

A CASE STUDY PORTFOLIO: 2025

HENRIK JONATHAN KLIJN

COPY + CONCEPTS

BACKGROUND

ABOUT ME

Every brand tells a story, but not every story finds its audience. I’ve built a career on closing that gap—finding the line, the phrase, the campaign that doesn’t just speak but lingers, sharp and resonant, in the mind of the reader. Writing, for me, is not decoration. It is direction. It moves people toward clarity, connection, and choice.

At Reflex Media, where I serve as Head Copywriter, I oversee two very different yet equally demanding voices.

[Seeking.com](#), with its 56 million members worldwide, requires the scale and polish of a global brand.

[FirstDate.com](#), a journal with more than 2 million readers, calls for intimacy, curiosity, and a steady editorial hand. Balancing both has made me fluent in contradiction: bold enough to lead a relaunch, precise enough to make every comma count.

For Seeking, I directed the company’s 2025 global brand relaunch, creating the campaign “You know what you want. Find it on Seeking.” A simple line, but simplicity is deceptive; it required weeks of strategy, cross-department collaboration, and a clear-eyed understanding of how people talk about love and desire in 2025. The campaign delivered measurable returns—20% lift in organic traffic, 25% YoY ROI increase—but what matters more to me is this: it gave the brand a voice that finally matched its ambition.

At FirstDate, my focus has been authority through authenticity. I built and executed the editorial and SEO strategy that increased readership by 40% year-over-year, transforming the journal into a recognized voice in modern dating culture. My work has been cited by The Dispatch (Nick Catoggio), referenced in Insider, Bustle, and The Cut. These aren’t just mentions; they are proof that when writing rings true, it carries. It escapes its intended platform and becomes part of the larger conversation.

The through-line across these projects is not just output, but outcome. I write copy that converts, yes—but more importantly, I write copy that endures. Whether through advertising concepts, native campaigns, SEO-driven features, or brand relaunches, I merge storytelling with data to ensure the message performs as beautifully as it reads.

What I offer as a Senior Copywriter is not only technical proficiency—the ability to draft, edit, optimize, and deliver—but also a way of thinking about words as architecture. Every headline is scaffolding; every campaign is a structure meant to stand long after the launch. My reputation, within and beyond Reflex, is built on reliability, precision, and the ability to turn broad strategy into sentences that work.

The best writing carries both inevitability and surprise. The inevitability that this is the only way the line could have been written; the surprise that it had not been written before. That is the energy I bring to every project, from a three-word tagline to a multi-platform campaign.

Henrik Jonathan Klijn



CASE STUDY # 1

SEEKING.COM



seeking
Presents

The
Truth
Booth

CASE STUDY: SEEKING.COM

**“YOU KNOW WHAT YOU
WANT. FIND IT ON SEEKING.”**

THE BRIEF

seeking.com needed a unifying campaign to sharpen its positioning as the premier platform for intentional, luxury dating. The objective was twofold:

1. Brand Elevation – articulate Seeking's identity around clarity, confidence, and luxury dating standards.
2. Performance – develop campaign assets flexible enough to be tested across native advertising, SEO-driven editorial, paid media, and CRM/email.

The challenge: Create a bold, clear messaging system that worked both as top-of-funnel brand storytelling and performance-driven copy.

MY ROLE

As Head Copywriter, I:

- Concepted & wrote campaign's hero lines and modular messaging frameworks such as the Truth Booth.
- Designed four distinct wireframe variants (MULTI, WHITE, PINK, NAVY) to test how brand voice performed across visual treatments.
- Partnered with SEO strategists to ensure blog/editorial extensions reinforced campaign pillars.
- Developed copy for native ad tests (different headlines, tones, lengths) to measure audience response.
- Coordinated with design and marketing to ensure tone and copy carried seamlessly through production.
- Extended the campaign voice into editorial features, CRM, and social content, maintaining consistency across channels.

RESEARCH & STRATEGY

Research & Strategy

1. Audience Insights

- Seeking's users are ambitious, style-conscious, and intentional daters.
- Pain points: fatigue with mainstream apps, unclear intentions, and wasted time.
- Insight: The brand had to validate members' confidence and clarity without alienating new, aspirational users.

2. Market Audit

- Competitors positioned themselves around fun, serendipity, or sheer volume of matches.
- None owned the luxury + intentional dating space.
- This gap became the foundation for "You Know What You Want."

RESEARCH & STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

3. SEO Research

- Worked with SEO team to identify high-value themes: intentional dating, high standards, clarity in relationships, luxury dating experiences
- Mapped campaign messaging into an editorial calendar (Q3 blog roadmap) that reinforced the campaign pillars via SEO-optimized features.

4. Testing Strategy

- Structured the campaign for native ad testing:
 - Created multiple headline variations (direct, luxury-oriented, curiosity-driven).
 - Developed long-form advertorial snippets for placement on lifestyle/native platforms.
 - Monitored performance to identify which tones drove clicks and conversions.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase 1: Core Messaging

- Developed the hero line: “You know what you want. Find it on Seeking.”
- Built supporting copy frameworks: clarity-driven headers, confidence-focused body copy, action-oriented CTAs.
- Built and developed a full range of slogans and taglines that reflect the core brand promise: that Seeking will help you find what you want.

Phase 2: Wireframe Variants

- Produced four modular site experiences:
 1. MULTI: Visually diverse, multi-panel structure.
 2. WHITE: Clean, minimalist layout – emphasizing luxury and clarity.
 3. PINK: Bold, playful variant with aspirational tone.
 4. NAVY: Strong, premium-feel variant for high-value positioning.

Each carried the same messaging spine but tailored tone and layout for audience segmentation.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS (CONTINUED)

Phase 3: Native Advertising Assets

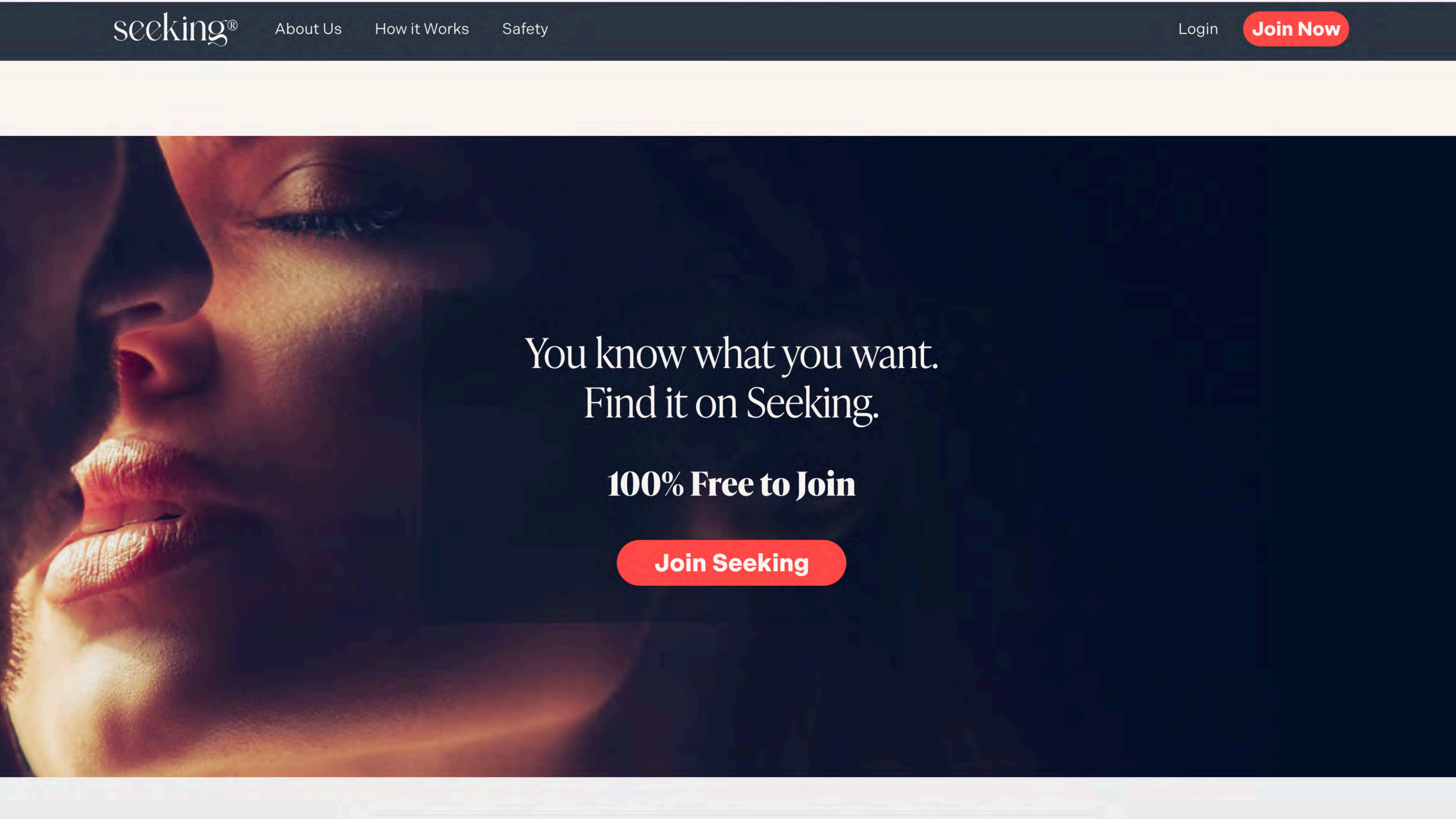
- Crafted headlines ranging from direct clarity ("Dating, Elevated.") to curiosity-driven hooks ("What Happens When You Stop Settling?").
- Built long-form native snippets framed as editorial stories – designed to blend into premium lifestyle placements.

