

'How To Build A Dating App' Podcast – Episode 7 Transcription

- Kate: [00:09](#) Hello, and welcome to 'How To Build a Dating App'.
- Michael: [00:12](#) This podcast will chronicle our journey of building and launching a brand new dating app. Our aim for this podcast is to take you through the whole experience of what it takes to build a dating app from scratch, and not just any dating app, but one that we really hope can take on the big competitors in the market.
- Richard: [00:28](#) We're definitely going to be learning some lessons along the way, as this is the first app of this scale that any of us have been involved with. And none of us have worked in the dating industry, or are experts in dating.
- Hayley: [00:38](#) So to really help us delve into the current dating landscape and online dating trends, we're going to be speaking with some of the leading dating industry experts, coaches and app developers, to share their insights on the industry.
- Michael: [00:50](#) Our interview with Hayley Quinn continues now.
- Michael: [00:55](#) Hayley Quinn is a London based dating expert and coach who has helped hundreds of thousands of men and women rethink their love lives. Hayley, thanks very much for being here today.
- Hayley: [01:04](#) Thank you very much for having me.
- Laura: [01:06](#) So we've touched on dating apps quite a lot already, but what are your opinions on dating apps, good and bad? And what do you think could be improved on them?
- Hayley: [01:14](#) I think what's good to talk about is that dating apps are neither good nor bad. I think a lot of the time we talk about in this really absolute terms. Like, oh, are they evil? Have they ruined romance? And all that kind of stuff. And instead, I think dating apps are really ... they're reflecting needs in our society. The fact that we're not ... we don't maybe have some traditional channels to meeting people open, whether that's gender roles are a bit more confused, we're living more solitary lives, that's really well documented. More people are living by themselves than ever before. We have less sense of neighbourhood and community. And because of that, I think there was a space there to use technology for a new way to connect and meet people. I think that ... but most, like most things, things are kind of double edged swords. They have positive sides and negative sides to them.

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- Hayley: [02:03](#) So I think one of the positives is, it's randomised so you will meet people that you would have never come across in other aspect of your life. But will those people ... or maybe the challenge for dating apps is, how do you, then, make that randomization less random? And how can you introduce people to people that are more well qualified leads – can I use that word? – to make sure they actually then go on and have a better experience? I think a lot of the stuff we complain about when it comes to dating apps is, actually, just kind of human ... our human behaviour. So it's like, oh, how do I tell if he's just trying to hook up with me or not?
- Hayley: [02:45](#) That isn't I think there's a line there where, as much as it's nice that apps are trying to do a little verification badges of who's using the app for what purpose ... and another thing we've spoken about is how apps, I think, are increasingly trying to niche themselves out in terms of the relationship style that they seem to offer; eharmony seeming very marriage orientated, other dating apps, like Tinder, being much more attached to the idea of hook-up culture. There also has to be, I think, a space for common sense, which is our, again, personal responsibility. That's my ... that's probably the phrase I've used most through the whole course of this podcast. About thinking, okay, well, if I don't ... if I want someone who's not interested in that, maybe I should just not answer messages on dating apps after 8 p.m. or something. Maybe I should ... if someone doesn't bother to ask me out on a proper, actual date, and their suggesting coming over or they just want to hang out, maybe I should just stop responding to that person.
- Hayley: [03:45](#) I think there's lots of things that we can personally take responsibility for. And I'm pretty sure, especially with the dating apps and sites that have really big user bases, there's going to be people on there who want all kinds of things. There's going to some people that want relationships, some people who want something way more casual, and your job is purely just to find whichever one you want. The people who are most closely aligned with you.
- Laura: [04:09](#) In terms of engaging the audience ... because obviously, when people date and they've done the date, and then they don't use the app anymore. What do you think the apps could do to keep them engaged afterwards?
- Hayley: [04:20](#) Well, I think a really interesting thing is because we live in this era of it being non-distinct when a relationship starts ... and, actually, I read another study that apparently Londoners can sometimes take on average three weeks to even set up the first

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date after they've agreed to meet. I think there's this whole kind of like in between-y period, where someone is ... they might actually still be casually checking the app, even though they're still ... they're kind of pursuing seeing may one, or several other people. So I think there could be something ... there could be something interesting there because I think ... I wonder how many relationships have ended, or potential relationships have ended when someone's seen ... they've had a minor disagreement, or they're not sure and they've been on five, six dates with someone, then they see, "Michael is currently online." You know?

Laura: [05:06](#)

Oh, yeah. That dreaded-

Hayley: [05:08](#)

That dreaded green light has gone on. So I wonder if that's something that could be avoided. And in terms of improvement, I still think people have a lot of short-term relationships and not, actually, usually through choice. I find a lot of the time, for one reason, somebody decides to end the relationship because, again, we're looking for this very, very high ... we hold very high ideals I think about ... around who we form that relationship with. And there's also just a lot of reasons beyond everyone's control why relationships might end. Because of that, I think you're going to find lots of people reentering, or just being in that dating phase for quite a long time.

Hayley: [05:45](#)

So I think that you maybe mentioned before, connecting up with venues, looking up places and spaces where people are passing through a lot of the time. Do they live in a similar geographical area? Date suggestions, anything like that could also be a really, really good value add because, I think, just like how sometimes apps do questions prompts and stuff to help the conversation get started in a relatively interesting direction, I also think lots of people would probably appreciate guidance on what to do for a date, or a dating app could have discount codes that apply to different venues and spaces. And also, obviously slightly biased here, a big fan of offering advice and content on apps as well because I think that would be a really good way to get people to look at themselves and address what's going on for them, rather than just thinking it's all the platform's responsibility.

