



In the business of love

By Maey El Shoush, Staff Reporter

It feels like centuries since you were last part of the so-called dating game and now you want back in. However, you have forgotten the rules (or apparently they have changed).

You have lost your skills, so you are out quickly and the moves you make are not quite as sharp. You may be clicking on the "two-player" option but they may be thinking more on the lines of a "multi-player" game.

This is why Seventy Thirty, a London-based professional matchmaking service, extends its support to lonely souls in the UAE, who find themselves lost in the winding paths of dating.

Susie Ambrose, chief executive of Seventy Thirty, who has nearly 17 years' experience in relationship counselling and psychotherapy, told Unwind that the biggest challenge was to prove to sceptical clients that the service can indeed find them a partner.

The service is, however, only offered to accomplished and affluent people - those worth over 1 million pounds (or at least Dh7 million).

"It becomes difficult after 28 or 30 years, as we become choosy and simultaneously focused on our careers," says Ambrose. "People also have a tendency to fall into the trap of going for the same type of partner, even though they are not compatible."

According to Seventy Thirty, they help members be more objective about identifying the sort of person they would be compatible with. In any one month, the company plays matchmaker for up to 85 members.

Imagine having someone else do all the screening for you and filtering out all the losers, time-wasters, players, control freaks, commitment phobics, lazy people and those you have nothing in common with.

In the UAE, many are turning to this service that first understands what its clients want in a partner and then finds them a proper match.

"Our first member joined in 2005 and since then, we have been helping people who live in the UAE find suitable partners," says Ambrose.

The matchmakers have paired up at least 150 people successfully in the past two years with help from a team of qualified psychologists, hair and make-up stylists, life coaches and fitness experts.

Wooing woes

Rachel Maclynn, head of global membership for Seventy Thirty, says the response to the service in the UAE has been phenomenal, adding that most people face the same problems as those abroad.

"They tend to meet the wrong types of people when they socialise or people who don't tell the truth entirely or are perhaps even scared of commitment," Maclynn says.

Another obstacle facing UAE residents looking for companionship is that, some of them are foreign nationals and are here mainly for business.

"The isolation from their cultures and long working hours are also common issues," Maclynn says.

She says people spend most of their time working. And you bump into a Brad Pitt or a Salma Hayek, while rushing home, only in films.

It is time to re-evaluate what an "active" social life really means; because it does not mean spending endless weekends with your pals watching reruns of Friends.

Neither does it mean playing football with the boys, convincing yourself that you could be the next big star. It may be best to leave all that for weekdays because the weekend is when everyone is out having fun, or is "on the prowl".

If you really want to be in a committed relationship but get clumsy on a date, talk too much when nervous, cannot stop fidgeting or freezing or just do not have time - then it is time to seek professional help.

Ambrose says: "We believe a successful long-term relationship depends not only on physical attraction, but also on complimenting backgrounds, lifestyles and goals."

Once someone is a member, a psychologist interviews the client to know him or her better - their experiences, attitudes, values and principles. This also gives an idea as to whether the person is seeking a serious relationship.

"A full personality profile of each member is then compiled. It covers all of these aspects and using this profile, compatibility can be determined between two members," Ambrose says.

Maclynn says "We put such extensive groundwork into the process that we have an extremely high success rate."

According to Trudy Hill, psychologist and health and success coach at Seventy Thirty, the company does not try to "create" chemistry. Instead, they look at important issues, such as religious views and politics.

"Their requirements in potential partners are fairly exclusive. They need intellectually stimulating, sophisticated, yet fun and enthusiastic partners with whom [they can] enjoy their lives," she says.

Dating details

Matchmaking specialists at Seventy Thirty have noticed a few interesting details while bringing people together.

Women are pickier than men when it comes to finding a life partner

More than 70 per cent of people's time is spent at work

The remaining 30 per cent of their time is invested in socialising

People spend more time with work colleagues

Some people have high or unrealistic expectations

After reaching their late twenties, people find it more difficult to date

Some people always date the same type of person whom they are clearly not compatible with

It takes 2 1/2 months to find a partner for a man

It takes 4 1/2 months to find a partner for a woman

Physical attraction, background, relationship goals and lifestyle are parameters of the matchmaking process.

Time wasters come in many shapes and forms

Hollywood can influence 'dreamers'

A professional head-hunter can be a time-saving solution

Packages

Looking for a perfect partner and need help from Seventy Thirty? Below are the packages offered by it. (The fees mentioned here are charged on an annual basis.)

Matchmaking service

Gold membership - Unlimited matchmaking with UK-based individuals only (£10,000 or Dh71,890)

Platinum membership - Unlimited matchmaking with UK-based and internationally-based individuals (£30,000 or Dh215,670)

Black Star membership - Personalised and bespoke service. Unlimited matchmaking internationally. (£60,000 or Dh431,323)

Lifestyle service

Bespoke Life Coaching Package

Relationship Recovery Package

Ready-To-Date Package

Wealth Management Package

Work-Life Balance Package

New Image Package

For more info, visit www.seventy-thirty.com