

Anxiety and Dating



Dating can be challenging at the best of times, but by throwing anxiety into the mix along with a lockdown - dating can seem impossible. If dating is something you want to do, you want to find that 'special someone' or would like to dip your toe into the dating pool and see what happens there are things you can do to help this process along while dealing with anxiety and all that brings.

Anxiety and Dating

Remember...

1. Consider your expectations

Not necessarily expectations of the person you hope to date, but expectations of yourself. When we have anxiety we can automatically assume we will have an anxiety attack, say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing, or over or under talk.

2. Take deep breaths

When you feel yourself getting stressed try to regulate your breathing by taking deep breaths. Alternatively, distract yourself, go for a walk, or try self-care techniques.

3. Be safe

If nervous about safety, tell a friend or family where you are going on your date, or have them check on you through the middle of the date. Alternatively, why not try a double date with friends or go somewhere public?

4. You are good enough

We can feel undeserving of a good partner/spouse, and negative thoughts and doubt can crop into our minds. Just remember that if they didn't like you, they wouldn't have agreed to go on a date with you!

5. Tell someone

Tell your support network about your feelings, your anxieties about the date.

6. Go at a pace comfortable with you

Setting boundaries as to how slowly you want to move things e.g., when to have that 2nd date, to meet for a dinner or just a cup of coffee on a Sunday afternoon. If you start to feel panicked about the pace, tell your date about this – your limits are important and valuable too.

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Remember...

7. What to do if you feel panicked

Remember it's OK to reach out for help, if you feel you need additional support beyond your support network, there are organisations that can help, give you guidance and talk you through managing anxiety.

8. Don't judge yourself too harshly

Being self-critical can add stress on top of stress, and this is not productive at all. If you had a bad day and are too stressed to meet your date, rearrange for another day. If you found you weren't comfortable with the place to meet, suggest another place. There are no rules, and we are only human. Talk this through with your friends, do some self-care and know you are doing the best you can.

9. Look up the place you are going to meet

Having a visual of the restaurant, the parking situation and even the menu can help alleviate some last-minute anxious questions we may have. So why not plan ahead, have a read over the menu to have an idea of what you might like to order, this could get you excited rather than anxious. If parking is tricky, get a taxi/uber or ask a friend to pick you up and drop you off.

Anxiety & transitioning from online/App to Meeting In Real Life!



Online dating or meeting someone on a dating app has become an extremely popular way to meet someone. While there is a wealth of options for what app or website to use or sign up for, the hope is that you transition from messaging one another to meeting in real life. This can be daunting, and given we are so used to doing lots of things online now like ordering our groceries, it is a handy and safe way to get to know someone. So what about that next step, that first face-to-face interaction? What if we have to manage anxiety on top of everything else? Well understandably there may be nerves, but why not try a few of these tips below to help make that next step a little easier?

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Tips to make it easier ...

1. Safety

This can be a big concern, especially having never met in person before. Get a friend to go to the same restaurant a few tables away, or maybe they can sit in the car outside incase you need them. Ask your friend to give you a call an hour into the date, or ask to go on a double date. Try a busy café for the first meet or inform your date you can only meet for an hour on your lunch break. This gives you a good amount of time to know if you like them and there's less pressure due to it being a lunch date.

2. Information sharing

Be aware of what information you give out. If you meet in real life initially, chances are that person knows little to nothing about you and you get to decide if you share your number with them or not, so why should online dating be much different? Outside of basic information needed for your profile, consider how much information you are comfortable sharing with this person, especially at the early stages.

3. Be Yourself!

It would be easy to start up a profile using filters and carefully editing captions and messages that you are sending to your potential date, but, for most, the hope is always that dating transitions from the virtual world into real life. So be yourself, that way you know that person likes you for you. Remember, you can't edit real life! This in turn will help you feel more confident and comfortable meeting.

4. Being Realistic

Just like in real-life dating, online dating comes with its own versions of let-downs e.g. ghosting. While it is never nice when this happens, it is also part of the dating world. However, this doesn't mean you will never find your match!

Anxiety & transitioning from online/App to Meeting In Real Life!

More tips to make it easier ...

5. Support

It's important to have your friends and family to help you through the ups and downs of dating, not only can they help to keep you safe, and encourage you to be you, but can also help you feel better about yourself if you experience the negative side of online dating, so lean on them, meet up for a coffee and a moan! This will not only help you in that situation but help you through any anxious thoughts.