Michael: [06:37](#)

So a 2016 survey conducted by the dating apps Huggle, showed that dating apps that match people solely on appearance have a negative impact on their self-esteem. 62% of these surveyed said dating apps make them feel self-conscious or depressed about their appearance, and over 80% of the women surveyed admitted to editing photographs that they've uploaded. Does

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this ring true to what you hear from your clients? And what do you think could be done to address this?

- Hayley: [07:02](#) First of all, I think this is a really great piece of PR on behalf of Huggle because that's a really grabby headline and survey they've managed to pull out. I also ... it reminds me, I really did a really funny YouTube video, this is years ago, where I called ... in my usual way of putting content on YouTube is the lowest common denominator. What girls do guys like on Tinder? And what I did is I put up a bunch of normal pictures of me, and then I also put up a bunch of pictures of me that had been massively doctored. So I just kind of smoothed out all of my wrinkles, gave myself massive boobs, shrunk my waist, was posing in yoga gear, all that kind of stuff. And just split tested to see who got the most matches. And of course, super babe profile got more matches, but I mean the other one still got like 180 matches in an hour, so I was hardly like scraping the bottom of the barrel there for responses.
- Hayley: [07:58](#) When I think ... I think that by the nature of, especially that very first gen swipe style app, they are a little bit aesthetic. And I've got mixed feeling about this because part of me feels like it's actually okay to need or want to feel attracted to a person. I think what it's definitely led to is a ... and I think this is linked to Instagram as well, I think our perception of what a good photo is has gone way up in the Insta generation.
- Hayley: [08:23](#) It's almost like we've created this niche style of photography that people are trying to out-perfect one another at, where it's about a very specific makeup style, there's a particular angle in lots of the body shots, it's about having a particular colours, or a particular quality of photograph, like if I put up a photograph that I have somebody ... a lady who actually does an online dating photography company. She also takes quite a lot of my social media photograph for Instagram, so I've always got a backlog just in case I happen to be in pyjamas that day, stressed out on my laptop, which is happening more and more often.
- Hayley: [08:59](#) So because of that, I can pull one out. And those pictures will always out perform because they're higher resolution, they look nicer to the human eye, they pop out. So because of that, I think it's more about this upward life, in terms of our standards and expectations for just photography and aesthetics generally. And I think it's not just confined to dating apps, I think this is definitely social media, as well, that's driving that trend.
- Kate: [09:26](#) Definitely. We read that dating app users place conversation well above reading profiles and swiping through photos as the

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most effective way to identify a compatible partner. What are your thoughts on that? And what advice do you have for people who aren't particularly confident starting and maintaining that conversation?

- Hayley: [09:44](#) First of all, I'm really glad that conversation is being rated so highly because I think getting off of that check list of who you think you might like based on some kind of factors like, what they look like and maybe some interests, is probably really positive because it's moving towards a more experiential version of dating, where you're actually looking at how a person is treating you and how they're engaging with you.
- Hayley: [10:08](#) So that sounds great. However, I think if you're concerned about your ability to generate a conversation or to keep it going, I'd say a couple of different things. The most important by far is, you don't need to generate a conversation endlessly. In fact, I've had some true horror stories from clients that I've worked with where they've maybe been messaging ... it was a man, he'd met a woman. I'm not going to lie about this. She, then, was off travelling in South America, and they stayed in touch. And, honestly, he tried to give me the transcript of the conversation as pre-reading before our session. I said no because it was 63 pages. I was like, "Mate, you're going to have to pay me for that."
- Hayley: [10:53](#) It was really detailed. You can imagine what happens next, right? Of course, they go on the date, and she says-
- Michael: [11:00](#) There's no spark.
- Hayley: [11:00](#) There's no spark!
- Kate: [11:03](#) Oh my god. I was thinking of all the kinds of things she could have said.
- Michael: [11:06](#) That's a thing.
- Hayley: [11:09](#) Exactly, so that's a really interesting point about going like, okay, there is a limit to how far we can know someone via the internet if we've had no real life meeting and, of course, apps are trying to solve this. I think it's Bumble, has a face verification thing, so you know that you're not being catfished. But really, beyond that, the most effective thing that you should be looking out for, man or woman, you should be looking for people who are open and ready to make a date in real life because you need

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to separate out ... this is shown definitely in demographic information in terms of how people are using dating apps.

Hayley: [11:44](#) Basically, the younger people get, the Gen Z-ers particularly, whilst they'll match with a much higher proportion of people, they then go onto message, and actually meet up with, far less. Whilst with the older generations, particularly Baby Boomers ... and by the way, dating apps are booming, also, for the silver splitster generations, people who have had long-term relationships and maybe in their fifties or sixties or seventies and they've gone, "actually, I've still got loads– I could be around for years." They actually really want to meet a new partner. And they've maybe ended that long term marriage and relationship.

Hayley: [12:18](#) Because of that, I think it's really important that you ... and those baby boomers, they actually match with less people but, unsurprisingly, message ... go on to message and actually meet up with more of them. So the moral of the story is, you have to use your conversation purposefully. And there has to be a point, I would advise maybe between five and ten messages in, where you say, "Hey, it's been great chatting to you. Send me your WhatsApp and we can chat more on there." Or, "Let me get your WhatsApp." Or, "Hey, I'm just running out to a meeting, but here's my number, give me a call."

