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SAN FRANCISCO'S JAZZ
ICON PAULA WEST

LOVE IN THE
TIME OF COVID

BLACK WINES
MATTER - A TOAST
TO BLACK WINE
PROFESSIONALS

CARLO PONTI
PROVIDES MUSIC AS
AN UNITING ART



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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE ELUSIVE STREET
ARTIST FNNCH

Haute SEAT

BY STEPHANIE BLOCK

Amy Andersen



HAS COVID RAVAGED CUPID? IS PANDEMIC PARTNERING POSSIBLE?

Exclusive Linx Dating Founder Amy Andersen Socially Distances and Tells

BEING SINGLE DURING A PANDEMIC: BLESSING OR CURSE? IT IS HARD TO SAY, SINCE coverage on singles has been scant. The dominant story has been about families coping with shelter-in-place orders, but what about the demographic that represents almost half the country: singles? How are they doing by themselves? Or are they by themselves? Our expert guide to all things solo is none other than the ultimate Silicon Valley matchmaker, Amy Andersen, founder of Linx Dating. She lets us peek inside her little black book to let us know how the fun half is doing.

Q&A

HAUTE LIVING X AMY ANDERSON

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC CHANGED THE DATING WORLD?

I want to start by saying that this is so new for everyone. We are all just trying to navigate it all. March was quiet. There was decreased activity both for my current clients as well as inbound interest of potential clients. People were sitting tight; the situation was scary and unknown. Then we fell into a tenuous comfort with this new life, and clients and prospects got more comfortable with the concept of dating during COVID-19. Around early April, singles living alone were like, okay, I'm antsy. They have been really challenged with this pandemic in that it has created a lot of loneliness.

The silver lining is that it gave people time to look within, to think who am I and what do I want? What am I really looking for in a partner, and when restrictions lift, how can I go about finding that right match? It was interesting to see their criteria shift and evolve in a positive way, not just trading in one trait for another, but maturing overall. This is refreshing.

I'd say COVID is polarizing. There is a percentage of people—I would say 25 percent of my clients—who have frozen their accounts and are just going to hunker down with friends and family to get through this. The other 75 percent are warming up to the idea of in-person dates with safe practices. The clock is still ticking, especially for women who want a family. They may have the attitude of why wait? Bring on the men!

WERE THERE ANY TROUBLESOME DATING TRENDS THAT THE PANDEMIC HAS PUT RIGHT?

Pre-COVID, a majority of my clients utilized multiple resources for dating, a lot of irons in the fire towards the one goal of finding the right match. I don't tell people to only use Linx Dating. I say to be strategic. Dating is a skill. But if you have so many irons in the fire it can get crazy. The online dating apps are high volume and involve quick, visceral, yes-or-no judgments. Pre-COVID, these traits transferred into the Linx experience. People were quick to give up in a superficial way. We had to retrain that way of thinking and look at someone from a holistic perspective, going deeper into a potential mate's character and values, personality, faith, and goals. This is a value-add that Linx brings to the equation. During COVID, clients have generally become more thoughtful in their approach.



HOW DO YOU THINK THINGS WILL PLAY OUT GOING FORWARD?

I have been evolving with my clients as we figure things out together. At first, I was bullish on Zoom dates. I was all about having a first phone call and then doing a virtual date: virtual museums tours or cooking dates or answering The New York Times "36 Questions That Lead to Love" together.

How it's played out is that matches who stay in "Zoom land" are kind of in cruise control. It's a little bit static, like floating down a lazy river. They might not be feeling the chemistry. It's hard to ascertain sparks when you're chatting through a computer screen. Body language is so important to chemistry, and even scent and pheromones. Seeing people in the flesh is critical.

At this point I encourage my clients to cut bait from the virtual as people emerge and get more comfortable with being out. Some matches have been nervous to suggest meeting in person. They don't want to come across as not caring about another's safety. It's almost better if I'm the one to suggest a picnic six feet apart or a distanced walk, and you each bring your own beverage. So I liaise and enable them to explore chemistry in person once they have established a connection through the virtual. Most have felt more sparks in person.

