

Announcer

Welcome to the Dating and Relationship show with Laura Bilotta. From singleinthecity.ca on Global News Radio 640 Toronto.

Laura

Good evening, everyone. Thanks for joining me tonight for this week's Dating and Relationship Show on Global News Radio 640 Toronto. I'm your host, Laura Bilotta, dating and relationship expert and founder of singleinthecity.ca joined by my lovely co-host, TV personality and philanthropist Joan Kelley Walker. Hi, Joan.

Joan

Hi, Laura!

Laura

How's it goin'?

Joan

Excellent! How are you doin'?

Laura

I'm good! Well I feel a little under the weather, I can't lie--I should (laughs). And some family members have COVID, so that's not a good thing. But we're--and I don't, I got tested, so I don't have COVID. But you know, I am still feeling a little under the weather. It's funny, as soon as you feel anything, you're like COVID. So--

Joan

Yeah, gotta just look after yourself and stay home and, you know, drink lots of water and just have a bath and just do everything to prop yourself up.

Laura

And that's what I'm doing. Now, tonight, we're going to be giving you an extra dose of dating advice as we're joined by our guest: Ariella Serur. She's the queer dating coach from queerdatingcoach.com. Ariella is all about transforming the dating pool into one we enthusiastically want to jump into and tonight we'll be chatting about the queer dating journey, making dating fun again, and exploring non-monogamy. Thanks for joining us tonight, Ariella.

Ariella

I'm so, so happy to be here. Thanks for having me.

Laura

And just quickly, where are you calling us from?

Ariella

I'm calling from New York City.

Laura

Yayyy! New Yorker!

Ariella

Yep. (laughs)

Joan

So, Ariella, you've built your coaching career around a few...I want to say refreshing things like enjoying the ride, finding your personal worth while dating--and we could do a whole show on that. And also helping the LGBTQIA folks through different stages of their dating journeys? So can you talk about what has your journey been like? And when did you know that helping other people through date coaching was what you wanted to do?

Ariella

Yeah, for sure. So I have always loved dating. It's something that scared me initially, but in the past couple years, especially I have just dated a lot, and I just really love the process. So I have been helping people off the books for a long time, and it's, it's kinda like the thing where after you come out of the closet, a lot of folks have the experience of reflecting on their childhood and being like, "Wow, I was really gay all along! Like I was such a gay kid." Why do I remember the first time I heard the word lesbian or things like that. And for me, I had a really similar experience with dating coaching. It's like, I've actually been doing this all along. I would talk about dating in professional contexts. And I'd help people roleplay about asking someone out and things like that. So, now in the past year or so I'm actually making it something that more people have access to me to do for them, because I'm really just totally, totally enjoying it.

Laura

And from one dating coach to another, I love the feeling of knowing that I help someone through my work, whether that means finding someone love or helping them to love themselves along the way and some of the things--uh, let's say that I help people with in my coaching practice is offering personalized support and inspiration in areas like re-entering the dating

world, and helping them navigate this new foreign dating landscape anywhere from online profile-writing to utilizing their time effectively on dating apps to messaging people how--I mean how to ask people out on dates, suggesting tools to help people regain their confidence, dating etiquette, various advice on what to do in certain situations that they may find themselves in currently, like dealing with a person displaying hot and cold behavior, for example.

Ariella

Mhmm.

Laura

These are just some of the things that I help people with. So, as a queer dating coach, there are many things that come up that pertain to the queer dating experience that you try to help people navigate, like the idea of relationship dynamics, when it's--when it isn't heteronormative, things like who takes charge in the relationship? Especially when you're first beginning to explore them. What do you think is the best way for someone who is struggling to find their identity or place in a relationship, um, to get more comfortable? And what advice do you offer in the area of dating advice?

Ariella

Yeah, so first of all, you were spot on--a lot of what we're navigating that winds up being different from traditional dating advice does have to do with heteronormativity and navigating the world without heteronormativity as the standard. So by that, I mean, typical gender roles of the man leading, the woman following, the woman being better at speaking, the man being better at doing--all this kind of stuff that we're kind of taught both literally, that's what our parents speak out loud to us and that's what is being mirrored in the media and whatnot in the world around us. And--

Laura

Who pays for that date? Right? Who pays for the date?

