

All Things Considered: Tips for Post-Pandemic Dating in NYC

Sean

It's All Things Considered on WNYC. I'm Sean Carlson. Dating in New York City is often horrible, terrible or, if you've experienced a slew of bad first dates, even hopeless. Well now add a global pandemic where sensible options for a single New Yorker seem to be limited to things like candlelit FaceTime dates or Zoom movie nights. But now summer's starting. The city is reopening and many people are ready to make up for lost time. Here to give listeners some tips on getting back into the rhythm of dating again is Ariella Serur, a queer dating coach who says she finds personal growth in almost every date she goes on. Hi, Ariella.

Ariella

Hey! I'm so happy to be here!

Sean

Did I just slander dating there by calling it horrible? Because I think it's true that you called dating simple?

Ariella

(laughs)

Sean

How is that possible? I don't know if I agree with that.

Ariella

Yeah, that's fair, it's a controversial thing to say. And by simple, I don't always mean that it's easy or that all parts of it are enjoyable. So, I think that a lot of times, dating is really hard or frustrating or exhausting, because we're showing up to the dating pool with this really strong image of what we want and kind of dismiss every interaction that falls outside of that, where I think we can show up with more of a sense of openness, understanding that brief moments can really have great impact on our lives, and allow ourselves to really treat these experiences as learning experiences, not just showing up to get what we want, and dismissing everything else that doesn't go our way.

Sean

So, that said, for someone who is now fully vaccinated, and they're about to dip their toes back into the dating pool, how should they approach it? Like, what should their mindset be when they when they get out there?

Ariella

I think the mindset should really be anchored in a sense of openness and staying true to your own personal values. Staying true to your authentic self, sensing how things are going for you, how you're feeling, and how the folks that you're interacting with--how you feel around the folks that you're interacting with.

Sean

When you talk about your authentic self. This past year, of course, it's been difficult for many, for everybody. But it also offered a lot of people time for self-reflection,

maybe the opportunity to discover more things about themselves. What advice can you give to people who are leaving the pandemic, realizing their true sexual orientation or gender identity?

Ariella

I think that many of us have gone through a process of investigating deeper during this time. So you're spot on. I think the biggest thing to say about this is that it's okay to be in process. And it's still okay to meet people when you don't feel like you have all the answers. And, I would encourage people to be transparent about where they are in the process, and to allow the dating experience and the experience of meeting people to help inform that process, to contribute to the knowing, instead of feeling like you have to enter into the dating pool once you have all the answers. Because we never do.

Sean

For people who don't feel comfortable doing the thing where you go to a bar and you actually hit on a person in person, and maybe just want to stick to the dating apps for now or maybe do a mix of both. Can you give people any suggestions about making their their dating app profile more attractive to the kind of person they want to meet?

Ariella

The biggest thing that I would say--I'm all about generosity, and making a generous dating profile. So, put something in your dating profile that makes someone else reaching out a little bit easier. So that could be a conversation starter. That could

be something simple, like "Ask me about blank," anything along the lines to make the barrier to entry for the other person a little simpler.

Sean

A lot of the apps, to be real, don't have the option to say that you're trans even if you want to--

Ariella

Yes!

Sean

You know, they operate within the strict gender binary. So, what about for trans people and non-binary folks who are navigating dating apps?

Ariella

Yeah, it's a great question. So, there are a handful of apps where you can pick your gender identity from kind of a...expansive list, but not as expansive as the queer community would like. But, for the most part, what you have to do is you can pick a gender identity that feels true to you. But then you still have to pick whether you want to show up in the deck as a binary man or woman, which really is not--does not feel good for a lot of trans folks, it can feel pretty dysphoric from the get go to still have to claim a binary gender. But, we also don't have to be on dating apps, we can be meeting people in person or going to community events, or asking our friends to set us up and expanding our social network from a friend level, and then seeing who comes into our circle.

Sean

So, let's say you are meeting a friend of a friend, you know, people are at a barbecue or something this summer, and somebody sets you up with somebody, and you have to flirt. I think that--and myself included--it's tough getting out there and just interacting with other humans again! What can you tell people who are feeling anxious about flirting or just may have forgotten how to do it all together?

Ariella

So much of flirting--the conversation around flirting out there, is kind of based in manipulation a little bit. It's kind of based in pickup artistry, so it's hard to be like "Okay, what is genuine flirting then?" And, for me, the way that I kind of contextualize this metabolize it, is the play between expressing interest in another person and expressing autonomy, or expressing my own value. And seeing how that lands with the person in front of you and respecting whatever the answer is.

Sean

Ariella Serur is a queer dating coach. You can find her @queerdatingcoach on Instagram. Ariella, thanks so much.

Ariella

Thanks for having me!