

# Dating IRL: Saying Goodbye to Dating Apps [C1]

Stanchi di Tinder? Potreste soffrire di “stanchezza da app di incontri”, un fenomeno sempre più comune che porta molte persone ad abbandonare queste piattaforme digitali e a riscoprire il piacere di incontrarsi di persona.

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In the last ten years, dating apps like [Tinder](#), [Bumble](#), Match Group and [Grindr](#) have become very popular. They have attracted tens of millions of users, all hoping to have a fun date, casually [hook up](#) with someone, or even find love. But by now many of us are suffering from dating app fatigue. This refers to a state of extreme emotional exhaustion as searching through enormous databases of potential partners on screen appears never-ending. Many people are abandoning dating apps [altogether](#) and returning to more traditional IRL (in-real-life) dating events.

## RISE AND FALL

As a result, the world's biggest dating apps have registered a decrease in the number and [engagement](#) of their users. At the same [time](#), IRL dating events have been increasing in popularity. The ticketing platform Eventbrite says the number of people going to IRL dating events in the US increased by 42 per cent last year compared to 2022. In response to this trend, [Bumble](#) has launched [Bumble](#) IRL and Match Group has launched 72 Hours, both of which organise IRL events, where people connect in person as opposed to online.

## SPEED DATING

One US company has been organising IRL events since long before dating apps became popular: Pre-Dating Speed Dating and [Lock](#) & Key Singles Parties was founded in 2001. Since then the company has organised some forty thousand speed dating and signature [Lock](#) & Key events in 120 cities across the US. Speed dating events have become very popular since the very

first of its kind was held in 1998 in Beverly Hills. It was the idea of a Harvard graduate and rabbi called Yaakov Deyo, who aimed to get Jewish couples together to marry and have families. As everyone seemed very busy, he proposed a way for people to meet as quickly and efficiently as possible: speed dating was born!

## LOCK AND KEY

In **Lock** & Key events, every person identifying as a woman receives a **padlock**, and every man receives a key. The objective is to match the right key with the right **padlock**. This guarantees a fun way to (maybe) find love! To find out more, Speak Up spoke to Linda Delucca, CEO and co-owner of Pre-Dating Speed Dating and **Lock** & Key Singles Parties. We began by asking her about what happens in a typical event. **Linda Delucca (American accent):** Typically, we **host** an event in a nice venue, nice local place, and we're typically having about ten women and ten men, maybe up to fourteen women and fourteen men. And that's really important; you want to an equal number if you can get it. You don't want people sitting by themselves or being **turned away**. And we want the best experience possible because people are nervous and, you know, this is a very personal service. We're not selling you a hamburger! You're opening your heart up at these events. So, the **host** welcomes them, gives them some instructions, they sit down, and then she or he lets them speak to one another for up to six minutes. And you talk about whatever you want. But we have little icebreakers if you get stuck. And most people talk about some superficial things, but it's good to sort of find out what people are looking for. Are they looking for just somebody to have some fun with this weekend while they're in town, or are they looking for marriage and kids? So it's good to make sure that you're on the same page in that way. So as they're going through the event, they're writing on a match **sheet** whether or not they like this person.

## READY FOR REALITY?

As Delucca explains, technology is **banned** in these events, as everyone can agree that it may have made the whole process much harder. This offers a

challenge for participants: to engage with other real people. **Linda Delucca**: It's funny because my partner and I, we both come from tech **backgrounds**. And the first thing we thought was, "Oh, well, we'll just write an app. Why are we using paper and pencils?" But we figured out really quickly that the technology **gets in the way**. The goal here is to get you off your phone, okay? We don't want you **staring** at your phone the whole event. So the paper and the pencil, as old school as it is, it's wonderful because it's not distracting, you know, you're still looking eye to eye to [at] that person. That's what's really the point of the event. So they write down whether or not they would like to talk to this person again. And at the end of the event, if there is interest, they'll exchange contact information and then they'll be able to talk to each other from that point on. These events, classic events, [are] extremely, extremely successful. We have a very high success **rate**, much, much bigger, much better than online. Online, you're generally looking at about a hundred profiles to find somebody to match with. And at our events, let's say you're meeting an average of ten men, you're going to generally match with two or three of them. So very, very good **odds** at our event.

## LOCK AND KEY

**Lock** & Key is a **trademarked** event with an innovative **approach**. Delucca tells us more. **Linda Delucca**: **Lock** & Key is less structured than speed dating. Speed dating is quite regimented: Sit here. We **time** you. You get up. You move to the next thing. You talk to each person a certain amount of **time**. And that's not for everybody. Some people love that. They love the structure of that, but other people don't. And so **Lock** & Key offers them something different. It's a more **loose** [**looser**] cocktail party feel. So, every man gets a key and every woman gets a lock on a little **necklace**, and they go around the room and they try to unlock. And when they unlock, they get a little prize ticket. And at the end of the event, we have a **prize draw** for them. So it's a lot of fun, but it's **loose**. You can speak to each person for thirty seconds or, if you're really intrigued by that person, you could stand there for forty-five minutes and have a conversation with that person. Generally, there'll be at least thirty to fifty men and the same number of women at the event. So

you're meeting a lot of people fast, and what's different about it is that when you have a party or a typical **singles mixer**, the same thing happens: the pretty girl has five guys around her, and the **shy** people are in the corner not meeting anybody. And this gives you the permission and the excuse and the mission to go up and meet every single person at that event.

## POST-TECH HANGOVER

Because we have all grown so used to technology to protect us, many people find it difficult to break the ice with someone they are initially attracted to. You might feel **awkward**, judged or intimidated. Some older daters may have spent years **raising a family** and/or with another person. We asked Delucca for some **advice**. **Linda Delucca**: There's definitely a lot more nervousness and butterflies in an in-person event. That excitement and that nervousness to me is number one part of the fun. And number two, that's a shared experience, and to me, breaking the ice happens when you have those kind of shared experiences. You're both out of your comfort zone, you're going to **bond** very quickly over that shared experience.

## BE YOUR (REAL) SELF

So, what is the secret to a successful date? **Linda Delucca**: I think really the most important **advice** is to be yourself. And I know that sounds very cliché, but that's who you are **at your core**, and you're not going to be able to keep up any kind of facade for very long anyway. So just be yourself and relax and try to open up. [www.lockandkeyevents.com](http://www.lockandkeyevents.com)

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# Glossary

- **backgrounds** = origini
- **singles mixer** = festa per single
- **Grindr** = macina
- **padlock** = lucchetto
- **shy** = timida
- **at your core** = nel tuo profondo
- **hook up** = uscire (con qualcuno)
- **altogether** = del tutto
- **Lock** = serratura
- **turned away** = respingere
- **staring** = fissare
- **awkward** = imbarazzante
- **Tinder** = esca
- **trademarked** = marchio registrato
- **necklace** = collana
- **advice** = consiglio
- **engagement** = coinvolgimento
- **gets in the way** = ostacolare
- **time** = cronometrare
- **Bumble** = bombo
- **banned** = proibire
- **sheet** = foglio
- **approach** = approccio
- **loose** = rilassato
- **prize draw** = sorteggio
- **host** = anfitrione
- **odds** = probabilità
- **raising a family** = formare una famiglia
- **bond** = legarsi
- **rate** = tasso