Ariella

Who pays for the date, exactly, exactly. So, this is all--and even in heteronormative dynamics, even if you're not operating with it, if the woman decides to pay, like we all know, what we're doing in relation to this heteronormative dynamic. So when that's off the table, we're left without a script, and we have to figure out what to do. So that's where my coaching is different than traditional dating coaching, but along the lines of what you said, I also help people with initiation, using dating apps and whatnot. So

this heteronormative piece is really a difference. So...my biggest advice around this is really to explore. Because when we're not dealing with heteronormative dynamics, everything becomes a playground where we get to step into these different identities and see what feels good for us. And there's a lot of power to be found there. And I found particularly--I used to date men, I no longer date men, and now I'm dating women and trans folks--and in this, in this place of dating women and trans folks where things aren't prescribed and these gender roles aren't prescribed, I'm finding a lot of power going off script. I'm finding a lot of power exploring what it is that makes me feel good and when it feels good to take the lead in certain ways that society has kind of taught us is taboo. Does that make sense?

Laura

Kinda.

Joan

No, totally. You know, I love what you said earlier about the fact that you loved dating. You know, I remember that--I've been married to a man for twenty-one years now so, you know, I feel like that was a long time ago, but a lot of people really have a lot of fear in dating, and I think that's because there's no one-size-fits-all relationship? And I'm sure you've experienced this quite a bit as you see relationships that fall out of, you know, the quote traditional heteronormative sort. How important do you think it is to be open to new relationships or partners who might not fit the type that you're used to?

Ariella

Yeah, well first I wanna say that people, a lot of people hate dating. People really think dating sucks, which is a huge part of the--

Laura

I think dating sucks.

Ariella

(laughs)

Joan

Really? I used to love dating--

Laura

Yes, oh my goodness.

Joan

--it was so exciting and it was like a chess game, like, you know, a strategy and it was just--

Laura

No!!!

Joan

No?

Laura

Okay, so when did you date? Twenty years ago? Twenty-five years ago?

Joan

Well, yeah this was twenty years ago, at least.

Laura

Things have changed...okay? And you don't want to get into the dating game today. Trust me. So make sure you make it work with Don, alright? (laughs)

Joan

(laughing) Okay.

Laura

It's not the same dating landscape as it was--it, I find it sucks, personally, but go ahead, please, keep going how--

Ariella

I just think it's interesting--people hate it for a whole different host of reasons. Yes, sometimes it's because the, there is more of a traditional relationship style that they need to get into. But, often I feel like people hate it because either the stakes feel too high or they're not--they feel like they're not finding what they're looking for which...we can get into that later, but I think it's, I think it's important to know what it is that you're looking for, if you're looking for partnership, to know what it is that you want to feel when you're with someone. And to allow a lot of the other things that come into play, like what the person does, how tall they are, what they look like and whatnot, to really be a question mark, and allow yourself to be surprised by the package that whatever the feeling is, might come in. So that's the main thing and one of the keys, I think, to enjoying dating, is to allow the stakes to be low, and really to be surprised by how someone

might make you feel who isn't necessarily what you had pictured for yourself.

Laura

Right, and you can always learn something new from every single person that you're sitting across.

Ariella

Yeah!

Laura

And I get that, but I personally don't enjoy dating. And I know that I'm not alone.

Ariella

Mhmm.

Laura

I don't like the disappointment that comes with a bad date or feeling like I'm...I don't know, like wasting both my time and someone else's, if that spark isn't there? Like I, I feel like I know instantly, almost--not instantly, like I'll give them a chance. But I know within like five or ten minutes if this is gonna go anywhere. And then I just feel like my time is being wasted and I would rather be somewhere else.

Ariella

Yeah.

Laura

But I'm such a kind person that I just don't know how to tell them--like I'm not very good with confrontation myself. I don't believe in ghosting, and, you know--

Ariella

Same.

Laura

--just disappearing or running, you know, pretending to go to the bathroom and then running away or anything like that.

Ariella

(laughing) Of course.

Laura

You just never do that. But, for me it's like, okay, I just can't wait until that hour's--cause usually I have like a one hour rule: you go in--

Ariella

Yeah.

Laura

--it's like with that one hour mindset--once that hour is done, you know, you just let them know "Hey, listen, I only have an hour today"--you let them know in the beginning, so whether you like them or not.

Joan

How about just being honest? Just tell them.

Laura

Because I don't want to hurt their feelings!

Ariella

(laughs)

Joan

Yeah, but you know, I think people appreciate...someone who's frank.

Laura

I know, but I'll tell them later, I don't tell them like in front of their face. I just don't.

Joan

Yeah.

Laura

I just don't like being mean--I've never been able to do that. So...

