

Nathan, 31

 Here to date



Cara, 28

 Open to chat



Badoo's Dating  
Confidence Report

**BADOO**

## Foreword

Badoo is one of the largest dating apps in the world, with millions of members across the globe. Our mission is to help daters build confidence so they can have more enjoyable, healthier dating experiences, regardless of what they're looking for.

We've commissioned this report to hold ourselves accountable, but also to provide insights—to daters and the wider Badoo community, as well as other apps and platforms. We can, and should, work together to make online dating a kinder, safer, and more valuable experience.

## In light of this year's findings, Badoo is making the following confidence commitments:

1

We'll no longer contribute to the creation of dating trends that fuel negative perceptions and behaviours.

2

We'll only work with influencer talent who we think are authentic and realistic in how they present themselves online.

3

We'll work to identify bad behaviour in dating so we can minimise its impact on our community's well-being.

4

We remain committed to the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.), ensuring human intelligence comes first and A.I. capabilities don't damage the authenticity of our community.

5

We'll continue to pioneer dating technology to meet the needs of daters as identified in this report, starting with the launch of Deception Detector™, a machine learning model that has demonstrated 99.5% precision in combating spam, scam and fake accounts.

To keep up-to-date with how Badoo is making dating a more confident experience, visit [Badoo.com](https://www.badoo.com) or [Badoo.com/the-blog](https://www.badoo.com/the-blog).

# Today, there are more people than ever using dating apps,

with the online dating community worldwide numbering over



**366  
million**

as of 2022<sup>1</sup>



## **But our recent research<sup>2</sup> reveals there is a huge opportunity to improve daters' experiences, especially when it comes to boosting confidence.**

One in five (19%) daters surveyed said their confidence in dating is at an all-time low, with a quarter (25%) saying they find it hard to put themselves out there when it comes to their dating or romantic life. Nearly three quarters (71%) said a lack of dating confidence has caused them to delete a dating app profile.


Even those who have previously felt good about online dating say their confidence has taken a hit lately. Almost one in three (34%) daters surveyed who reported low dating confidence say their confidence has actually decreased over the last six months. Almost a fifth (18%) said they used to feel confident dating, but no longer do.

People come to dating apps to find love, romance, fun, and connection. Instead, some find themselves feeling overwhelmed, disappointed, anxious, or cynical. This in turn can lead to dating burnout.

Here at Badoo, we want to help daters make meaningful connections that lead to real outcomes and greater possibilities. We also want them to enjoy the experience. It is our mission to bring back confidence, and support our community to make the most out of meeting new people online.

We've identified eight key factors feeding into this 'confidence crisis' that we need to address if we want to build a safe and healthy dating landscape for the future. But we can't do it alone. It's the collective responsibility of dating platforms to support members' mental health and help people feel good about finding and forming positive connections.

**Dating isn't perfect. Like all human interaction, there are highs and lows. Putting yourself out there is a vulnerable thing to do, and no platform can control human behaviour. What we can do is help equip our members to navigate it.**

  
**No one should feel like they can't enjoy online dating. It's up to us to do better.**

<sup>2</sup> The research was conducted by Censuswide on behalf of Badoo, among a sample of 8004 18+ Respondents who are single/using dating apps or have used dating apps within the last 6 months in the UK, France, Germany and Spain. The data was collected between 20.09.23 - 05.10.23. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

## The case for confidence

# It's simple: our research shows that when people feel confident, they have a better time.

Almost a third of daters surveyed (32%) said having greater confidence allowed them to be themselves—itsself a major indicator in self-esteem and dating satisfaction. They also noted that when they felt confident they enjoyed chatting to people more (33%), felt more open to meeting people (33%), had more fun on dates (27%), were more likely to say yes to dates in the first place (26%), and had more conversations on dating apps (20%).

No surprise, then, that a quarter (25%) say feeling confident while dating has a positive impact on their mental health. It's clear that addressing confidence has the power to unlock greater dating well-being, positivity and, ultimately, outcomes for members.

On the flipside, when people struggle with low confidence, they not only stop enjoying themselves, they actually begin to lose faith in dating altogether. More than one in five (22%) of daters surveyed said, when they've felt low in confidence when dating, they've felt like they're going to be single forever.

Low confidence can also lead to self-blame, with almost a fifth (19%) saying that low confidence causes them to lose trust in their ability to find someone. Over time, daters surveyed even start to believe they'll never have a positive romantic relationship (19%), with many telling themselves they'd be better off alone than risk a negative dating experience (26%).

These feelings of hopelessness have real world implications. One in six (17%) daters surveyed said that low dating confidence had a negative impact on their mental health. Similar numbers (17%) have felt the need to take a break from dating in order to improve their mental health. Almost one in five (19%) said it caused them to feel bad about themselves, with 21% saying it made them feel hopeless and as if they'd never have a successful relationship.



**Spanish Psychologist Lara Ferreiro contends that low confidence and/or self-esteem can have a significant impact on mental health and the dating experience:**

**“Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem are two interrelated and mutually reinforcing issues. Self-esteem refers to the value we place on ourselves. When someone has low self-esteem, they tend to have negative thoughts about themselves and feel out of place. This can lead to indecisiveness and avoidance of certain situations, such as meeting new people”.**

Over time these feelings can lead to self-sabotaging behaviours, making it even less likely the person will find a partner or have a good experience. Nearly a fifth (17%) of daters surveyed said they find themselves ignoring messages from potential matches due to lack of confidence, with similar numbers (20%) saying they struggle to even go on a first date as they're too nervous. Almost a fifth (15%) say they do not initiate conversations, whilst 18% are even turning down dates due to lack of confidence.

**We find ourselves in a situation where people are leaving dating apps feeling worse than when they arrived. At Badoo, we see this as an opportunity for change.**

**Rather than focus purely on what isn't working, we want to turn our attention to how to improve.**



**Chris, 36**



Here are the



eight key areas

we have identified



1

# Calling time on negative dating trends





Over the last decade, naming dating trends has almost become a trend in its own right.

Who among us cannot reel off at least a handful? From ghosting to vulturing, catfishing to breadcrumbing, the list just gets longer every year. The aim is to affirm daters' experiences, empower them to weed out unsuitable matches, and focus their energy on positive connections. But here's the thing: it's not helping. In fact, it's making people feel worse.

