

**Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Minnesota Now - Looking for love? The Modern Yentas can help**  
**01GQGORMWMPGYVVGPEDSZQBS5S**

CATHY WURZER: We all know that love takes a lot of work, right? And for many, it takes a lot of work just to find someone to love. More and more young adults in Minnesota are putting off finding romantic partnership until later in life. Perhaps some of you listening are one of Minnesota's thousands of single young adults who are interested in a romantic connection.

Well, a group of young adults took it upon themselves to match people up, and they're crediting their Jewish roots for their romantic connecting. Now, this is going to come up here. We have an interview coming up with Modern Yentas. One of them joins us right now is Bex Klafter. Bex, welcome to *Minnesota Now*. How are you?

**BEX KLAFTER:** I'm good. Thanks for having me, Cathy.

**CATHY WURZER:** Thanks, Bex. Now for folks who don't know, what is a yenta? So

**BEX KLAFTER:** Yenta is the Yiddish word for gossip or busybody. People commonly think it means matchmaker, but that's just because that's what they call the matchmaker on the musical fiddler on the roof.

**CATHY WURZER:** So you are a matchmaker really.

**BEX KLAFTER:** Yes. We are matchmakers, but we do love gossip. So that's how we got the name. [LAUGHS]

**CATHY WURZER:** Got it. So how did you get the idea of becoming a matchmaker? Why is it important?

**BEX KLAFTER:** Well, so Natalie and I, a friend from college, we were setting people up casually just when we had friends who wanted to go on dates. We'd think, who do we know who's single?

So then, we thought, let's take this show on the road and we started our own little hobby business called the Campus Yentas. And that was at Carleton. So small, small school. And we thought, it's fun to get to know people, to help people get to meet each other.

And people are tired of the apps. The dating apps are hard, and stressful, and weird. And I mean, no shame to them. I use them as well. But what if there were another option for how to connect with people? So that's how that idea began.

**CATHY WURZER:** How has this changed since COVID created the need for so much social isolation?

**BEX KLAFTER:** So I think especially during this time of isolation, people are really excited to connect. So we had done this at Carleton. We moved to Minneapolis and thought, we can never do this in an actual city. This only worked because we were on a small liberal arts school campus.

But then we met Naomi, who said we could actually do this. So cut to us belting out matchmaker, matchmaker for them on the roof on the common roots patio, and the matchmakers were born.

And so during this time of-- we were setting people up, and then the pandemic hit. So for a while, we went dormant. We weren't doing anything. And then we started offering virtual events, which were very funny. Imagine like meeting people in a Zoom breakout room and the wrong people are in the wrong rooms. It was not as smooth as we'd hoped, but it was fun.

And now, we both offer personalized matchmaking and also events. And I think people really enjoy the opportunity to meet each other in a structured way after so many years of isolation.

**CATHY** Now tell me. Do you have a formula that you both follow? Do you-- what do you consider-- how do you consider  
**WURZER:** who to put together?

**BEX KLAFTER:** That's a great question. So we get information from people if they sign up for personalized matchmaking, they fill out a Google form where they say things about them, both demographic info that's really important. And obviously, things like age and gender and sexuality.

And then they also answer things like, what do you like to do? And describe yourself? And do you prefer cats or dogs, beaches or mountains, chocolate or vanilla? Silly things like that.

So after we've filtered people out in our big spreadsheet by demographic information so we know that people might be interested in each other, we read their descriptions and then we go from there. It's not super scientific. It's more just based on the information they give us.

**CATHY** But do you have a gut feel?

**WURZER:**

**BEX KLAFTER:** Yes, definitely. What's really-- yes. [LAUGHS] I think in my head, I create an image of what this person is like. So they like dogs and they like beaches. And they're a homebody, but they like going out. And they're 36, and they're interested in men, and whatever it is.

