**8/16/24; Dating sucks right now**

**[HALF SECOND OF SILENCE]**

**[BILLBOARD]**

NOEL KING (HOST): Dating is TERRIBLE now according to survey data. And the APPS! Are part of the problem according to these people producer Hady Mawajdeh met on the streets of Fort Worth.

SCORING IN <JCM\_JM\_0205\_09101\_Love\_U\_\_b\_60\_\_APM>

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*PIPER: It's just so superficial, I think. It's just like you're swiping on someone with, like, their only looks. You're not looking at, like, who the person is.*

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*MILES: everyone on a dating app is trying to paint a picture of who they are, the best image of who they are, you are trying to get someone else to notice things about you that you want them to see.*

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*RYAN: I hate the small talk. And I hate the ghosting. And then I just find that guys, they think that there’s always someone better.*

NOEL: Fort Worth is not alone. We all hate the apps. Why are we all on the apps?

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*PIPER: I wish so badly I could block myself from the app store, of being able to reinstall these apps. That’s what i want. <laughs>*

NOEL: On *Today, Explained:* Tinder, OKCupid, Hinge and et cetera they aren’t working anymore. That’s the consensus. So, what’s the plan?

**[THEME]**

MYISHA BATTLE (SEXOLOGIST, DATING COACH, PODCAST HOST): Hi, my name is Myisha Battle and I am a sexologist and sex and dating coach. I'm also an author and a podcaster.

NOEL: What's your podcast called?

MYISHA: It's called How's Your Sex Life? And it's with KCRW.

NOEL: How's your sex life?

MYISHA: It's pretty good. I just went on vacation for my anniversary, so if it wasn't good, I think it'd be pretty awkward.

NOEL: You are not currently dating because you are currently in a relationship yeah?

MYISHA: That's right.

NOEL: But you hear about how it is out there.

MYISHA: Yes. And we met on Tinder. So I've been through the trenches multiple times. This last round ended in a six year so far relationship from Tinder.

NOEL: Good for you. Congratulations. That is awesome!

MYISHA: Thank you.

NOEL: All right. So people come to you, talk to you about what it's like to be dating right now. How would you describe it? What's going on?

MYISHA: Oh, things are rough out there for most people that come to me seeking help. And in my friend group, people who are dating, I think they're varying degrees of into it to not into it.

SCORING IN<KOS\_KOS\_0132\_08301\_Love\_Me\_Spencer\_OL\_APM>

*<CLIP> tiktok*

*Anyahaas: i feel so defeated right now. I’ve been trying to meet someone for years.*

*<CLIP>tiktok*

*Ryanspencer51: What more do i have to do before i’m just allowed to be happy?*

But I think for the most part, if people are focusing their efforts primarily on app based dating, they're having a hard time.

*<CLIP>tiktok*

*Amariangelique: I’m done with the dating apps. I realized it’s literally like digging through the trash and finding something that is just sparkly enough, but it’s still trash.*

SCORING OUT

NOEL: Yeah, let's talk about why that is, because Tinder and Bumble and Hinge and OkCupid and all of the rest of them were alleged to have broadened our prospects. Right? And made things easier.

*<CLIP>OkCupid*

*Narrator: with okcupid, you can find love your way.*

NOEL: And yet, that is not my lived experience.

MYISHA: <laughs>

NOEL: And you are hearing from people that that is not their lived experience. So what is going on exactly?

MYISHA: In some ways, it has broadened our experience of dating. We see more people dating across race, across religious lines, across cultures. So in in some ways it's taken that whole, uh, you know, ‘you have to rely on your immediate community’ thing and expanded it to the world, potentially. I mean, some some apps don't even geolocate. I think where people get tripped up is that it does feel like an endless struggle to mine through all of these profiles of all these people who are now opting in.

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*Josh, bartender: It’s just like you swipe and you swipe and you swipe and you swipe. And for me personally, i swipe for five minutes and i’m bored.*

MYISHA: And there are some problems with how the apps are designed, with how we're being asked to use them now. So that's the biggest thing that I see is the struggle is people are just tired.

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*Josh, bartender: when i’m a dating app, i’m looking at ‘are you sexy or not?’ like, let me the fuck know! You have five minutes <snap> one mississippi, two mississippi, three mississippi bitch.*

NOEL: We think of more choices as a better thing. I get the sense that you’re saying something else is going on with the apps beyond just there are a lof of people on them? What has changed about the apps?

MYISHA: So early days? Online dating was really built on this premise of, we want to find you the best matches.

SCORING IN <JW\_IMPR\_0111\_00101\_This\_Love\_Story\_-\_Remastered\_APM>

*<CLIP> 2008 Match.com Commercial*

*Narrator: you’ve always wanted to know who was on Match.com. And we want you to it’s okay to look. We guarantee if you don’t find someone within six months, we’ll give you six months free.*

MYISHA: We want to create quality connections for the world. And that has been actually pretty successful. But where things changed was when we added swiping.

