



Kirsty Jenkinson,
photographed
in London

'The final straw was when he asked me to look through his night-vision goggles at the bus stop'

'It's good for my daughters to see me throwing myself into life'

Kirsty Jenkinson, 46, lives in London. Her husband of 13 years died suddenly in 2013. She started dating again in 2016 and has had one relationship, which has since ended. She has been dating again for three months. She has three children.

On the whole, I've found dating an incredibly positive, life-affirming experience. Before meeting my husband, I'd been in a series of long-term relationships and had generally met people through work. My husband, for instance, had been my boss. But now I work part-time and I'm often in an office on my own, so the chance of meeting new people is fairly small.

If bereavement has taught me anything, it's that I should strive to have as many exciting, positive and new experiences as possible. I also think it's good for my daughters to see me throwing myself into life and being brave. Grief fundamentally changed me as a person. I think it made me stronger. And, in a way, online dating gave me the opportunity to find and connect with people who would only ever know the new, stronger me.

There's an element of escapism to modern »

dating. I turn the process of matching and messaging into a game. I use OkCupid, where my name isn't listed, and often give people clues to see if they can guess what it is. I've always been attracted to wit, humour and intelligence, so, for me, getting to talk to someone in a no-pressure environment where you can verbally spar for a little while feels an ideal scenario. And I've certainly had some interesting experiences. I went for cocktails and then went geocaching at midnight all over London (it's like a treasure hunt, where an app directs you to different locations in a city). I had my first kiss with one date in the middle of an immersive art installation. I don't think I've had any *really* bad dates, but I once met someone I hadn't messaged very much before: he said he preferred to just meet in person, rather than waste time on lots of chatting. He was very softly spoken and shy, which wouldn't have been so bad, but we also had nothing in common. He would talk only if I asked him a question, so it felt a bit as if I was interviewing him for an hour. At least it was only a coffee.

I was on OkCupid from November 2015 to June 2016, when I met someone through the app.

We were together until three months ago. Though our breakup was my decision, I was shocked by how much it plunged me back into my grief. I signed up to the charity Widowed & Young to find others who might have been through similar situations. Lots of people assured me that revisiting your grief is normal, and it's nice to have others with whom to share my feelings.

I'm back on the app again now, and recently had my first date since the breakup. Truth be told, it wasn't great. The final nail in the coffin was when he asked me to look through his night-vision goggles while waiting at the bus stop. I'd forgotten all the things I'd realised last time around, that you shouldn't let your expectations get too high. We'd had such fun chats beforehand, that it made the disappointment even more intense. I feel like I need to build up that armour again.