Ariella

I think it's really interesting what you're saying here, because on the one hand, you think there's always something to learn from the person sitting across from you. And then on the other hand, it kind of feels like this is a waste of time, because, you know somehow that this person isn't meant for you--

Laura

I know, I know, I'm messed up that way. (laughs)

Ariella

No, you're not messed up! You're perfect, and so many people fall into this. I think it's just a matter of kind of adjusting the volume dials a little bit, which is what I do in my coachings with folks, too, because people are like, "Yes, I know, people are amazing. And yet, I feel like my time is being wasted." And I think that you're spot on with giving yourself a time limit and that's something I talk to my folks about as well. But I think it's, it's almost slowing down the process of going from curiosity and knowing this person has something to give you all the way into judgment of I know this person isn't, you know, MY person or whatever I'm looking for, in this.

Laura

Well, especially if you date a lot, you know, and you feel like your time is being wasted? Because you are a busy person?

Ariella

Yeah.

Laura

I mean, that's where it gets difficult, right?

Ariella

Totally.

Joan

I also think you have to qualify them more beforehand. Like, you know, we've got FaceTime and all those things now, so you--

Laura

Well that's what's happening now.

Joan

Yeah, yeah, you have to do that before you actually sit in front of them-- before you can actually make that in person judgment. I think you need to do more of the backend qualifying.

Laura

I totally agree. And that's uh, that's what I do tell my clients and I'm gonna to let you guys know what else I tell my clients, and I want to also hear from Ariella when we come back on the Dating and Relationship Show, we're gonna continue this fun and exciting conversation, we'll be back.
(music plays)

Announcer

Now back to the Dating and Relationship Show with Laura Bilotta, from singleinthecity.ca, on Global News Radio 640 Toronto. (music fades)

Laura

And we're back on the Dating and Relationships Show on Global News Radio 640, Toronto with myself, Laura Bilotta, and Joan Kelley Walker. We've been chatting with Ariella Serur, the queer dating coach, about some of the experiences that come up during non-heteronormative relationships and what we can learn from them for future relationships. And, before the break, I guess we were talking about being on dates and how some of us feel like they can be a waste of time. Although I am a dating coach, and sometimes I do feel like, you know, bad dates are a waste of time, I do coach my clients to have a different mindset. And, um...I know that doesn't sound right, right? But (laughs)--but I do try to remain positive. I mean, like and what Joan said: try to qualify people before you go on these dates, which I have been doing. So I have been going on a lot less dates, I've been doing a lot more video chatting, which is so important. It's a great way to qualify someone before you actually meet them in person. But, what I tell my clients is to be aware of the small talk that goes on during and after the date. It's so easy to get into that mindset of you know, you know, "I'll never meet someone and why do my dates never go well?" So instead of letting that self talk get in the way of your thinking, try to stop it in its tracks. So stop panicking, that you're never going to find the one and then focus on what you want to achieve. Okay, so the date didn't go well. Well, it's not the end of the world and there are a lot more fish in the sea. So try to remain positive because good things tend to happen to positive people. It's the law of attraction and tell yourself "it's not your time. You just haven't met the right one yet." And this is the mindset that I have. So although I do go on some dates sometimes and I feel like "Ah, okay" you know, and then I feel deflated a little bit--I get down that maybe that evening, but then I turn around and go "Okay, you know what, it's not the end of the world. It's not my time, the right person's still out there and I stay positive and that's what keeps going. And I know that one day I will meet the right person for me.

Joan

Mm. So, Ariella, just further to that--how do you think we can move to a better mindset when it comes to dating?

Ariella

Yeah, so this is something that I talk about with clients a lot and I think what you're saying Laura, too, is spot on with remaining positive and whatnot. Something that I find is interesting is to--and this comes a bit from non-monogamy, is what I call in quotes "cushioning the hard part." So if you're someone who is going on dates and after every date you're getting really disappointed because they're not what you're looking for, or it doesn't go well. First of all, if you're a catch, which I'm sure if you've worked on yourself you are, the chances of you--of every date feeling like a home run are pretty low. Like, it's gonna take someone who's quite amazing to actually make you feel good and to actually feel like a hit. So, more often than not, I'm not expecting the people I'm going on dates with to actually be up to what I'm looking for, or to have the communication skills that I'm looking for in someone else. So--so that being said, "Cushioning The Hard Part" is something that we can do when we're gonna do something scary or big, or we might feel disappointed after--I use it also when talking about asking people out. You can do something nice for yourself, not only after the date after you're disappointed, but do something nice for yourself before the date. So, what this could look like is going for a walk or taking a nice bath or getting your favorite chocolate bar. And this is stuff that sometimes I will brainstorm with clients in sessions to figure out how can you--how can you tell your body and your mind that yes, what you're about to do might be scary, might be hard, might not have the result that you're looking for, but it's okay to keep doing it and I'm gonna treat you kindly before and after the thing, so that we can keep doing the thing. Does that make sense?