The proliferation of negative dating trends is crushing confidence. The following trends make people most nervous about dating:

Gaslighting

94%

Love Bombing andBreadcrumbing

92%

Catfishing

90%

Ghosting

88%

It's entirely understandable that people would feel this way. Being on the receiving end of this kind of behaviour has a very real impact on self-esteem and dating confidence. In fact, the vast majority of daters (88%) who have experienced these behaviours agree that they have affected their dating confidence. Many (38%) did eventually feel able to start dating again after a period of hesitancy, but others (25%) said it had such an impact on their confidence that they have not dated since.

But it isn't just the behaviour that's causing this dent to confidence, it's also the fear of these behaviours. While recognising and calling out bad practises can be useful, it can also lead to hypervigilance and paranoia. The rise of dating trends was the third most-cited influence on people's views of dating.

By focussing our attention on what could go wrong, and intricately labelling every poor decision or moment of thoughtlessness, we are fuelling pessimism and self-doubt. The result is that daters are missing out on positive connections.

Badoo now believes that constantly consuming reports and commentary on negative dating trends is worsening people's confidence. This is why we are no longer going to unnecessarily perpetuate news of negative dating trends or behaviours. Instead, we believe it's time to focus on positive reinforcement, encouraging people to spot green flags - and to recognise the moments when they felt confident.

## UK Dating & Relationship Coach Persia Lawson shares her 'Green Flags' to look out for when dating:



1

### Open & Honest Communication

Open and honest communication in dating cultivates a sense of trust and transparency, which allows both people to feel safe enough to express themselves freely. This feeling of safety is an essential component of all healthy relationships.

2

### Respect for Boundaries

When the person you're dating respects your boundaries, this demonstrates their capacity for empathy and their willingness to honour your limits, which in turn fosters a mutually respectful connection.



3

### Shared Values & Goals

Shared values and goals are one of the strongest signifiers for long-term compatibility when it comes to romance, and provide a strong foundation for the potential of a happy and fulfilling relationship in the future.

4

### Trustworthiness & Reliability

People who consistently follow through on their promises and act with integrity automatically establish a feeling of trust, which encourages a deeper and more meaningful connection with the people they date.

5

### Mutual Independence & Space

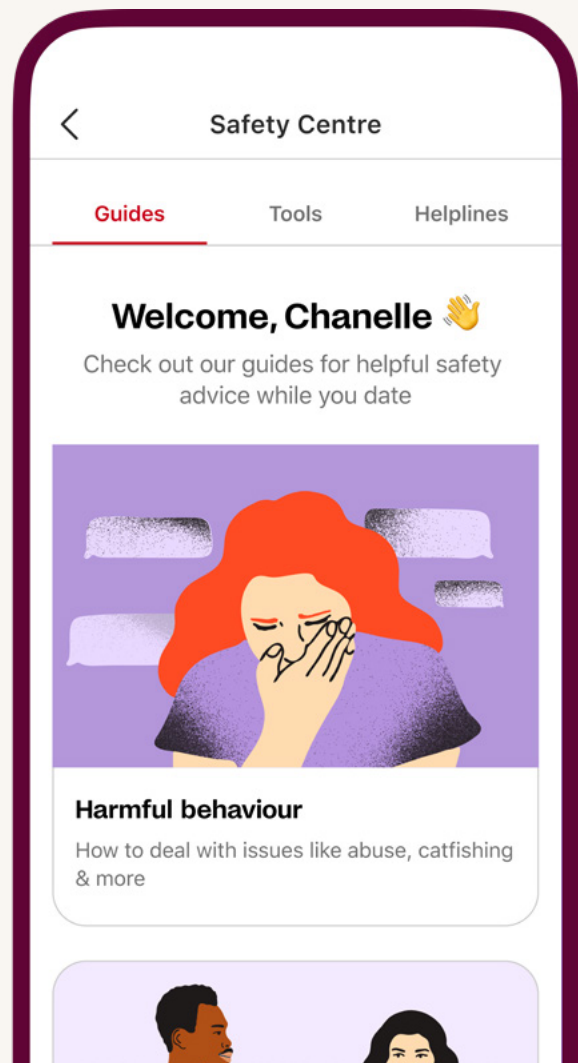
Balancing individuality and togetherness is a key factor in healthy relationships. When both partners respect each other's need for personal time and hobbies, it builds trust and enables the relationship to flourish - without either person feeling suffocated or dependent on the other.

**Unfortunately, it isn't possible to completely eradicate unkind behaviour on or offline. But we can rid it of some of its power.**

Dating platforms can help by nudging conversations that have gone quiet, sending prompts and check-ins to encourage members to stay real in their interactions, and ensuring our reporting mechanisms are clear and accessible.

We need to enable members to spot when things aren't quite right as well as support them to notice and appreciate when they are.

**It's no fun being on the receiving end of these experiences, but we can take steps to ensure they don't derail the whole experience.**





“Negative behaviours say nothing about you, but everything about the other person”, says Lucie Mariotti, a Relationship Expert from France. “However, if you find yourself having to deal with them, here are three simple tips you can put in place to protect yourself:

1

**Remember that this attitude has nothing to do with who you are, but with the other person’s way of doing things.**

2

**Do NOT add fuel to their fire! In other words, don’t follow up, or try to understand, negotiate, or insist. This would be pointless and could potentially make you feel even worse.**