Phase 4: Editorial Extensions

- Developed Q3 blog theme: Luxury With Clarity – Dating Elevated.
- Articles tied campaign themes to cultural conversations, reinforcing SEO pillars
- Example pieces: Why Clarity Is the New Luxury in Dating, Confidence Over Convenience: How to Date With Intention.

Phase 5: CRM & Social Rollout

- Repurposed hero messaging into email lifecycle campaigns (welcome sequences, engagement nudges, reactivation flows).
- Adapted tone for Instagram/TikTok ads, keeping copy short, bold, and high-impact.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes and lips. She has dark hair and is looking slightly upwards and to the left. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting her features. The background is dark and out of focus.

You know what you want.
Find it on Seeking.

100% Free to Join

[Join Seeking](#)

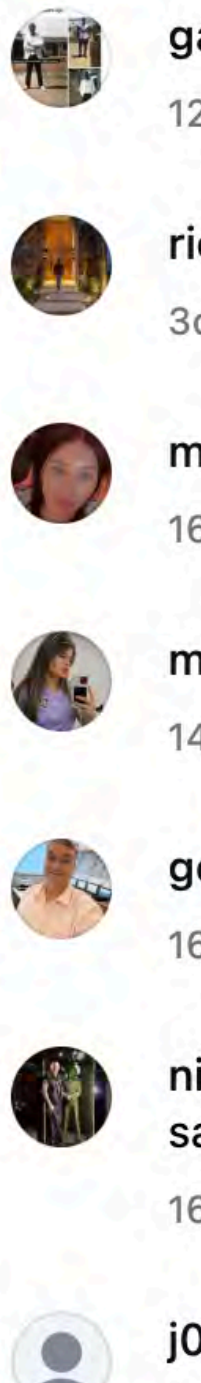


Same Energy.
Same Elegance.
New @

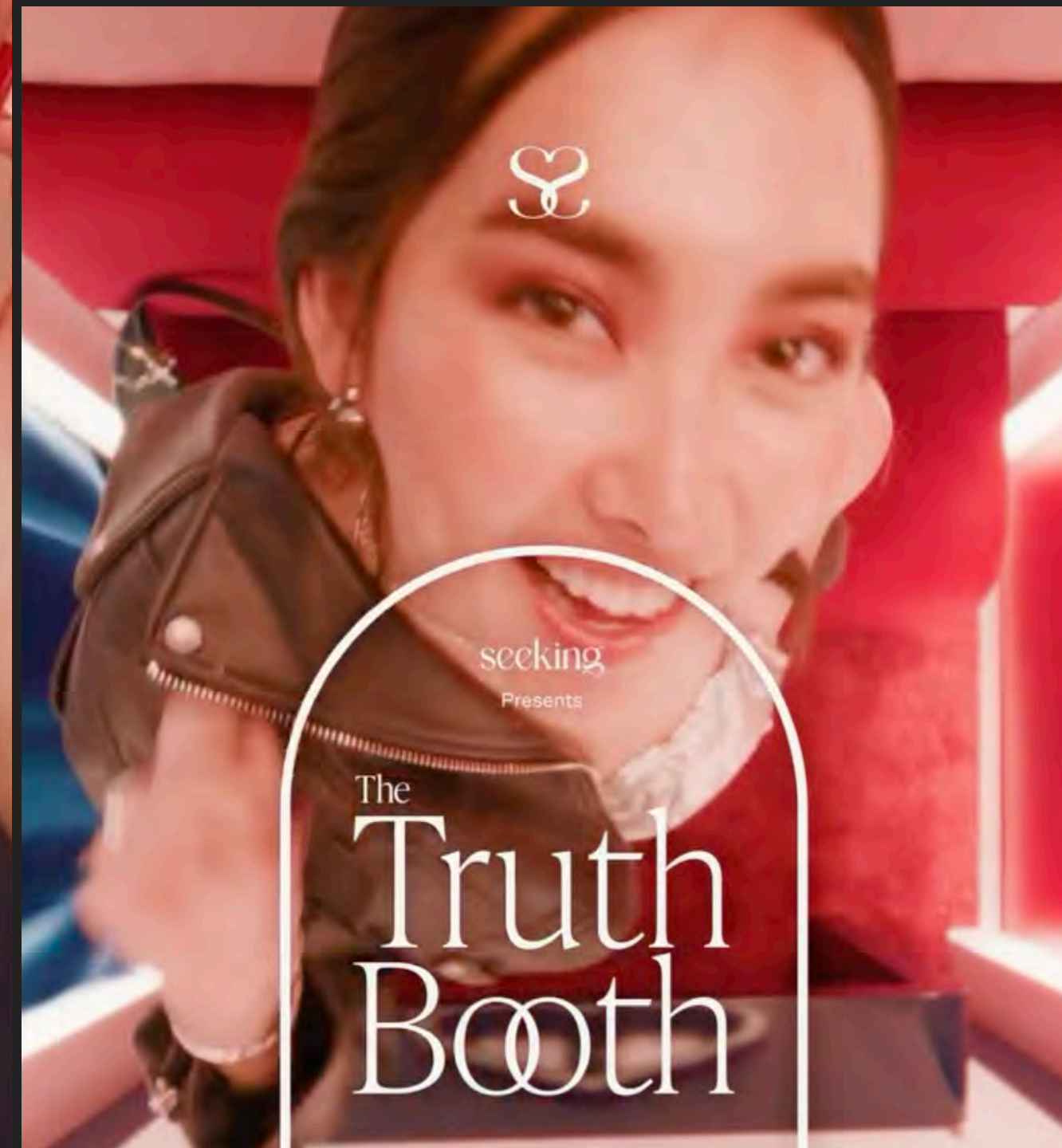
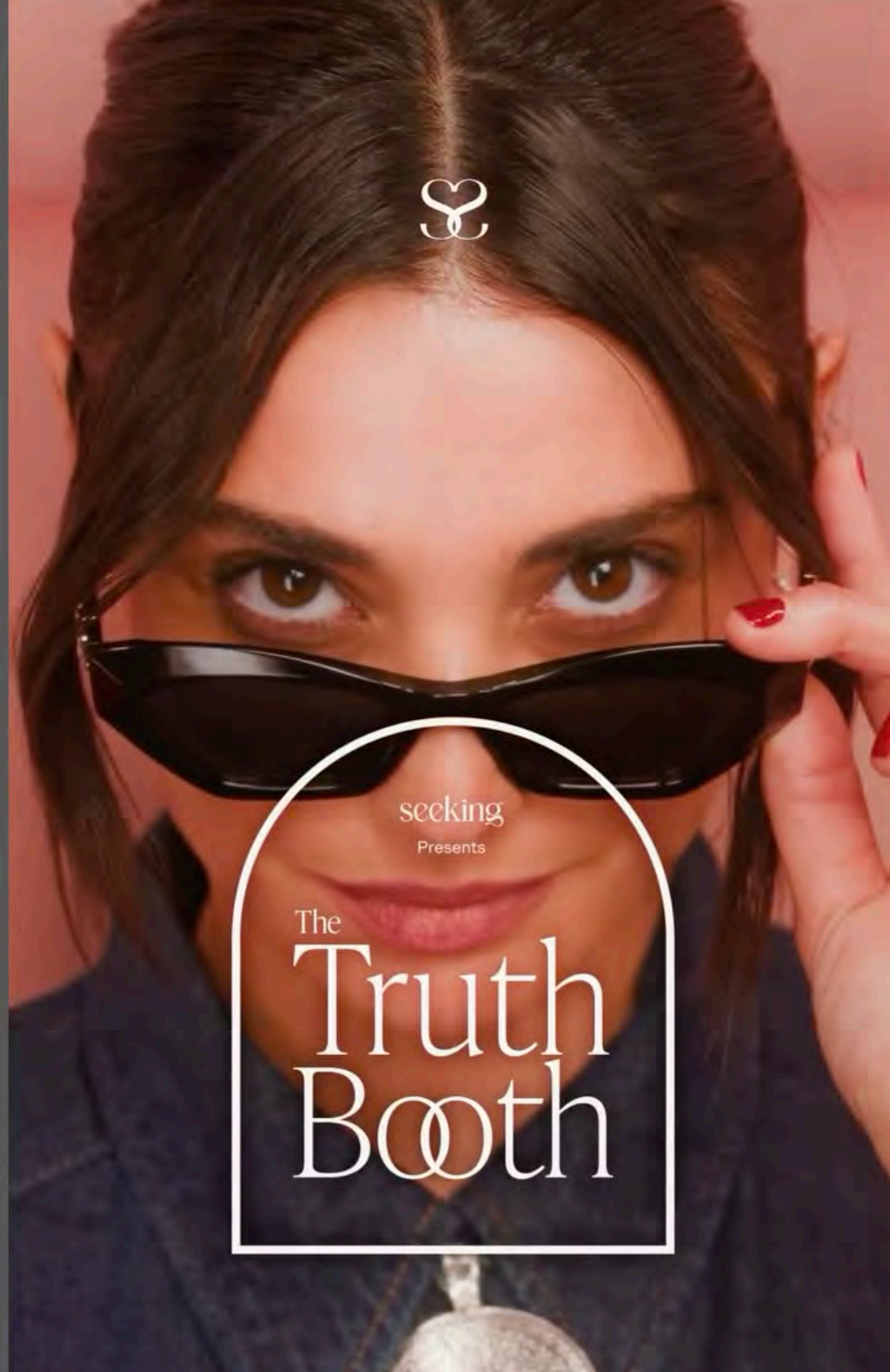


