

# Looking for love on a flirting safari

**If you're too shy to meet your mate, the dating doctor can help. Alison Jones reports**

If a stranger comes up to you on Saturday and engages you in conversation, don't be afraid.

They aren't necessarily trying to a) offer you a cut price hairstyle, b) sign you up for a catalogue or c) help you achieve enlightenment through the teachings of L Ron Hubbard.

They might just want to buy you a cup of coffee or take you to the pictures.

It could be the start of a beautiful friendship.

There is a flirting safari going on in the city with hopeful singles learning how to make the first move (no butterfly nets involved).

The safari is one of the workshops run by the man dubbed the Dating Doctor, Peter Spalton.

A marketing expert rather than an MD, his speciality is more about repairing broken body language.

After 18 years advising companies on how best to sell their products Peter, who comes from Bewdley, realised his expertise could be used to help people sell themselves (in the emotional sense).

"Someone asked me to help improve their social skills, so I took selling techniques and neuro linguistic programming and did a spin on that," he says.

"Every salesman know how to build a good rapport, to make you feel comfortable, how to flirt basically. That is exactly what you do when you are looking for a friend, a soulmate or a partner."

At a sales workshop he was asked for advice on how to work a room. Now he runs everything from half day safaris, to evening classes to weekend workshops and will be an advisor on The Academy of Sex and

Relationships, which opens next month.

"There are a number of learned sex therapists, psychologists and doctors. I can teach people how to flirt, what to do on a first date, even how to kiss but I leave the sex advice to the doctors," says Peter.

With a total of 15 million singles in the UK, ten million people living on their own and 52 per cent of them between the ages of 35 and 60, Peter has his work cut out assisting Cupid.

This is clearly not a case of those who can't do teach.

Peter has a way of making you feel instantly at ease, his personable nature invites intimate chats.

In his late 50s, tall and slim with more salt than pepper hair, he has a ready smile that accentuates his twinkling eyes (one of his tips is to make the most of what other people have praised as your best feature).

He dresses well with just enough difference to be noticed, avoiding the businessman's uniform of pinstripes or a blue suit in favour of the more unorthodox brown.

Today he has on what he calls his autopsy shoes. Made of leather and pointed at the toe, they have stitches down the middle that look like post-mortem tacking.

Hardly surprising that, after a weekend in his company, there are a few that decide to try out their flirting techniques on him. Happily married for 22 years, he remains flattered but impervious.

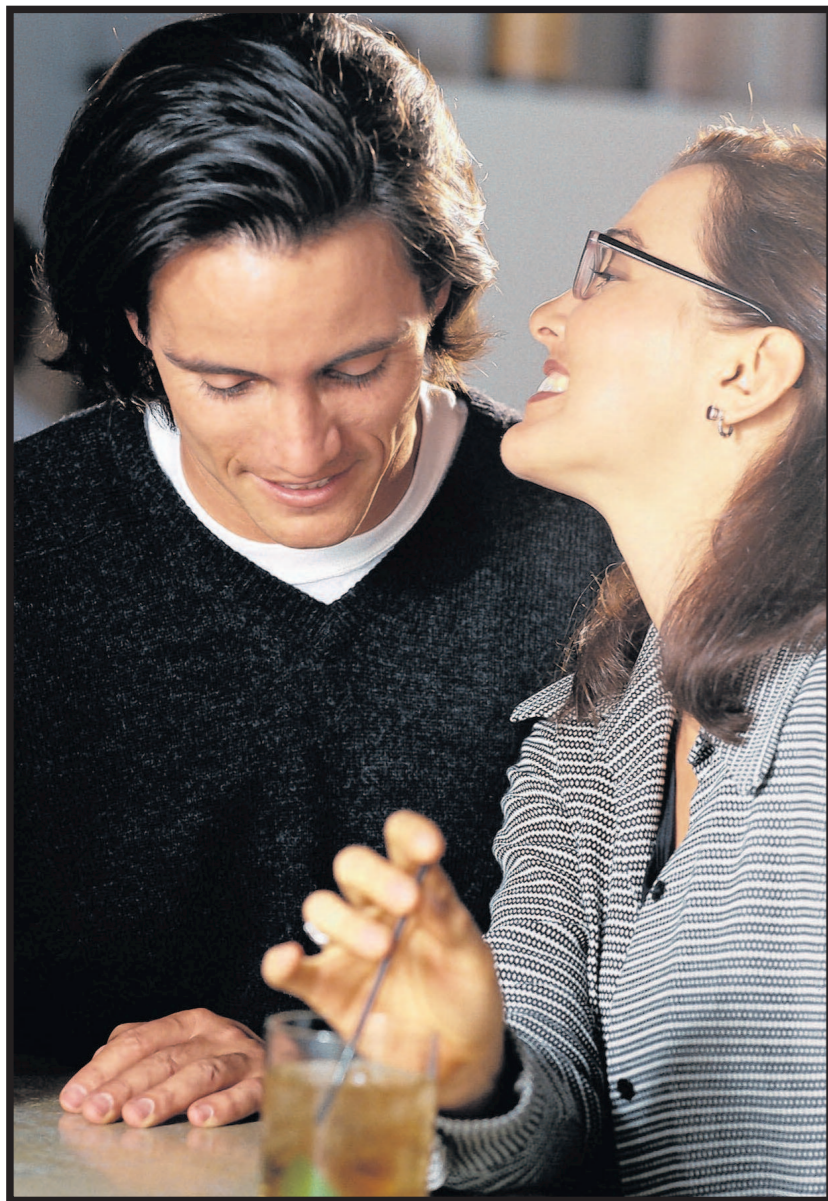
The first step in his guide to dating is persuading people to give out the right signals.