So in my head, I'm thinking of them as this imaginary person based on what they've told us. What's really funny is that very often, we'll set people up or most often we don't hear back from them. But sometimes, they'll say, wow, y'all are good. This is actually my roommate, or we used to date, or that's my friend. And that and that feels like, OK, we're onto something with the gut feel there.

**CATHY** What do you think makes people compatible for each other? What's the secret sauce?

**WURZER:**

**BEX KLAFTER:** That's a great question. I think that people are compatible mostly based on having shared values. And otherwise, it seems to be random. Some people get along well when they have the same interests and the same ways of being in the world. Two extroverts can get along. But sometimes, there's a great couple that have seemingly nothing in common.

So I think that beyond sharing whatever the core values are that someone identifies for themselves, that can be important to have in a partner. But otherwise, I don't know if there's any specific formula for a great match other than just connecting.

**CATHY** So I'm going to put this to the test. We want some dating advice from you. And we got this letter from a listener.  
**WURZER:** They asked, I'm quoting now, "I am new to dating apps and have talked to just a few people on them." I met one woman who I really like. On paper, we have so much in common. And on our first date, she was really kind, cool, and seemed emotionally available." All good signs.

"But I don't think I felt that romantic spark. I feel like this has happened to me a couple of times. People are perfectly great, but I'm not immediately attracted to them." She asked to see me again and I'm not sure if I should go. I want a spark. Is that too much to ask for?" So what do you think?

**BEX KLAFTER:** That's a great question. I don't think a spark is too much to ask for. But I'd be curious to know what this listener defines as feeling a spark. I think that personally, I find it hard to feel really connected to someone I've just met, particularly if it's from a dating app. So we don't have any common ground. We're just getting to know each other.

My advice to this listener would be, if they're up to it, go on one more date and ask really good questions. I honestly sometimes like to have the *New York Times* 36 questions to fall in love list at my ready.

**CATHY** That's a good one.

**WURZER:**

**BEX KLAFTER:** Or you could always ask the Modern Yentas. We have lots of good speed dating questions. And from that date, if they're willing to go on another one, figure out, do you have those core values in common? Things like how important is religion and politics and family? And how do you how do you treat a waiter? How do you treat your mom?

But other than that, your getting to know them I think is probably the best way to build that spark. The idea that you can just go on a date with a stranger and immediately fall in love probably does happen for some people. But for me at least and for many people, it takes a while to build that foundation of connection and to know them well enough to know if there is going to be a good spark.

And for example, I meet new people all the time and might think that they seem cool. But it takes many meetings and many times of getting to know them to really feel like, oh, this is someone that I want to pursue some relationship with. So my advice is just take your time.

Good on them and good on everyone for trying. Dating is scary and putting yourself out there is hard. And hopefully, that helps and that spark will come once you get to know each other better.

**CATHY** So are your clients looking for-- they're looking for love obviously. Are they looking for marriage?

**WURZER:**

**BEX KLAFTER:** I don't know. [LAUGHS] Some for sure. And we have-- so in our time, we have set up couples that have had a wide variety of outcomes and some who I think are heading towards marriage hopefully, year 5 of their relationship. So that's pretty exciting.

Some people definitely are looking for their life partner. Some people are just looking to get out there and date. Some people are looking for something in between. It's really a huge range.

**CATHY** I can only imagine. Oh, my gosh! Bex, I appreciate your time. Thank you and best of luck.

**WURZER:**

**BEX KLAFTER:** Thanks, Cathy. Thanks for having me.

**CATHY**

**WURZER:**

Bex Klafter is one of the Minneapolis Modern Yentas, otherwise known as a matchmaker. You can find their upcoming events and personalized matchmaking services on Facebook and Instagram by searching the Modern Yentas. That's Y-E-N-T-A-S. Their next speed dating event is for folks over 35 who identify as queer. It'll take place this Wednesday, January 25th 6:00 PM at the Next Chapter Booksellers in Saint Paul.