We're not playing
hard to get.
Just hard to miss.

Follow us at [@seekingofficial](#)



We moved,
but we're still your type.



 seekingofficial Something big is coming 🤔
You know what you want. Find it on Seeking.
9w

 ekem.iniudom002 Can I get a serious relationship in this platform I have been hearing good about this platform
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9w 3 likes Reply

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5w 1 like Reply

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You're not asking
for *too* much.

You're just asking
the *wrong* apps.

Find it on
seeking



He's a 10
but acts more
committed to his
fantasy football team

seeking



Manifestation? Please.
We have an app for that.

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT. FIND IT ON seeking



seeking
Presents

The Truth Booth

Seeking Redefines Luxury Dating – Press Release

SEEKING ANNOUNCEMENTS



Avoiding Situationships – How to Take Back Your Power

DATING TRENDS

By: Henrik J. Klijn - February 3, 2025

Are you, by any chance, tired of navigating the emotional roller coaster that is the dreaded situationship? Or, perhaps you’ve recently been hit—again—with an awkward, “I like you, but I’m not looking for a serious relationship right now” chat?

Welcome to dating in 2025, where the “situationship”—that maddening almost-but-not-quite relationship—has managed to claim center stage. You’re not alone if you’re frustrated with the endless gray areas, social media’s chokehold on your romantic prospects, and a hookup culture that never quite delivers.

But here’s the good news: you have more control over this chaos than you might think. It’s time to reclaim your power by embracing clarity, boundaries, and realness.

The Rise of the Situationship

Gone are the days of simple courtship. Now, terms like “situationship,” “breadcrumbing,” and “ghosting” dominate dating discourse. A situationship, a term coined to describe a relationship that is neither a casual hookup nor a committed partnership, is essentially a purgatory where two people connect but avoid defining their relationship. Sound familiar?

Why has this become the norm? Experts attribute the rise of situationships to a perfect storm of dating apps, social media, and shifting priorities among young people. Dating apps provide endless options, giving the illusion that someone “better” is always a swipe away. Social media fosters comparison, making authentic connections feel impossible. Couple that with career-driven goals, and people are hesitant to “settle down” without feeling certain—a certainty few achieve in today’s fragmented dating landscape.

Hookup Culture and Emotional Famine

Hookup culture isn’t inherently bad. For some, casual encounters can be liberating and empowering. But for many, it creates a confusing paradox: physical connection devoid of emotional intimacy. And when you layer in ghosting—that heartless vanishing act that leaves you wondering what went wrong—it’s no wonder people feel drained.

