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## Ready to go steady: Keep up to date with modern dating lexicon



Virtual dating is here to stay, and a significant number of singles are being more intentional about dating or looking for a long-term relationship. PHOTO: PIXABAY



**Benson Ang**

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**SINGAPORE** - As the world enters a new normal under the spectre of Covid-19, how people date has changed.

Virtual dating, for instance, is here to stay, and a significant number of singles are being more intentional about dating or looking for a long-term relationship.

But amid the mushrooming of dating apps, dating agencies are not going away anytime soon and good old in-person dates are still the preferred way to meet.

Ms Lucille McCart, Asia-Pacific communications director at dating and networking app Bumble, says virtual dating - which exploded at the beginning of the pandemic, when meetups were not allowed - will have a place in dating culture well after the pandemic is over.

People, she adds, are now more open to incorporating video calls into their dating routine as a way to know someone better before committing to an in-person date. And many are still having conversations about mask-wearing and vaccination status before meeting.

Following the recent relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, Bumble observes that more than 42 per cent of its Singapore users prefer to meet in-person for their first dates, while 52 per cent are open to virtual or in-person meetings.

Less than 5 per cent want to date only virtually.

Ms Dawoon Kang, co-founder and chief dating officer of Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB), says around 45 per cent of users feel Covid-19 has triggered them to look for longer-term relationships, while 60 per cent say the pandemic has made them reflect more on the qualities they desire in a partner.

Also, 86 per cent find themselves being more open and honest with their matches.

The San Francisco-based app, which turns 10 this year, has made more than 11 million matches in Singapore and facilitates some 600 dates here each day.

Ms Kang says that compared with other dating apps in Singapore, CMB has the largest percentage of users looking for a serious relationship, with most feeling that there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction.

"That is why at CMB, we encourage users to go on real dates by implementing conversation ice-breakers and a seven-day chat expiration to help move the connection offline."

CMB is also testing a new feature in Singapore called Table for Two, in which daters are offered an exclusive deal at a local restaurant partner. Ms Kang says: "We take the work out of planning the date, so daters can focus on just getting to know each other."

In its recap of what 2021 looked like for its members in Singapore, Tinder, billed as the world's most popular dating app, found that ideas for first dates have increasingly veered towards activities that help the parties get to know one other.

For example, the app saw an increase of 2.7 times in the usage of the mahjong emoji in bios as Gen Z users opted to lounge at home on their dates. Requests for a variety of sporty date activities outdoors - such as hiking, cycling and kayaking - also popped up in bios.

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## Virtual dating in Singapore on the rise, due to Covid-19

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### Get off your dating app and go on a real date, says Coffee Meets Bagel co-founder

Picnic suggestions jumped by 92 per cent, while mentions of trips to the hawker centre and Sentosa grew by 27 and 23 per cent respectively.

While dating apps seem to have dominated the dating scene in recent years, there is still space for dating and matchmaking agencies.

Ms Violet Lim, co-founder and chief executive of Lunch Actually, says her dating agency offers safety and confidentiality, which dating apps may not be able to.

And while anyone can join a dating app for free, she notes, most matchmaking services conduct identity and background checks, income and educational verification, as well as checks to ensure that members are legally single.

"It saves singles a lot of time and effort, and they do not have to waste their precious time swiping and chatting with no outcome."

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## Keep up to date with modern dating lexicon

The explosion of virtual dating has led to the emergence of many new dating terms. The Sunday Times compiles a list and gets four experts in the dating industry to give their views.

### **The experts:**

- Ms Lucille McCart, Asia-Pacific communications director at dating and networking app Bumble
- Mr Alex Tam, co-founder and chief executive of dating agency GaiGai by Paktor Group, which also runs a dating app called Paktor
- Ms Dawoon Kang, co-founder and chief dating officer of dating app Coffee Meets Bagel
- Ms Violet Lim, co-founder and chief executive of dating agency Lunch Actually

### Breadcrumbing



Sending out flirtatious but non-committal social signals to lure someone in without expending much effort.

**Example:** "She makes plans with me, but then either cancels or doesn't show up. She is breadcrumbing me and leading me on."

**Mr Tam:** As the name suggests, they tease you with breadcrumbs only to end up not offering you any bread.

If you suspect someone is non-committal and appears interested only when it is convenient, you might want to talk about it - if you are feeling nice.

But really, what you need to do is to start de-prioritising this person - perhaps leave him or her as your backup plan, too, or walk away.

