

FEATURE

**A Date in 8,
Concise Courtship:
Gay8MinuteDating.com
Hosts Cupid Party**
By Nick Schrott

If yesterday's dating mantra was "Don't squander your virginity on a loser," then today's must be "Don't waste time on one."



PHOTO BY BRENT FUQUA

As we speed down the highway 10 miles over the limit on the way to our 50-hour-a-week jobs while wolfing down a tube of GO-GURT (that's yogurt for people on the go), it becomes blatantly obvious that we have little time to spare in our hectic lives. Time has become a hot commodity, and no one wants to waste it on a bad date.

Enter the concept of speed dating and Tom Jaffee.

In January 2001, Jaffee founded 8minuteDating.com. Since its inception, the company has grown from a one-man start-up to one of the country's most popular speed-dating services.

More than 150 organizers plan and execute events for more than 100,000 customers in more than 70 cities across the United States and Canada.

In the Twin Cities, Sam Aleck has been planning, organizing, and hosting Gay 8minuteDating.com events for members of the GLBT community since last September.

"I am continually impressed by the cross of guys coming to the events," Aleck says. "They are not desperate losers by any means. Many of them are attractive professionals simply trying something new."

How does this fast-paced dating-nouveau concept work?

Here's the breakdown of a speed-dating event:

Participants must pre-register on-line at www.8minutedating.com

prior to the event. The cost of \$35 is paid on-line by credit card during registration.

Considering one easily spends twice that amount for dinner on a single date, it makes speed dating a bargain even the most penny-pinching miser would love.

On the night of the event, show up at the appointed time and place dressed to kill. Check in to receive a nametag and a dating card (it will come in handy later). Grab a drink at the bar, help yourself to some complementary appetizers, and mingle among the crowd before the dating begins.

After everyone has checked in, organizers randomly assign dates: eight one-on-one dates with eight people, each date lasting eight minutes.

It's easier than multivariable calculus.

Upon the completion of each date, fill out your dating card (told you that you would need it!).

Four options are available: not interested in seeing the other person again, interested in a second date, interested in friendship, and interested in a business relationship.

Simply check the appropriate box, and move on to your next date. No time to waste.

At the end of the night, head home with your dating card (no one will think of you as a tramp for going home with it, even though you only were introduced mere hours ago), go on-line, and rate each of your dates as well as the venue and host.

Head to bed (dating is exhausting, after all), and wait for your results.

If two individuals match up in a category, Gay 8minuteDating.com will e-mail names and contact information, so that your second date, friendship, or business relationship might commence.

No matches? No tears. Those guys (or gals) weren't right for you anyway. Dry your eyes, and mark your calendars for the next speed-dating event. One or two per month usually are scheduled.

Does speed dating work? How well can you possibly get to know someone in eight minutes? Can you find the love of your life at a speed-dating event?

According to the company's Web site, those first impressions have

been more than enough to gauge whether a person will be a potential mate.

The site states that it has sparked approximately 100 engagements and marriages out of about 104,600 users--and those are only the ones it knows about.

Aleck reports that one couple has contacted him, saying that they met at one of his speed-dating events, and are still together and doing well.

Minneapolis's next Gay 8minuteDating.com event takes place at Jitters Bar and Café, 205 East Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, on February 10.

This particular event, dubbed the Cupid Party, is one of many taking place across the country to help single people everywhere (both gay and straight) find a date in time for Valentine's Day on Saturday, February 14 (or, as some people would call it, Black Saturday).

More than 5,000 single people are expected to attend one of the 105 parties taking place in 75 different cities.

"Most singles would love to be with someone on Valentine's Day, and our 2004 Cupid Party will give thousands of singles across the country a fast and fun way to meet their valentine without the pressure of pickup lines," Jaffee remarks.

Valentine's Day is just around the corner, and nobody likes to spend holidays alone, even the Hallmark ones. Gay 8minuteDating.com could be the solution, and times' a wastin'.

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