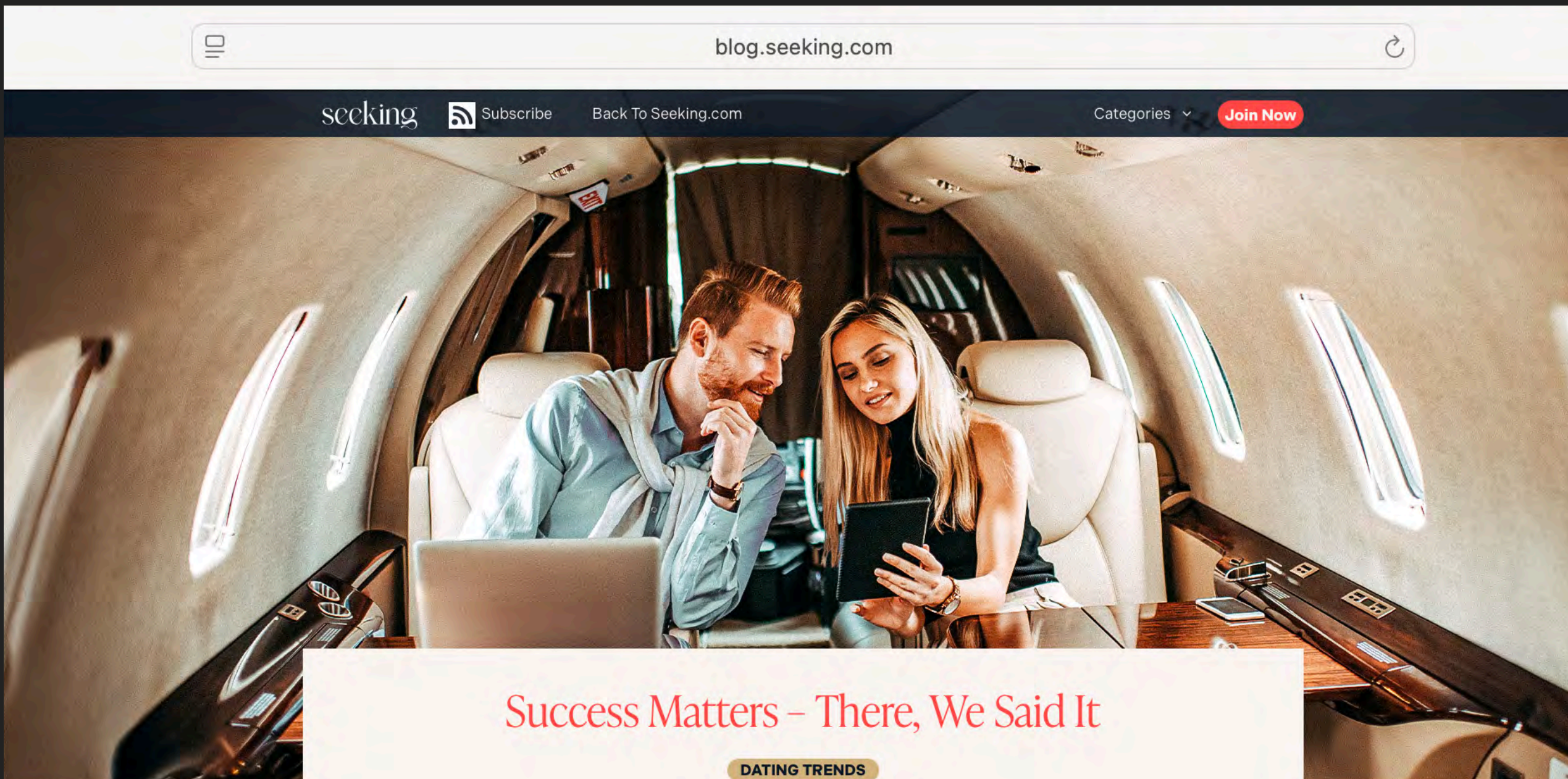
A 2022 Pew Research study, a comprehensive survey conducted among U.S. adults between 18 and 30, revealed that over 60% of the participants reported feeling dissatisfied with their dating lives. The most cited reasons? Lack of clarity, mismatched goals, and the exhausting unpredictability of modern dating—all hallmarks of a situationship.

How Social Media Fuels the Chaos

Social media compounds the problem by turning romantic lives into performative art. Instagram highlights the glossy facade of happy couples, while Insta trends dissect every potential “green flag” or “red flag.”

Meanwhile, the endless scroll of “relationship advice” threads can make you second-guess every interaction. If you’re already stuck in a situationship, these conflicting messages can pull you deeper into confusion, making it harder to set clear boundaries or walk away.

How to Take Back Your Power



Success Matters – There, We Said It

DATING TRENDS

By: Henrik J. Klijn - May 23, 2025

Why Chemistry Requires Ambition

Being kind—and most will agree on this—is a relationship baseline. It’s fuzzy, comforting, and undeniably a foundational component to any healthy relationship. But being nice alone isn’t enough. It doesn’t sustain intrigue. It doesn’t keep a spark alive. Nor does it guarantee you’ll still be fascinated with each other in five years. Kindness, unfortunately, has an expiration date.

Success—now *that’s* magnetic. Ambition is the secret ingredient that transforms fleeting attraction into lasting chemistry. And no, valuing ambition doesn’t make you elitist. It means you are realistic about what truly sustains meaningful connections.

Ambition Isn’t Merely Attractive—It’s Necessary

Recent dating trends observed by the [Seeking](#) team reveal something intriguing: ambition is quickly rising to the top as a must-have trait, competing directly with physical attraction and emotional intelligence. According to a 2024 Pew Research study, 76% of women aged 25-40 list “ambition” and “drive” among their top non-negotiables when selecting a long-term partner.

Why the sudden surge? Because today’s daters crave more than just good conversation and weekend plans. They’re looking for a shared vision of the future. Ambition signals stability, vision, and growth—qualities that are critical in a partner if you intend to build something lasting.

Chemistry Needs More Than Sparks

Chemistry often gets mistaken for instant attraction. That immediate spark is exciting, but chemistry runs deeper. It’s the sustained interest that happens when you respect and admire how someone moves through life. As the Boston song says, it’s *more* than a feeling.

“We naturally gravitate toward people whose vision aligns with ours,” says [Emma Hathorn](#), relationship expert for Seeking. “Ambition signals capability, commitment, and future-oriented thinking—all essential for stable relationships.”

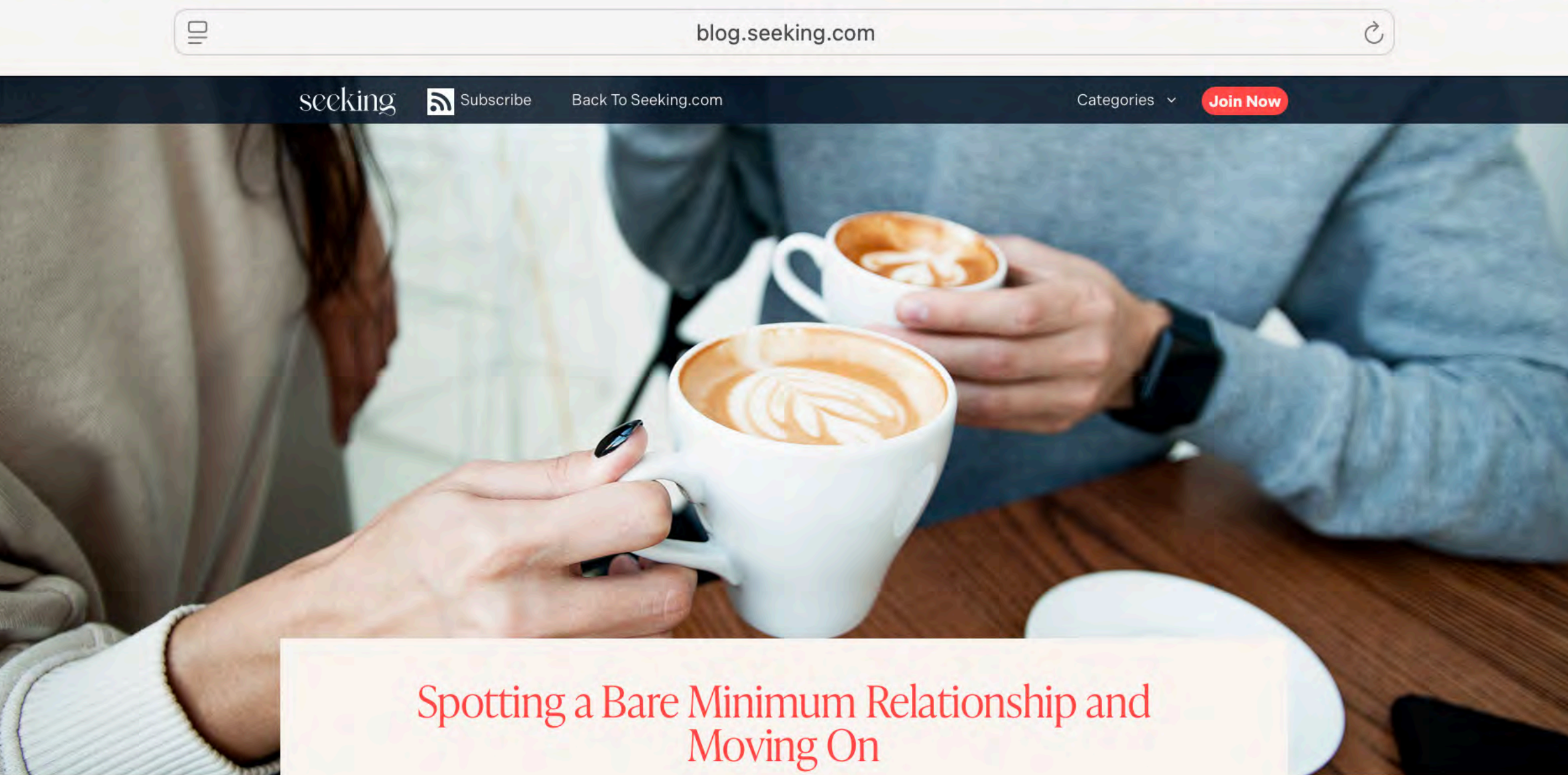
Think about it practically: If you’re constantly growing, chasing your goals, and leveling up your life, it’s nearly impossible to stay attracted long-term to someone content with doing the bare minimum. Research published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology in 2023 found that couples with matched ambition levels experienced significantly higher rates of relationship satisfaction compared to those without matched ambition levels.