Hayley: [12:46](#) And if at that juncture, someone isn't open to getting off of the app and onto a different messaging platform, or doesn't seem to be willing to maybe meet up with you for a coffee in a public space, you should then start feeling cautious because this is less about your attractiveness and your conversation skill and more about, are you speaking to a person who – even if it's the best case scenario, and they are who they say they are, and they are single – lots of people say they want to meet people, but they don't actually take any real world action around it. So be careful about that.

Hayley: [13:20](#) And also to try in and this should hopefully, as well, make it more fun for you, don't treat dating as a chore, like a job application. Try and get out of that really logical chain of questions like, where are you from? How's your day been? What do you do? How long have you been doing that then? Because whilst that might ... you might be getting information from a person, you're not really understanding anything about their character, and you're not connecting to that.

Hayley: [13:49](#) So you can ask, instead of saying what someone did ... how long they've been doing something for, which gives you a number,

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you might want to say, "What motivated you? what are you most passionate about? What do you enjoy? What do you hate about it?" Do something that's more emotionally based. Or you can do something wildly creative. I love saying ... well, not encouraging people to say things like, "So imagine you have a plane ticket somewhere tomorrow, where's the destination?" Because again, you get this more qualitative information. And dating should be playing, it should be experience, and it should be about that more friendly and informal form of communication, rather than that Q&A job interview.

- Michael: [14:31](#) So it's about being ... asking more open questions, I guess. And-
- Hayley: [14:34](#) Yeah. And share ... always share stuff about yourself in return. You could say ... if you did the plane ticket one, you could say, "For me, Rio." Or "Here's my top three." And that would be something that ... again, it shows something about your personality and makes you much more engaging and three dimensional. And you don't actually ... I think, again, I think sometimes they can get hung up on, what point am I allowed to ask for someone's number? Or when do I have justifiable cause? A lot of the time, they'll really, really hold back because they don't feel that there's enough context.
- Hayley: [15:10](#) And instead, it's about understanding, it's not so much about having 20 messages with her or with him. It's about actually the quality of that conversation and getting outside of that really, small-talk dialogue.
- Michael: [15:22](#) A friend of mine always uses that whole, "Would you rather have the legs of a horse or the head of a shark." Or something. That kind of weird icebreaker thing.
- Hayley: [15:33](#) Oh yeah, that whole thing!
- Michael: [15:33](#) It's his thing though. He's made it his brand. But it doesn't work on everybody. And for some, that's too silly, and they probably shut down straight away and think, "you're annoying". So it's finding the line of being fun and being too job interview-y.
- Hayley: [15:47](#) And also being ... it's also okay, I think, to be a little bit marmite-y because online dating usually does give you volume. You're going to meet a lot of people potentially. So I think, actually, showing a bit of personality there is good. And also fundamentally focusing on people who are ... if someone isn't opening that app very ... "Oh, sorry, I haven't opened the app in two weeks." I would just probably be thinking, okay, they're

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probably not that interested in dating right now, or they're certainly not that interested in dating through this platform right now. And that's not a reflection on me, but I actually should be really focusing down my energy on people who are really open to that.

Laura: [16:25](#) In a survey by the PEW Research Centre, data suggested a third of people that use online dating have never gone on an actual date with someone they've met on apps. Why do you think that is? And what are those people looking for from online dating?

Hayley: [16:38](#) I have to say, this statistic does not surprise me at all. Really interesting. I think that that's a really good lesson. I think that's a lesson we not only take from dating apps, but also for social media sites and for myself, just doing content production. Not all people watch and engage, or use things, with the same goal, even with something like a dating apps, which you'd think it was so explicit in terms of its focus point. As I said before, gen Z-ers are matching with loads of people but, typically, not actually meeting many people. And even if they do suggest meeting, the meeting is usually a kind of, let's hang out group-of-friends-style thing versus something that a more mature generation would consider to be a date.

Hayley: [17:24](#) So I think people can use it for a variety of reasons. Entertainment is one of them. Just like any ... like, you know on Instagram you put the new Insta picture drops and you see how many likes you've got on something like that. Again, it's a way of achieving validation, alleviating boredom, curiosity, fun, something to do with your friends, something when you're lonely to engage in, escapism. There's lots of things that people could potentially use an app or a service like this for, rather than just explicitly meeting a partner. And I think, not that that might not by any means represent the majority, maybe it is just a third, but it's something for ... used as if you are looking for more dating experience, just to be a little bit conscious of, that not everybody might have had the same self awareness, or the same ability.

Hayley: [18:14](#) And this doesn't always have to be conscious either. A lot of times, people might have an app open and they might think that they're going to meet someone when they feel safe enough, or when they feel it's the right time. Maybe that's masking something inside themselves where they are very, very closed off, or they haven't looked at that yet. Or maybe they're just ... going back to the openness thing, maybe they're not that open to meeting people right not. And that's okay.