Business-wise, I'm trying to stay as accessible as possible to clients, checking in with them and keeping them on track. My client just told me: "You are my coach. I paid you the big bucks so I'm going to listen to you!" I think this is the new normal. People can easily let things stagnate and fizzle if someone's not encouraging them.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COVID SUCCESS STORIES?

Two couples come to mind. One couple in their mid-thirties, both Ivy League graduates who really connected very deeply and cerebrally through virtual dates. They opted for heavier topics in early stage dating—politics and religion—they really got right in there! I might say don't broach these topics early on, but it worked for them. They are also elite runners and run safely together. This couple is an interesting one and a lot of fun to watch.

What could become another relationship really blossoming in a dark time is this one: she's in her fifties and he's in his sixties. Both are divorced, with adult children. He has a more liberal stance over COVID and is bothered by California's lockdown policies. He wanted to find a similar match. I found him a vivacious Brazilian woman who has a similar *joie de vivre* attitude. They go biking and picnic on the beach, and feel those sparks.

People feel most cautious when it comes to getting physical. This decision is a very personal and individual one for my clients.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR VIRTUAL DATING?

Clients are fatigued with Zoom. They have back-to-back meetings all day and, the next thing they know, they have a 7:00 p.m. Zoom meeting with a Linx match. They have no chance for a break or a shower to end the workday and transition to a date. They show up to a Linx date disheveled and distracted. I had a lovely client who arranged her space nicely, lit a candle, and put on a chic blouse. Her date showed up, Zooming from his office at the end of a busy day. She picked up on those signals from him. So, I recommend putting a break in your day. Take a walk, clear your mind, and then shift the mindset into dating mode.

Also be mindful of your first impression. Order that hair dye online and cover the grays. I was getting highlights religiously, and now I'm doing Garnier myself at home. A couple of clients don't want to do their own hair, so they're wearing cute sun hats on daytime walks with dates.

IS THERE SOMETHING SINGLES CAN DO TO PREPARE FOR LOVE DURING THIS TIME?

THIS IS THE BEST TIME, whoever is reading this, to prepare for the love of your life! Get yourself mentally and physically ready. Gyms might be closed, but we have access to the great outdoors. I am running on weekdays now. This new habit helps me get into a centered, focused mental space. Physical health also supports mental health. When you feel good about yourself, you attract that right person into your life.

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Meanwhile, do a vision board! I think it is a great time to think about what you are looking for in a match. Look at patterns of the past, the type of person you have been with, and see what did and did not work. Then really start to map out the person you seek, the characteristics for long-term success. Write those out. If you have only dated one type of person, from heritage to profession, consider going outside of that. What cultures you might be open to? What is non-negotiable? For instance, what if the person has children? And have fun with your vision board! Images for impact are what you are looking for in your life: positive visualizations. I am such a believer in that. Put it out there to attract it into your life. To me, this is an exciting time: make yourself the best version you can be and take advantage of this time when the world has slowed down.

HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY PRACTICE LOVE AND CONNECTION?

I have loved this time of connection to my family. My son is five and a half, and I have a 12-year wedding anniversary coming up. I've really loved weekends. Usually everyone would be scattered, but in COVID, we get to spend time together as a unit, spending a whole day hiking and exploring as a family. Then we have a wonderful dinner together. I'm cooking more than ever. And we really check in with one another. It is important to be compassionate and respectful and not take things personally. We are getting through this together. In fact, it has brought us closer.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE TO KNOW?

I would mention that our office in Menlo Park is open for in-person, safe-distance client and prospect meetings. The property is gorgeous, historic, and closed to the public. It is so serene and romantic. Weddings are hosted here. I'm one of the only tenants to use it, so clients can come onto the ground through a private, safe entrance. I have masks and hand sanitizer ready. If people are meeting up, then you couldn't have a better setting—and I feel comfortable here, too.

For more information on Linx Dating, visit LinxDating.com. Find Amy Andersen on Instagram at [@ms.linxdating](https://www.instagram.com/ms.linxdating) and Twitter at [@linxdating](https://twitter.com/linxdating) or email her at amy@linxdating.com.



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