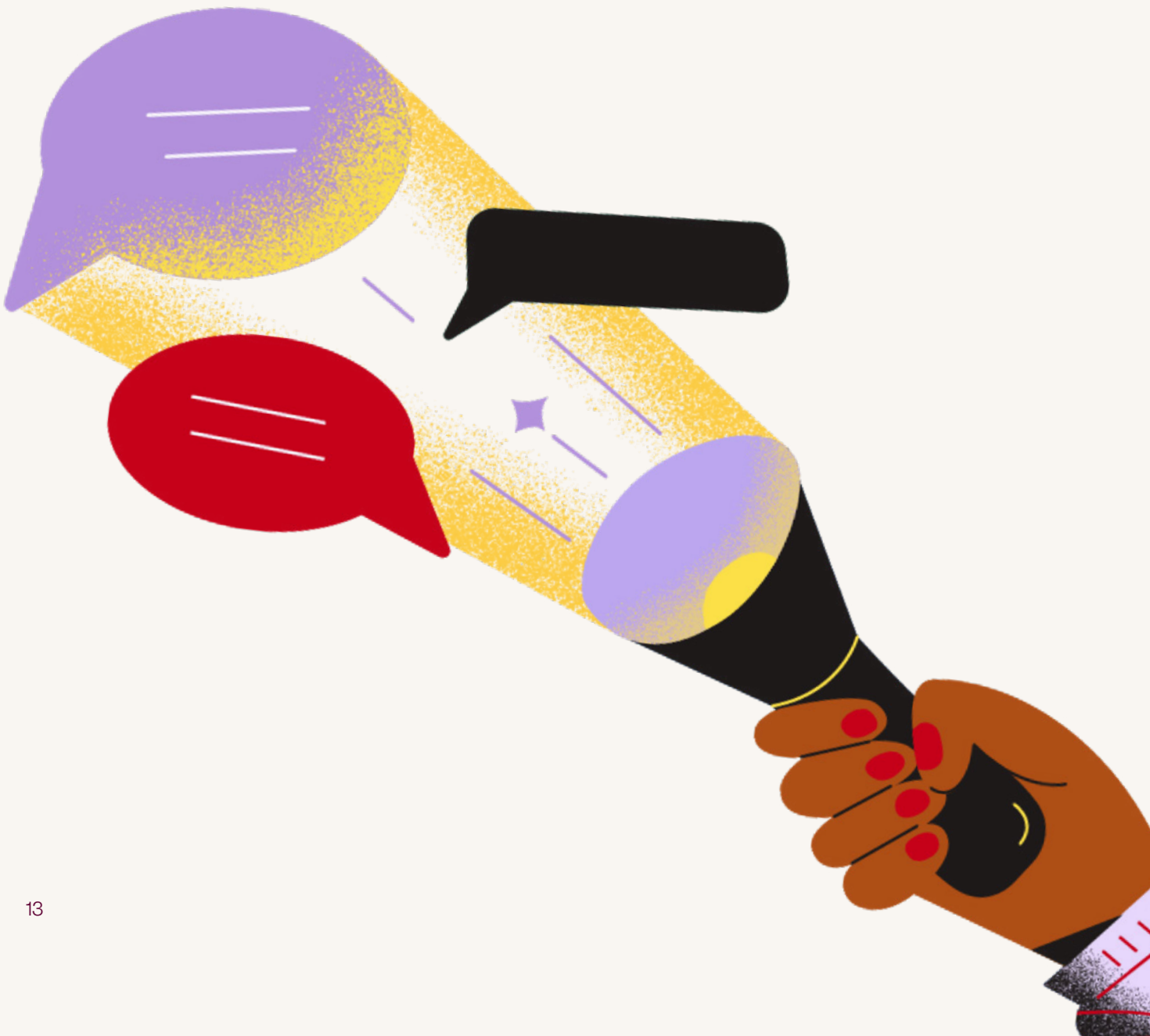
3

**Take a break. Take the time to digest, and don’t go back to dating without having taken the time to heal the wound. This will enable you to come back in great shape, and therefore in the right conditions to meet new people.**

Whilst Badoo’s [Safety Centre](#) has tools and guides to make daters aware of bad online behaviour and this report has provided some expert guidance on how to minimise its impact, we know there is more we can do. This report will continue to guide developments to help us continue to build a more confident dating experience for all.

2

# Fear of fakes



With true crime podcasts showcasing the horrors of catfishing, and TV shows about scammers and swindlers surging in popularity, it's not surprising that huge numbers of daters report feeling anxious about who they're talking to online.

Not knowing if the person they're talking to is who they say they are was the number one thing that made 38% of daters feel nervous or less confident, with almost half (46%) of women surveyed citing it as a concern.

This is often a fear born out of experience. Over a third (37%) of daters surveyed say they've met people through dating apps who turned out to have lied about themselves or who did not look like their profile picture. Meanwhile, others (35%) say they have lost confidence in dating apps because it's "too easy" for people to be fake or lie about themselves.

This is where stringent verification processes need to come into play,

with all dating platforms committing to weeding out fake or overly-doctored photos before they make it onto people's profiles. Indeed, daters agreed that knowing the person you've matched with looks like their photos (31%) and knowing that people are using unfiltered pictures (28%) would inspire confidence.

The advancement of artificial intelligence (A.I.) poses a slightly different challenge because it applies not just to pictures, but to the content people read and the conversations they have. Over a fifth (22%) of daters surveyed said they worry A.I. is making it easier for people to be fake online and nearly one in five (15%) actually claim to know people who have used A.I. in their dating profiles or when using dating apps. Naturally, they are concerned that this comes from a place of unkindness and ill-will.

However, we need to consider the possibility that people are using A.I. not in order to trick potential matches, but out of their own lack of confidence.

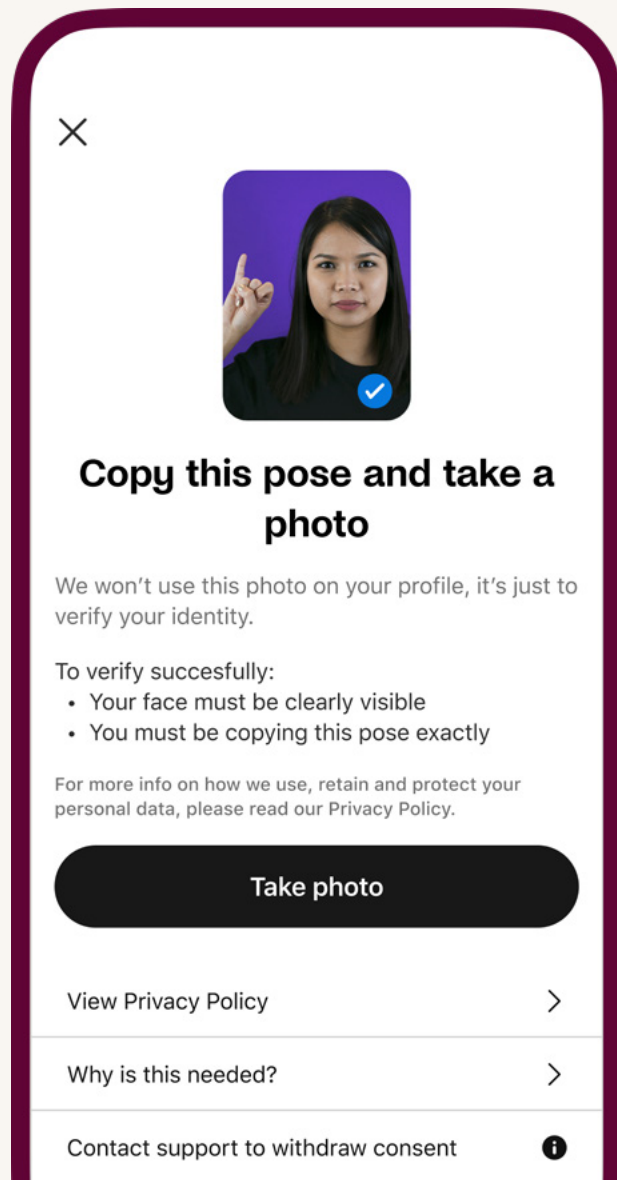
### **Richard Watts, General Manager, Badoo, commented:**