Laura

I love that, and I tend to work out. I do that before every date, I work out. It makes me feel better about myself and it gives me that confidence--

Ariella

Yeah!

Laura

--boost that I need before I go into the date.

Ariella

I think that's great.

Joan

I think it's good, too to have something else social right away afterwards. "Oh, sorry. You know what, I only had an hour because I have to go meet some girlfriends or you know, something?"

Laura

Love that.

Ariella

Totally, totally something to lift your spirits, for sure. Leaning on community is really important.

Joan

Talk about it, and you just feel better!

Ariella

Yep. For sure.

Joan

Yeah. Yeah. So sharing. Um, so growing up, you know, we're often faced with stereotypes. And this is something that the queer community deals with all the time, even the stereotypes that we're taught when we're children, that women are supposed to be more emotional, and men should have a tougher, more sexualized mindset. That all comes into play when we start dating. So how do stereotypes come into play when it comes to dating? Do you think that they're affecting relationships?

Ariella

For sure, and--and for the queer community, you know, we're a little--we're a little bit exempt from this a little bit. It is--I think stereotypes come more into play when dealing with heteronormative dating dynamics. And even Esther Perel talks about the feminization of intimacy, which means women are socialized to talk well, where men are socialized to DO. And I think that that's all kind of backwards and arbitrary, but I do--I definitely see in the dating world around me, you know, even what we were saying before with gender roles as far as men being the ones that usually pay, and women are the ones that keep the conversation flowing and whatnot. I think stereotypes are all over the place. And we need to do the work to undo some of those.

Laura

Well, I don't know who these people are dating cause I, every time I go on a date, I can't shut the guy up. (laughs)

Joan
(laughs)

Laura
It's like, can you shut up for a minute?

Joan
It's a competition! (laughing)

Ariella
Wow, interesting, yeah.

Laura
I always tend to attract guys--this is funny, because I tend to--I tend to draw on the guys that don't talk as much. Um, because I like to be the one that talks a little more. But I'm, I tend to attract the ones that just talk over talk.

Ariella
Wow.

Joan
Well also, when people are nervous sometimes they talk--

Laura
No, no, no! Even like, when I, you know, things have, have progressed into second, third, fourth, fifth dates, I find that they still continue to talk that much, and sometimes it's like--

Joan
Huh.

Laura
--okay, they take over the conversation all the time. It's like, Why do I keep attracting this type? (laughs)

Ariella
Yeah, they need to ask you more questions, for sure.

Laura
(laughing)

Joan

Wow. So, Ariella? Are there stereotypes in the queer community? And what would they be?

Ariella

There are stereotypes in general, but honestly, in my coaching practice, this isn't something that I'm seeing too much pop up. I think it's more stereotypes when it comes to society's standards and society's standards of what's hot and what's not and people feeling self-conscious if they don't fit the particular image that, essentially, capitalism has profited off of like--

Joan

Mmm.

Ariella

That's what I see, people measuring themselves against something bigger than themselves, which can be stereotypical. But as far as the queer community itself, I'm-- I'm not, I'm not seeing too much of that, to be honest.

Laura

I want to talk about non-traditional relationships now. So you're a big believer in the non-monogamous relationship.

Ariella

Yeah.

Laura

Which I'm not. So, I'm curious to hear from you.

Ariella

(laughing)

Laura

So, what types--unless you want, that unless two parties want that, that's fine. So what types of relationships do you typically see when it comes to this? And, based on your experience, um, what are the important things to think about when it comes to giving this a try?

Ariella

Okay, well first of all, I want to say: the ONLY time where I'm a big believer in non-monogamy is when both people DO want it--

Laura

Exactly what I said, yeah.

Ariella

I am not a believer in anyone cheating or whatnot, like, non-monogamy is-- it's usually called ethical non-monogamy and abbreviated ENM. So--so all of this that i'm saying is with both people clearly on the same page about it. So, I'll say that first off. The reason why I'm such a big believer in non-monogamy is not necessarily because I'm--I think people need to have sex outside of their relationship or need to have partners outside of their relationship. But the pillars of non-monogamy make for a very strong relationship. So, what that means is that you need to be able to have really difficult conversations with your partner, you need to be really transparent about what it is that you desire. And then you build the relationship from the ground up. There's an organization called Curious Fox, who I'm a big, I'm a big supporter of their work. And they talk about relationship by design, and how both people really need to build what it is that they want to build together talking about it, instead of falling into traditional patterns and doing what maybe they saw their parents do that either did or didn't work. But both people really bringing to the table, hey, this is what I want to be in a relationship, this is what I want it to look like, is what I'm hoping to gain here. And like let's see how we can make this work for the both of us.

