





# Love in the fast lane

Speed dating is the latest method for lonely singles to find that perfect match in the shortest time

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CALGARY HERALD

**Y**ou can't hurry love. Only fools rush in. Slow and steady wins the race.

Popular culture is filled with advice warning against jumping head-first into romance, of allowing it to take its course. Yet as spring blossoms, a new breed of singles is finding that sometimes haste avoids waste.

Welcome to the world of speed dating, a cross between musical chairs and the Love Connection, a new concept lonely singles are hoping will help them find soulmates.

Created in 1999 by Los Angeles Rabbi Yaacov Deyo and his wife Sue as a means for marriage-minded single Jews to meet, speed dating has reached cultish levels as more than 30 similar offshoots have popped up across the continent. Boosted in turn by turbo dating episodes of *Frasier* and *Sex in the City*, open-minded individuals are taking the opportunity to go from zero to love in 360 seconds.

Calgary's no stranger to the phenomenon. At least three speed dating services — Six Minute Dates Inc. (243-1456, [www.sixminutedates.com](http://www.sixminutedates.com)), The Dating Planet (681-5777, [www.6minutedates.com](http://www.6minutedates.com)), and Seven Minute Power Dates (809-7378, [www.roundtableevents.com](http://www.roundtableevents.com)) — have popped up in the city.

The concept places singles in a bar/restaurant environment where women sit at individually numbered tables. A round-robin of numbered men each sit at one of the tables and the couple share a conversation for a brief period, anywhere from six to 10 minutes, depending on the organizer. A bell rings when time is up and the men shuffle to the next table. Both sexes write down the numbers that correspond to the partners who appealed to them, and if there is a match, the parties are contacted in 24 hours and given the other's telephone number.

The phenomenon appeals to hard-working professionals who have little time for arduous courtship rituals.

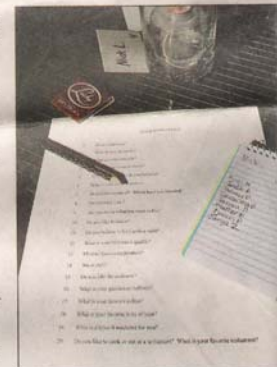
With the constraints of today's hyperactive working world, letting romance takes its time to blossom is a tough option, Sue Deyo says. The chance to arbitrage a month's worth of dates in a single night is an attractive alternative.

"It gives people a lot of hope," Deyo says. "Because

they enter a room with like-minded singles and they really get to talk to them, I mean have a real conversation. Even people who don't find a match find they enjoy talking to others. So it becomes a dignifying as opposed to a degrading experience."

The Deyos, who met through a friend, say the idea came to them during brainstorming sessions with young Jewish singles in L.A. They have since authored *Speed Dating: The Smarter, Faster Way to Lasting Love*, and have expanded the service to more than 25 cities worldwide, including Paris and Kiev.

"The whole purpose behind speed dating is marriage," Sue Deyo says. "It's based on traditional Jewish custom, when thousands of years ago young Jews would



Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald

**A list of questions you can ask your date if you get stuck for conversation during the speed dating that places couples together for six to 10 minutes.**

be set up to meet for a short while and they would decide if they were right for one another. So my husband and his students brainstormed and took a traditional way of dating and modernized it for today's busy singles.

"Typically the system works if its people are interested in getting married. We're not here for professional daters."

Deyo says 80 per cent of singles who enrol in speed dating sessions are ready for marriage. The system brings them together in a social setting where everyone is given equal opportunity to meet one another.

"If you think about a party setting, it's great for Mr. or Mrs. Popularity," Deyo says.

SEE DATE, PAGE D4

## FROM D1

# DATE: A way to meet people, not a quick way to love

"But for someone who doesn't have that outgoing personality or the model appearance, maybe people don't pay that much attention to them. What speed dating has done is set up a social atmosphere where you go from one conversation to another, and you have to talk to the person you're dating and really get to know one another. The person you wouldn't talk to at a party may end up being the most fascinating."

Dana Blonde, who runs Calgary's Six Minute Dates with Christine Hart, agrees that the usual dating outlets are tough places to meet people. It was her motivation behind opening the service in February when it was still novel here.

"The friends and family I told who weren't making fun of us thought it was a great idea," Blonde says and laughs.

Six Minute Dates say they already have a success story — one couple that hooked up at their first session on Feb. 12 are bringing up "the M word." Blonde has a few ideas about why their sessions have been popular.

"Since September, people have been taking the time to think about the quality of their life," she says. "They want to take more initiative to improve that quality. So while before people would follow that 'the right person will come when you're not trying' mantra,

they're now starting to think that they should put more effort into it."

Daniela Burlotti, who started offering sessions through The Dating Planet with Spencer Quadri in April, says honesty between couples has meant they've enjoyed an 80 per cent match rate so far. That means four out of five participants find a partner.

Her advice is simple: "If your eight minutes are up and you're glad that person is moving on, you've got no chemistry."

Deyo hopes people don't misinterpret the speed-dating philosophy. She says it's just a faster way of meeting people, not a quick way to love. People who are quick to judge prospective partners often end up disappointed.

"The biggest mistake people make is when they don't feel an immediate chemistry with the person they're seeing, they don't want to see them again," she says. "Because often times that spark takes a little while to ignite. If you come out of a date and go, 'That was a nice guy, but I don't know' — date him again. Because I've seen a lot of women in their 30s and 40s who've remained single for years and years waiting for that one guy to knock them off their feet.

"That is the movies, that is television, that is romance novels. That is not reality."