"We all create masks to protect ourselves from the outside. Our heads are down we've got iPods in our ears when what we want to say is 'I'm available'," says Peter.

"You have to alter your frame of mind and be approachable. Don't carry so many bags people can't get near you."

"Keep your head up, smile, chat with the person at the check-out because you never know if you might meet the one in the queue for the till."

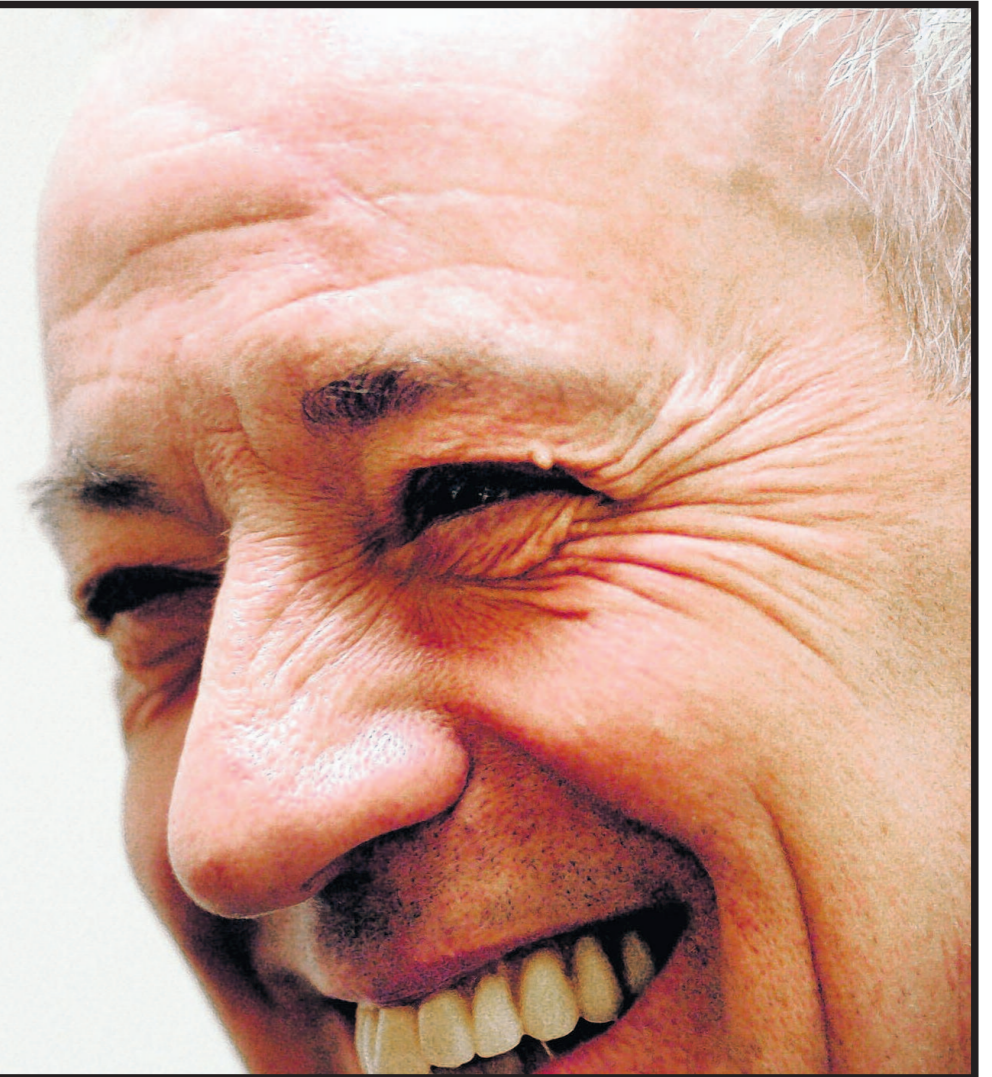
Though we like to think we are



It is important to be relaxed and not feel intimidated when meeting someone new

## Ten top tips for finding romance

- 1 Be confident in yourself and open to opportunities. Appear relaxed as it makes you attractive to others and helps you stand out
- 2 If you see someone you like, make eye contact and use your smile to disarm them. Then go and talk to them as though they were single, attractive and interesting
- 3 Be spontaneous and light-hearted. Don't be afraid to make an amusing remark or observation to start a conversation with an attractive stranger – you never know where it may lead
- 4 Don't use hackneyed chat-up lines. Saying things like "get your coat, you've pulled" are off-putting and rarely work. Instead, comment on the situation, compliment what they are wearing or ask a simple question
- 5 Strike a relaxed and confident posture and use your body, as well as your voice, to build a rapport and make the other person feel at ease
- 6 Observe the situation carefully – try to mirror his or her mood and posture and show you're interested in them
- 7 If you are a woman, speak slower and more deliberately and make direct statements. Talk about facts, not feelings
- 8 If you are a man, be enthusiastic and try to talk a little faster. Talk about emotions and feelings, not just facts
- 9 Go to places where you are likely to find other single people, and where there are few time pressures, like art galleries, book shops or even late night shopping!
- 10 If you do meet someone you connect with, you don't have to ask them directly for a date. Try simply suggesting meeting up or doing something fun together instead. Being spontaneous is best



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**Jack Nicholson is attractive to women because he is 'bad'. He has an edge**



capable of the type of witty badinage that we see in Austin adaptations – romantic conversation is something of a dying art.

While Peter doesn't actually teach chat-up lines, he can give tips on how to make small talk and keep things flowing, how to turn questions into a way of finding out what you have in common rather than an interrogation.