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- Hayley: [18:38](#) So it's not all Machiavellian. I think a lot of the time, when people don't have the experience they want on a dating app, whether it's someone not agreeing to meet them, to not meeting in real life, or that they agree something and then the person cancels last minute, that's rarely a person just being absolutely malicious and trying to play games or ruin your day. A lot of the time what you're seeing there, is someone who's really fearful, who's quite anxious, probably hasn't taken much thought into this area of their life, is maybe ... behaves generally in a way that's a bit flippant. None of these are particularly good qualities FYI for any for boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Hayley: [19:18](#) But so it's good actually, when you're in that, just to ... if you're having some of those negative user experiences of a dating apps, don't take it all that personally. Instead, I would just be thinking, all I'm seeing here is the ripples of what's going on for this person. I might have thought they looked cute online, or I might've enjoyed chatting to them but, again, I don't actually know them. So I'm in the unknown. And what I'm getting to know about them right now isn't good, or it isn't going to work out for me. And that's all right.
- Hayley: [19:44](#) Tough mindset to get into when someone's just ... you've got on the northern line and travelled to a date venue and someone's just cancelled on you, but that's the one you have to go with everyone.
- Michael: [19:54](#) In your TEDx Talk, you mentioned the hip form of dating. And people using dating as a form of escapism. Can you explain this further? And why do you think this has become the norm?
- Hayley: [20:05](#) Yeah, I definitely think dating is being used as a form of escapism, and it probably always high school been. I don't think it's necessarily something that's related to dating apps. I think maybe it was harder in some ways because pre-sexual revolution, we might not have had that much fun, you know, as per your school video, I think. Watch out. But I think what happens is, just like when ... I really noticed this myself, personally. Here's my best example, when I was feeling a lot of emotional pain, I realised I was scrolling Instagram. Literally, my knee jerk reaction to that was pick up my phone start staring at it and scrolling. And it was also, I think, almost changing my brain state into a more sedative mode.
- Hayley: [20:46](#) But I think, when we have that focus point on someone else, and that could be, "Oh, I went on this crazy adventure last weekend," or, "I'm messaging four people," sometimes that can help. That drama, "Oh, he's done this again, I've had to break up

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with him." All of this drama can actually act as a distraction from any real stuff that's going on with you. And I think this is something I really identified and went through personally. So I would just say to people, if you are in that situation where you are having ... your relationship is constant breakup, get back together cycle. That's not what a relationship should really be about. So you might want to exit that.

Hayley: [21:28](#) Sometimes also it could be that notion of, "I've got loads of people on the go." I think, again, what kind of crack in the self esteem is being plastered over? What gap do you need to fill by having to prove to yourself that you can date loads and loads of people? Unless they're all obviously, mutually complicit in that and you're being really open with someone.

Hayley: [21:49](#) So I think, what that does is, a lot of the time, rather than maybe deal with some of the hard stuff ... and for me, that hard stuff was not having ... coming from a background where I didn't really have very much money, probably not really knowing ... having much sense of career direction, living in a big lonely city. There's loads of feelings of loneliness or loss of self esteem that you can try and fill, I think, via having this big recreational, or these big storylines going on in your life.

Hayley: [22:16](#) I would say, if it is hard for you or slash unthinkable to spend a weekend just hanging out with yourself doing really low-key stuff like watching a movie or making some food or just reading a book or chilling, plus you're not allowed ... asterisks you're also not allowed to message anyone or FaceTime them. If that sounds terrible, and you'd be like, "Oh, my God, I'd feel so lonely. I don't know what I'd do. I'd feel really bored." I would look at that because I think that's saying that you need to have foundation for building good relationships.

Hayley: [22:46](#) I think, when you come from that space where you're really self content in your own company ... because that means, when you are in the dating process, if you ... the relationship doesn't work out for whatever reason, or ... don't enter dating from such a space of need. You don't need anything to be going on in your life. You can just kind of happily plod on and exist. Therefore, if something isn't working out, it doesn't make it such a huge deal to let it go because you're not thinking, oh, gosh, who am I going to hang out with on Friday nights? But who am I going to WhatsApp then? Those are not good reasons to stay in a relationship.

Hayley: [23:22](#) So I'm a massive fan ... I'm probably one of the only people in the dating industry that really such ... so strongly advocates for

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staying single, and that there's nothing wrong with that. And it's equally as valid. It's just a lifestyle choice that you can make and, actually, it's one that people make ... are making, I think, in 2019 more and more often.

Kate: [23:42](#) So you mentioned, in your last answer, about when you were feeling, maybe, at a low point in your life and you were spending a lot of time on Instagram. I'm wondering if we group dating apps in the social media realm, as they are essentially social media platforms, what responsibility do you think lies with the brands that, the app company owners, to trying to, I guess, negate that? Because ultimately, that is the users experience. I don't have the stats in front of me, but I think we've all read stuff about Instagram and social media app, whatever, making people feel bad about themselves. So where do you think the responsibility lies, and what do you think could be done from the corporate side to try and help that?

Hayley: [24:27](#) I think that's a really good question. I think also, it's been interesting to see what from the corporate side people have been doing in other big areas, whether it's like, addressing catfishing through the app that does facial recognition, or ... I don't know how effective it is, I don't have a stat on it, but verifying users through their intentions or how they seem to be utilising the site. So, giving people some kind of like ... it's almost like getting into ... get a black mirror-y uber rating of dating. And also, many companies are part of a board which, basically, they just don't do any unethical practises like, no fake users on profiles and all that kind of stuff.

Hayley: [25:08](#) When it comes to actually looking after user health, there are some really interesting things that are projects that I know that people are working on. So for instance, we all know that we have screentime now if you have an iPhone. I have it on. I have yet to look at the results, and I am afraid to do so. But you could ... I mean, this might make ... I don't know if any app would actually do this. There are apps that can do this on behalf of other apps, so if I could just ... limiting the amount of time you're actually allowed to have access. And I even think, for a bit of dating coaching, only being allowed to ... setting things where you're only allowed to message in these three windows of the day, that could actually be ... that would actually probably get you a better result in terms of your interactions.