6. Pace

Go at a pace you are comfortable with, if you are feeling pressurised into meeting someone early on, it is OK to take a step back from messaging that person to consider your needs and comfort zone. While it is good practice to give yourself goals to gently push yourself into new situations, there is a limit to this...and only you can know what that limit is. It is also important to remember that if you don't get matched right away, or don't feel attracted to anyone, that's OK! Take your time, consider your options, and know your worth!

Alternatively, if you feel your anxiety is getting worse, negative thoughts are spiralling, or is hard to manage, we have a variety of counselling options available for you at Relate NI.

How Relate NI can help ...

Golden Threads Project

Group Education Workshops

To promote understanding of healthy relationships, our expert Golden Threads Project Team can provide education workshops in youth & community settings in the Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council Areas. These can be tailored to your group, but will usually cover some of the following themes;

- **Relationships & Mental Wellbeing**
- **Nurturing Relationships**
- **Relationship Transitions**
- **Love Yourself**
- **Communicating Well**
- **Managing Conflict**

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One At A Time Therapy

We have recently launched a new single session therapy service, which can support individuals and couples with "#YourOneThing."

We have a limited number of funded sessions available to individuals in the Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council Area.

If you would like to chat opportunities through further, you can email lynseyhassin@relateni.org or by ringing 028 90323454 to speak to one of the Golden Threads project staff.

This programme is funded by the Department of Health's Mental Health Support Fund and administered by the Community Foundation Northern Ireland

Anxiety Around The End Of Your Parents Relationship



No matter what age you are, finding out that your parents/caregivers are separating or divorcing is never easy. You may be questioning why this is happening, maybe you believed they had a strong relationship, and even when it comes as no real surprise it can still be a shock! If, you are also trying to manage the anxiety you may be feeling overwhelmed. Transitions like this, no matter what age you are, or how long your parents/caregivers were together, are challenging. We can easily blame ourselves or think back to scenarios and what may or may not have helped. As much as your parents/caregivers are the ones going through this, it impacts you too. So how can you journey through this?

Anxiety & Separating Parents

How to journey through this ...

1. Ask friends who have separated or divorced parents for their tips.

As much as everyone's experiences are different, you may find you get a tip or two that is beneficial to you. On top of that, you know that person understands what you are going through. They may be able to support you through this.

2. Talk to your parents about how you are feeling.

In healthy parent/caregiver–children's relationships, your parents/caregivers want the best for you, so informing them what the situation is doing to you may help them understand you better and they can advise you on support and options available. Your feelings are valid too...

3. Set Boundaries

If you feel you are being put in the middle or in an uncomfortable situation, consider setting boundaries, and asking each parent/caregiver to respect these. This could be stating you aren't going to talk about the other parent/caregiver, whom the other is dating, you want to take holidays year about etc.

4. Get Support

When managing anxiety, you may already have tools and techniques that work for you, transitions like this are when it's important to utilise these. Monitor this, and if needed, don't be afraid to reach out for additional support through GP or counselling services.

Anxiety & Separating Parents

How to journey through this ...

5. Ask Questions

It's OK to take time to talk to your parents/caregivers together, or separately and ask questions. They may not want to answer all of them, or maybe they want time to heal and you can revisit the questions later. When you know the answers to questions you are informed and can manage the situation better. However, it is also important to balance this with respect for your parents/caregivers, if they are uncomfortable answering, give them space, respect this, and move on.

6. Be aware of changes

Big transitions like this can have their impact, if you find your concentration lacking, or your relationships changing (you may find you resent a parent for the separation, or you lean on a parent more due to feeling unsettled) or how you view relationships changing (you may find you no longer want a long term relationship/marriage, or start to doubt the validity of your relationships)

7. Take Care of Yourself

We can get caught up in our parent's/caregivers' feelings, behaviours, and emotions, and forget about ourselves. This is not healthy as we then tend to suppress our own feelings and emotions, and eventually, this comes out in unhealthy ways. So, it's important to ask ourselves how we are feeling, how we are coping, what emotions are we experiencing etc, essentially, we are experiencing loss, so it's OK to grieve!

Anxiety & Separating Parents



Remember ...

Whatever the circumstances around this, how you are feeling is valid, how you experience it is valid, and just because you are not in the relationship that is ending, does not mean you do not feel the sadness, disappointment, hurt etc that comes along with this. You may find comfort in reaching out to those around you, that aunt that you take to regularly, the cousin you meet every Friday night for a drink or a friend that only lives up the road and is always there for a shoulder to lean on. Be mindful though that when dealing with anxiety, you may need to go that step further to seeking additional support through your GP or counsellor to give that helping hand to manage it...but you are not alone!

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