Safe topics include work, where people live, holidays and what is going on in the world. Politics, religion and relationships should be avoided in a casual first meeting.

"Sharing laughter creates a bond. The other person will be interested in you because you are different and the next step might be to suggest a date," says Peter.

Our ways of communicating are evolving and he sees things

like texting as a powerful weapon when it comes to wooing.

"They can help build sexual tension. Short, quick text messages sent at night are very different from long texts sent during the day. You can say what you want to do to each other and build anticipation," says Peter.

"But you should always find a reason to end the conversation while it's on a high. Leave them wanting more."

When it comes to face to face contact men and women need to learn how to read signals, which is a little harder than it sounds as women have 52 flirting signals whereas men have only ten.

"Blokes don't touch very much when it comes to flirting," reveals Peter.

"They tend to use words, they brag or tease – though they do groom themselves as a sign of

attraction," he adds, running a finger along his eyebrow to demonstrate. "Their pupils dilate whereas women get 'bedroom' eyes, which means they water."

When things do start to get touchy-feely, even that comes with its own code that must be cracked.

For example, if someone touches you with the pads of their fingers it is non sexual, if they use their finger tips it takes on a sensual dimension – as does touching the palm of someone's hand.

When it comes to seduction, he says we can learn from the masters.

"It doesn't have to be sexual. Bill Clinton – the Monica Lewinsky incident aside – seduced the American people because it's said when you met him you felt like you were the only person in the room," says Peter.

"Jack Nicholson is attractive to women because he is 'bad'. He has an edge."

Peter's workshops might cover everything from flirting to foreplay but he draws the line at preparing scripts for people because it gets the relationship off to a false start.

"Spontaneity works better. I don't teach people to use magic or treat it like a game. It's not about how many phone numbers you can get and then not follow up," says Peter.

"The most important thing is to be relaxed and not feel intimidated."

"The worst thing you can do is look desperate. If you are anxious or nervous nobody wants to associate with that."

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