just casually let them know you're on the lookout for eligible singles to date, so if they happen to know someone who you might hit it off with... you get the idea!

If you keep it a secret, chances are you'll be home alone most weekends, so don't be shy, and drop the occasional hint. How else is the world supposed to know?

Be open.

The best advice we can give you (aside from joining It's Just Lunch, of course) is to be open to meeting someone everywhere you go. There are lots of opportunities throughout your regular day to meet your future partner. You just need to have your radar turned on. Think about it. You could meet him or her over your morning latte; on the train heading to work; while standing in line for a caesar salad, cruising through the produce aisle, at the dry cleaners or the gym.

Interesting people are all around us, but we're all so consumed with our busy lives that we rarely take the time to look up from our phones. We hear countless stories of people that meet their match in an elevator, the grocery store, or the metro. So start today! Put your phone down. Notice your surroundings and the people within them. Here's what will make the biggest difference and allow serendipity to do its thing: being aware, keeping a friendly smile on your face and not being afraid to say hello once in a while. After all, staring down with headphones in your ears doesn't send off the signal that you're open to love... it sends the message that you want to be left alone.

Widen your scope.

Don't limit your options by thinking someone is not right for you, is beneath or above you, or isn't your usual type. That high-powered corporate attorney who helped negotiate your company's last acquisition might be longing to go out with someone who is creative and free spirited — you! Don't get turned off because of occupation, income, height, number of children, fitness level, hair color, hobbies, musical tastes, shyness, bold-ness or whatever. Right now you're just looking for dates — and like job opportunities or taxis — when one appears, a whole slew of others seem to follow. Try not to focus on the ultimate goal, but think more about putting your dating skills into practice and having some fun.

Create a ripple effect.

Do you know why it's smart to talk to anyone, anywhere, even if that person doesn't seem to be your type? Well, if you throw a pebble into the dating pool, it can have a significant ripple effect that is sure to benefit you.

A 30-year-old female friend of ours recently met a 60-year-old



woman at an art exhibition. Even though the older woman was twice her age, the two found they had many things in common, especially their taste in art. The woman later introduced our friend to her nephew and they've been out several times since. Having a genuine interest in getting to know new people and keeping an open mind while you're networking might end up being more valuable than you think. You just never know who that person might introduce you to in the future. Similarly, if you meet someone you like, but you don't feel a love connection, why not offer to set him or her up with a friend?

Never turn down a party invitation or an opportunity to expand your network of friends and potential dates. Seek like-minded people who can introduce you to colleagues of a similar quality. Expanding your network will ensure a life rich with opportunity and happy times.

You Gotta Have Friends

Your friends are your number-one resource for finding a mate. Use them. However, don't rely solely on them. After all, it's much harder to tell your mutual friend why you're not interested in pursuing a relationship with their match than it is to tell a professional matchmaker. Dating within your circle can have awkward moments if the two of you don't connect.

Co-Workers

Just like your friends, co-workers are a great resource for finding possible dates. There are downsides, however. If you and your date end up falling out, or one of you breaks the other's heart, your co-worker could find themselves in an awkward position. The best solution is to try to keep the friendship, dating and work issues separate.

Expand Your Possibilities

A circle is exactly that — a circle! And often we get stuck inside our own. There's nothing wrong with that — after all, it's great to have people in your life who you know you can depend on. It's great to have a routine. But that circle can shrink.

While getting fixed up by friends and co-workers is a traditional approach to finding your soul mate, stepping outside of your comfort zone and trying some new dating avenues expands your possibilities and increases your confidence ten-fold.

In *The Artist's Way*, creativity coach Julia Cameron states that she often sees synchronicity in the lives of her clients. When they develop a strong commitment to bringing their dreams to life, events around them start to fall into alignment with that vision. Little coincidences take place and lead them toward their true path. For example, a writer meets a producer at a party the day after he finishes his screenplay, or a personal trainer finds a studio for lease the day after she decides to go solo and start her own business.

This happens in love too. It has a lot to do with your intention. The moment you become open and accessible to meeting new people, miraculously, potential dates begin to materialize all over the place, often when you least expect it. Your circle expands.