"A.I. actually has the potential to help people across the world find their happiness more quickly, safely, and easily than ever before. We're not talking about artificially influenced connections, virtual relationships, or automated conversation. We're talking about using A.I. to inspire conversation starters that help daters feel secure and confident before they start chatting to a potential match. We're talking about enhanced matching algorithms, and improved safety measures.



We know dating can be daunting for some, and the research is clear: it's impacting our confidence and self-esteem. At Bumble Inc., we're laser-focused on addressing the concerns of our members through responsible innovation. We're looking at ways to apply A.I. technology that help our community feel safe, secure, and confident - and that better enable us to connect as humans. The introduction of our Deception Detector™ is a great example of this."

More than a fifth (21%) of daters said their dating confidence would be improved by having tips and advice on conversation starters and ice-breakers. Perhaps, rather than stoking more fear, platforms need to try to support people to understand and use A.I. responsibly. Profile-writing prompts, photo suggestions, ice-breaker games, and ideas for opening lines can all be a part of this, as well as features such as voice notes and video calling which facilitate A.I.-free interactions from the get-go.



3

# The authenticity dilemma



In a cynical online world, it's easy for authenticity to become little more than a buzzword. When everyone from brand strategists to social media influencers are using it as a hashtag, it can become hard to work out what's real and what's a performance. Still, daters are striving for authenticity—both from themselves and others.



**“Feeling like I can be myself”**

was cited as the number one influence (32%) on confidence levels when dating, with Gen Z daters in particular (28%) saying that finding a way to embrace their most authentic self when dating would improve their confidence.

It's clear that people recognise the benefits of “being yourself” and want to approach dating with openness and honesty, but the vast majority struggle to believe that other people feel the same. **More than four out of five (81%) daters surveyed said they do not think people are honest and authentic on their dating profiles.** And more than nine out of 10 (92%) said they feel there is a need for people to be more real and authentic when they are dating.

**Daters find themselves caught in a dilemma: they recognise that being themselves would make them feel more confident, but their lack of confidence in other people's intentions stalls their attempts to be authentic.** It's a classic chicken-and-egg situation. Not least because our findings also show that

when people feel confident in dating, they're more likely to feel like they can be themselves (32%). And many seem caught in the middle, craving authenticity but still aspiring to a fantasy. Over a quarter of daters (26%) said they wanted romance to feel inspirational, fantastical, and escapist.

**Daters desperately want authenticity but they struggle to fully embrace it themselves in an online world where everything is curated.** When they don't completely trust what they see and hear from others, or when they suspect people of manipulating the truth, being genuine feels vulnerable. But this is precisely where platforms ought to be able to help.

**A dating profile is not a confessional; it's a snapshot, a starting point.** Apps need to be using the right prompts to help members feel comfortable presenting themselves authentically while promoting understanding that it's okay to hold some things back. Openness and intimacy come when people get to know each other.

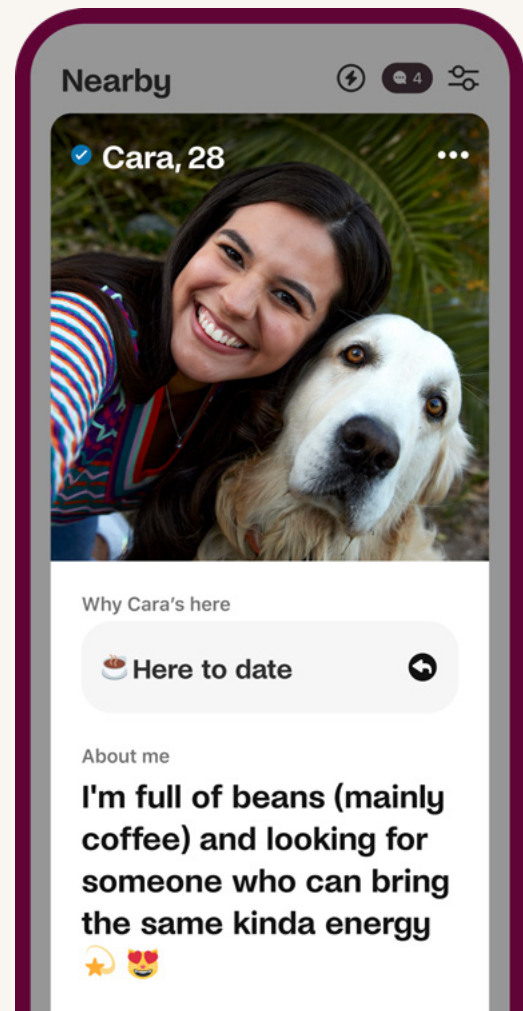


**Germany's Sex and Relationship Expert, Paula Lambert, says,**

“You have no choice in life but to be yourself: that’s a thought that can be scary. Why? Because you make yourself vulnerable. At least, it seems that way. The truth is different. If you show yourself as you are, you can quickly weed out those who don’t suit you. Because if you only show an embellished version of yourself, you will attract people who want to be with this inauthentic version, or are at least interested in it. And that never works in the long term. So, take heart! The faster the wrong people say goodbye, the faster there is room for the right ones.”

