

Considered Connections

People are seeking new ways to forge intimacy and connection



With intimacy redefined by the pandemic, people have reckoned with the importance of closeness and how it is crafted. In turn, many are exploring ways to connect that feel more intentional, be that via more 'authentic' online dating tools or analogue methods of communication, such as love letters. And despite all the headlines about a 'hot vax summer', people are looking for more emotional candour and control, pursuing relationships that feel meaningful.

Digital connections

Many people feel meeting people online creates superficial and distant interactions, with movements like [Love Is Not Tourism](#) rejecting the replacement of IRL intimacy with video calls. But with limited options available, many keep putting their faith in tech, like the 46% of Americans who enjoyed Valentine's Day virtually in 2021. But with 52% of people in the US saying that not having regular date nights can make intimacy more difficult, brands like [Hinge](#) and [FEELD](#) are aiming to spark more fluid online connections with virtual dates, in-app multimedia events, and social experiences. Similarly, dating app [Feels](#) is shaking up monotonous swiping by allowing people to personalise their accounts with short-form content.



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We've found at least a third of our users are saying that they have more urgency around wanting to settle down and find a partner, and more than half of our users are actively seeking that long-term relationship.

Justin McLeod,
CEO of Hinge

Recreational romance

Although the pandemic challenged relationships, lockdown made many people aware of their luck. In the UK, 61% of people claim the crisis caused them to realise that relationships are the most important thing in their life. With 55% of people feeling inspired to make more of an effort with loved ones, traditional ways of connecting have grown in popularity. Board game sales jumped by 240% during the first week of lockdown in the UK, and thought-provoking games like *Where Should We Begin?* have helped facilitate bonding moments. Activities such as love letter writing and sharing niche interests have also found favour as methods of crafting intimacy, showing that old-school ways can still ignite a spark.

Intentional intimacy

In an unpredictable world, people are clearer about what they want out of relationships, be they temporary or long-term. With more than half of young Americans believing one-night stands will no longer be relevant once the pandemic passes, brands are trying to facilitate intimacy in ways that give people more control. One example is *Snack*, which has invited Gen Zers to invest in its video-first dating app that enables more authentic self-representation, while Match is introducing features to discourage ghosting and add some more mindfulness to online dating. Meanwhile, others prepped for a 'hot vax summer' that promised a surge in emotional candour and re-evaluated values, including more focus on the power of physical touch and fewer fleeting interactions.

63%

of singletons in the US claim that they're looking to spend more time getting to know potential partners

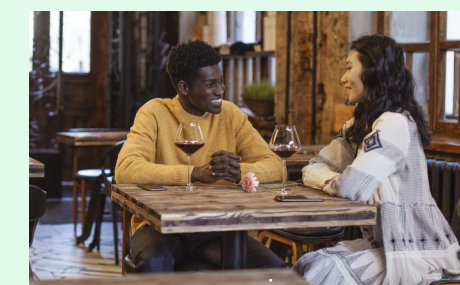
Match.com, 2020

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How recreational romance shapes intimacy for Gen Y

Lockdown forced many couples in the UK to spend almost all of their time together, causing some to get closer while others barely constrained their tensions. As WFH life looks set to continue in 2021, how can brands help them resolve problems and restore a sense of spontaneity and intimacy?

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