This happens regularly to our clients, the moment they take action and join It's Just Lunch. One client, Lisa, went on three dates through our service. Each time we sent her to the same restaurant because it was close to her office and she really loved the atmosphere and food.

Although she enjoyed all three dates, there wasn't a strong love



connection and she was happy to continue meeting a few more guys. At the end of her third date, after the man left and she was waiting for the valet to bring her car, Lisa started chatting with the restaurant manager, Brad. Each time Lisa had visited the restaurant previously, Brad, who found her attractive, had his eye on her. Because It's Just Lunch coordinators call and make lunch reservations, we become very familiar with many restaurant staffers, who usually take special care of our clients. Obviously, Brad knew Lisa was open to dating. When he saw his opportunity to ask her out for lunch, she was extremely flattered and agreed to go.

Of course, you know how this is going to end, right? Lisa and Brad fell in love and recently were married. Lisa says that just getting out there and being open to dating caused Brad to show up in her life. After all, if she hadn't been on an It's Just Lunch date, she never would have met her husband.

Every time you get out of the house and meet someone new, it sets off a domino effect that generates new opportunities.

Let's take a look at some non-traditional methods of dating:

Internet Dating

It doesn't matter if you're having a bad hair day, if you live far outside the city, or if there's three feet of snow outside your window — finding a date now is possible in a 24/7, instant-gratification moment through a slew of online dating services, chat rooms, and even social networking sites.

This approach to finding a date can be thoroughly enjoyable as long as you don't set your expectations too high. Let's face it, you can't really tell what people are like until you meet them in person — no matter how recent they say their photo is.

The Pros and Cons of Internet Dating

The Pros: It's immediate and convenient. It's cheap! You get to know basic information about your dates before you meet them in person. You have access to thousands of people and can narrow your search by criteria. You can learn to speak of and describe yourself kindly which reinforces a positive self image.

The Cons: The biggest con is also one of the most appealing parts of online dating. You can be anybody you want to be and so can he or she. Studies mentioned in The Wall Street Journal state that, "30% of online dating site visitors are married and countless others misrepresent themselves." Not exactly what you signed up for, huh? You'll find more than your fair share of untruths online, so don't believe everything you read or see.

Many Internet dating junkies are not interested in real relationships. Navigating through Web sites and wading through hundreds of profiles can be very time consuming. Also, safety is a big concern. Without a screening process, you haven't the faintest idea who you might be meeting for coffee.

Yes, it's a shot in the dark, so be prepared for some disappointments (you get what you pay for, right?). On the upside, your odds are about the same as meeting your ideal mate in a bar, and you don't even have to put on a clean shirt. The best part of cyberdating is that you get to practice your flirting skills. You also get first-hand experience with your cyberdate's ability to string together sentences.

Here are a few basics to keep you safe and informed when meeting new people via the Internet:



DOS AND DON'TS OF ONLINE DATING

DO be honest. You're going to have to meet in person one day (or at least you hope to), so tell the truth early rather than having to face an awkward conversation later.

DON'T reveal too much about yourself until you become better acquainted.

DON'T use your last name or give out your personal information until you've known the person for a while.

DO dial *67 before dialing their phone number. It will block your phone number and name from appearing on a recipient's Caller ID unit so that your address cannot be tracked.

DO get a separate email account that does not give away your real name — some email providers allow you to create multiple addresses or names for free.

DO post an up-to-date photo, and ask if their photo is recent. Many aren't.

DON'T spend too much time emailing before talking on the phone or meeting in person. Nothing can replace face-to-face chemistry. Better to find out if you have any before you get too involved.

DON'T jump too quickly into sexy talk; it may send the wrong message.

DO meet in a public place. Tell a friend where you are meeting and when to expect you home.

DO make every word count. Keep your descriptions light hearted, to the point, and add a little teaser.

DO expect a flood of emails. Longtime users will jump at the opportunity to meet someone new.

DON'T be ambiguous. Be clear about what you want, your goals and desires.