When it comes to dating, authenticity isn't just a buzzword. How we present ourselves and view other people online really matters for our interactions. When we stop seeing people as “real”, it’s much easier to be unkind, or to treat them carelessly—and being on the receiving end of this can destroy dating confidence. Meanwhile, it’s only through being authentic that we find our most meaningful connections.

Solving the authenticity dilemma requires building both confidence in how we present ourselves online, and trust in what we see from other people. Platforms can support this, and also help build community awareness of it, in the way we prompt, check-in, and suggest, as well as through our tips, advice, and encouragement.



**Lambert continues,**

“Showing your authenticity is the ultimate green flag. You can recognize an authentic person by the following points:



The person dares to show themselves as vulnerable—for example, they talk about past hurtful dating experiences. This shows their honest, authentic side - and that they talk openly about feelings, pain, and weakness.



Your date doesn't expect you to be happy all the time, because let's face it, that's not realistic in our complicated lives.



The person can laugh at themselves. This shows they don't take everything too seriously and are fallible, which helps create closeness.



The person is capable of apologising. This is very important! Especially if they've behaved inappropriately or made an insensitive comment.



In general, authentic people tend to be more personally responsible, and acknowledge where they have got room to grow.”

4

**Connections feel better offline, but are more readily found online**





The vast majority of people don't come to dating apps looking for penpals. We know that human connections are better IRL, and half of daters surveyed (50%) would actually prefer to meet people offline than on an app. But daters also acknowledge that they lack the networks, skills, and opportunities to do that, admitting they find it harder and harder to meet someone in person rather than online (38%).

With dating confidence at an all-time low for many, daters are feeling caught between a rock and a hard place. More than a quarter (26%) said they don't want to use dating apps, but they don't know how else to meet people.

We're seeing a situation in which people resent the time they have to spend online trying to find a partner. They feel like they have no choice but to use dating apps, but they don't enjoy the experience. What used to feel like fun now feels like a chore. In order to change this, the focus needs to shift away from racking up matches—and more towards turning matches

into meaningful conversations, and conversations into dates. The ability to chat and learn about people online before meeting up has the potential to improve confidence, with a quarter (25%) of daters surveyed saying they find it easier to chat to people via messages or apps than in real life. Boomers in particular (36%) say that being able to chat online before meeting up makes them feel more confident.

Despite the disillusionment, the daters we surveyed do still want to make dating work for them, expressing the desire to turn more conversations into dates (20%) and make a conscious effort to meet potential partners in real life (31%). Platforms have an opportunity to play an important role in boosting confidence with ice breakers, conversation starters, as well as prompts and nudges to encourage chat, keep the momentum going, and help people get from first match to first date without losing their nerve.



5

# Mindful dating as the antidote to overwhelm



With so much of our lives now facilitated through our phones, dating can start to feel like just another piece of admin. And when that “admin” doesn’t lead to a satisfactory result, it’s easy to lose confidence. Almost a fifth (19%) of daters surveyed find dating overwhelming, and a quarter (25%) have felt disappointed by their dating experience.

If it’s repeated over and over, as is often necessary with online dating, this disappointment can spiral into feelings of hopelessness (21%), or the belief that you’re going to be single forever (22%). If online dating becomes a hated chore that you “have no choice” (26%) over, it’s not difficult to see why so many people feel the need to take a break or delete their profiles altogether.

Studies suggest that having too many options can actually lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction<sup>3</sup>. Rather than being a benefit, research has found that the more potential partners people have to choose from, the more likely they are to become critical, and the less satisfied they tend to be with their choices.

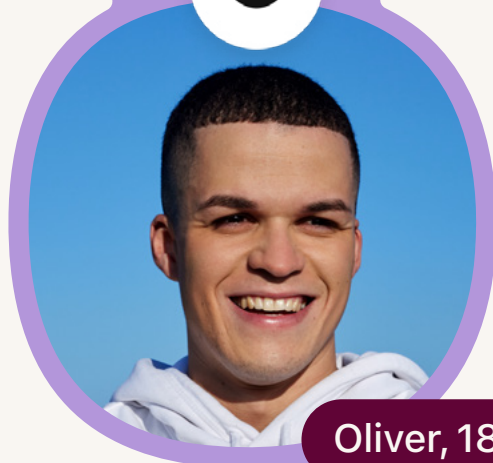
Most daters surveyed (55%) are just looking to date one person at a time, with almost a third (30%) noting that, rather than having lots of ongoing chats, they’d prefer to find “quality connections.” **When limitless choice has become the norm, it’s no wonder they feel overwhelmed and disengaged.**

There are ways to tackle this within dating apps. Platforms can consider limiting the number of likes or matches each member can have, or using prompts to get people chatting to their existing matches before they go looking for new ones. Checking in to see how people are getting on, how the conversation is, if they’ve checked our safe dating tips, and whether they have plans to meet up (and if so, how it went) could also encourage members to be present and intentional.

It should also be possible to take “holidays” from dating apps without missing out on potential connections. Many non-dating platforms such as retail apps allow users to set an “out of office” when they’re going to be away for a while so customers know what to expect from communications and service. On a dating app, a feature like this would allow members to set healthy boundaries for themselves and help manage expectations from other daters.

**Dating shouldn’t feel like a chore! We want to encourage people to be more mindful in their approach to dating, creating healthy boundaries for themselves, setting realistic goals for how much time they want to spend dating, and taking breaks whenever they need to in order to conserve time and energy for their hobbies, friends, family, and the other things that bring them joy.**

Anna, 20



Oliver, 18

<sup>3</sup> Pronk, T.M. and Denissen, J.J. (2019) ‘A rejection mind-set: Choice overload in online dating’, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 11(3), pp. 388–396. doi:10.1177/1948550619866189.

# Persia Lawson shares ways to be more mindful with your dating:

## 1 Take Regular Breaks

Keep a sense of perspective, avoid burnout, and prioritise self-care.

## 2 Create Realistic Dating Goals & Boundaries for Yourself

Focusing on the role you want dating to play in your life - especially regarding your time - is crucial for maintaining a healthy balance.

By establishing clear time limits (such as times of day or the week to spend on a dating app), you prevent the risk of feeling overwhelmed or disappointed by the dating process, or becoming too emotionally invested too quickly, allowing relationships to develop organically.