Laura

They're all mine, I don't want to share with anybody!

Ariella

Oh, as far as other people?

Laura

Yeah!

Ariella

Yeah, that's okay! That's cool. And I--if you're forthcoming with that information, then you know, don't worry about what I'm saying.

Laura

(laughing) Okay. Oh, yeah, we've talked about this--we've talked about that on the show extensively, yes. So I understand--

Ariella

About wanting your person to be all you?

Laura

Yeah, no, no, no! That there--there are people that are interested in having sex with, with a bunch of people rather than just with one partner, and that's okay. There's no judgment here. Anything goes--it's whatever works for the two of you. I-- no judgment.

Ariella

For sure, for sure. But I will say though, even in monogamous relationships, and this--I'm not sure how familiar or if you've talked about Esther Perel's work on the radio show before but, she talks about acknowledging the presence of a third and understanding the reality of the situation that it's highly unlikely that even in a monogamous couple, that neither person will EVER be attracted to another human being. And allowing that conversation to be a conversation--not that it needs to be acted upon. But removing the taboo that like, yes, I'm in this, I love you, maybe we're married, whatever? Allowing the reality of the situation--I'm a human who might be attracted to other things that are in my line of vision--to be something that's talked about within the partnership, I think is more important than non-monogamy. Just allowing, removing the taboo, that we might be attracted to other people in our long life together.

Laura

I agree with that, but I can see there being a huge problem if there's a breakdown in communication, or if someone is unconfident to actually be really honest and open about where there's feelings.

Ariella

Yeah, for sure, for sure. Communication is the most important, the most important.

Laura

If someone is in a, in a non-monogamous relationship, how do you make sure that you're really sensitive to being honest to your own feelings, and to that of your partner? And what if you sense that one of you isn't really being forthcoming with your thoughts and feelings?

Ariella

Well, I would be tempted to turn the question back on you for any monogamous relationship as well, right? So it's like, how do we in general, whether other people are in the picture or not, stay really in touch with our own feelings, and stay generous with what we're giving to our partners and what they're asking for, and what happens when we feel like there's a breakdown in communication. It's all the same. It's just that the topic of

conversation can be shifted slightly when we're no longer afraid of certain taboos about relationships. So when it comes to non-monogamy in particular, I think what's really important is, is obviously establishing healthy communication, knowing how to talk to each other in ways that don't encourage each other to get defensive. And my last partner, when we were non-monogamous, we would have meetings. Like, we would have full on relationship meetings that we would schedule in, we would talk about how it's going.

Laura

Meetings?

Ariella

Yeah! Relationship meetings.

Laura

Like, what, every Friday at eight PM? With no alcohol, right?

Ariella

No, not every...(laughing)

Laura

Alcohol-free meetings, cause those can get heated.

Ariella

Yeah. (laughing) it wouldn't necessarily be weekly, but it would be like, we haven't, you know, we haven't checked in for a while. Or, if you're going away for a little bit and you're leaving the city and we're gonna be doing long distance, like let's check in about whether we wanna, you know, update our agreements. But, the whole point of non-monogamy is to allow each person to really have their own strong sense of autonomy and to take care of each other while doing it. So, there is no--there's no fear of really pushing too fast because it goes a lot slower than you might think, there's a lot more conversation than we might think is even normal for a relationship. And, when it feels like something's not going well, we seek outside help. And I was seeing a therapist who was really well versed in non-monogamy. (music begins playing abruptly) I would ask her my questions, and we'd go as slow as both people needed to go.

Joan

Mm.

Laura

Great, great, great advice.

Joan

That's brilliant.

Laura

Yeah, great advice. We need to take a break. What types of things should we be asking on dates? And what should we avoid and much more when we come back on the Dating and Relationship Show. Don't go anywhere! (music volume increases)

Announcer

Now back to the Dating and Relationship Show with Laura Bilotta, from singleinthecity.ca, on Global News Radio 640, Toronto.

Laura

Welcome back. It's Sunday night, and you're listening to the Dating and Relationship Show right here on Global News Radio 640, Toronto. I'm Laura Bilotta, with co-host Joan Kelley Walker. And tonight, we're talkin' about the stresses of dating and how to make it fun again with Ariella Serur. She's the queer dating coach. I love this show--we are having so much fun, ladies. And, I think Joan, this is your first show talking about dating. And I'm so impressed, like, you know, so much and you haven't been in the game for so long?

Joan

Well, you know, I've been, I've been married for--I just had my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, but I'm not--

Laura

Congratulations.