Success Isn’t About Money—It’s a Mindset

So, what is success really about in today’s dating culture? Firstly—mindset. And discipline. It means someone having a clear vision of who they are, where they’re headed, and exactly how they’ll get there.

This redefinition of success, extending beyond financial means, is increasingly influencing how people approach dating. Phrases like “dating someone ambitious” and “goals in a partner” have seen a significant rise in Google and TikTok searches, indicating a broad cultural shift. We are collectively moving away from glamorizing the “bare minimum” and leaning into the allure of ambition.





Spotting a Bare Minimum Relationship and Moving On

DATING TRENDS

By: **Henrik J. Klijn** - April 11, 2025

It happens fast. One moment, you’re wrapped up in an “us against the world” relationship, and the next, you feel you’re doing all the emotional heavy lifting. But how do you know when your partner is doing just enough to keep things from falling apart and not enough to truly make you feel valued?

In a fast-paced world where convenience often edges out effort, it’s easy to find yourself stuck in an unfulfilling dynamic. A great connection is intentional, not a passive understanding, where one partner coasts while the other does the work. The first step to breaking free? Spotting the subtle signs, understanding the emotional cost, and choosing to put yourself first. Because feeling loved should be the bare minimum

The Red Flags of a Bare Minimum Relationship

Bare minimum relationships are deceptive. Research reveals that over 18% of individuals admit to staying in unsatisfying relationships due to the fear of being alone, underscoring how this anxiety often traps people in bare minimum partnerships. These connections may not appear outwardly toxic, but they are nonetheless unsatisfying.

Here are five unmistakable signs:

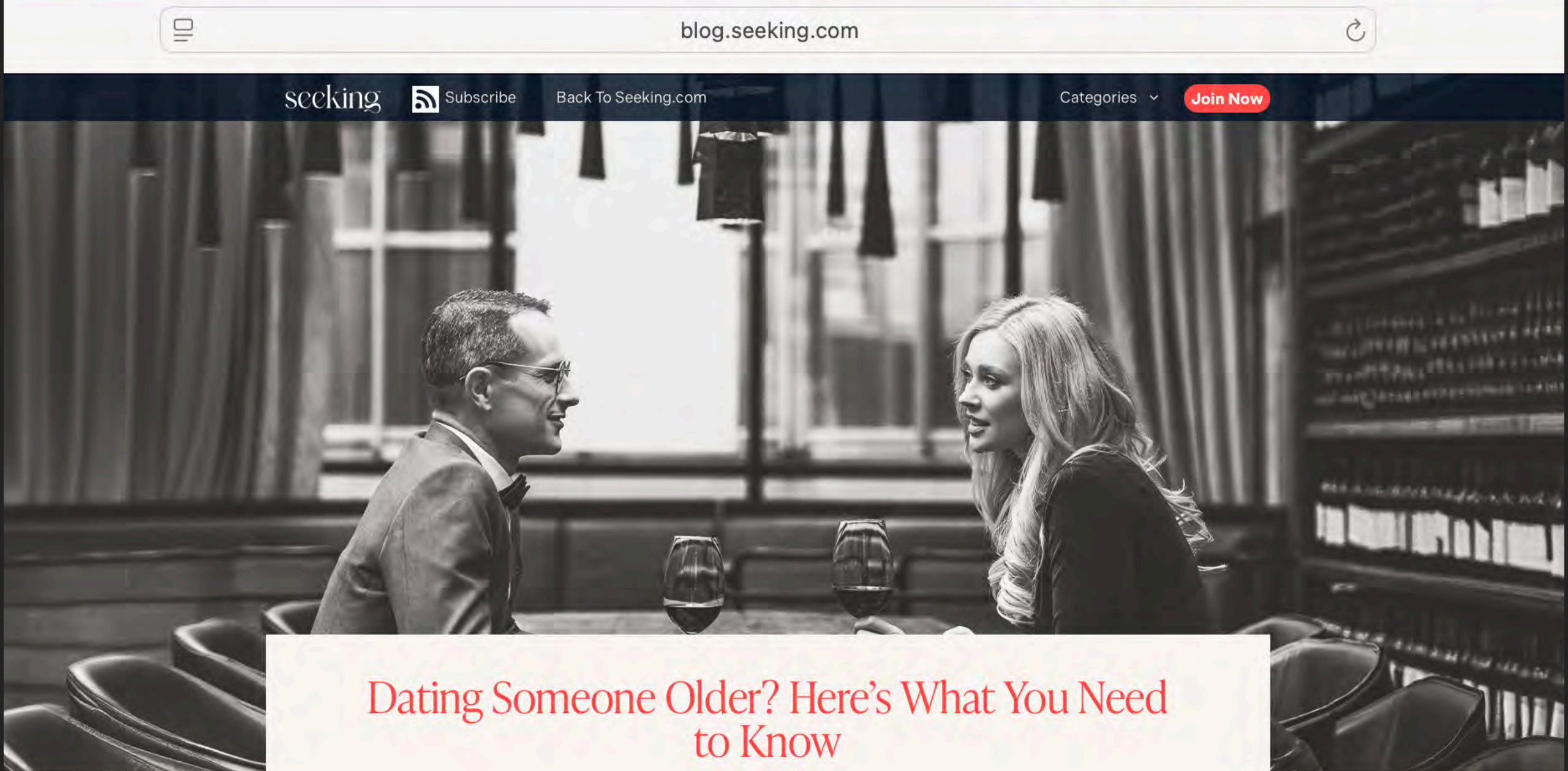
- Lack of Effort – Your partner rarely initiates plans, conversations, or meaningful gestures. You seem to be the only one putting in the time and work to maintain the connection.
- Inconsistent Communication – They reach out when convenient but don’t make a real effort to engage or check in on you.
- Emotional Unavailability – When you share concerns, they dismiss your feelings rather than offer comfort or solutions.
- Minimal Growth as a Couple – Things just feel stuck. There’s little forward movement. No talk of plans, shared goals, or deepening intimacy.
- You Feel Unappreciated – You give more than you receive, leading to persistent emotional exhaustion and loneliness.

If these sound familiar, you’re likely in a relationship where your partner gives you the bare minimum to keep you from walking away.

Why Do People Stay in Bare Minimum Relationships?

It’s easy to assume that people stay in unfulfilling relationships out of fear of being alone, but the truth is more complex. Psychological attachment, nostalgia, and societal pressure to maintain a relationship—even a mediocre one—can keep people tethered to partners who aren’t fully invested. Studies indicate that nearly 40% of individuals in relationships experience some form of emotional neglect, highlighting how common such unfulfilling dynamics can be.

Author [Molly Burford](#) writes on Thought Catalog, “The difficult truth is this: A man who starts giving you the bare minimum will never change. You will spend your whole life begging for the basics, which will be exhausting.” For most, it’s hard to identify that one is surviving on the mere fumes of a relationship, and then, when the realization hits, it’s even harder to pinpoint an exact problem.



