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10 unexpected ways to meet women

By Steve Mazzucchi

At some point in your single life, the usual singles-heavy stomping grounds — nightclubs, parties, the gym — start to lose their luster. But don't worry, these locations represent only a fraction of the places where you can encounter amazing single women. And really, you should be on the lookout for love everywhere you go. "Dating is a numbers game," explains April Masini, author of *Date Out of Your League* and creator of www.askapril.com, "so the more opportunities you give yourself to meet women — especially in places you hadn't thought of before — the greater your chances of dating success." With that in mind, here are 10 unusual spots where you just might run into the woman of your dreams. Be prepared for love

around every corner!

1. At a boring work event

This scenario's ripe for the smart fellow who knows how to make light of things. And yet, "don't open with a complaint — it's too negative," cautions Lynn Harris, co-creator of dating advice site www.breakupgirl.net. "Acknowledge the boring aspects in a positive way. Say, 'Those are some impressive doodles,' or 'Are you looking forward to the Tuscan chicken wraps as much as I am?'" Use this sort of casual, non-threatening chit-chat as an opening to learning more about the woman who catches your eye. And you don't have to try too hard to be clever to pique her interest. As Harris points out: "Even a boring line is still going to be less boring than the event you're both at right now." It worked for Jason, 28, a New York City magazine writer. "I was late for some ski association press luncheon, but it turned out to be a good thing," he says. "When I spotted a seat next to a cute editor, I threw my jacket on it. I cracked a few upbeat jokes and made sure to get her business card when it was over. We ended up dating for several months."

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2. On vacation

When women are away from their normal routine, it's easier to woo them, according to Masini. "On vacation, women are focused on relaxation — not work and home tasks — so they'll be more receptive to your advances," observes Masini. Start with harmless, touristy questions about cool things to do while you're there, and then let the conversation flow. "Vacations are great, because it's easy to invite someone out," adds Harris. "Let's say you're both at a beach resort with a few friends. You can say, 'Hey, you guys want to meet up later at the Ocean View bar after dinner?' It's much more casual than asking her out on a date." Also, don't rule out the possibility that a fling could turn into something long-term. Chris, 33, an art director in Los Angeles, met his girlfriend Kristi while they were both kicking back in Cancun. "We got each other's phone numbers and email addresses, and we actually did keep in touch," he recounts. "Ten months and 6,000 emails later, I moved to California to be with her. We got married a year later."

3. Competing on a co-ed sports team

"Playing team sports together is great, because you automatically have something in common," notes Harris. Most teams head to happy hour after their games end, giving you plenty of time to get things going as you converse about the sport with each other. "After a softball game, instead of a pick-up line, you can lead with, 'Where'd you learn to hit like that?'" she adds. Once you're talking and drinking, it should be easy to mention that you have two tickets to the hometown team's upcoming game and invite her along. If you're more of an individual-sport-only kind of guy, bring some sunscreen along on your next bike ride, hike or jog, suggests Masini. Then you can offer it to that hot-looking woman stretching on the side of the trail or park entrance, and take it from there.

4. While you're both stuck in line

Lines give you a completely captive audience to flirt with — especially when you're somewhere inherently dull, like the DMV or post office. That's when a joke can instantly lighten the mood. "You could say, 'Should we take bets on whether we'll be home by Sunday to watch *The Walking Dead*?' If she laughs and says, 'Yeah, totally,' keep going with it." Other places are equally workable for meet-and-flirt scenarios. "Women love to be asked for their advice, so ask what kind of candy you should buy at the movie concession stand or to recommend something at a baseball game — popcorn, hot dogs, or maybe both?" advises Masini. "You can get into a comparison/information-sharing conversation easily." That and a sense of humor should be all the opening you need. "My little sister was a huge Backstreet Boys fan way back when," says Van Ray, 25, a Cleveland police officer. "I ended up in line behind a beautiful woman buying tickets for her niece. Of course, she didn't believe I was there for my sister at first, but we did wind up meeting for dinner before the concert."

