

Newlyweds and Beyond: What Can You Do¹ ?

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Introduction

There are many different modalities through which singles may meet dates, ranging from using a more traditional matchmaker, to meeting through friends, to dating events and websites. Nonetheless, there are still singles who find it difficult to find prospective dates. We as a community can no longer leave this responsibility upon the shoulders of a few dedicated individuals. All members of our community can play a major role in assisting the matchmaking and meeting process. This article will target a few segments of our community and suggest specific steps they can take to involve themselves in the shidduch process.

Newlyweds

Some people think that newlyweds are too young, busy and inexperienced to involve themselves in *shidduchim*. However, the fact that a young couple is blessed with finding their soul mate should inspire them to assist others in finding theirs as well. Given some direction, if every young couple is empowered to dedicate **two hours a week** to helping facilitate dates for their single friends, many more marriages would take place. Consider the impact on our community if every married couple felt a responsibility to help facilitate at least **one** couple's marriage! Young couples are closer to the age range of the average dater and know them more as friends than as matchmakers. This makes the entire process more comfortable for everyone. Prospective daters are more likely to listen to suggestions if they originate from a friend who knows them, rather than a *shadchan* who doesn't know them as well. There is also a side benefit for the couple themselves. Thinking of possible dating ideas together and facilitating dates is a wonderful bonding activity and may enhance the beginning of their marriage experience.

Here is a simple step-by-step process all newlyweds should try:

¹ Many of the ideas herein and more can be found in my monograph entitled "Sound Advice," available on YUTorah.org.

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- After settling in to your new apartment or home, sit down and make a list together (on paper or computer) of all of your single friends in two columns, one for men and one for women.
- Read the list a few times and jot down notes if you think of any compatible matches.
- If you don't know all the relevant background information or have lost touch with some of the people on your list, call/e-mail them and set up a time to catch up and casually ask what they are looking for in a prospective mate.³
- If you have a specific match idea, make the initial phone call to each party and set it up.
- Understand that the measure of success in this area is not defined by whether or not each couple you set up marries, but rather by whether they had an enjoyable date. This indicates that your idea was on target.

If at first you do not succeed, try again and do not get discouraged. Do your best to avoid setting up “random” dates with people who do not have much in common. Try to look for similar interests, aspirations and backgrounds/*hashkafa* when considering a possible match.

It is also advisable that you connect with an older couple, who may be more experienced in this endeavor and who can guide and mentor you for related questions or concerns. This way you will not feel as hesitant to suggest a match or offer some advice to those who are dating. Additionally, community leaders should consider facilitating this process by matching up couples with years of experience in the area of *shidduchim* with neighboring younger couples. For example, my wife and I are fortunate to reside on the YU campus in Washington Heights, a beautiful growing community of young couples. We recently ran a workshop for young marrieds in our area, where we presented on how to be effective *shadchanim* and offered advice as they begin getting more involved in facilitating dates for their friends.

Married Couples

But what if you are no longer a newlywed—what can you do for the single community? Don't worry, there is much to be done.

#1 - Open your Home

If you are comfortable opening your home, consider inviting singles to your Shabbat tables as often as possible. We sometimes forget that singles are an integral part of every community in which we live. Get to know and befriend them. Once a month, invite six to eight singles and have a mixed meal. A relaxed Shabbat table is one of the best and most comfortable ways to meet people. If you are more adventurous, get in touch with an organization and offer your home for a singles' event, or donate your time to that organization.

³ A helpful tool that I advise others to use is referred to as the “4+4” model, based upon the writings of Rosie Einhorn and Sherry Zimmerman in their book *Talking Tachlis* (1998). The basic idea is to delineate four personality traits or interests that are unique to an individual in order to help the *shadchan* get a better understanding of who they are and what makes them different from others. Some examples of traits are: outgoing, creative, bookworm, intellectual, free-spirited, organized, ambitious, warm, artistic, patient, and spiritual. Then think of four characteristics that you feel would match or complement with someone else.

#2 - Be a Mentor/Role Model

Act as a mentor or sounding board for single friends who are dating. Provide encouragement and support throughout the sometimes difficult dating process. Even if you assist one single or dispel one concern, you have made a major impact on their lives. In addition, invite couples who are dating to join your family at a Shabbat or weeknight meal together, which offers them a perspective on seeing the other within the context of other adults and a family setting.

If you have children of marriageable age, do your best to model appropriate perspectives on the dating process by focusing on the essence of the individual, and not on the outer trappings of externals and money. Encourage your friends and children to look for good *middot* and similar aspirations. Have your sons who are dating consider suggestions of women who are a little older than they are.

Singles

Singles are also great contributors to the broader dating process. In many communities, singles host Shabbat meals and organize events on a regular basis. These are wonderful initiatives and have led to many dates and marriages. In addition, if a prospective date does not work for you, consider whether that person is perhaps more suitable for a friend and try to facilitate their meeting each other.

Chazal (*Vayikra Rabbah* no. 8) teach us that G-d Himself spends time every day making *shidduchim*. If the Almighty has time for this holy endeavor, then we surely must carve out time from our hectic schedules to do whatever we are capable of and to share in the communal responsibility of building more Jewish homes and hastening the final redemption.