Michael: [25:55](#) Maybe limiting the amount of people you can message at the same time. So you're not messaging 20 people.

Kate: [25:57](#) You'd value them more.

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- Hayley: [25:57](#) Yeah. And lot's of apps, obviously, do offer you just a small selection of users per day that you can potentially match with. So that's something that's definitely happening. As well, there are more kind of mental health based platforms that are now being developed. I'm not sure ... I can't give better information in terms of where they're at, but they look at things like, how much sunlight the phone is being exposed to, is it moving around? So you know then, for instance, or you can kind of build up a picture of someone's lifestyle. So ... and I think it's more likely those apps which could then connect into dating apps and have some kind of ... again, share information, there's probably some really interesting legal stuff around this that I'm not aware of.
- Michael: [26:39](#) GDPR.
- Hayley: [26:40](#) Yeah, my god. There's going to be click boxes and pop-ups everywhere. But I think that could be interesting because you could then be like, right, this person is ... clearly they've been on the phone, they haven't put it down for like 24 hours. There's no sleep there. They're definitely in a darkly lit space, so they're in the same location, so we're thinking they haven't left their house. And there's things there that can be used as indicators of someone's mental health.
- Hayley: [27:08](#) So it's always an interesting conversation because as a company, or ... you always want to do the best to ensure ethical standards. But then on the other side of that, there's that privacy element, there's intrusion, data collection. I think it's a really complex argument to look at.
- Michael: [27:30](#) I think that's something that Netflix did. I'm sure I read that they got in touch with somebody that was basically watching Netflix like 22 hours of the day. So they ... and they could see by the type of thing he was watching, and the patterns and things, that he maybe had some sort of depression or maybe mental health issues or things. And I think they actually got in touch with him. So it might be something they're doing permanently now. So it's obviously happening, people are monitoring activity.
- Laura: [27:50](#) They've always got that thing, like, "Are you still watching ... " like if you're bingeing a box set or something. "Are you still here?" And I'm like, "Yes I am. I'm still sitting here watching this."
- Kate: [27:59](#) In the same PR piece they also said they'd found someone who'd watched Bee Movie something like 800 times. And they

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contacted it and it was a Mother, and she was like, "My son just only calms down when I play Bee Movie." It's hilarious.

- Michael: [28:14](#) They were worried about that person.
- Kate: [28:17](#) But that's ... that's part of it. Showing there is a social responsibility in that. For instance, if we were to build this app, you have to redefine what that is and how you want to ... how much effort you want to put into it, and is there a point where you separate yourself and say, "Well, this is our product, it's up to them." It's a difficult one, morally, I think, to be able to make a call on.
- Michael: [28:38](#) Yeah, it's something that we feel we need to at least consider, whereas some app developers, maybe are thinking of the money that you can get from it and that sort of thing. But we have to consider the psychological element. You've got an element of responsibility if you're connecting people that are then meeting offline. It's a risk. There's a risk there, isn't there?
- Hayley: [28:57](#) Absolutely. And I think it's really nice to talk about dating app building, instead of terms of like, oh how do I get my ... use the space. Or what's my PR angle. To actually think about, let's research the market, let's look at trends, let's look at what's not being provided out there and how we can provide better customer service. And I think that's the one thing that is ... even though there's been plenty of criticism that's been levelled against dating apps, I do see lots of companies that are in the market, in their own way, trying to do something to address those needs.
- Laura: [29:30](#) So also offline versus online, do you think offline leads to healthier relationships or online?
- Hayley: [29:36](#) I think that both places is, again. I don't think that you can call it really, whether what develops into a better relationship because that depends on who you meet and how you also conduct yourself within that relationship. Obviously the benefits of meeting someone offline, as we've discussed before, if it's through social circles that could be really helpful because you've got that shared value system. And also, because there isn't a sense of anonymity there, I think that can be a very important contributing factor to people moderating their behaviour and engaging with people in a way that's a bit more respectful.
- Hayley: [30:08](#) Similarly, if you've got a shared interest or shared social set through kind of a hobby, that could also be relevant. I also

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think, when you meet people offline, the main benefit to doing that is that immediacy of knowing if there's an attraction or if there's a feeling there. I think what can be challenging with dating apps though, not ... by no means impossible, is understanding is when someone ... you are actually engaging in real life, who's going to be the person you connect with because you can find someone aesthetically attractive, and you can have good messaging connections, but I do think there's a certain ... there is that je ne sais quoi that you can't, or it's very, very hard to pin that down to what that might look like for a person.

Hayley: [30:51](#) And in terms of what develops into a better relationship, I think that goes back to partner selection. So who you are ... are you investing your time in. And I think a big dating problem, isn't it, just that people invest too much time in people who aren't open to the same things as them. And then kind hope ... they kind of get sold on who they hope a person might change into, or if they can just get through this period in their life, maybe then they'll be a great person. And that's what I think can be very energy and time draining.

Hayley: [31:21](#) So I think it's all about investing in the right people and just looking out for people who want the same things as you. If you want somebody that's serious, committed and you stumble across someone who's not into that at this point in their life, it's no ones fault. But the best thing to do their is just to ... isn't to try and convince and to persuade.

Hayley: [31:39](#) If you're looking for a relationship, you want to build that with someone who's had some time by themselves and they've kind of had a think about it and they're like ... they are really committed to looking at the same thing as you because as much as we'd love life ... we'd like love to just be a swipe away, in fact it's actually ... in the real world, it's about two people who are going to be prepared to communicate when things are difficult and who are maybe aware of their own shortcomings and how they can connect better as a partner. So I'd look out for people that has those partnership qualities, but I think where you find them isn't so important.

