

Making The Perfect Match—New Help In The Search For A Mate

By Josh Murray

It took Carrie Bradshaw six seasons. Finding a rewarding, sustainable long-term relationship is no easy task—even when you're financed by HBO. Now, as Valentine's Day looms ominously again and coupled friends lament, "I just don't know why you can't find someone to be with", gay men and lesbians in Canada have new hope—and new help. Entre-Nous Network is a growing, national collective that aims to bring together compatible, same-sex partners for lasting relationships.

Patricia Ross, a Toronto-based counselor for Entre-Nous, explains the group's mission. "Entre-Nous Network provides a safe and confidential way of meeting like-minded individuals who are serious about starting long-term relationships," she says. Quite simply, it's one of the better options for those tired of a stale bar scene and awkward blind dates set up by well-intentioned friends. "Our members are thrilled to have a more professional and successful method of meeting without having to compromise their lifestyle," explains Ross.

That lifestyle often includes a busy work schedule and other pressing personal obligations, something Entre-Nous is clearly aware of. "Our service has taken gay dating to a whole other level," Ross explains. "We aim to make finding a long-term partner a priority without our members sacrificing the time dedicated to their careers and other responsibilities."



Singles interested in the service tend to have strong career goals, active lifestyles and solid footing in life, though they cover a broad age spectrum. "The age range of our members is quite diverse. It begins with [those in their] early twenties and goes up to sixty-five plus. Our members have proven it is never too early or too late to start a meaningful relationship," Ross says proudly.

Besides spanning a full range of ages, members also span the country, with offices for Entre-Nous in Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. "We have members that travel from all over the world to meet with us," Ross adds.

Age and locale differences aside, Entre-Nous' members share a common objective. "They all have one dating goal in mind, and that is to establish a serious long-term relationship," Ross explains. Clearly, this isn't the place to find a casual encounter. "There seems to be an existing stereotype that, if you are searching for a same-

sex partner, you are probably looking for a casual fling or an open relationship. There are several outlets available for these types of relationships; in fact this style of 'hooking up' has dominated the gay dating scene for quite some time. Our members are looking for unattached, emotionally-available individuals who are financially stable and serious about starting a long-term relationship," she reiterates.

It is exactly the stale clichés of dating that drive most Entre-Nous members to sign up. "They are tired of insincere intentions, mind games, lack of commitment, and, lastly, prospects trying to get them straight to bed," Ross says. "Our members have gotten tired of wasting time meeting all the wrong types of people." Gay bars across the country may be hubs of social activity but the group's members sometimes get discouraged by the nature of the scene itself. "It's tired and frustrating," concurs Ross. "It's great for short-term hook-ups and, if that is what someone is looking for, our service is probably not for them."

Upon seeking out Entre-Nous' assistance to find something more, members get personal attention from the get-go. "Entre-Nous is the only company in Canada that meets with their clients in person and caters exclusively to same-sex relationships," Ross says. "A private interview allows us to learn about preferences and relationship goals—we consider both the physical and emotional connection. We offer a thorough screening process, and a compatibility assessment before hand. We tailor a match that would be most compatible for each of our members."

Even if that perfect match is well-tailored, it doesn't mean he or she will appear right off the bat. "After a new member has joined, it typically takes about two weeks for them to receive their first referral. We do not create a fairytale of overnight success," Ross says honestly. "We let our members know that it is a process of getting to know each other—it takes monitoring, feedback and

meeting a few highly compatible introductions to determine who you would really like to end up with."

The downside is that members may meet a few people that they have no romantic interest in but, instead, feel would be great friends. "Many of our members develop invaluable friendships. Such positive relationships can only enhance one's life." Certainly, not a bad by-product.

The ultimate goal though is, of course, more than just friendship—and Entre-Nous is committed to pairing those with the same intentions. "Our ideal candidate is someone who is honest, sincere, and stable in life," Ross says. "Someone who is tired of searching unsuccessful avenues and is serious about meeting the right person is exactly who we'd love to meet. Entre-Nous gives our members comfort in knowing their search for a long-term partner is now an attainable goal."

So, this year, when the sickly sweet couple down the street mails a little pity along with their Valentine's card, know that next February you may just need to mark it return to sender. ▼

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