5. At a community or HOA meeting

Attending gatherings of neighborhood groups and city council meetings to discuss recycling initiatives and proposed bike paths will win you automatic points with women by making you appear to be a concerned citizen — which, to many of them, is actually pretty sexy. And because the issue is important to both of you, it lends itself to hanging out in the doorway afterwards and letting the conversation blossom easily. "You need to talk about the issue at hand, and you need to be sincerely interested in it, but you *don't* have to be an expert," says Harris. "If you don't really know everything, you can ask a woman who's there: 'What's your take? How'd you get involved?' If she's a cyclist, for example, then you have a whole other thing to talk about together." James, 32, a Washington, D.C., attorney, went to a meeting for a group who opposed the building of a new mall in town. "I ended up talking to the group's president," he recalls. "We exchanged numbers so we could 'discuss some things,' and the next thing I knew, we were dating twice a week."

6. In a hotel lounge

"Many upscale hotels have an area where women can sit and sip a drink while waiting for a friend to arrive, a dinner reservation to be called, or their luggage to be found," says Masini. "It's the perfect place to strike up a conversation with someone you find attractive." A comment on her drink choice followed by some friendly travel talk (i.e., "Where are you in from?" or "What brings you to the fair city of Scranton?") should get the ball rolling. Two tips: 1) Don't look desperate — have work to do, phone messages to check, or reading material to keep yourself busy, and 2) If you're not staying at the hotel, have a very good reason why you're hanging out there already rehearsed and ready to go, in case anyone asks.

7. At a rally or protest around civic issues

With so many key issues (global warming, the financial crisis) coming to a head these days, rallies and protests aren't uncommon. Much like the community meeting suggestion above, conversation about the issue at hand is a great place to start. "If you're both holding signs outside an animal-testing lab, you're not going to walk up and ask, 'So what's your favorite color?'" notes Harris. "There's a lot of passionate energy circulating, so it's a good time to chat and bond first. Then maybe you can take it up a notch at the next sign-making meeting a week later." In other words, don't go asking Miss Activism for a date right away. Simply find out when the group's gathering again in the future, and say that you hope to see her there. If she smiles, you just might have a new kind of social change to look forward to in the coming weeks.

8. At the doctor's office or a hospital

Waiting rooms, lobbies and the hospital cafeteria are great places to meet your fellow visitors, because everyone's really just killing time. What should you do? If you're lucky enough to be a maternity ward visitor (the only area of the hospital filled with happy people, surely!), go to the nursery and look through the window at the babies — and the women who are there swooning over them. "Which one are you here to meet?" is a great opener, says Masini. It doesn't matter whether or not you're related to one of the newborns — women are often attracted to men who simply like kids. Other medical situations offer similar opportunities, too. While waiting at the allergist's office, try chatting up your neighbor about the poor choice of reading material available. Or ask her if she knows the best place to get an espresso nearby. It could lead you somewhere with better lighting and more privacy, after all!

9. At a Laundromat or in the laundry room at your living complex

Laundromats fit into that mandatory hang-around category of locales people find themselves in for several hours at a time, making them a great spot to start flirty conversations. But how can you manage to make it feel friendly instead of creepy? "Ask her advice," advises Masini. "Let her be the clothes-washing expert. Ask her: 'Is yellow considered to be a color, or a white?'" A magazine or book can be a potent ally; just be sure to choose it wisely. "*The Robb Report* is for a guy on his way up the ladder — way up the ladder. A political autobiography says you are worldly, smart, and current," asserts Masini. If you're feeling pretty comfortable with yourself, go ahead, pick that tattered *Us Weekly* up off the stack. "Most women love gossip, and if you know a little — but not too much — she'll like talking to you," she adds.

10. On the street in your neighborhood

Ladies can be a little wary of run-ins on public pavement, but that doesn't mean this environment's utterly hopeless. Keep an eye out for women you see regularly — that means they live in your area and may have noticed you, too. "Then, when you find yourself on the same route one day, you can say something like, 'I think I know you, but I can't remember where from,'" explains Masini. "And then you figure out that you both walk to the dry cleaning place after work and almost bump into each other once a week." As in other situations, playful comments about shared common experiences (dilapidated sidewalks, bad local restaurants, the new employee who lost both of your sweaters recently) can boost her mood and foster an attraction to you. Play it right, and one day you could be picking up *her* dry cleaning!

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