Dating Someone Older? Here’s What You Need to Know

DATING ADVICE

By: **Henrik J. Klijn** - March 14, 2025

Ever thought about dating someone older? Not just a couple of years older—someone whose life experience, ambition, and references belong to an entirely different era.

Age-gap relationships are often dismissed as a pursuit of financial security or a nod to outdated “gold-digger” stereotypes. In reality, they’re more nuanced. Modern dating trends—especially on platforms such as [Seeking](#)—reveal many younger daters are attracted to older partners because they value connection, shared goals, and clarity of purpose. Research indicates that for many, it’s less about the number of birthdays between you and more about how well your life visions align.

Emotional Maturity: More Than A Number

Dating someone older doesn’t automatically mean they’re more emotionally mature. Age and emotional intelligence don’t always go hand in hand. An emotionally mature partner listens without dismissing, communicates without condescension, and respects differences without trying to mold you into some idealized version of youth.

The flip side? An emotionally immature older partner might lean into the power imbalance, try to control the relationship, or fail to respect your independence. And being younger doesn’t mean you should accept being treated like a project. Your voice matters. Your boundaries matter. It’s about blending wisdom with vitality, where each person respects the other’s individuality while working toward shared long-term goals.

Power Dynamics: Stability vs. Control

Navigating inherent power dynamics is one of the trickiest aspects of any age-gap relationship. With more life experience and, often, greater financial security on one side, imbalances may emerge. However, the key isn’t to ignore these differences but to manage them transparently. For a younger partner, gratitude for support should never turn into a sense of obligation. And for the older partner, it’s essential to remember that respect isn’t something that can be bought—it’s earned through genuine connection and mutual understanding.

Attraction vs. Long-Term Compatibility

The thrill of an age-gap relationship often comes from experiencing different lifestyles. An older partner might introduce you to luxury travel, fine dining, or career networking. A younger partner might bring spontaneity and fresh energy. It’s exciting—but excitement alone doesn’t build a lasting relationship.

If your daily routines, social circles, or ambitions don’t align, those differences matter more than any initial chemistry. A night owl dating a morning person might seem minor, but it becomes a dealbreaker if it leads to entirely different lifestyles.

That’s why it’s crucial to talk about life goals early. If one of you wants marriage and family while the other sees relationships as short-term fun, no amount of attraction will bridge that gap. Compatibility isn’t about liking the same music—it’s about whether your lives naturally complement each other.



IMPACT

- Brand Elevation: Established a clear, premium positioning for Seeking that resonated across touchpoints.
- Testing Wins: Native ads using clarity-driven messaging outperformed playful curiosity-driven variants by ~18% CTR (internal test results).
- SEO Strengthening: Blog tie-ins reinforced luxury/clarity keywords, boosting visibility and aligning with campaign voice.
- Cross-Channel Consistency: Unified copy across landing pages, blogs, email, and ads created a seamless user experience.
- Creative Foundation: The campaign's tone became the backbone for Q3 editorial strategy, with ripple effects into Q4 planning.



CASE STUDY # 2

FIRSTDATE.COM



CASE STUDY: FIRSTDATE.COM

**BUILDING “A DATING
JOURNAL FOR THE CURIOUS.”**

THE BRIEF

Building the [FirstDate.com](#) Editorial Voice & Platform

When [FirstDate.com](#) was preparing to expand its brand presence, the challenge wasn't just to launch another dating blog, it was to create an **editorial destination** that could stand on its own, with the sophistication of a cultural magazine and the authority of relationship psychology.

The mandate:

- Define an entirely new editorial voice.
- Research and build content pillars that spoke to a stylish, upwardly mobile audience.
- Develop a repeatable calendar system that could scale into multiple months of content.
- Ensure the platform avoided clichés and “listicle dating advice,” instead presenting bold, original, psychology-driven features

MY ROLE

“From planning to publishing, I built [FirstDate.com](https://firstdate.com) into a premium editorial destination: psychology-driven, culturally sharp, and unapologetically bold.”

As **Head Copywriter**, I:

- Led the conceptual strategy behind FirstDate.com’s editorial identity.
- Designed the tone of voice guidelines, positioning FirstDate as bold, intelligent, light yet grounded in psychology.
- Researched cultural, psychological, and SEO trends to identify unique angles not covered by competitors.
- Built the Q2 and Q3 editorial calendars, creating weekly publishing structures with thematic pillars.
- Authored and edited flagship features that served as tone-setters for the brand.

RESEARCH & STRATEGY

The challenge was to avoid clichés and create an editorial space that felt like a cultural magazine, not a content farm. [FirstDate.com](#) needed an intelligent, stylish voice that spoke to self-aware daters looking for clarity and a modern perspective.

1. Market Audit

- Analyzed competitor dating blogs (Tinder, Hinge, eHarmony, Cosmopolitan) and found that most leaned on repetitive tropes: “Top 10 First Date Ideas,” “What Your Star Sign Says About Love,” etc.
- Identified whitespace: no one was speaking with editorial sharpness, mixing psychology, culture, and bold POVs.

2. Audience Research

- Target: Stylish, self-assured, upwardly mobile singles.
- Pain points: Dating fatigue, lack of clarity in relationships, and desire for more intelligent conversation about love.
- Insight: Readers didn’t want to be “talked down to. They wanted nuanced, cultural analysis with practical takeaways.

RESEARCH & STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

3. Trend & Academic Research

- Incorporated emerging psychological research on “just talking” relationships, ambiguity in modern commitment, and attachment theory.
- Pulled from wider cultural conversations (NYT Modern Love, The Cut, academic journals) to anchor pieces in real-world relevance.

4. Strategic Pillars

I created four editorial pillars that guided all content:

- Self-awareness & Emotional Clarity (psychology-driven, reflective features)
- Modern Dating Culture (trend analysis, cultural critiques)
- Psychology of Connection (attachment, communication, reciprocity)
- Practical + Playful Guides (light but intelligent dating strategies)

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Building the Editorial Platform

Editorial Calendar Design

- Developed a bi-weekly publishing cadence (Tuesdays & Fridays).
- Designed content flows where each week delivered one trend-driven anchor piece and one lighter, curiosity-driven piece.
- Ensured interlinking across articles to improve SEO and build a coherent reader journey.

Tone of Voice Guidelines

- Sharp, intelligent, bold – but never gimmicky.
- Avoided clichés, AI-detectable phrasing, and overused tropes.
- Modeled tone after premium editorial voices (TIME, The Cut, Myisha Battle's essays).

THE CREATIVE PROCESS (CONTINUED)

Launch Features (Q2-Q3)

- Bare Minimum? Barely Interested. Why Daters Are Raising the Bar
- Dating a High Achiever? Here's How to Keep Up Without Losing Yourself
- Benched! Is It Ever Okay to Sideline Someone You're Dating?
- Self-Aware, Not Selfish: The New Psychology of Modern Dating

Each piece was structured to deliver:

1. A cultural hook (trend or behavior).
2. A psychological layer (anchored in research).
3. A clear POV (editorial stance).
4. A takeaway (empowering, practical advice).

THE BUILD: FROM STRATEGY TO SYSTEM

- **Core Editorial Pillars**

- Self-Awareness & Emotional Clarity
- Modern Dating Culture: Aware and Responsive
- Psychology of Connection, both in terms of subject and brand/user
- A Practical + Playful Guide to relationships as an SEO feeder to engagement with the seeking.com mother brand
- Interlinked article pathways for SEO + user flow between FirstDate.com and seeking.com
- .
- Crafted tone of voice guidelines: sharp, intelligent, bold yet never gimmicky



A dating journal for the curious, FirstDate is a resource for those in pursuit of extraordinary connections. Because first dates should be easy. And fun.



