

BY NIAMH WALSH
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FINDING love in modern times can be a romantic minefield. Time's up on office dalliances and the internet can be both a daunting and dangerous dating game.

But romantics and love hopefuls still searching for the perfect partner are turning to matchmakers in the hunt for 'the one'.

Modern-day matchmaker Jennifer Haskins has been playing cupid for over a decade running Two's Company and she says that never before have so many singles been looking for a life partner.

'We launched in 2008 but in 2009 things really took off and we were travelling the length and breadth of the country, even though it was during the recession it just took off.'

And she says it is all ages who are enlisting her talents to help reignite romance.

'With girls it starts from around 38 but with guys it's from around 30 upwards, but we cater for people from around 28 to 80. So long as people are fit and healthy there's no reason why they can't meet someone. I always say if people are looking for love and they're out there, there's no reason why they can't meet someone.'

Drawing from her personal background Jennifer says she has the skillset to help others find a lasting relationship.

'I had been a member of an agency myself years ago and I had met somebody. My background is in psychotherapy and counselling and coaching so I had always dealt with people and helped people. So a lot of the skills I had developed over the years, they were the skills that you would need for running an agency. For me I thought there was a great synergy there and I had thought it would help me in helping people search for partners.'

'I had also been in business for 23 years in manufacturing so I had the business background and I was also interested in human behaviour and relationships and what makes people tick. A lot of people coming for counselling relationships were then at the top of the pyramid, so it all just came together,' she says.

And she says that men are still looking for looks while women want a man to make them smile.

'Men are visual. A lot of times for a man it is about the attractiveness. Women look for qualities in men. Obviously we look for attractiveness and we like to be attracted to a partner, but women look a bit deeper - how will this person behave, how will they treat me, are they inter-

ested in me and are they interesting? Men want all of that but the attractiveness is up there at the top. Women like men who make them laugh, so sense of humour is very much up there.'

And with Valentine's Day just behind us, Jennifer says that these are times when being alone really hits home.

'People make New Year resolutions, or people may have had a Christmas that wasn't great, if they spent it on their own, so that can highlight it if they're on their own.'

'But it is generally steady streams. We do have peaks, like Christmas and Valentine's, that are more emotive.'

'October is very busy coming up to Christmas, because they want someone if they are going out or if they have functions.'

Explaining the process, Jennifer

If you're seeking 'the one' look no further

Matchmaker Jennifer Haskins shows Niamh Walsh the path to love



CUPID:
Jennifer
of Two's
Company

says that security and privacy are paramount for prospective partners.

'When someone makes contact we have a chat and explain everything that's involved, how we operate. Then we make an appointment to meet you one-to-one, either in our offices or we have representatives around the country.'

'Then we meet for a consultation and we get to know you, who you are, what you are looking for. We

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ask a lot about yourself, your background, past experiences, what elements of those relationships worked and what didn't, what your aspirations and goals are. Then at that stage if I think I can look after you, I introduce you to people who I think match your expectations and who I think would match your levels of compatibility.'

'It's at that stage then you decide if we are the right fit for you and if you want to join up and then we discuss the different levels of memberships. Then you choose which one is appropriate.'

'We do a profile which is basically all the information about you in a format that we can use to introduce you to people. So, your private information is kept totally confidential, your surname, address, where you work.'

'Other information is passed on to

prospective dates, your personality, your character, your qualities, occupation, background, marital status, whether you have children, hobbies and interests. So it is a fairly comprehensive overview that you get.'

'Then, all going well, we give them your mobile number. Then it's just a quick chat over the phone to decide where you are going to meet, if it's drink, lunch, dinner or a walk, so you are in full control, you decide where you're comfortable to meet and when you are comfortable to meet. Then you come back and let us know and give us feedback, what elements you liked or what elements didn't work.'

So if shows like *First Dates* and Netflix's hugely popular *Love Is Blind* have you in the mood for love then turn off the telly and meet your match.