

"Meeting" People for Dating During a Pandemic



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My last article about dating that appeared in this paper talked about ways to use your isolation time in smart ways. But my

single clients are getting restless and frustrated after 6 months of isolation and are wondering how they can keep their partner search going while also social distancing to stay safe.

Many safe dating options to consider

So, since things are improving in Bucks County and some places are open for outdoor activities, let's explore some options for safely connecting with new people. These suggestions, of course, primarily apply to ways to meet face to face with folks you've already gotten to know online through an Internet dating site, Facebook group, or other virtual activity such as a seminar, class, museum tour, or club/civic meeting.

My clients who use online dating are saying that they can safely start the getting-to-know-you process by reaching out with an email, following up with one or more phone calls, and then having a video chat, FaceTime call, or even a two-person Zoom meeting.

Slowing down the search process

In what I see as a very healthy new dating trend, singles are now spending more time than they did before COVID to gradually get acquainted with prospective partners—establishing a "comfort level" before they rush into meeting. Ultimately, I think this could prove to be a big benefit that might result in more success in your dating endeavors.

Once you feel comfortable with a person and know a fair amount about his/her interests, personality, and background through the online profile and the various interactions the two of you have had, one of you can propose safely meeting in person (which is, of course, the only way to find out if there's a mutual physical attraction and then to decide whether to "continue the conversation").

Gayle Crist, M.S., has been a dating coach since 2005. She helps singles over 50 discover places to meet like-minded people, prepare to date again after divorce or widowhood, improve their dating confidence, and succeed with online dating. Gayle is also a motivational speaker and author of *How I Met My Second Husband Online* at Age 50. Information about her dating coaching services is at www.datingsuccesscoaching.com. You can reach her at 267-245-3023 or gayle@datingsuccesscoaching.com.

Getting outside for those first meetings

While the weather is still nice this fall and even into November, you may consider getting outside for some meetings. I've listed below several ways you might do that (face masks recommended) if you feel comfortable venturing out. Any of these would make for an unconventional but fun first date or meeting—certainly more interesting than the standard going out for coffee or dinner:

- At a park for a picnic breakfast or lunch at a table big enough to sit 6 feet apart or for a socially distanced walk and/or some time swinging on the playground swings
- At a bike trail where the two of you can stay 6 feet apart as you first introduce yourselves, ride your bikes, and then nosh on the snacks you packed as you chat afterward
- At a drive-in movie where you can park your cars next to each other and talk before and after the movie through your car windows. More and more places are showing films this way now. There are 4 real drive-ins within an hour's drive of Doylestown: <https://www.bigscreen.com/Marquee.php?view=nearby&zip=18901&range=50&scope=all> And keep your eyes and ears open for other organizations that are showing films outside.
- In a downtown area where you take a 6-foot-apart walk around town for some window shopping or sight-seeing
- At an outdoor venue where it's easy to stay 6 feet apart, such as:

- 1) Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ (near Princeton), which lets you reserve "timed tickets" in advance. Having been there several times, I can tell you it's a lot of fun to walk the grounds taking photos of the amazing sculptures and learning more about your companion by comparing

notes on your favorites. More info is here: <https://www.groundsforsculpture.org/visit/guidelines-faq/>

- 2) Nature centers such as Churchville Nature Center in Churchville
- 3) Gardens and arboretums such as Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve in New Hope
- 4) Wineries with tastings and outdoor seating such as Buckingham Valley Vineyard in Buckingham, Chaddsford Winery Tasting Room in Peddler's Village, and Crossing Vineyards in Washington Crossing. See this link for a complete list: <https://buckscountyalive.com/business/wineries.cfm>

Or how about a unique indoor option?

You could share a meal on Skype. Imagine arranging to meet online for a candlelit dinner date by each eating the same foods while you converse, sip wine or cocktails, and maybe play some music you both agree on in the background. In my opinion, the planning part of this could be fun—and could even reveal some commonalities or surprises about each other.

So, what do you think? Would you feel comfortable trying one of these ideas? If so, do you have some questions or need moral support before moving forward? I'm happy to help.

If you'd rather fine-tune your online dating profile and/or strategy first so you can make best use of your time contacting, screening, and getting to know potential dates, I can help there too. My specialty is keeping you motivated to keep searching for and meeting people for dating. A pandemic doesn't have to derail your dating life. *Let's talk!*



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