Dating

July 22, 2025

Love Bomb: When “Wow” Feels Like a Warning

Dating

July 1, 2025

Dating a High Achiever

It’s easy to get dazzled by someone who seems to sprint through life. That intensity can be thrilling, but not everyone moves at the same emotional speed ... READ ON

Dating

June 27, 2025

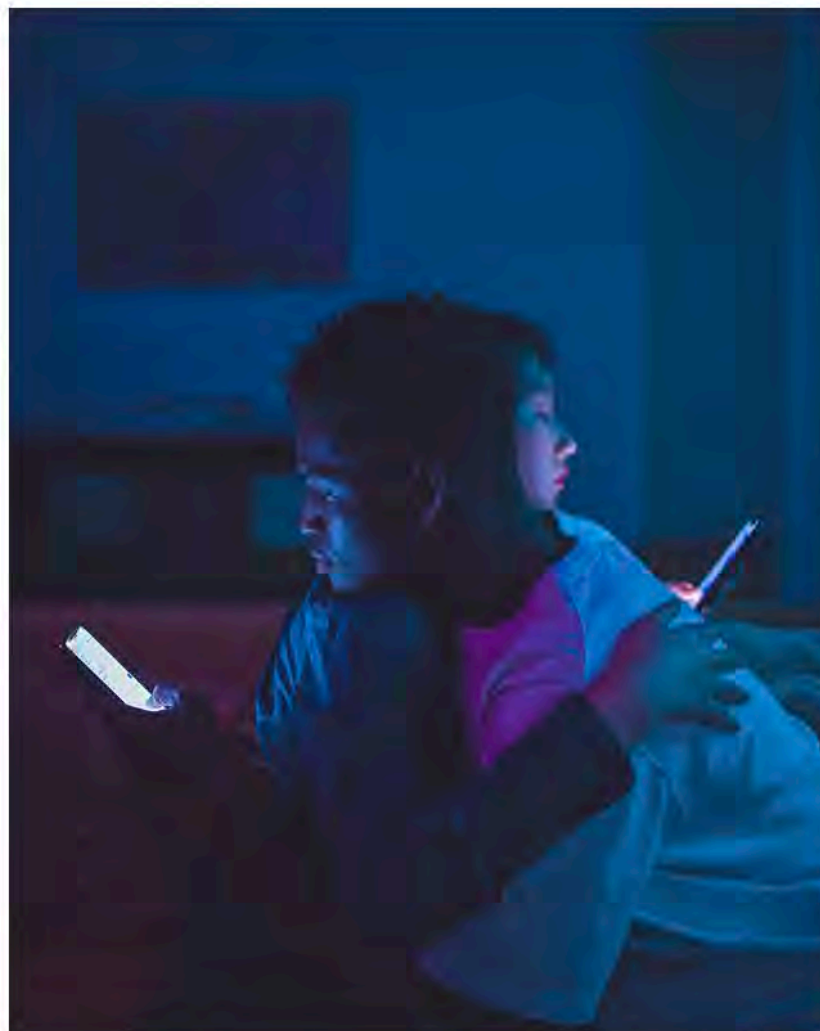
Making Magic Happen

FirstDate™ stands out from other dating journals by focusing on journeys of self-discovery and reflection rather than merely recording dates. It encourages users to engage with their experiences, fostering a unique blend of introspection and curiosity about their romantic lives.

Exploring the myriad wonders—and potential pitfalls—of the initial dating encounter including social activities, travel, culture, and other interesting topics, *FirstDate* celebrates successful connections and quality of life. *FirstDate* is a leading dating lifestyle authority with a dynamic mix of content and connects a global

📅 Dating June 6, 2025

The Playtionship



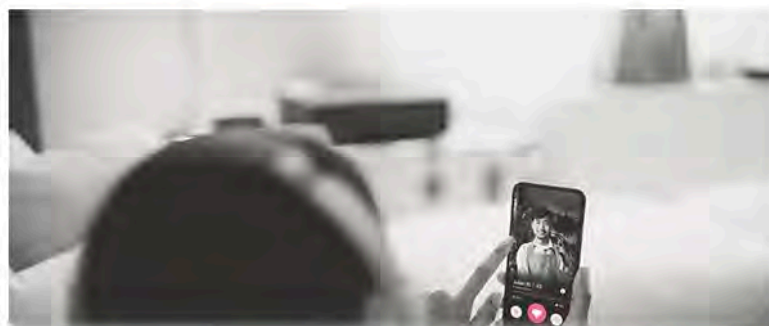
Should You Still Be on Dating Apps If You're Seeing Someone?

Picture this: you've been seeing someone new, it's going well. In fact, *really* well. But there's a familiar glow in your peripheral vision: your dating apps are still buzzing and oh-so tempting. Welcome to the "playationship," modern dating's ambiguous middle ground between "just hanging out" and "definitely exclusive." It's exciting, a little confusing, and highly relatable—like trying to decode the dress code for a party you want to nail.

Navigating this blurred line isn't just about timing—it's about understanding the subtle psychological dynamics at play. If you're keeping your apps around, are you hedging your bets, or simply caught up in the thrill of digital validation?

Swipe Science: Why Dating Apps Hook You In

Dating apps aren't just digital matchmakers; they're dopamine-fueled games designed to keep us swiping. Each new notification lights up your brain's reward centers, turning casual interest into an addictive cycle. Even if you genuinely enjoy someone's company, the endless potential matches can feel irresistible. Neuroscientists highlight this addictive feedback loop emphasizing why many daters feel conflicted about quitting the apps, even when sparks are clearly flying elsewhere. Understanding this brain chemistry can help you spot whether you're uncertain about your current connection or just hooked on the rush of new possibilities.



WORDS

Henrik J. Klijn

South African-born Henrik J. Klijn has been writing since childhood when his mother handed him a stack of notebooks to fill with his stories. Years later, she admitted it had more to do with keeping him quiet "because everyone needs a break, now and then." After completing studies in musicology at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University, Henrik pivoted back to creative and writing while working in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany.

As Creative Director (Copy), Henrik delivered concept, strategy, and creative for luxury and lifestyle brands as diverse as Levi's, DKNY, and Emporio Armani while also working on high-profile campaigns for real estate, petroleum, food and beverage as well as pharma brands. As a writer, he has contributed to various outlets, including Sourced Fact Media, Cosmopolitan, Men's Health, The Big Issue, and considerable Afrikaans—his home language—publications.

Currently, Henrik is pursuing a Master's in Journalism and Sociocultural Anthropology at Harvard. He is authoring a pre-doctoral dissertation on the [xam people of South Africa and the role of storytelling—told in resignation at their imminent extinction at the end of the 19th Century—as oral history and collective memory.

In his spare time, he attends music events, ranging from classical to jazz and electronica. Henrik is an avid cook and a voracious reader who tries never to complain about Chicago winters, a city he has called home since 2017.

📁 Food - Travel August 23, 2024

Yes, Chef!



Innovation often simmers alongside tradition, and the savvy yet somewhat inexperienced daters who also just happen to be food-obsessed, are discovering that the path to new romance may be paved with a dash of competition and a generous serving of local flavor. It's time to reconsider the tropes of stiff candlelit dinners and awkward small talk over overpriced appetizers. For the many seeking an unforgettable first date, the (mildly competitive) cooking class scene offers a gastronomic gladiatorial arena where culinary prowess becomes an ultimate aphrodisiac.

At the Epicenter of Culinary Fusion

In the heart of New York City, where international culinary traditions collide, couples dive into the world of sushi-making at acclaimed establishments such as [Taste Buds Kitchen](#). Picture yourself and your date, armed with bamboo mats and razor-sharp knives, competing to create the perfect maki roll. Naturally, the stakes are high, the fish fresh, and the potential for a playful wasabi mishap is endless. As you fumble with a mound of sticky rice and debate the merits of spicy tuna versus eel, you'll find that laughter—and shared challenges—are the secret ingredients to a memorable evening. It's a lot like life, and that is the point.

For those looking to explore beyond sushi, New York offers a plethora of cooking classes that cater to every culinary curiosity. At [Abigail's Kitchen](#), you can master the art of fresh pasta, while at [Atelier Sucre](#), pastry Chef Simon Herfray offers workshops and classes on French pastry making. All these options provide hands-on cooking experiences and offer glimpses into the city's very fabric and food story, making it perfect for a first date that is both experiential and wildly entertaining.