Michael: [32:13](#) So what dating apps have you had experience using personally either for yourself and for your clients to kind of help them get familiar? And how have you found that experience?

Hayley: [32:23](#) I have ghost profiles on many a dating apps. So it's usually with the tagline, NOT HERE FOR THE DATING, in caps. So if you see my picture on there, that's for real, read the profile. I've been on loads of sites. Being a London based dating coach, I've used

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Inner Circle quite a lot. They're a really interesting, small company that I think is ... blended. They've done a city by city expansion. They also offer loads of live events where people can meet. And it's also a lot about what places you find yourself frequenting. So again, I think they've done some good things there.

Hayley: [32:59](#) And also, it's ... because it's an invite-only technically, and there's some moderation in terms of who's allowed onto the platform, I think because of that, that's again created this sense of sort of exclusivity. And I find that with dating apps I use quite a lot with my customers, whether that could be like Coffee Meets Bagel, or Hinge, lots of things have a Facebook, API or application. There's obviously some pros and cons to that with what's going on with Facebook as a platform itself.

Hayley: [33:28](#) But what that enables you to do, because you're connecting with friends of friends on Facebook again, it's leveraging that social circle element to dating, which can, I think, increase peoples open-mindedness and willingness to actually go on a date with you, if you have that shared connection in common.

Hayley: [33:48](#) For myself, I haven't actually ever really used online dating. Again, if you see me online, I'm either snooping around for my clients or I'm making a YouTube video, so approach at peril. And the only one I've ever used personally is, actually, a few years ago I was in ... I found myself in San Francisco for a month, didn't really know anybody there, was doing some work stuff actually with some online dating companies. And I was just like, "Might as well go on Bumble then." And I actually had a great time, I have to ... it has to be said.

Hayley: [34:18](#) It was more ... less, maybe, about the platform, more about the fact I think I was approaching dating from a space where I was just having ... I was just looking ... I was just having fun. I wasn't ... I didn't have much expectation. And bizarrely, I met so many high quality guys that if I hadn't ... if I'd been in town a bit longer, I'd have like to continue to get to know them a bit more. Some of them connected with me and contacted me again when they came back to London. So that was a really positive experience.

Hayley: [34:45](#) I got on some cool dates. I went for brunches, I went hiking, I basically somewhat used the app as a portal to getting to know the city really well with tour guides I was just roping in left, right and centre. And of course San Francisco I was thinking, well ... how my clinical brain was looking at it as like, well, this is a very small geographical area, people are usually very highly

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educated, they're usually doing some really interesting stuff, nice american accent, I was like, I could ... slightly male heavy population. I was like, I think I can do alright here.

- Michael: [35:17](#) I could meet a John Travolta type of guy.
- Hayley: [35:21](#) I know. My dream, my dream. No, I basically worked my way through, I think all of CTO, CMOs and CEOs of the Bay Area before probably exiting the game at the right time. But I think it was ... I think, again, that was a really good demonstration of how, when you join a dating apps, if you're like, "Oh, dating sucks, especially dating apps." Then I totally understand why you feel that way. Sometimes you feel that dating sucks and that's probably a signal to you just to take a time out. You don't actually ... even if you want to find a partner, if you're feeling frustrated and demotivated, I think its often a lot wiser just to kind of check out of the whole process for a little bit, get yourself back together, get right. And don't worry about wasting time because actually if you're getting more settled and more stable and more happy and healthy within yourself, that's only going to help you to meet more people.
- Hayley: [36:11](#) And I think ... so that differentiation point of people that have positive and negative experiences with dating apps, of course there's some dodgy people out there. Of course there catfishing. Of course there's some really inappropriate material that's sent. But I think a lot of it is also down to the mindset that you enter dating with. And a lot of, even the coaching that I do, whether it's online or offline, it's all about people finding enjoyment because dating is a bit of a marathon, it's not a sprint. And often that ideal partner, or a really good match for you, isn't going to be the first person you meet.
- Hayley: [36:45](#) So being a little bit prepared there to actually think, how can I use these apps, or how can I find, if apps aren't for me, find a different way of dating, that actually is much more about the, I'm going to find fun, that I'm going to find enjoyable that's ... so I can keep my own motivation levels high so I can stay in the game.
- Michael: [37:03](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). Taking the pressure out of it. Taking out the end goal of finding a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and just having fun with it.
- Hayley: [37:10](#) I know. I just have to end on this note, one of my worst questions I've ever been asked, no joke, and it was probably October, and a woman put her hand ... I'm sure it was a woman,

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I wish it was a guy, at my talk and said, "Hayley, quick question. How do I find a boyfriend before Christmas?"