SCORING OUT

<CLIP> Tinder Match SFX

NOEL: oooh.

MYISHA: And so the swipe was not designed to help us find partnership.   
  
NOEL: oh?

SCORING IN <MTA\_MTA\_0002\_04501\_Prance\_\_a\_\_APM>

MYISHA: The swipe was designed as a prototype for essentially a hot or not app.

NOEL: <gasp!>

*<CLIP> NPR*

*Camila Domonoske: in both bumble and tinder users see a picture of a possible date.*

*Shaun O’Hara: when you swipe left it’s not someone you're interested in. If you swipe right, then you are interested and if they’re interested as well then you connect.*

MYISHA: Yeah. There's actually, I believe, a pending lawsuit,   
  
NOEL: <laughs>

MYISHA: for this design that has now been brought into all dating apps.

*<CLIP> NPR*

*SARAH BURSTEIN: You don't own the concept of swiping right or swiping left. You don't own the concept of matchmaking.*

MYISHA: And that premise in and of itself came about because people wanted to create a game, and they pivoted and created Tinder. So that has exploded and gamified, literally the process of dating.

*<CLIP> TODAY*

*Reporter: A lawsuit filed on valentines day argues that popular dating apps tinder, hinge and the league are portrayed by their owner Match Group as effective tools for establishing off app relationships while secretly doing everything in its power to capture and sustain paying subscribers and keep them on app.*

MYISHA: And there's definitely a sense that even though online dating was used for a number of reasons including casual to long term partnership, that there's something about how the gamification changes how we treat each other in this environment.

SCORING OUT

NOEL: Hey, so why did the apps change? Like why did they gamify?

MYISHA: Dudes. <laughs>

NOEL: <gasp> What do you know?

MYISHA: Dudes did it to us. <laughs>

NOEL: Oh, men. Okay, gotcha. <laughs>

MYISHA: Tech dudes.

*<CLIP> Recode, Code Conference*

*Sean Rad, CEO & Founder Tinder: we wanna build products that get you out into the world experiencing something.*

MYISHA: You know, and this is where app dating is going. They needed to get us all hooked on the apps…

*<CLIP> TODAY*

*Reporter: an e-harmony survey in the UK found nine in 10 singles who use online dating platforms believe they are addicted…*

MYISHA: So everything was free, free free free free, free. Come in, do what you want but the dating apps would like to have us reliant upon them for infinity, because once we're in the pipeline, they can monetize us, they can sell our data, they can upsell us, they can offer these premium features with the promise that behind these paywalls are easier times ahead. Like you hate swiping around, well, hey, behind this paywall, you can have, access to all the people who like you, which is a time saver and is something that I do recommend. But now we've gotten into okay, well, we'll show you your most compatible matches, and I'm using scare quotes for that

NOEL: Yeah!

MYISHA: because how are they supposed to know? How are they supposed to know? We don't know. There's a lot of mystery. There's a lot of like tinkering behind the scenes that they're just making a lot of empty promises and not showing us the proof that these things actually work. So am I a success story? Yes. Do they work? To some degree, but for the most part, people are really coming up against and feeling how much these companies want their dollar and how much they don't want them to find partnership.

NOEL: What you're saying about the tech bros, creating a thing and then wanting needing to to take our money in order to sustain the thing, sounds a lot like what has happened with other tech companies Uber, TikTok, Amazon. We did a show about this. Our guest memorably called it enshittification.

*<CLIP> Today, Explained*

*Cory Doctorow: Colloquially, I think a lot of people just use it to mean things are getting worse.*

NOEL: Are dating apps going through the enshittification phase right now?

MYISHA: Dating apps have been enshittification period.

NOEL: Fully enshittified

MYISHA: Yeah.

NOEL: There's a trend now, I'm sure you've seen this because this is your line of work. But regular people, celebrities saying they are boys sober, that's the straight woman version of it, right? Yeah. So do you think that's okay? Like, what do you. Think about that trend.

MYISHA: I love it.   
  
NOEL: Yeah?!   
  
MYISHA: I love it. Women, femmes, trans people are most likely to be subjected to harassment and violence through dating. So women are tired. They are tired. There are some some legitimately traumatized from their experiences that they've had with dating men. So if they need a break, they need a break. It's, I think, a choice that a lot of people are making. Not lightly. It's not like people are like, I'm just doing this because it's what it's what's trending. I think it's it's giving name to something that women were already doing and saying, this is okay, you know where it's fine. You don't have to be on this endless pursuit for the company of a man, especially if your experiences in that pursuit have been harmful to you.

