

Q and A: Meeting New People in the Big City

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Dear Dr. Estrin,

I am a 27 year old, attractive, professional woman who recently moved to Vancouver from Winnipeg. Is it just me, or is it incredibly difficult to meet eligible men in Vancouver? I've done the club scene and out of desperation even tried Internet dating, but so far I've had very little luck. Is there anything you could suggest?

Lonely Heart

Dear Lonely Heart,

Most lonely, eligible people are astounded to learn that there are thousands of other lonely eligible people out there (everyone thinks they're in the minority). So you're certainly not alone. Here are three possible reasons why you might be having difficulty meeting the right guy.

Reason number one is that the Lower Mainland lacks the easy congeniality of Prairie towns like Winnipeg. Many newcomers complain that Vancouver can be a difficult place to break into socially, much less find a partner. The solution is to be proactive, focusing not just on finding your soulmate, but by getting involved in established social networks. For example: join a fitness club (which has the added benefit of helping you look and feel good), take part in some form of team sports (a great way of meeting new people), or if religion was ever a part of your life, become active at your local place of worship. When it comes to finding meaningful relationships, clubs or bars are a great way to meet the wrong kind of partner. As for the Internet, it works for some, but you usually have to kiss a lot of frogs before you meet your prince.

Reason number two is that you are not in school. Apart from providing an education, universities and colleges play important role in helping young people find mates because they allow you to meet literally thousands of people in your age group with similar interests. The workforce by contrast, can be isolating because it is far too easy to fraternize with the same ten people (i.e., your coworkers) all year – and don't get me started about why it's a bad idea to date a coworker.

The solution? Try signing up for a course at your local college or university. If you choose a topic that interests you, you may meet new friends with similar interests (it's also easier to make conversation if you have something in common). If school's not your thing, try volunteering – and choose something that really interests you so you stand a better chance of meeting kindred spirits. For a comprehensive listing of volunteer opportunities, go to: www.volunteervancouver.ca.

Reason number three is that for many people, their daily routine can itself be isolating. Avoid sitting in front of the TV every evening after work. Internet chatrooms can be entertaining, but they usually don't lead to long-term relationships. Try challenging yourself to be more social: attend (almost) every party to which you are invited, host a party yourself by inviting 5 people (and ask each guest to invite two more people), join a singles group (one that plans dances, hikes, trips, etc.), or, if you have the time and energy to be a responsible pet owner, get a dog. Dog parks are a terrific way to make new friends (for humans too). The take home message? Take chances, form all kinds of relationships (not just romantic). The more connected you are socially, the greater the likelihood that you will find your match.

Have a relationship question you would like answered in this column? Send your questions to: drestrin@shaw.ca. Dr. Terry Estrin is a Registered Psychologist with offices in Richmond and Vancouver.

Disclaimer: the content of this column and Dr. Estrin's responses to reader mail are meant to be advice only, and in no way constitute a professional relationship.