## 3 Take the Lead

Another tool is to create a rule whereby you have to start a chat with everyone that you match with. This shows respect and acknowledges the effort both parties put into swiping and matching. It also opens the door for potential connections that might not have been immediately apparent from profiles alone.

## 4 No Swiping when Drunk

Given that alcohol impairs judgement, swiping on dating apps after a few too many inevitably leads to hasty decisions that don't always align with your genuine preferences.

Why not utilise features like app time limits. This ensures that you approach dating with a clear mind, increasing the likelihood of forming connections that are actually compatible and meaningful.



# 6

## Everything is content





Few of us will be surprised to learn that social media is a major player when it comes to breaking down confidence, but as the way we use the internet evolves, so too does its nuanced effect on our perception of dating.

Social media is the number one thing the people we surveyed cite as having a negative impact on their dating confidence (32%), with over a third of Gen Z daters (36%) feeling affected by it.

By now, it's well known that social media creates unrealistic expectations and promotes perfectionism, which itself has a negative mental health impact<sup>4</sup>. But daters struggle with the cognitive dissonance that comes with being aware of this and yet still susceptible to it.

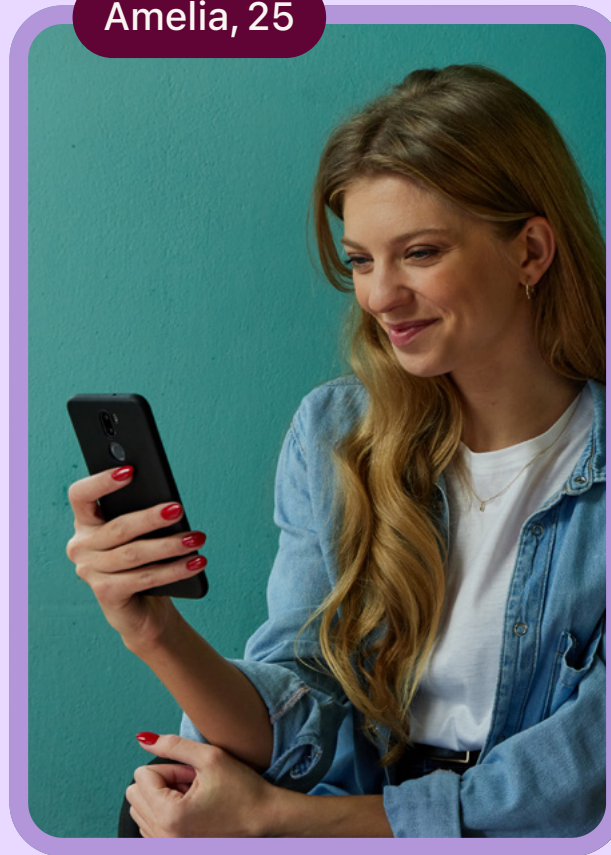
**Daters believe that people purposefully portray a different version of themselves on social media. They know that what they're seeing isn't the whole story, but it nevertheless makes them feel disappointed with their own life and relationships (36%).** Many resent how easy love and romance is made to look in the media, including films and TV (30%), and find the scenarios depicted—such as grand or expensive gestures—unattainable (26%). They wonder how a “normal person” like themselves could possibly be expected to live up to that.

**Seeing friends posting about their partner being their number one fan, supporter, or their “rock,” but never posting about their let downs, their conflict, or the things that drive them mad, creates an idealised version of what romantic relationships should be.** Celebrities and influencers posting huge romantic tributes, trailing their big relationship “announcements” (whether or not they break up weeks later), and filming “get ready with me” videos before glamorous dates and glitzy events all feed into the narrative that dating should be one long party.

Even satirical videos and ironic “POV” memes create the impression that “everyone else” is enjoying fun and intimacy 24/7 while many daters are struggling to get their matches to commit to a second date. As the most online generation, it's perhaps not surprising that Gen Z daters are particularly likely to compare their romantic situation to what they see their family and friends posting on social media. They say it creates unrealistic expectations and dents confidence (25%), as do women across all age groups (23%).

The rise of dating trends has allowed for a surge in social media dating advice. While some of it can be educational, other parts of it can actually serve to muddy the waters, making daters second-guess themselves and see everything as a “red flag” when it may not be.

Amelia, 25



<sup>4</sup> Sirois, F.M. and Molnar, D.S. (2015) 'Conceptualizations of Perfectionism, health, and well-being: An introductory overview', *Perfectionism, Health, and Well-Being*, pp. 1–21. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-18582-8\_1.

Bad dating behaviours and conversational faux pas have now become memes, with people screen-shotting chats to express amusement or outrage and invite comments on their “toxic” exchanges. Stories of prank messaging, such as only responding to conversations with song lyrics, have become a common theme on social media.

The maxim that “everything is content” not only sets daters up to believe that their romantic lives need to be exciting and “shareable” at all times, it also makes them fearful. Nobody wants to wind up as someone else’s content, posted online to shock or ridicule. Such displays of unkindness affect people’s ability to relax and be themselves. Some of this can be addressed by dating apps themselves. Platforms can

send warnings to users attempting to screenshot and potentially share other members’ content in this way. Checking in with members to see how the chat is going and offering tips for getting things back on track such as prompting the use of a question game, which apps like Badoo offer, might be another way to encourage people to find better ways to connect meaningfully.

**At the same time that social media contributes to ultra high standards and unrealistic expectations, it also creates anxiety and pessimism around members’ abilities to make positive dating choices. This is having a detrimental effect on dating confidence. To counter this, it’s vital to support members to block out noise and focus on what’s important to them.**

Luna, 41





Lara Ferreiro believes that “instinct is your secret weapon”. She shares her top five tips on letting go of what you see online and listening to your gut when dating:

1

Recognise and remember that social media is not reality. People tend to show only the positive on social media.

2

Try not to get caught up in trends or behaviours that don't reflect who you are and what you feel comfortable with. Crucially, be emotionally responsible with the people you get involved with.

3

Dismantle unrealistic myths about love. There are no fairy tales.

4

Listen to your instincts. If something makes you uncomfortable, don't ignore it. Your subconscious mind is sending you a message.

5

Take a break from your phone. Set aside a specific time for dating and don't obsess. For example, no more than two hours a day. Or tell yourself you'll have a Saturday without using social media.

