

Make me a match

After exhausting all avenues, busy singles are now turning to an old-fashioned method

Everything old is new again.

Traditional matchmaking is making a comeback.

Hiring someone one-on-one to match you with a suitable partner is, despite all the other options available, increasingly attractive to fed-up singles.

Canadian TV personality Erica Ehm found her wonderful husband this way. And even Dr. Phil recently tried his hand at matchmaking for *American Idol*'s Paula Abdul on a special

primetime show but found it isn't as easy as it looks. Tabloid rumour has it that Abdul has, in the past, used the services of a professional matchmaker.

It all sounds so old-fashioned and out-of-date when there are so many avenues for singles to meet and connect nowadays.

From newspaper personals, speeddating, lock and key parties, social events, sports groups, dating phone lines, cellphone texting and dating agencies to the most popular, online dating websites used by millions, there's a wide choice.

In fact, the Singles Search has become big business as well as the subject of a dozen top television shows including *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Ex-Treme Dating*, *ElimiDate* and *Meet My Folks*.

Yet, despite all the choices, many singles find not only are they too busy to search out a mate but also find the dating world frustrating and fruitless.

Gloria Macdonald, one of Toronto's top professional matchmakers, owns Perfect Partners (perfectpartners.ca) and says when her clients arrive at her door, they've "just about tried everything" to meet someone including online dating.

"They're people who have found dating generally unreliable and stressful with online dating overwhelming, time-consuming and full of misrepresentation. They say it's hard to know anyone from a profile or even a photo, and they also want more privacy with their search."

But she points out that online dating services have had a good effect on the dating

world as they've taken the stigma away from exploring a variety of methods to find someone special.

"Singles are nowadays more open to alternative ways to find a partner," she adds.

Macdonald says she works personally with every client, most of whom are Toronto women 40 plus.

"I've twice as many men as that in a large database and we work much like an executive recruitment company

to find them appropriate partners."

Her success rate is high and she says it's a combination of "instinct, art, personality profiling and science."

Lisa Ronis is one of New York's hottest matchmakers. She's appeared on many top U.S. TV shows such as *Good Morning America* and *DateLine NBC* and written up in publications such as the *New York Times* and *USA Today*.

She's also the star of a new W Network dating series *Manhattan Matchmaker* starting Wednesday, April 19, at 9 a.m. It was filmed in Vancouver where she helps struggling singles find a match.

A former executive in the fashion business, she says she found early on she had a knack for connecting people with the right partner.

"I've literally been practising to be a matchmaker all my life!"

She says she started Lisa Ronis Personal Matchmaking (lisaronismatchmaking.com) in 2000 to help not just her friends but upscale singles find their soulmate. She says she not only works

very hard to find them the right person but also acts as her clients' coach and confidante ("not to mention their punching bag!"), advises them on personal image and even gets them party invites.

Her clients are high-end, busy, professional men and women, 30 plus, who want to be married.

"Business boomed after 9/11," she says. "It affected everyone deeply and it became even more important for people to find someone to share their life with."

"It used to have a bit of a

stigma to hire a matchmaker," Ronis says, "but now it's not only acceptable but a great way for ultra-busy people to find someone. I do all the work for them."

She says while finding a partner that suits clients is not that difficult for her as she's so connected, they can be very "picky," especially the women.

They all want someone with money, power, smarts and high energy, she says.

She laughs. "But, hey, that's New York!"

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Valerie Gibson
INTIMACIES



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THE COST OF CONNECTING

Perfect Partners charges depend on the choice of package — there are three.

They are the Basic at \$2,895; the Mid Package at \$3,895 and the Premium at \$6,500.

There is a success fee of \$3,500.

Lisa Ronis says it also depends on the package chosen, but the cost of her services is around \$5,000 US.

SEE IT ON W

Four new series on dating and relating starts on the W Network in April.

A twist to the older woman/younger man relationship, *Ivana Young Man*, with Ivana Trump. Airing Tuesday, April 18, 9 p.m. Trump gives Kathy Dahl, a successful but lonely 40-something divorced woman, the opportunity to find a 20-something man who can complete her lavish lifestyle by dating six who are hand-picked.

The new Wednesday lineup begins April 19 at 9 p.m. with *Manhattan Matchmaker* with Lisa Ronis (see main story) as she travels to Vancouver to help struggling single women and some men. With Canadian TV personality Michael Eckford, Ronis gives her clients the skills and confidence to achieve a long-term relationship.

Next that evening is the *Single Girl Diaries* at 9:30 p.m. It is a six-part documentary series that follows five single, smart and remarkably different women as they go out into the world of dating in search of love.

Completing the evening is the first of a six-part series about the scientific side of attraction *Truth About the Sexes* at 10 p.m. The series examines what happens when men and women are put into situations that test their emotional and physical reactions to the opposite sex.

The *Survivor* relationship expert, Valerie Gibson, is a guest in one of the segments, giving advice to singles on how to make that first meeting a success.