Speed Dating

This is definitely not for the shy types, or those who take a little time to warm up. Speed dating is like horse racing: The bell rings and you're off! The pressure is on to be the best that you can be in six minutes or fewer. Still, if you want the opportunity to meet a dozen singles in one night, you can do just that.

First, you register online for an event in your city. Most are held at local clubs and restaurants. Once there, you get a nametag and a worksheet. You then chat with about a dozen other singles in less than two hours via a series of six-minute "speed dates." At the end of the six minutes, a bell rings and you move on to your next date.

You keep track of who you'd like to get to know better, and they do the same on their worksheets. At evening's end, you turn in your worksheet, and if there's a match, the organization sends an email to both of you with each other's contact info so you can arrange your "first" date. After that it's up to you. Phew.

Matchmaking Services

These services run the gamut, with some offering events, singles' nights and seminars while others provide introductions, video dating, and matchmaking services. Some focus on fixing up singles who are interested in sports. Others cater to specific religious groups. It's important to note that the newer and more niche a service is, the more likely it is that it will have a smaller dating pool.

When choosing a service, there are a few things to consider to ensure you don't get ripped off or unwittingly sign up with a fly-by-night service.



Stick with busy, reputable services, and be sure to ask the following questions:

How many years have they been around?

How successful are the matchmakers?

How do they define success?

How does the company advertise and attract new clients?

How are clients screened and interviewed?

Are people available for questions you might have?

How responsive are they?

What are their demographics?

How many dates are you guaranteed and over what period of time?

Do both men and women pay?

If I meet someone I am interested in dating, can I put my contract on hold?

How do clients get matched up?

Do they tell you the price over the phone or do they make you come in to find out?

We can tell you all about the workings of one very successful dating service: It's Just Lunch.

Yeah, yeah, so we're a little biased on this one. Who can blame us? With a success rate of millions of first dates and tens of thousands of marriages, we've definitely got something to brag about.

Here's why we're so successful: Everyone has to eat. So why not consider a matchmaker who schedules brunch or lunch dates for you? Instead of popping out for a sandwich, you can use your time wisely and have a very productive and entertaining lunch.

What makes us unique is that It's Just Lunch does all of the work

for you — and we even make the reservation! All of the people you meet will be busy professionals who want to meet singles outside of their office, client list or usual circle of friends. Our roster includes doctors, architects, journalists, engineers, lawyers, TV producers, management consultants, writers, teachers, business owners, advertising execs — and that's just for starters. The best part is that they all have the same objective as you: finding someone special.

This is how it works. First, you schedule a confidential interview with us. This interview enables us to carefully discern what it is you look for in a potential partner. We talk about what has worked for you in the past (and what hasn't) and what your interests are. We'll know by the end of the hour if we have what you are looking for. If so, the fun begins!

After your date has been hand-selected by us, we will give you a call and tell you all about the person we've chosen. We don't give out last names, phone numbers or places of employment. Once the two of you give us your schedules, we choose a convenient restaurant and set up a lunch date. Sometimes it's a weekend brunch, sometimes a drink after work but never, ever dinner. It's a first date that's short and sweet, which you'll enjoy at one of the many fun, hip eateries on our preferred restaurant list.

Taking this light-hearted approach helps reduce nerves and anxiety so you can relax and enjoy the time together. What more could you ask for?

After the date, we encourage you to call in and provide feedback so we can learn more about what you like and dislike. This helps us fine-tune the matching process. When you connect with that special someone, we allow you to put your membership on hold



to explore the relationship.

Singles Events

When most people think of dating, they think of singles events and singles bars. To find some in your city, check social media or try an online search of gatherings in your area. You can find events in all types of venues from museums and theaters to bars and clubs. The best approach is to go as a non-member and check out the event before committing to a membership.

Networking Events

While it isn't smart to date someone where you work, there are plenty of opportunities to meet a mate at work-related events. Most cities have a bevy of options when it comes to places to connect with professionals. Not only do you have the opportunity to meet people and expand your professional network, but you may also expand your social circles. The more opportunities you have to meet new people, the greater chance of meeting your match! Again, dating is a numbers game and this is simply another way to meet new, interesting, like-minded people... the type of people you may easily relate to.