People like that have no intention of staying in your life, so do not let them take up your precious space. Say no to toxicity.

### Fleabagging

Repeatedly dating people who are not right for you.

The term is inspired by British comedy-drama television series *Fleabag* (2016 to 2019), where the protagonist has a string of sexual encounters and doomed relationships.

**Example:** "Stop fleabagging and pining after people who ghost you."

**Ms Lim:** This is quite common for some of our clients. They come to us with a list of requirements, and when we dig deeper on why they have such preferences, it is often because of their past relationships.

In a way, they cannot move on or wish to have closure by dating someone who resembles their ex. Even though we put the right one in front of them, they do not see this as they have not got over their past.

Fleabagging is hard to see for yourself and I would advise singles to get advice or feedback from friends and family members, or go to a dating coach, who can help one see one's blind spots.

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### Love bombing

When a person bombards his or her date with extreme displays of attention and affection.

**Example:** "He is love bombing me - buying so many gifts, and checking up on my whereabouts because he says he gets worried."

**Ms Lim:** We once had a male client who liked his date so much, he surprised her by showing up at her office shortly after their first date. This turned the woman off as she felt he was love bombing her when they had had only one date. So we had to coach him to slow down and not overwhelm her.

I always say the objective of the first date is to get a second one. Do not think about marriage or getting into a relationship. Focus instead on getting to know each other because that is when you find out whether you are compatible, and let attraction grow naturally.

**Mr Tam:** Honestly, this one is not easy to spot. The question to ask yourself is: Are you happy in this relationship? If you feel obligated to continue even when the feeling is not right, it is a sign something is wrong. Trust your instinct and perhaps talk to your close friends about how you feel.

### Slow dating

Being less active on dating apps and dating fewer people simultaneously.

**Example:** "I prefer slow dating because I am emotionally exhausted from the pandemic and do not have the energy to chat with multiple people at once."

**Ms Kang:** It might sound scary, but do not let the word "slow" deter you.

Slow dating can help you find your match sooner because you are devoting your time and energy in a better way.

Instead of downloading every dating app and swiping endlessly through profiles, slow dating allows you to be intentional about how and who you date.

Coffee Meets Bagel embraces the slow-dating approach by suggesting a small batch of potential matches every day at noon. This way, you can focus on a few great people at a time rather than be overwhelmed by a never-ending list of people who might not be a good fit for you.

Slowing down means you can read profiles, make informed decisions, have meaningful conversations and go on even better dates.

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### Consciously single

Consciously making a decision to be single.

**Example:** "I am going to be consciously single for a while and prioritise myself. I will date someone whom I see a future with, rather than date for the sake of it."

**Ms McCart:** The pandemic has made 53 per cent of the Bumble community understand that it is okay to be alone for a while. A majority say they will be more mindful and intentional in how and when they date.

**Mr Tam:** Almost everyone found another side to themselves during the pandemic, and if you realise you love yourself more than the idea of dating, good for you. Prioritising one's wellness and sanity is the secret to having healthier relationships.

### Eclipsing

When someone adopts hobbies, interests or even personality traits to match the person he or she is dating.

**Example:** "She is obsessed with Star Wars and I said, 'Me too', when I have seen only two of the movies. I am eclipsing."

**Ms Kang:** We are all a little guilty of this dating behaviour. It is normal to want to connect with a crush over something he or she loves.

If you genuinely want to try something new or expand your horizons, by all means go for it, but do not feel pressured to impress a date by being someone you are not. When you are dating someone new, make time for the things you love and encourage him or her to do the same.

## Explori-dating

The mash-up of "exploring" and "dating" means testing the waters to understand what works for you and what does not.

**Example:** "I am still young and not really sure what kind of partner I am looking for. I am just explori-dating, being on a few dating apps to have fun and see what my options are."

**Ms McCart:** The pandemic has made single people rethink what they are looking for. In the global Bumble community, 43 per cent now describe their dating style as exploratory and a further 48 per cent say they have reassessed what their type is recently.

## Fast-forwarding

Looking ahead and really weighing if a potential partner fits into that picture or is able to bring what you want.

**Example:** "I know it is early, but I'm fast-forwarding and thinking about what the future might be like - might we meet each other's families, get married or have kids?"

**Ms McCart:** In the Bumble community, 34 per cent say the pandemic has drastically changed what they are looking for in a partner, 61 per cent now prioritise emotional availability and 23 per cent care less about a partner's physical appearance.

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