

Pandemic dating: how couples have safely started relationships despite COVID-19

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Three couples share their success stories with online dating during the pandemic

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Dating during a pandemic has created a whole new set of challenges for those looking for love. Three couples share their experiences with developing relationships when we're all being encouraged to stay home and keep apart. (Stock photo)

It has been almost a year since the current age of lockdowns, physical distancing, social bubbles, and mask wearing first began. These restrictions place massive hurdles for those wanting to meet and date new people.

Just as the internet has been an asset for schools, workplaces, and keeping in touch with friends throughout COVID-19, it is also a huge asset for those looking to start a romantic relationship.

Here's how three young couples have started relationships safely, despite the pandemic.

James and Amanda



James and Amanda went on three dates before the first provincial COVID-19 lockdown stopped them from going on their fourth. The couple spent the lockdown getting to know each other on FaceTime and are now living together. (Supplied photo)

One couple, who started seeing each other just before the first provincial lockdown, has spent the last year finding creative ways to date throughout the age of COVID-19.

James (age 28) and Amanda (age 25) met on the dating app Hinge in February 2020. A year later and they are now living together.

“We had our first date on March 1st,” James recalls. “Our second date was the following weekend, and then our third date was a few days before lockdown. Covid hit, and we were both upset because clearly, we were very into each other. We were like, ‘Go figure this

happens — we finally meet somebody we're interested in and a pandemic hits, and we can't see each other.”

The two then began video chatting as an alternative to in-person dates. James says they had extra time to talk with both parties home and not working, video chatting almost every night for between two and six hours.

“I have never spent so much time on video calls in my life,” James laughs. “I typically hate FaceTiming, but I'm honestly thankful for it. We were forced to get to know each other better and on a more personal level.”

James says without this time getting to know each other so intimately on FaceTime, he doesn't think they would be living together now.

The couple eventually started also meeting up safely for physically distanced, masked walks outside.

When the restrictions lightened up in the summer, James says they began seeing each other for at-home dates. They would do things like watch movies, order takeout, and play cards.

In October, James and Amanda took the next step in their relationship and moved in together. According to James, they felt ready since they had spent the past months getting to know each other so well.

However, COVID-19 was another contributing factor since they had been living with their parents. They didn't want to put their families at risk by seeing each other when the virus heated up again.

“We love being together even in a lockdown scenario where we're not going anywhere else,” James notes. “When we finally have the opportunity to go out to restaurants and bars or travel the world together, it's only going to get better.”

James says he is not at all concerned about receiving judgment for meeting his girlfriend online.

“Nowadays, it's just as common as meeting somebody anywhere else. Even my mom met her current husband online.”

As for their plans this Valentine's Day, James says that he still plans to do something nice although they cannot go out.

“I'll probably go out to the grocery store and bring home some flowers, light some candles, and cook some dinner. We'll probably do what we've been doing throughout the pandemic — spend some time together and watch a movie.”

Emma and Liam

Note: This couple has requested their real names not be used.

When Emma (age 25) and Liam (age 26) matched on the dating app Tinder last spring, Liam had just returned from school in the U.S. and was in a two-week quarantine.

The pair didn't end up meeting in person for another two months. Now, they're back to communicating purely online since Liam returned to school in September.

After two months of texting and phoning each other, the pair had to consider COVID-19 when finally meeting up for their first date. They got takeout and sat outside together at Del Crary Park in Peterborough.

The rest of the summer was spent within each other's "social bubbles", doing things like going to get ice cream or bringing takeout home and watching a movie together.

The pandemic has certainly made the start of this relationship different — the pair has yet to meet each other's friends or family due to restrictions on social gatherings.

"It's been so tricky," Emma says. "It's always had to be just one-on-one. I think that part of a typical relationship would be entirely different without covid."

"We never went into a restaurant, which pre-covid was a pretty classic date," she adds.

Nevertheless, they've made it work, even now that Liam has returned to school, and they are back to communicating purely online. According to Emma, they text and FaceTime nearly every day.

When COVID-19 subsides, Emma hopes things will become easier.

"I'm hoping when he comes home at the end of this year, things are lifted so we can meet each other's family and go from there."

Emma says she is sometimes hesitant to tell people she met Liam online.

"Dating online wasn't a thing for my parents' generation," she points out. "When I first started dating Liam, I was hesitant to tell my mom how we met. When I did, she was worried about my safety."

"It's so normal now. I feel like everyone my age has at least tried it in some sense."

Another way Emma and Liam are currently staying connected is by mailing each other packages.

"I sent him a little Valentine's Day care package," Emma says. "I hope it gets there in time. With the delays in shipping, everything I send takes twice as long as they say it will."

Although they haven't made official plans for Valentine's Day, Emma expects they will spend some time eating chocolate together over FaceTime.

Matt and Jill



Matt and Jill were set up by family members in October 2020. The pair talked on Facebook for two weeks before meeting safely outside a Starbucks for their first date. (Supplied photo)

Although Matt (age 28) and Jill (age 25) didn't meet through a dating app, the beginning of their COVID-era relationship relied on the internet.

Jill's aunt and Matt's mom are best friends — so when they were set up in October 2020, Matt and Jill initially connected on Facebook.

After chatting for a few weeks on Facebook, the couples' first meet-up was in October at Starbucks. They stood outside, socially distanced, with their coffees, since the inside seating area was closed.

Unfortunately, it started to rain, and they had to finish the date by sitting in their cars.

“We had to battle through,” jokes Matt.

When things got more serious, they went on to plan dates such as walks through various conservation areas, drives, and dinner at restaurants.

The relationship progressed when Matt met Jill's family on her birthday in November. The couple says they felt another lockdown would be coming, so they also arranged for Jill to meet Matt's family.

With the most recent lockdown, Matt and Jill are still permitted to see each other since Matt lives alone.

Matt and Jill's typical date night during the lockdown consists of ordering takeout and watching TV — which, according to Matt, has recently meant getting Jill caught up on *The Mandalorian*.

Between dates, they try to call each other once a week and text each other daily.

“It's been helpful to be in a relationship during these times,” Jill notes.

“Because we're still new, we're still learning about each other,” Matt adds. “Being single through a lockdown is okay, too. You can get through by keeping in contact with friends, but it's nice to have this extra person to have those deeper conversations with.”

According to Matt, the end of the pandemic will be a welcomed change for the couple.

“I'm looking forward to being able to go on some other dates and to have Jill be able to meet friends of mine,” he explains.

This Valentine's Day, Matt and Jill plan to get takeout, watch a movie, and go for a walk.

“Maybe I'll get her some chocolates,” Matt adds, to which Jill responds, “I'll take chocolates any day.”

Comments
