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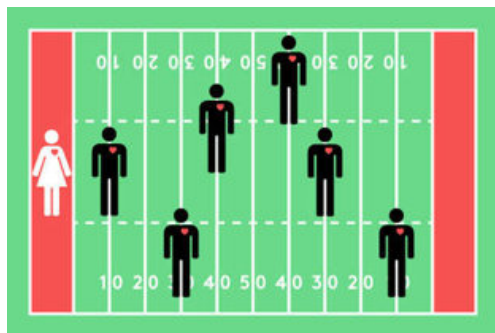
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# Do You Need a Dating Rotation?

By [Refinery29](#) | Love + Sex - 2 hours 27 minutes ago



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By **Caitlin Thornton, Refinery29**

They're all in the Notes section of my phone: the 26-year-old graphic designer from Baltimore. The surfboard shaper with a motorcycle. A couple of actor/bartenders who live within a five-mile radius of my place in Central Los Angeles. The 37-year-old who works at an ad agency, has a sweet pit-bull, and an enviable vinyl collection - but is so obviously not over his ex-fiancée.

I was fresh out of a relationship, breakup wounds still searing. But, rather than stay single, I figured out what the hell I wanted from my next long-term partner, dove straight into dating, and found myself in the middle of a rotation - that is, seeing a multitude of men, all noncommittally. My many relationships have fallen somewhere between a string of not-so-great first dates and being in love. I've enjoyed the fun aspects of being with a partner without being tied down to one person emotionally. And, since I don't have a top-notch memory, it also requires keeping a handy

list in my phone.

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The logic behind multi-dating isn't rooted so much in the need to distract oneself with a bunch of dudes following a breakup (although it totally can be) as it is in what men have long called "playing the field." And, it's certainly not a new concept. It's just gotten more buzz ever since Chloe, the infamous party girl and lead character from *Don't Trust the B - in Apartment 23* (R.I.P.), explained the benefits of having a roster of men on hand to her naïve roommate: "Everyone should [have a rotation]. It is awesome."

Of course, I'm not the only 20something who jumped into a rotation immediately following a breakup. Nina, a 25-year-old accountant living in Chicago, started hers after a four-year relationship ended. "I like to keep my options open," she says. And, Monica\*, a 25-year-old producer in New York City, can also echo the experience. "I had just gotten out of a long-term relationship," she explains. "I was ready to get back out there, but I definitely wasn't looking for anything 'real.' Just people to spend time with, drink cocktails with, and get naked with."

"Rotations allow you to date other people at the same time, giving you perspective on the dating process," says April Masini, relationship expert and author of the column, [Ask April](#). "Rotations give you the opportunity to not close doors on people who may be great for you. People who get involved too quickly shut out others because they don't rotate dates. While they're serial dating, they're losing out on opportunities to date other great people."

Tina B. Tessina, Ph.D, (a.k.a. "Dr. Romance"), psychotherapist and author of *The Unofficial Guide to Dating Again* agrees. "Dating several men can be a good choice for women, because many women tend to settle for the first man who comes along," she says. "Seeing how different men relate to you can open your eyes about what you *really* want in a man." She also says there's no need to tell the person you're with about other dates if you don't have an exclusivity agreement - which I agree with. But, as human beings with human emotions (not to say someone in your rotation couldn't be a complete sociopath), dating more than one person can, inevitably, get complicated.

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During my multiple nights of dinners, drinks, and flirting, I've been honest about that last serious relationship and that I'm currently "not looking for anything serious." I always assumed this implied, "I'm seeing other people, you got that?" and that by being transparent, I'd prevent hurt feelings or building up certain dudes' expectations. Within a month of attempting to maintain my rotation, though, I disappointed one guy enough to get the, "I need to respect myself and not see you anymore" text. He explained that he didn't want to "share me." Even though I was into him and disappointed he wanted to cut the cord, I knew I wasn't ready to be a girlfriend again so soon. (Despite the old-school belief that men are born to "sow their wild seeds," some men want monogamy, too, duh.) Gretchen, a 30-year old producer living in Los Angeles, says relationships in her rotation also seem to be short-

lived. "I could only juggle three people at a time for one-month spans before it got out of hand - someone would freak out or want commitment," she says. "I dated someone for nine months that came out of a rotation. But, it really only happened because she found out I was seeing other people and flipped out. I wasn't honest. I should've been honest with her."

"This [type of dating] is definitely not for everyone," says Monica. "It helps to be selective and seek people who are independent enough to not need lots of attention or you get sucked in to a relationship-like situation quickly."

Then there's the slippery question that looms: I know I can casually date a few people at once, but is it possible to have strong feelings for more than one person at a time? One guy in my aforementioned Notes section is simply labeled as "The Best," and another man isn't even on the list, since I so easily remember everything about him. So far, I've been able to balance my strong affection for multiple men, but not everyone finds this easily attainable (or even desirable). For example, L.A.-based Elle, 26, says, "When I was younger, I might have liked more than one guy. Now that I'm older, I usually tend to only have strong feelings for one guy at a time."

Though dating a horde of people can feel fun and freeing, for most adventurers, it isn't entirely sustainable. "I don't plan on dating this way forever," Monica says. "I feel like I would stop immediately if I met someone I really liked." Gretchen, a former multi-dater who is now in a committed, long-term relationship, says: "Having a rotation worked for me, and I had fun. It got kind of difficult with all of the drama, though."

Cassie\*, a 30-year-old designer living in Brooklyn, got out of her rotation only after one date asked her to be monogamous with him. "I didn't want it to happen," she says. "But, he always brought me on amazing experiences, and it's hard not to fall for someone when each experience is so fun."

For some women, having a rotation with the hopes of ultimately meeting a long-term partner can also be unfulfilling. "Dating is always fun, but eventually it gets old when you don't take anyone seriously, or no one is taking you seriously," Elle says. "You start to see that in the end you really are still alone."

I recently felt the pang of loneliness as I sat post-coital on the edge of my bed with "The Best" and told him that I've realized maybe having sex with someone who wouldn't come visit me in the hospital (where I was briefly on New Year's Eve day for some lady problems, fun!) probably isn't the best thing for my self-esteem. And, as I continue to meet more men, I've realized that perhaps I *have* been distracting myself from the lingering pain of my last relationship and the uncertainty of my career. While it's been fun and I've learned a lot, I'm thinking that maintaining a rotation isn't the best thing for me right now. Because really, whether or not dating many-a-partner is something you think you can handle, the most vital thing is to focus on your emotional and physical well-being.

"Condoms and birth control, USE THEM," Monica emphasizes. "Get tested. Be safe. Dating multiple people is not fun if you're passing STDs around." Hear, hear.

So, should you have a dating rotation? Of course, there's no clear-cut conclusion. Atypical relationship models work for many people - even if they're temporary. As with any romantic scenario, it's important to have regular mental check-ins with yourself to determine whether the pros outweigh the cons. If it causes you unnecessary stress, or you're using the relationships to avoid other issues, opt out. And, if you're meeting a lot of interesting people, "keeping your options open," and having a blast? Go for it. But, as Gretchen recommends, "Just be sure to keep notes."

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