Joan

--actually under a rock. And I have so many friends that are in the dating world and I sort of live vicariously through them. I know how much things have changed. And I know how scary it is like, you know, in my day, you would meet people through people. And now it seems people are meeting more through technology and things have really changed. Like you have a list and you sort of judge people beforehand, you qualify them before you meet them in person. And there's, there's more of a process. But you know, I totally respect that. And I really respect what the two of you are doing in coaching people and helping them navigate the situation.

Laura

Well, thank you very much.

Ariella

Thanks.

Laura

And I do like--cause I do remember, you know, I'm, my age is up there as well. And I do remember dating back in the day, and I loved it, it was--there was something so authentic about it. And now it just seems so cold and, um, surreal too like, you're flipping through these apps, and you could be passing by some amazing person because they have one photo up, or they didn't write a good description about themselves.

Joan

Yeah.

Laura

And you're just like, I don't want to waste my time so I'm just gonna say no. Meanwhile, they could be the love of your life, they could be the best match you've ever met in your life, they could be the one for you that you feel would be the one for you. Right? So--

Joan

Yeah.

Laura

Yeah, that's what makes it difficult.

Joan

Yeah, or they move on too quickly or something like, you know--or they send flowers or something, like things are so much more calculated now than they used to be.

Laura

Yeah, I want flowers--

Ariella

Something that comforts me in this is something that I've heard Lily Womble, who's another dating coach talk about, and it's the phrase, "What's meant for me won't pass me by." I find that to be very soothing to think about, especially in the moments where you're like, "Oh, I'm gonna

swipe over this person has no, you know, just one picture", like you said, so "what's meant for me won't pass me by." I like to hold on to that.

Laura

Okay. Um, so when it comes to dating, we want to do everything that we can to make the other person, you know, feel comfortable. And one of the best ways to do that is by asking questions that put them at ease, and stir up positive emotions. So Ariella, what types of things should we be asking? And what should we avoid?

Ariella

Well, first, I think you're spot on about putting them at ease and stirring up positive emotions. I think that that's a great goal. And I'll say that people love when you show genuine interest in them. There's all this theory out there and pickup theory and whatnot, of what makes people like you. And I think it's the balance of showing genuine interest in another person AND maintaining your own autonomy. As far as with questions--I know there, there are certain things you really want to know that are kind of facts based, like what you do for work and whatnot? But I--so I would say you can ask those questions, but then try to get to the layer just underneath that. Which could be something like, "What's your favorite part of your job?" Or "Do you have a favorite coworker? What's your relationship like with them?" Something that is anchored to the present moment? Not something where we're asking them, you know, what, what was the most difficult thing you had to overcome at work? You know, maybe if you get there you get there, but we're not asking about like, why did you go through the breakup? What happened in your last relationship, like we can get those things--

Laura

Nooo.

Ariella

(laughs) But for a first date, I think it's okay to keep it light, but still keep it anchored into some kind of emotional quality so you can get a sense of who this person really is.

Laura

Mhm, I agree, asking questions that spark a positive emotion in the other person. For example, I noticed that you have children. What has been the proudest moment as a parent or, you know, what's the most amazing trip you've ever been on? And you can see their face light up sometimes, you know, oh! that, you know, brings back amazing memories. You know, what

are you working on, any personal passion--passionate projects that you're working on? Ask them how they spend their weekends? So what are some--

Ariella

Yeah.

Laura

--some things that we we should avoid asking, though? You said it--don't talk about your past relationships!

Ariella

Yeah, and I just want to say too exactly what you're saying with the questions that you're giving for an example, when you're allowing someone to answer questions that have made them recall something positive about themselves, you're both anchoring into them the fact that you are interested--you're showing genuine interest--and you're allowing them to associate you with experiencing positive emotions. So I think that there's really a lot of benefit to be had by asking these kind of feelings-based questions, where we're really giving--being generous with allowing the other person to feel something really good. And tell us about it.

Laura

Joan, do you remember anything from your past dating life?

Joan

Yep, I remember, you know--

Laura

Questions that were asked?

Joan

--it's a real mood killer if anybody starts talking about their ex, like, do not go there. But you know, like, it comes down to basic conversation skills.

Ariella

Yeah.

Joan

You have to ask questions of the other person. And it's like pulling teeth if you're asking all these questions and they're not asking anything, and you're trying to share something. So it has to be a back and forth. And, you

know, a lot of this--there's a book I remember from ages ago that Dale Carnegie "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

Ariella

Uh huh.

Joan

That's exactly what they're talking about. I mean, these are, these are, you know, tried and true techniques of engaging people and you know, making yourself interesting and finding out about other people, and that's what you have to do.

Ariella

Yes, for sure. I think that's spot on.

Laura

But, you know, keep in mind that some people tend to get nervous on first dates.