NOEL: Is there evidence that people are going off of the apps? We're all talking crap about them? Are we stopping it though?

MYISHA: I think this cycle of abuse ends with Gen Z. <laughs>

NOEL: Zoomers, over to you. <laughs>

MYISHA: I do, I mean, I think, you know, there's a perspective of their whole lives have been online, digitized, you know, and there's like a real disillusionment with like, wait, this is dating. Like, this is exactly like everything else that I do. This is this is weird.

NOEL: Mmhmm!

MYISHA: And also, they're currently in college or finished college, and they have communities that they can pull from instead of relying so heavily on the apps. So, right now we're seeing that they're not the primary users of apps. Millennials, Gen X, those are the the hot demographics right now.

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MYISHA: But it could also be, too, that there are other digital ways that younger people are connecting. They're not shy to use. Instagram and TikTok to make connections with people, for instance. <laughs> So yeah, I think we're going to see, the disenchantment, result in and some apps shutting down. That's my prediction. I mean--

NOEL: Bold prediction Myisha.

MYISHA: I mean, Bumble is already hanging on by a thread. They're really grasping at straws and trying to add these features in that I don't think anybody wants. And I just think things are really on the brink. So unless somebody comes out with something, you know, amazingly transformative for the dating app space that is not reliant upon swipes. I think we're going to have them for a while, but I think the interest is is definitely waning.

NOEL: Myisha Battle, sexologist, dating coach. How to date I-R-L, C-U-N - that’s coming up next - I offer my own tip that doesn’t work but it’s fun.

**[BREAK]**

**[BUMPER]**

*<CLIP> Audio From Reporting*

*MILES: Can anybody find me somebody to love…*

NOEL: Today, Explained. We’re back with Myisha Battle, love guru, author, host of How’s Your Sex’s Life? In a six-year relationship courtesy TINDER WOW. Myisha, in the first half of the show we talked about being disillusioned with the apps and deciding we don’t want to be on them. If we’re burning out on the apps, what’s taking their place?

MYISHA: There's been a lot of conversation recently about our lack of third spaces where people can meet organically. You know, we're generally experiencing a loneliness epidemic, and it's affecting people on very deep levels. People are lacking friendships, but they're also lacking spaces where they can just, you know, go and flirt and feel like they have community to connect with. Whether that's sexually or, you know, finding long term partnership. So I think we are in need of space. And there's a conversation about space. And I think what's next comes building out of spaces where people can connect. I think that bars are kind of out of fashion for people.

NOEL: mmmh, mhm… not the move anymore.

MYISHA: Yeah. So, so there's this need for places to also just be out in the evening sober and to find connections and meet. So I think that there's, there's going to be this movement. But until we get there, I have encouraged all of my clients to not rely so heavily on the apps to have them going to use them for connections, for sure, but to also live a really rich life and do things that connect you to people in general because that is supportive of their goals of finding partnership. We forget that most people do meet still through community connections. So those friends, those invites that you get, accept them. Those random events that are happening in your neighborhood, go to them. And I also think there's something to to being in a place repeatedly. A lot of us have lost the space of work. Not to say that work is a place that you meet people to hook up with,<laughs>

NOEL: <laughs>

MYISHA: although, you know…   
  
NOEL: Oh. I know.

MYISHA: it has been, but it it's a place where you form relationships. You start going to happy hours after work to, you know, blow off steam. Those coworkers invite their friends. Now you're in a group. Those groups, you know, connections form into other things. So I think that's really important to realize that, that we've lost something in terms of community that we have to rebuild and we have to be pretty strategic. So I'm really curious to hear what your strategy is for all of this.

NOEL: Okay. So I don't particularly like who I am on the apps. I do all of the things that you said people are doing, it moves too quickly. I'm judging. I'm not really thinking about anyone's individual feelings, which is not something I feel good about. So my rule is if a man asks me out in real life, like even if that man is yelling at me from a car or like working on the house next door to my house, unless there seems to be something really off about him. I say yes to a date every single time, and I'm told by some of my friends that that is weird, because you're not going to meet quality men if they're like yelling at you from their Honda Civic. And yet and yet I always it has not led to anything long term, but I always do have a really good time and I never feel like a bad person.

MYISHA: There's value in that. Noel like there's real value in that.   
  
NOEL: <laughs>

MYISHA: That's the other thing too. We are so singularly minded when it comes to dating that we forget that it just connecting with people can be fun learning about somebody who's quite different from us. It's fun. It's interesting. What do you do with your time? How long are you working on this house? Like how long does it take you to redo a roof? Like all of those things I don't know the answer to. I mean, you know, I have family who does that, does construction. But those are not questions that I've asked them. So, you know, it's it's, I think very human to want to explore connections like that, even if they don't result in long term partnership, if they result in fun.