Brotherly Love & Cheesesteak Showdowns

Meanwhile, in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love serves up a different culinary connection. At [Sur La Table](#), for example, would-be-couples may face off in an ultimate cheesesteak showdown. Choices, choices... does one opt for a traditional Philly "whiz wit" or dare to elevate a humble sandwich with artisanal cheese and locally sourced deli cuts? And as you debate the merits of kaisers vs. pretzels and perfect the art of the meat flip, you'll soon discover that bonds forged over a hot griddle may just be as sturdy as ones formed over candlelight.

But Philadelphia's culinary scene isn't limited to chesesteaks. The city is blessed with a rich array of cooking classes that

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In the heart of the Midwest, where the skyline reaches the heavens, and the streets buzz with anecdotes, Chicago stands as a testament to resilience, innovation, and cultural confluence. For those seeking an exceptional first date that transcends the ordinary and delves into history, a guided walking tour through the Windy City's storied past offers an engaging and educational way to spend time together. This hour-long journey, best undertaken in the soft, amber glow of early evening, is a captivating exploration of Chicago's hidden gems.

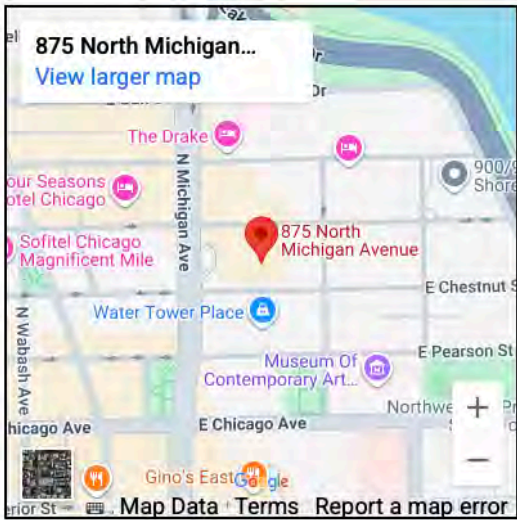
Starting Point

CHICAGO WATER TOWER – 806 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE

The Chicago Water Tower is an enduring symbol of Chicago's resilience and architectural heritage. Built in 1869, this Gothic Revival structure is one of the few buildings that survived the devastating Great Chicago Fire of 1871, earning it a special place in the city's history and the hearts of its residents.

Designed by architect William W. Boyington, the Water Tower was constructed using distinctive yellowing Lemont limestone. Its castle-like appearance, complete with turrets and crenellations, gives it a fairy-tale quality, making it an iconic landmark along Chicago's Magnificent Mile. Standing 182.5 feet tall, the tower originally housed a 138-foot high standpipe used to regulate water pressure for firefighting and control water surges in the area.

The tower's survival of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 was nothing short of miraculous. As flames engulfed the city, destroying most structures in their path, the Water Tower remained standing, becoming a beacon of hope for the city's residents. In the aftermath of the fire, it served as a rallying point for the city's rebuilding efforts, symbolizing Chicago's famous "I Will" spirit.



Reading Body Language on a First Date

We've all been there: a first date that suddenly feels like you've stepped into a high-stakes poker game—you're both playing it cool, but under the surface, signals are flying. The key to winning? Learning to read body language.

Forget overanalyzing every word—what people *say* on a first date only tells half the story. The real clues? They're in the flick of an eyebrow, the lean of a shoulder, the way they position their hands. When you master decoding these silent cues, you'll know exactly where you stand—and what move to make next. It's like a fun puzzle, adding an element of intrigue and entertainment to your date.

Ready to sharpen your first-date instincts? Here's a short guide on how to spot unspoken signs of attraction, disinterest, and everything in between.

The First 30 Seconds: What An Entrance Says

Nonverbal cues make up a huge part of communication—experts estimate that 55% of communication is nonverbal, meaning body language often speaks louder than words. On a first date, when both people are feeling each other out, these silent signals can reveal far more than nervous small talk ever could. Before you even say "nice to meet you," your date's body language has already told you something. Here's what to watch for:

- Eye contact & smile:** A genuine smile (one that reaches the eyes) and sustained eye contact signal interest and confidence. Bonus points if their face lights up when they spot you.
- Open posture:** Arms uncrossed, shoulders back, walking toward you purposefully? They're feeling good about this date.
- Avoiding eye contact or closed-off stance:** If they barely glance at you or keep their arms folded, they might be guarded or unsure. Or they wish they had stayed at home. Now you know.

At the Table: Attraction vs. Just Being Polite

 Dating July 11, 2025



Here's Why Daters are Raising the Bar

You've been there. The date's over, but you're still decoding the signals. Was that a real next-date plan or just a polite maybe? Did they mean it when they said "let's hang again"? It leads to one overwhelming question: Why does "effort" suddenly feel like a high bar?

Modern daters are done with uncertainty. They're over the guessing games, the delayed replies, the "chill" detachment dressed up as cool. What they want now is intention. Energy. Presence. Something that feels deliberate, not default.

After years of emotional burnout from breadcrumbing, ghosting, and swipe fatigue, people are learning to read the signs early. And the clearest one? Effort.

What Effort Looks Like (And What It Doesn't)

Let's recalibrate. For too long, the dating bar has been on the floor. Responding to a text within a day? Applause. Asking a single follow-up question? Practically revolutionary. Planning a date that doesn't involve someone's couch and Netflix autoplay? Apparently rare enough to merit a group chat recap.

But real effort isn't about grandeur. It's about consistency. Showing up. Making thoughtful plans. Being emotionally present. Choosing a location based on something they mentioned in passing. Reaching out first. Following through.

This is the quiet architecture of intention. It doesn't need to be flashy. It just needs to be real. And increasingly, dater are not just raising their standards—they're expecting others to meet them.

Because when effort is missing, it's not ambiguous. It's loud. And the new standard is listening to what that silence says.



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 Dating February 21, 2025



Is It Too Soon to Talk About What's Next on a First Date?

There's a delicate element to early dating conversations—one misstep, and you risk sounding like you're already planning joint vacations and meeting their parents before the appetizers hit the table. But here's the thing: dating in 2025 is more than banter over cocktails. For many of us, time is valuable, and we're not here to waste it. So, the question lingers: *When is it too soon to talk about the future on a first date, and how do you do it without sending them running for the hills?*

Let's be clear: talking about the future doesn't mean bringing up marriage or kids within the first ten minutes. But let's not pretend the future isn't all that important either. You're dating with purpose, and that's a good thing. The key is knowing *how* to navigate conversations about long-term goals without making it feel like an interrogation or a premature pitch for commitment.

The New Rules of Modern Dating: Why Timing Matters

"Futureproofing is, at its core, not just a positive trend, but something that we should all be taking into our dating lives — both online and off," says [Emma Hathorn](#), relationship expert for [Seeking](#). "Considering the future seriously, and who you see from your side — and more importantly, where you see yourself; these are key considerations when we date with intention. Your time could be spent anywhere, from building your company, to studying a new language, but you're choosing to spend it getting to know someone new. Ensure that their trajectory matches yours—as early as the first date, or even before you decide to meet irl."

Gone are the days when first dates were strictly about surface-level small talk. Sure, there's still room for playful questions about favorite movies or travel destinations, but today's daters—especially millennials and Gen Z—are increasingly focused on compatibility from the get-go.

A 2025 Bumble survey reveals that concerns about the future—such as finances, job security, housing, and climate change—are shaping the way people approach dating. An overwhelming 95% of singles say these uncertainties influence both their choice of partner and how they navigate relationships.

Among those surveyed, 59% of women prioritize emotional stability in a partner—pursuing someone who is reliable, grounded, and clear about their goals. Looking ahead, these futureproofing discussions are becoming more important early

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