- Michael: [37:25](#) Wow. That is pressure.
- Hayley: [37:28](#) And I was like ... I wanted to say, "He is for life, not just for Christmas."
- Michael: [37:31](#) Get a puppy or something.
- Hayley: [37:32](#) Yeah, I know but that's-
- Laura: [37:34](#) That's a thing going around. People are like, "I just want a boyfriend for Christmas to cuddle up with and watch movies." Then summer comes, "I want to be single."
- Michael: [37:39](#) Get rid of them.
- Hayley: [37:40](#) I know. I know. And even if we look at Facebook reports on the dreaded relationship status, not so much a thing anymore, but definitely used to be a thing. Most breakups happen in June.
- Kate: [37:53](#) Really? Why?
- Hayley: [37:53](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). And then there's cuffing season, which is quite well reported is bigger ... there's a big drive towards finding a partner in the winter months, October, November. Then peak traffic window for online dating, boxing day through to V day.
- Michael: [38:07](#) Really? Wow.
- Hayley: [38:08](#) Yeah, like the-
- Kate: [38:09](#) That's hilarious.
- Hayley: [38:10](#) Yeah, I know. It's like, clearly has gone home for Christmas, faced some really awkward question by some insensitive relatives, or been bored on boxing day and after watching Jurassic Park 3 and eating another Ferrero Rocher, cracking out the dating app. Doing that, and then also I think, weather is cold, not so much going on, there's that real dead zone for social events between Christmas and the end of January, before that first payday comes.
- Hayley: [38:37](#) Then there's Valentines day. So I think a lot of it is, again, user uptake and stuff is affected just by season things, but other

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trends that are going on in our life. And I think going into dating, though, you have to just be like, I'm just going to have some ... I'm just going to enjoy myself. Have some fun. You always think, oh, hooking up. It's doesn't have to be that. You can have fun in other ways, you know? You can.

Hayley: [38:58](#) But going in for the experience. I don't know people very well, but I'm going to take some time to get to know someone and see what happens. I think that's so much of a better, a nicer, perspective, rather than crumbling into that pressure and thinking, oh, my gosh, I have to find a serious relationship by my next birthday or I am doomed.

Kate: [39:17](#) I think it's so true what you're saying about the mindset of using it though, and what you want to get out of it. And recognising, it's just a way to meet people, it's not the only way, or it's not this ... I find that a couple of my friends, I've noticed over the years that they've had break ups, the rest of the girls are saying to them, "You need to get on dating apps." It's almost like, as soon as you have a break up, because that going to really make you feel better, when it does the complete opposite. It's like, heightened likelihood of rejection, less meaningful conversations, less confidence building for yourself. So it's so interesting that you say that, as in people need to recognise why they're using them, and then say to themselves, "Am I in the right place to even do this?"

Hayley: [39:59](#) I know. And it's so tough, isn't it? Because if you've had a bad break up, the first thing you want to do is, is you want to go ... you want to be like, I want to have some distraction, I want to get away from this pain that I'm feeling. I want to have that optimism restored that I'm going to meet someone great. And all of that can really push you towards getting back out there.

Hayley: [40:18](#) Particularly, I think with woman, they do have lots of, better get ... you know, tick-tock messages around stuff that makes you think, oh, god. I've just wasted six months or twelve months or two years with this person, better hurry up and find the next on. When in fact, the complete opposite is true, where there is, I think, a window there, where you've got to be like, actually, as un-fun as it is, this is probably me sitting on the backbench time and just chilling out and just looking after myself and getting more into an even keel. And the old adage, the best way to get over someone is to-

Michael: [40:48](#) Yeah (laughs).

Hayley: [40:48](#) Yeah.

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- Hayley: [40:49](#) Definitely not.
- Hayley: [40:51](#) Definitely not because, just like you pointed out, you're going to look to find that level of intimacy and connection and that just can't be immediately replaced. And when you do find it again, it's going to be in a different version to the one that you experienced in the past, hopefully in a really positive way. So I think that doing that, often, can be quite a damaging experience. And I think, actually, as we keep going back to, the initial start point, and the mindset of how you enter dating and where your life is at generally, that's probably the biggest determining factor on outcome, not what dating site you sign up to.
- Michael: [41:26](#) Have your clients voiced any opinions on dating apps, both positive and negative? Have any of them dealt with scammers or bots or fake profiles?
- Hayley: [41:35](#) I think a lot of my client base has voiced discontent with online dating. But I think that probably when they've gone through the cycle of online dating, haven't got to the solution they wanted, and suddenly a dating coach doesn't seem like such a bad option after all. So I think a lot of that is people looking very specifically for an alternative. So because of that, I would imagine that more people that engage with my and my brand are going to be turned off from online dating than, maybe, the general public.
- Hayley: [42:03](#) Typically, what I find is two things that people say. These are things that I think dating apps ... these are challenges that I think dating apps are, again, trying to find a way to meet. Guys will often feel that they get actually a very low response rate, which is something we discussed before. And that's often to do with dating sites being male-user heavy. There are some unethical practise out there as well, where before the man pays the subscription, he'll see that five very attractive woman are waiting in his inbox to say hello to him. Then as soon as he joins up, those woman evaporate, you know?
- Hayley: [42:38](#) So I think there are things like that which have led ... or also ... and it's not just things that are created by the dating apps, or unethical dating apps, a lot of the times there's third parties that are involved here. Whether it's companies trying to sell a product, or con artists, or someone trying to do one-on-one individual scams, or more illicit businesses that are going on, they're starting to utilise these dating apps as a kind of guerrilla marketing. So people can sometimes get sucked into that, and I have had many user ... male users saying that they just felt they

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were constantly talking to bots or ... I don't know a nice way to say this, women who were sex workers. I couldn't think of a better way to say that, sorry guys.