7

**Expectation  
vs reality:  
what are  
you REALLY  
looking for?**





Almost two thirds (60%) of daters surveyed acknowledged they have had unrealistic expectations of dating and relationships, and among Gen Z that number climbed to 66%.

Social media definitely plays a part in this, with “unattainable” displays of romance feeding people’s disappointment with their own life and relationships (36%). But so too does consumer expectation, which increases as more and more needs are met. **In dating, the goal is no longer simply to meet someone you’re compatible with, it’s to meet a soulmate who “can handle you at your worst” but also shower you with rose petals and balloons on top of the Eiffel Tower on New Year’s Eve, and make sure it’s all caught on camera from a flattering angle.**

Sex and relationship therapists point out that as our cultural norms regarding love and marriage have evolved to allow for more choice and freedom, so too have our expectations. It’s not that daters are asking for too much, it’s that they are expecting too much from one person<sup>5</sup>. By reflecting mindfully on what they want most out of their dating experience, people might realise that they don’t need a potential partner to tick every single box, but can also look to friends, family, colleagues, and their community to fulfil some of their needs.

**People might feel their expectations are too high, but when you drill down, what they’re really seeking are genuine connections.** When asked about their dating goals for 2024, finding real connections rather than having lots of ongoing conversations was the second most-cited desire. The same number of people said they wanted to make a conscious effort to meet potential partners in real life. The desire and intention to turn more conversations into dates came in at number three.

We’d like to ask our community: If dating could look any way you wanted it to, what would you actually choose to do with a match?

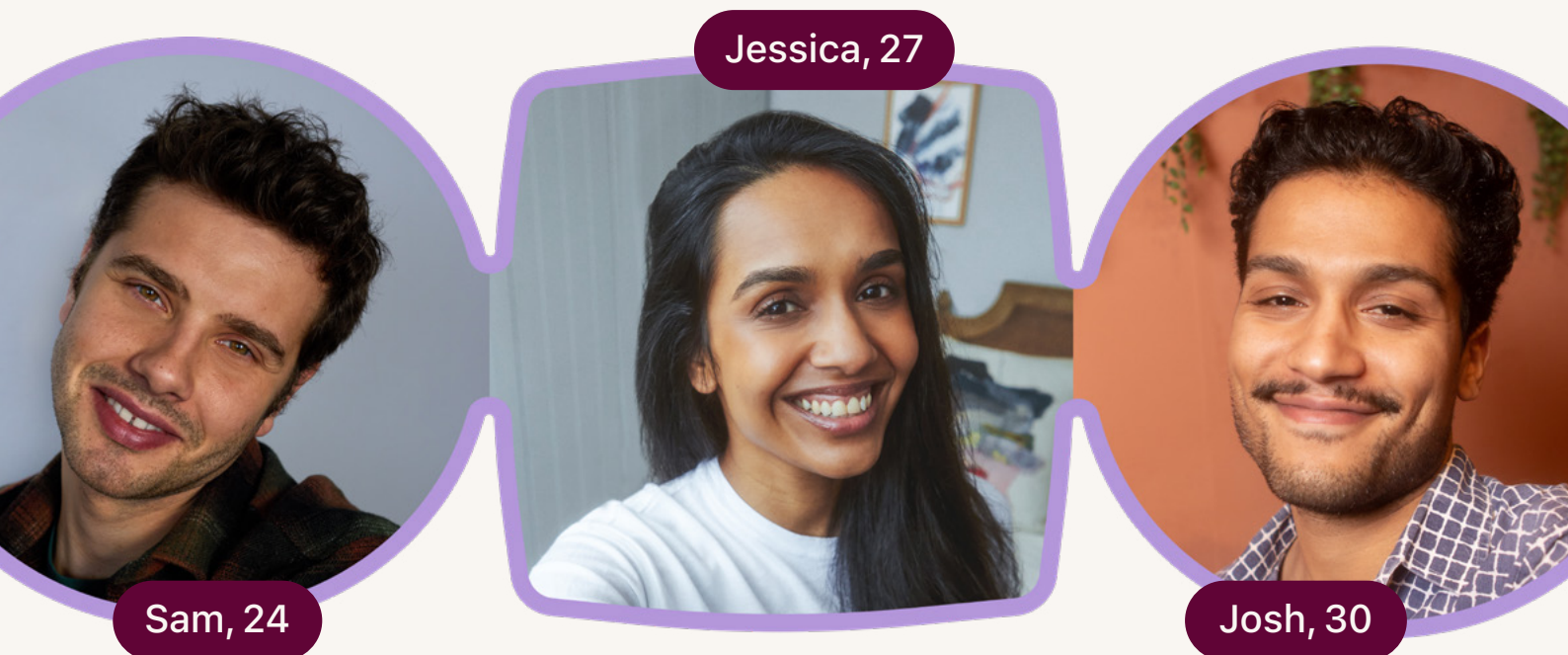
Of course, some people genuinely love fancy restaurants, and that’s great. But if the idea of going for dinner doesn’t spark joy, you don’t have to go on those kinds of dates. Daters should be encouraged to organise dates around doing things they actually want to do. The key to having an enjoyable dating experience isn’t to mimic what you see on social media or picture in your mind when you think of “a good date”. The key is to do things you find enjoyable. Don’t enjoy expensive bars? Don’t go to them. Check out a car boot sale together. Go to the zoo. Take a walk by the canal. Again, platforms have a role to play here too. When making suggestions for dating activities it’s helpful to be diverse to cater for what is the reality and ‘normal’ for the majority of people.

Daters said they’d feel a lot more confident if potential partners were more honest about what they actually like (38%). Being up front and open about dating intentions was also cited as a way to inspire confidence (38%). But that goes both ways. **If people want integrity and openness from their matches, they need to start being honest too, starting with themselves.**

**To counter unrealistic expectations, daters should shut out the noise of what they’re seeing and hearing online. They need to let go of social media-influenced ideas and misconceptions about what a romantic relationship “should” be and listen to their gut.**

**Paula Lambert says that we must ask ourselves a few questions to find out what we want from dating:**

“Namely, why you want another person, which part of your life would it improve, and whether you are really ready to accept another person for who they are. Many people want a partner because they believe they’re not enough on their own, so they’ll take anyone. Of course, that’s not healthy. Spending time with yourself is the most important relationship you can have. This is how you grow, explore, and understand what you want. And know that a partnership should not be about filling a void within you, but rather enriching what is already great with something just as great.”



