

# Seeking a Jewish soulmate? This matchmaker can help

Laura Paull | J. Staff

When Judith Gottesman was growing up, she often accompanied her father, a rabbi, to weddings he officiated all over California. She was curious about the couples he counseled before they took their vows. "What makes a marriage a happy one?" she would ask him over and over. "What makes a match work?"

She pursued those questions through a bachelor's degree in psychology at UC Berkeley and a master's in social work at Yeshiva University in New York.

So it's no surprise she found her calling as a modern-day matchmaker, helping Jewish singles to find each other when they want a serious relationship.

Her one-woman business, Soulmates Unlimited, which specializes in the West Coast Jewish community, is coming up on a decade of operation. The business model she's developed thrives on the combination of her experience, intuition, deep Jewish background and contemporary marketing skills.

She calls it "traditional Jewish matchmaking with a modern twist."

The traditional part is grounded in the belief that there are good reasons, even in this modern era, for Jewish people to seek one another out as mates.

"The most harmonious marriages are going to be when you share the same values, the same goals and the same lifestyle," Gottesman says. But must the "harmonious" people also share the same religion? Gottesman believes it's just a smart bet — especially when individuals are looking to co-create "a Jewish life."

She recalls discussions with her late father, Rabbi Aaron Gottesman, about his premarital counseling sessions, after which the engaged couple — especially those of different faiths — would sometimes decide not to marry.

Even though the couples were in love, "some hadn't thought it through in terms of how their

different religions would affect things," Gottesman says. "You're never going to be exactly like your partner. But I feel that starting with the same religion is a good foundation, and it's more likely you'll be compatible."

Of course, there's more to a good relationship than having the same religion. Personality, attraction-factors, and lifestyle are details Gottesman teases out of her clients and tests "in the field" when she sets them up with a date.

"So much of my matchmaking is a combination of intuition and paying attention to the little details people tell me about themselves," Gottesman says. "Something they share in their new client interview will make some other client pop up in my mind, and I will think: You need to meet this other person."

The "modern twist" in her business is her acknowledgement that

online dating is now the main method by which people look for relationships.

That being the case, she offers "date coaching" so that people who do use those platforms will have a better experience. Online dating is all about the photos, she says, yet many users don't have a good sense of what pictures are in their best interests to post. She also counsels people on the wording of their profiles.

Overall, however, she feels online dating is a numbers game — the exact opposite of a personalized matchmaking service.

"What I'm doing is trying to set people up with as few people as possible," she says, "waiting until I have a genuine potential match."

How long a client has to wait is really a matter of chance. It depends on the individuals in her client database, which is constantly in flux.

"Love is about fate, luck and timing," she adds.

Still, many people expect a guarantee, especially when they plunk down a fee for the service. Hers is \$3,600 to register as her client. She asks for a \$7,200 success fee once a client has formed a serious relationship with one of her referrals.

"What I tell people is that I'm 100 percent successful if I have their match. But I'm not God, I'm not a magician and I can't manufacture human beings. I can't predict how long it's going to take to find the right person for you. Some people wait months, some wait years and some don't wait at all."

Gottesman says it's her commitment to personal service and integrity that has brought her a constant flow of clients ranging in age from their 20s to their 90s. What is indisputable is that her "product" will never go out of style.

"At every age we are in need of love," she says. "People of every age have difficulty finding love. That's why they come to me." ■

Contact Judith Gottesman at [soulmatesunlimited.com](http://soulmatesunlimited.com).



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