NOEL: Yeah!

MYISHA: I keep doing it.

NOEL: So look, I say this I'm I'm a journalist. I talk to strangers for a living. This does not make me uncomfortable to say, sure, I'll go out with you. But I want to respect that there are introverts out there. There are lots of people who are like, oh, I'm far too shy to do that, or I'm. I'm just not comfortable. What tips? Do you give your clients for meeting people in real life?

MYISHA: Yeah, groups are really important for introverts,   
  
NOEL: hmm!

MYISHA: groups, meetups,

NOEL: Aha.

MYISHA: recurring activities that they feel comfortable doing. And, you know, the pandemic, again, did rob us a lot of our joy and spontaneity. So it's really important to kind of double down on that again and say, well, you know, now I can occasionally attend that talk at that place that I like to go to, or I can join a running club or a group that works out in the park or, you know, there's so many, so many groups that are fairly low stakes that, again, can expand your community and to stay open to have those conversations when you're there. And for my introverted clients, that's a big ask, right? It's like you got to talk to strangers. You've got to do it. You've got to do it at least with one person today when you're in this group and then, you know, see where that connection leads. Again, there's something to being in community that that kind of meets on a regular, consistent basis that helps people kind of find their rhythm with that communication. And even if it's a book club, you know, I have a lot of straight, female clients who are like, but I love reading and I love knitting. These are very female. Like, if I join a book club, it's going to be all women. I'm like, yes, but those women have friends as women have partners, those women have, you know, maybe dinner parties that they would invite you to. They, you know, we're social animals. So the the group is not the end. Right? It's it's also thinking more long term about I'm joining a group. I will build friendships. Those friendships may lead to partnerships. They don't necessarily have to though. They can be supportive in a different way.

NOEL: I think we should go back to setups.

MYISHA: hmmmm

NOEL: Yeah.

MYISHA: Yes. Well more people okay. My my thing is more people who are in relationships should be setting up their single friends.

NOEL: Amen! <laughs>

MYISHA: in like a cool way in a non pressure free way but like to be on the lookout. I'm a dating coach so I think about this all the time. I've even thought about like can I connect my clients sometimes, you know?

NOEL: <laughs> Oh my God, you should! <laughs>

MYISHA: Yeah I mean a lot of them don't live in the same area, so it be difficult. But I had that thought before because it's just ingrained in me to think about connection, like who would be cool together? I just think about that. Yeah. And so if there are people in my life that I think should meet, I want them to me, whether that's two friends that I have that I think should meet, I love a, you know, kind of friend connect or yeah, maybe this is something romantic that the two of you can explore. I think that's great too.

NOEL: Alright, let's say you do meet that person in your softball league, right? And you're into them. And you think I want to ask them out? It's 2024. Everything's a little touchy. You just never know. What sort of advice do you give to someone who says, I've got a person in mind. I want to ask them out, but I just don't know. There's so many unknowns.

MYISHA: Just do it.

NOEL: Just do it.

MYISHA: Yeah

NOEL: okay and if they're like, no, I don't want to go out with you, do you have to quit the softball league?

MYISHA: No, no, you most certainly do not. You can take a week off to lick your wounds and feel bad about it and 100%, that's okay. But then go back and see who else is there and then be cool with it. Yeah. No, I think like to to be human is to suffer rejection. You know, and and it's okay. You know, people are either not dating, not open to dating. They're, they’re partnered. They are not into you. Whatever the reason. And that's okay. That's their reason. And they're helping you to, you know, get over your crush and move on to the next person because they're not a viable option anymore. I think it's really important to to shoot your shot when you have it.

Here's the thing. All of us deserve love.

SCORING IN <BIB\_IOM\_0004\_01401\_Love\_s\_Not\_A\_Dream\_Anymore\_\_Instrumental\_\_APM>

MYISHA: That's what I come back to. Time and time again with my clients when they feel sad and desperate. I know that they deserve love. I don't care who they are. I don't care their race, their ability, their age, like everybody deserves love it’s just that simple. And everybody deserves quality sexual experiences too. I'm a big proponent of like, following your joy and like, if that means you have a weird one night stand, that's fine. It's on the way to your long term goal of having a partnership, it's it's fine. On the way to love I think we all make a lot of mistakes, and those mistakes actually help us learn and grow. At the end of the day, I guess I'm just I'm just a sap. I just believe that people are going to find love and I am. My hope is that we all do.

NOEL: Myisha Battle, host of How’s Your Sex Life? She’s also an author, she’s a dating coach. Hady Mawajdeh produced today’s show. Amina al-Sadi edited it with help from Lissa Soep and Allie Volpe. Matthew Collette fact-checked. Patrick Boyd engineered. I’m Noel King. It’s Today, Explained.

**[10 SECONDS OF SILENCE]**