Joan

Mhmm.

Laura

So we can't always--we have to go lightly when we try to--when we judge people, because--

Ariella

Yeah.

Laura

Especially if they're really attracted to you. They move--they get all tongue tied, and they just go (gasps) their brain just goes blank. That happens to me sometimes on this show. (laughs)

Joan

But what if they say, "You know what, I'm so nervous?" Like, how do you, how do you deal with that if they actually confess to you like, I'm so nervous, I'm sweating, I'm shaking.

Ariella

First of all, I think it's totally okay to name the experience you're having...if you're naming it in a way that is not putting the responsibility on the other person to solve that. So I think if you're feeling really nervous on a date,

yes, you can be like, "Wow, I am way more nervous than I expected! You've look very attractive." And you could say it with a sense of optimism and positivity, even if the experience--the emotional experience--might be deemed negative. Does that make sense?

Laura

Yes--

Joan

Mhm. Totally

Laura

I don't know if I would--I don't know if I would point that out to someone though. That could reeeally embarrass them.

Joan

Not embarassing, no! I think if they're sharing it, they're just being honest. Like, like I remember the first time I went live on the radio, I think it was doing tropic or something like a million years ago. And I remember actually thinking like, "Oh my God, my heart is pounding, I'm sweating, I'm so nervous," that I just acknowledged it.

Ariella

Yeah.

Joan

And then I sort of was able to, like, you know, think about the wonder of how you physically react when you're interested like that. (music starts)
There you go, ladies--

Ariella

Absolutely.

Laura

--you both taught me something that I didn't know.

Ariella

(laughs)

Laura

We need to take a break--how important is it to take responsibility for our actions on dates when we come back on the Dating and Relationship Show. (music gets louder)

Announcer

You're listening to the Dating and Relationship Show with Laura Bilotta from singleinthecity.ca on Global News Radio 640, Toronto.

Laura

Thanks for joining us again for the Dating and Relationship Show on Global News Radio 640 Toronto. I'm your host, Laura Bilotta, joined by my co-host Joan Kelley Walker, and the queer dating coach Ariella Serur. Tonight we're discussing non-heteronormative relationships and how we can make dating fun again by getting into the right mindset to enjoy the process.

Joan

And, you know, it's obviously--when it comes to dating, we want to do what we can to make the other person feel more comfortable and then you have a better experience as well. But I have girlfriends, one in particular that--she really feels like she needs the person to give her compliments. She spends a lot of time getting herself prepared for a date. And if they don't even acknowledge like "Wow, you look really pretty" or something, it's a game changer for her. So how important is that? And is that just insecurity? Or do you have to carry that through like once you establish that into, like, you know, your fourth, fifth, sixth date?

Ariella

Well, yeah, I think that's a really interesting question. You know, it's hard to tell from this brief anecdote whether it's insecurity or what. But for me, if I were someone who would take it really personally, or maybe feel like it, it affects my sense of self or self-worth if someone doesn't compliment me, I would really look into what that means for myself, and what are the things I'm telling about myself? How beautiful am I telling myself that I am? So they can really kind of fill that bucket up and not rely on someone else to give that to me, because we can't really rely on anything from our first date. I think that's part of keeping the stakes way too high, thinking that this person is gonna be something that we're looking for when we really haven't totally vetted them yet. So, I try to take a lot of responsibility in that way. If words of affirmation are something that you really need on a first date, for me--

Laura

Mmm, like, if that's your love language--

Ariella

If that's your love language, for me, in my book, I'm all about my practice is all about transparency, generosity, and kindness. I would tell them. I'd be like, "Look, I love when people tell me that I look great. It really means a lot to me. It makes me feel loved. So I just want to throw that out there." Like I am generous with telling people how to treat me in a way that makes me feel good. And then we can--and then if they don't do it, then fine, whatever. But we--some people don't compliment each other for fear of sexualizing someone too soon--there are a whole host of reasons that we have to really give, be generous with telling people what we want.

Laura

And some guys hold back because they don't want the woman to get the wrong idea.

Ariella

Mhmm.

Laura

(laughs) I had a situation happen to me where I kind of was dating this guy who was giving me breadcrumbs. He was, he was in and out, didn't notice, hot and cold, whatever. And that was kind of one of the last straws for me. He took me out on a date, and I spent like two hours getting ready. And I really did look pretty. Like I did, I look really great. And he couldn't even give me like one compliment.

Ariella

Mhmm.

Laura

Like, I took all that time out to get ready for you and your girlfriend's right, in that way. And you're really you're right, if her love language is words of affirmation, that's how she feels love or appreciated from a person that she's interested in. So, that is what is important to her, uh, in a relationship moving forward.