- Hayley: [43:26](#) However ... and then also on the women's side of things, they would tend to say the opposite, actually, that they feel overwhelmed. It's like they have a ... imagine, a lot of the time ... I think especially the women I've worked with, they might be really busy, they tend to be working quite ... project management or managerial or professional level careers. And they're probably like me. They probably have quite a chunky inbox, like all of us do. And they just look at it, and they're no longer finding it a pleasurable experience because they feel that they've got too many leads, and the leads that they have aren't well sorted enough. They don't feel like they're well matched. They just feel like every man in the nearest area who's single has offered himself to them.
- Michael: [44:09](#) Yeah, and it becomes a chore I guess. And if it's too much of a chore, they'll just delete it.
- Hayley: [44:11](#) Yeah, exactly. And so because of ... as many men that might be straight men that might be listening to this thinking, that sounds like paradise. For the women, it honestly isn't. So because of that, I think when they've had these negative experiences, that's when they're looking for something different. Now, I do think dating apps are going somewhere. Whether that's offering a smaller selection of matches, doing things where there's more niche dating sites, catering to a more specialised user base. There are trends that are going on there which are trying to stop people going into a state of overwhelm, or whether it's different company's algorithms that are purporting to do a better job of offering more verified and higher quality leads.
- Michael: [44:54](#) Yeah, throwing more things into the algorithm aside from just location, age, are you looking for a man or woman. Adding more interest based stuff, I guess, to try and make that match even more specific.
- Hayley: [45:06](#) Yeah, and I think ... but beyond interest based stuff because I think hobbies and interest ... all these things are helpful. Shared hobbies, shared social and economic background, similar beliefs and values. But how do you check up for that? Do you do a really intensive questionnaire, which some sites do? But unfortunately, especially with younger users who might be using the sites in a much more quick way, much more ... they're swiping furiously, are they going to sit there and answer a detailed questionnaire that's actually going to provide them

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with enough ... the app builders with enough information to create an algorithm that's really purposeful.

Hayley: [45:43](#) So I think without ... if we take algorithms out of the question, for each person who's engaging with online dating, I'd think about a couple of just really obvious things. First of all, do my picture represent the kind of lifestyle I lead? And how are they repping me as my ... almost like a personal brand? And we all know this from using Instagram or something, accounts where it's very obvious what the account is about, it's always got a very purposeful and clear message, whether that's fitness or food or dating, those accounts will perform, by and large, better.

Hayley: [46:17](#) So if you've got a confusing account where it's like a ski picture, a yoga picture, a picture of you clubbing at Ibiza, and then your corporate headshot, people might not understand what kind of aspects of your personality you're really actively trying to promote. And obviously, you want to promote aspects of your personality, you also have about who you want to attract. So I'd go through that photo selection. For any woman who's feeling that she's overwhelmed, write a profile. Lot's of times, people don't.

Hayley: [46:43](#) And in fact, if you do that, you can very cleverly put a little line in there saying something like, "Tell me what your favourite book is," or, "Ask me about my last holiday." And then you can know ... you can at least tell ... that's a little filter that you can do for yourself, non-robo version, where you can know if a person's bothered to read that. Then you can look at things I said like, how quickly someone's asking you out on a date, how well they respond to a "no", all of those things are actually quite important criteria for you. And also, the quality and planning around the date, these are all good indicators, actually, of a person's interest in you, plus openness to a relationship.

Kate: [47:22](#) That's really interesting because we're looking at ways of potentially, obviously, matching people based on a percentage. It might be that we ask them questions, maybe not so open-ended, but we generate questions for them like, do you like this movie or this movie? To try and learn, I guess, what kind of person they are. There's a few problematic issues with it in the sense that, one, yeah, it can be laborious for the user, and it might be they just drop off immediately once they see these questions. But also, how honest might they be if they think, okay, I'm not going to say that I like that film because it might look silly or something. It is ... they're scared that someone might actually see the answer.

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- Kate: [47:58](#) So doing ... instead flipping it, and maybe making it like so it's more of a tool to curate your profile in a way that actually will work for you, might be a way for flipping it round. Just-
- Hayley: [48:12](#) I also think that sometimes it's about ... if someone likes sci-fi movies, how good an indicator is that of compatibility? I know my partner's well into sci-fi, and I watched Aliens 2, I sat through it, and it wasn't bad, but I wouldn't say it would be what would draw me to him. And I think it's about, again, how do we break down those things. I would say, again, I think looking for people who are looking for the same kind of relationship. And again, how honest are they going to be around that, that's a big one. And also, because there's on both ends of the spectrum ... because I think it's slightly stigmatised to go out there and say, I'm looking for something serious. And likewise, lots of people might say they're looking for something serious, when they're looking for something casual, for obvious reasons.
- Hayley: [49:00](#) So I think relationship style that you want. Also, availability. So I do know from apps, a lot of the time, will prioritise people who are new users to the site, or who are logging on a lot. And that kind of makes sense. As long as we're not looking at someone who's trying to be ultra Casanova, or ultra John Travolta, of whatever dating apps it is. And they actually ... because I think that's at least indicating ... there's probably a point where it becomes unhealthy ... but to an extent, that's indicating an active user who's really looking to connect with people.
- Hayley: [49:27](#) Also, the quality of messages. I think this would be a cool machine-learning thing to do, where you're looking at how many words, and how long those words are, and things like that, in terms of peoples messaging styles. If someone is just spamming people with emojis and pictures, they might not be the right user to match with lots of people. So I'm sure that there's so many ways that AI and algorithms can help us. But I think it's about looking at which ones can we develop that mirror those very human ways of assessing compatibility.
- Speaker 5: [50:02](#) Stay connected.
- Kate: [50:04](#) If you want to get in touch with any questions or feedback, you can find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and SoundCloud. Just search for 'How To Build a Dating App Podcast'. Thank you for listening.
- Michael: [50:17](#) Our interview with Hayley Quinn continues on the next episode.