



HOME → VIEWS → COLUMNISTS → WHO'S YOUR DADDY → THE DATING GAME

The dating game

December 19, 2014 | Who's Your Daddy | 0 comments | 192 views

Last autumn, Peaches, my brother from another mother, and his partner called it quits. For the first time in about 15 years, Peaches finds himself single. He knew that getting back into the dating scene wouldn't be easy, but his life changed dramatically since he was last single: he became a dad.

Dating for any single parent is difficult, but for gay and lesbian single parents there is a whole different set of rules. So, in order to help my BFF navigate the dating waters, I reached out to several experts for advice.

Where can single LGBT parents meet potential dates?

Florida-based life coach and LCSW, Jennifer Kelman, suggests looking for potential dates in places where you're likely to meet other gay people. Try the Utah Pride Center or the Gay and Lesbian Parents of Utah group (you can find the GLPU on Facebook.)

Dating sites geared toward LGBT people are another great idea. Trish McDermott, Dating Coach at OneGoodLove.com (herself a single lesbian mom), explained sites like hers fit better into the LGBT reality because people can search terms that you can't on more mainstream dating sites, like "femme" or "bottom."

She also suggests: "Go to every party you are invited to, and throw some parties too. Book clubs seem to be fertile dating ground for gay men and lesbians. And why not try speed dating? Bring a single friend along to compare notes and laugh about it all. If there aren't speed dating events for LGBT people in your area, organize one. It's fun!"

What about apps like Grindr or Tinder?

Author April Masini, who pens the free advice column "Ask April," echoes what other experts say about these apps, "No matter how sexy you are, you're a parent, and that has to be a priority. Try to avoid sites that are geared more towards quick sex. Instead, focus on those that will yield a romance with someone, who might make a great parent in your child's life. I hate to be a prude, but when you decide to have a child, you have a different focus in your life."

When should you mention to your date you're a parent?

David Cruz of TV's *Millionaire Matchmaker* told me, "This is why I love dating online. You can put your parental status right there on your profile. There is no awkward juggling of when to bring it up."

But what if Peaches meets his potential Mr. Right somewhere that doesn't list his stats, interests, and turn ons? Cruz was emphatic, "It should be brought up in the initial conversation you have after exchanging phone numbers. Single parents have no time to waste on those who don't want anything to do with kids. It's better to be open and upfront from the get go!"

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When should you introduce your kids to the person you're dating?

The experts agree: Take it slow. Kelman adds, "If the fit is right and you are moving toward longevity and your values and integrity are in line with one another you can begin to introduce. I would wait until you are truly in an exclusive relationship with the goal of longevity. Kids should not be subject to the revolving door that dating can sometimes bring."

How do you explain to a potential date that your child is your first priority?

McDermott really hit the nail on the head, "Honestly, if you have to explain this to a date, you're probably dating the wrong person."

The above advise is just the tip of the iceberg. So, I'll continue this topic in next month's column.

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