Joan

Yeah.

Ariella

Totally.

Laura

Now, okay, so of course, after a bad date, right? We have this tendency to pick things apart and often look at outside factors, like something our date said, or a bad environment as reasons why it didn't work out. But we don't usually look at ourselves as a factor. So how important do you think it is to take responsibility for our actions on dates? And what can we learn from this?

Ariella

I think it's hugely important. Even you saying that you don't want to ghost, you know, like, I think the whole game is that we treat people the way that we want--

Laura

The way we wanna be treated.

Ariella

A hundred percent. So, if the date doesn't go well, we have to first figure out why--what about it didn't go well. Is it just that like, it was a fine date, but the person didn't, isn't what you're looking for? There might not be too much to learn here, there might not be too much to dive in, it might have been that the conversation was flowing, and that things felt good, but it just doesn't--maybe the chemistry wasn't there or whatnot, fine. So in those cases, it's like, maybe there's something to learn, maybe not. However, if it's something like: we were stuck talking small talk. I didn't know how to change that type of conversation to go a little bit deeper. These are things that we can take responsibility for. If it was something like, like we said before, I'm really nervous. I was really nervous on that date. Then, what can I do before the date to get myself ready that would make me feel less nervous? Or, how can we shift the date to be less talking-oriented? Can we go do an activity where maybe I don't have to worry about tripping over my words, or I don't have to worry about exactly what I'm saying. And those are the ways in which we can take responsibility: to do things on the date that we actually find enjoyable.

Laura

Yeah, and I think it's important to take responsibility for your own actions when on dates. Um, because people that never generally do, they're called gaslighters, and a gaslighter is a master deflector. It's never their fault. You know, some call them narcissists. And the main problem with this is anyone who doesn't want to be held accountable in life is someone who is not emotionally mature enough for a real relationship. And you'll probably be walking around constantly hurting others, you know, over and over

again. So if this sounds like you, I think that you're the problem and you should self reflect and work on yourself. So be the one whom you want to be in a relationship with. Be the one whom YOU want to be in a relationship with, and like what you said, treat others the way you want to be treated.

Joan

Hm. And I totally agree. I think doing an activity is great because then even if the relationship isn't going anywhere, you walk away from it feeling better.

Laura

Yes.

Ariella

Yeah, it could be fun regardless.

Joan

Yeah. And the whole perspective on dating apps. Um, now, how can that whole process be better?

Ariella

Yeah, so that's a great question. First of all, I'll say that dating apps are just one way to meet people. And, I think of meeting people--they're are kind of like four main categories--

Laura

Well, wait a second, right now, we have no other way to meet people, really, unless you're hanging out at the grocery store or the liquor store. I thought about it. But--

Joan

With COVID (laughs).

Ariella

To be fair, I have still met two people organically during COVID. Meeting people in person is like my bread and butter. So--

Laura

I love it.

Ariella

A lot of people have trouble and that is totally understandable. So most people are picking dating apps right now. So, the question is how to make dating apps suck less? So, one way to make them suck less is don't be on too many. I'd say pick the dating apps that are most in alignment, potentially giving yourself a time limit for how long you're actually gonna be on the app. Maybe it's, you know, I have three matches, I have to send a message, I put the phone away. It all depends on what you consider to be enjoyable. And then we can kind of borrow from the other areas of life where you find fun, and infuse it into the dating app experience.

Laura

Amazing advice and...dating apps that you suggest for queer folks?

Ariella

I think it still depends on what your dating values are, but I see a lot of folks on OkCupid if they're in the non-monogamy sphere. I see people on Lex which is a queer-specific dating app. Field is okay. And then people are on Hinge on Bumble as well.

Laura

Amazing. Thank you so much for joining us tonight. Where can we learn more about you?

Ariella

Thank you so much for having me--it was such a blast, such a fun conversation.

Laura

I know!

Ariella

I'm @queerdatingcoach on Instagram and queerdatingcoach.com for my website and you can feel free to send me a DM or an email whenever. I love talking about dating. I'm happy to do it.

Laura

And Joan?

Joan

Awesome. I'm at joankelleywalker.com or joankelleywalkerofficial on Instagram. (music starts)

Laura

And I'm [singleinthecity.ca](https://www.instagram.com/singleinthecity.ca) or [officialaurabilotta](https://www.instagram.com/officialaurabilotta) on Instagram or follow us [thedatingandrelationshipshow](https://www.instagram.com/thedatingandrelationshipshow) on Instagram. Thank you everybody for tuning in! Bye!

Ariella

Bye! (music gets louder then fades out)

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>