



Casual Dating

When It's OK To Date More Than One Person



Scarlett Russell

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I've been in **New York** for the past two months. As you'd expect from a city 3,000 miles away from home, things are different. You can go to the cinema at 1am and drink at a bar until 4am, but cab drivers hate you and *good luck* finding a corner shop that sells beer. Oh, and the dating scene is brutal. If you're a woman, that is. Single men probably have it better in New York than any other city in the world. Why? The 5-1 woman-man ratio means you've got five times more chance of pulling than in Britain. And the women here are ballsy – they'll think nothing of chatting you up at the traffic lights, approaching you in a bar or **instigating a talk on OK Cupid.com**

Dating is a serious business in New York and 'Multiple Dating' is the standard. It's perfectly common – if not expected – for men and women to have three or four people on the go before deciding one is serious enough to make them monogamous and everyone is alarmingly open about it. A man would think nothing of blurting out at dinner; 'You know what, can we just get the cheque? I have a drinks thing with someone after this.'

I don't know whether to be offended by or admirable of this brutal honesty. Multiple dating certainly happens in Britain, but the stark difference is that we don't *talk* about it. We'd worry what the other person thought and fear rocking the boat too early on. Best to just keep schtum until something gets serious, eh?

During my last year at university, I remember having three casual dates on the go. It was all harmless, really. I wasn't sleeping with any of them and thought this made me wildly cool, modern and powerful. Frankly, I couldn't keep up. Juggling three text conversations, re-telling the same anecdotes, not to mention the sinking feeling that maybe I was a bit of a tramp. I'd be out with one, get texts from another asking what I was up to and totally panic. 'At home! Sick! Don't call!' would be my hasty response. I gave up after two weeks.

After my last breakup I decided to throw myself back in the game and set up two first dates. Both lovely, attractive guys who I juggled for a couple of weeks under the premise that it was completely innocent, until I fell for both of them and wound up with neither. Turns out I wasn't Multiple Dating anymore; **I was cheating**.

And, let's face it, multiple dating takes up a lot of time. What with work, parties, Pilates and Googling 'Ryan Gosling Tumblr,' I can barely find time to maintain one relationship, let alone two or three. Yes, multiple dating may mean more sex, more excitement and one hell of an ego boost. It will also **set you back a few quid and take up most of your spare time** – and will take over football Saturdays and pub Sundays.

Here's my advice: Keep it simple. A few casual dates don't make a relationship. Do what you want, as long as you're not lying, cheating or leading anyone on. As soon as sex is involved, the game changes and you need to be upfront. Of course there are more traditional Brits who wouldn't dream of dating more than one person at a time. Respect. But perhaps we can learn something from our transatlantic pals. Their approach to dating might be ruthless, but there are no games or expectations. Then again, isn't all that part of the fun of dating?

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FIRST DATE

DATING MISTAKES

THE SCARLETT LETTERS

SCARLETT RUSSELL