

Online dating services cater to those seeking cannabis-friendly partners



With the legalization of medical or recreational marijuana in many parts of the U.S., use of the drug has become a bigger topic on online dating sites. (Brennan Linsley / AP)



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As marijuana laws change and recreational use becomes more socially acceptable, matchmakers are having more open conversations with clients about the drug. But is marijuana use a turn-on? Probably not.

According to Match.com's Singles in America survey, which surveyed more than 5,500 U.S. singles in 2015, 70 percent of all singles said it's a turnoff if a potential romantic partner regularly smokes marijuana. However, 38 percent of men and 24 percent of women said they're open to dating someone who regularly lights up.

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Data from OkCupid paints a slightly different picture. OkCupid spokeswoman Jane Reynolds wrote in an email that 2016 data showed that at least 50 percent of OkCupid users in every state except West Virginia (which clocked in at 47 percent) answered in the affirmative when asked, "Could you date someone who does drugs?"

Stef Safran, a Chicago-based matchmaker, says she has seen attitudes about marijuana change dramatically as states have legalized the drug for recreational or medicinal purposes. In November alone, voters in three states — California, Massachusetts and Nevada — passed measures to allow recreational use; three other states — Arkansas, Florida and North Dakota — voted to legalize the drug for medicinal purposes.

Safran says career often influences if someone tolerates a potential mate's marijuana use. Those who aren't in a profession with strong views about drug use — such as law or medicine — may be more open to it.

"Like drinking," Safran says, "people do seem to state that if someone does use marijuana recreationally, they are OK with it if it is not a daily or every weekend habit."

A number of cannabis-friendly dating sites and apps have gone online in recent years, including My42oMate and High There!

My42omate launched in 2014 — on April 20, naturally — and now has nearly half a million members in 50 states and more than 88 countries, according to co-founder Miguel Lozano.

"As a daily smoker of cannabis myself, I came up with the idea about five years ago when dating sites were becoming more and more popular," Lozano says. "As a person who uses the benefits of cannabis, I thought it would be nice to have a way to meet potential dates and friends, alike, who supported cannabis use. With a site like My42oMate, I felt I would have an avenue to meet other cannabis users, and I didn't have to feel judged or explain myself."

Free app High There! bills itself as a social network for the cannabis community.

Co-founder and CEO Darren Roberts says the app has attracted nearly 300,000 users, mostly in the U.S., since launching 18 months ago. Dating is only one component of the app.

"It's not just about meeting and dating," he says. "That does take place, but (sharing experiences on) the medicinal side of things, sharing experiences, travel, you name it. There's multiple ways in which people connect and the reasons for it."

Users fill out a brief questionnaire, which includes questions on your energy level when consuming cannabis, how you prefer to consume it, what kinds of activities you're into and a brief personal bio — up to 420 characters — detailing who you are and what you're looking for.

Users can then select whether they're in the mood to go out, stay in or chat. Much like Tinder and other dating apps, users see photos of other users, along with information about how far away they are. Rather than swiping left or right, users click buttons labeled "Bye There!" for people they don't want to get to know and "High There!" for ones they do. Tapping "High There!" sends a chat request to the other person. If it's approved, you can start chatting right away.

"People generally are drawn toward individuals where they want to think they have some things in common," Roberts says. "Technology has made it a lot safer in a lot of ways because you're not sitting across from somebody at dinner and saying, 'You know what, I like to do edibles.'"

For a more personal touch, there's Molly Peckler, a 32-year-old California-based former matchmaker who launched Highly Devoted in June 2015, a service offering cannabis-friendly life coaching and dating coaching services ranging in cost from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

"I focus on helping people find a cannabis-friendly partner," she says. "In terms of the dating, what I'll do is I'll help people to figure out what they need in a compatible partner, and then I will help develop and implement online and offline dating strategies, so they can meet someone locally and bond over cannabis."

Peckler herself has been married for five years and with her husband for 11 years altogether. She says she and her husband initially bonded over their shared affinity for marijuana.

"The first time we met, we smoked weed together. It was such a great way to bond," she says. "We would spend hours just chatting over a bowl of weed getting to know each other, and this was before we even kissed. It's been a really important part of our relationship ever since."

So how does one become a cannabis-friendly life and dating coach, exactly?

"There were none of them out there before I came along," she says, laughing. "I just had the perfect background and perfect experience to fill a need that wasn't being filled. I realized there was this huge demographic of more white-collar cannabis users that just wasn't being catered to."

Peckler says that, regardless of how you go about meeting the love of your life, if cannabis consumption is an important part of your life, it's best to be upfront about it with any potential mate.

"It's just about ripping off the Band-Aid and being honest and open," she says. "If someone has an issue with you consuming cannabis, you can have an interesting conversation there, but it's also maybe a sign that some of your other core values may not be aligned."

Safran says the same applies for those who don't consume marijuana.

"If you are someone who is uncomfortable with someone who does marijuana a few times a year, then you may want to bring that up within the first few dates," Safran says. "As of now, I feel that it's a conversation like about drinking. If drinking regularly is extremely important to you, you need to let someone know that it is a regular part of your life in the first few dates."

Matt Lindner is a freelancer.