8

# Embracing nervousness



While online dating can help remove barriers to meeting potential partners, it doesn't eliminate the feelings of nervousness that come with dating. Many of the people we surveyed admitted to struggling with nerves, whether trying to start a conversation or going on a first date.

Meeting someone in real life for the first time was shown to be a particularly nerve-wracking experience, coming second in the top 10 things people said made them feel nervous or less confident about dating (26%). Not knowing what to say also scored highly, coming fifth, with almost a third of people (24%) saying they've experienced this dilemma.

Platforms can undoubtedly help here, and many of us already are, with chat prompts, ideas for questions to ask each other, and suggestions for opening lines—all features that daters say they would welcome. However, these findings suggest that apps could be doing more to offer coaching, tips, and advice on conversation starters and ice breakers, something almost a quarter (21%) of daters say would help boost their confidence.

**But it's also important to note that feeling nervous is normal. In fact, only 4% of daters surveyed said they don't have any nervousness about dating, which shows that nerves are an authentic part of the dating experience.** They can even be viewed as a good thing, showing that you care about the outcome. We know that anxiety, particularly in anticipation of an upcoming event, is physiologically very similar to excitement. Studies have even shown that rebranding (or "reappraising") anxiety as excitement not only helps people feel better, it actually improves their performance<sup>6</sup>.

The fact that people feel nervous about dating could therefore be taken as a positive sign. After all, dating should be exciting and invigorating. The goal, then, should not be to do away with nervousness altogether, but to feel confident enough to date while nervous. Fostering kindness in the face of awkwardness, and helping members develop the skills to cope with nerves will be a really important part of building dating confidence.



<sup>6</sup> Brooks, A.W. (2014) 'Get excited: Reappraising pre-performance anxiety as excitement.', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143(3), pp. 1144–1158. doi:10.1037/a0035325.



**“Dating is exciting and that's exactly why it's so fun!” says Lambert. If you're nervous about something, the following tips will help:**

1

Own your nervousness. Say it right from the start. Because of your honesty, the other person can immediately let down all protective walls.

2

Know that the other person is just as nervous. Portraying yourself to someone is exciting and nerves come with that.

3

Get hyped up by your friends before the date! Have a confidence-boosting pep talk with people you trust. Involve them in the fun of getting ready by asking them what they think you should wear or if they have any conversation tips.

4

Find a cool location. Sitting across from each other in a quiet bar can be nerve-wracking. Consider doing something active to loosen you both up like a walk in the park, a bike ride, or bowling.

5

If you drink alcohol, please do not use it to dull your nerves.

Going forward:

New rules



for confident dating



Our findings show that we are at a pivotal moment in online dating. Daters want to find romantic connections and have positive dating experiences. They know that apps offer the best chance of doing that, but they've lost confidence in

themselves and lack trust in what they see online. At Badoo, our mission is to help rebuild this confidence, reduce fear and cynicism, and empower members to be themselves in their dating experiences.

## The key ingredients to people having greater dating confidence, are:

- 1 Feeling they can trust that who they're seeing or speaking to is for real.
- 2 Reducing paranoia and hypervigilance about negative dating behaviour.
- 3 Feeling clear in their own intentions and trusting that their matches are being genuine, too.
- 4 Being able to ignore what they see on social media, and focusing on what works for them.
- 5 Intentional dating where they're able to relax, be present, and be themselves, in their dating experiences—on and offline.

This is where we need to be if we want our members to get the most out of online dating. Through our focus on kindness and our commitment to authenticity—in terms of the talent we work with, the features we offer, and the technology we employ—we at Badoo will support our community to match, chat, and date with confidence.

To kick things off, we asked daters what dating behaviours would help rebuild their confidence and make online dating enjoyable again.

Hey 🙌 love your last pic!



Hey! thanks 😊

# Together with Dating & Relationship Coach Persia Lawson, we have come up with the new rules for confident dating:

1

## Be your authentic self

Being authentic while dating is crucial for establishing genuine, confident connections.

Be honest about your interests, values, and aspirations from the outset, and avoid pretending to be someone you're not; this will only lead to misunderstandings later on.

Badoo encourages the use of interests, moods, detailed profile creation and the ability to add video clips and question responses to your profile so that every member has the opportunity to express the real them.

2

## Respect boundaries

Respecting boundaries in dating is essential for cultivating a sense of trust – a non-negotiable component of all healthy relationships.

It goes without saying that you should always seek consent and never pressure your date into activities they're uncomfortable with. Be mindful of their feelings and show empathy towards their needs; if a boundary is set, honour it without question or negotiation.

Guidance is available to support members with the unique dynamics of dating conversations, along with Badoo's comprehensive safety tools, all available through Badoo's safety section and Blog.





3

### **Be upfront about your dating intentions**

Being upfront about your dating intentions helps establish clear communication and mutual understanding from the start. It shows respect for your potential partner's feelings and time, allowing them to make informed decisions about their own involvement.

Badoo provides the ability for all members to clearly state their dating intentions and change them when they feel the need.

4

### **Reply regularly**

Replying regularly to your dates is a sign of respect and consideration. It shows that you value their time and are genuinely interested in getting to know them. Consistent communication helps build trust and keeps the connection alive, preventing misunderstandings or feelings of neglect. It also fosters a sense of mutual effort and investment in the relationship.

Badoo continues to focus on tools like 'Quick Hello' and conversation driving games - aiming to minimise small talk and improve the number of quality chats.

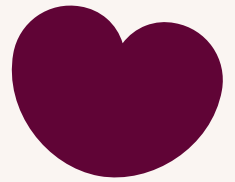
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### **Make an effort on dates**

Putting in effort on dates is essential because it demonstrates genuine interest and respect for the other person. It shows that you value their company and are committed to making the experience enjoyable and memorable for both of you.

We hope the insights and expert guidance throughout this report has been useful. Badoo has never been more focused on helping daters feel more confident so that we can connect people to greater relationship opportunities than ever before. We hope you will join us on this journey. Until then...

**Here's to**



**confident**



***dating***