

Diahan Southard Suggests How to Connect to Your DNA Matches

You need to think of that initial contact you send to your new DNA match like a first date, minus the awkwardness and the bad complexion. No matter the size of your DNA match list, or the complexity of your query, or the size of your pedigree, all of us will likely end up composing a first contact note to one of our DNA matches in the very near future. Keeping in mind some simple dating principles may just help increase the chance of a response, and therefore boost your genetic genealogical success rate.

Dating Principle #1:

Just meet for coffee. Meaning, keep your correspondence short. Remember, the purpose of a first date is just to see if you want to go on more dates, just as the initial contact you make helps you determine if more contact is necessary. Your match does not need to know your whole pedigree chart, or your whole life story, and they certainly don't need to know how many centimorgans of DNA you share! Just a simple statement of what you want to know. Try, "Do you have any Wilsons in your pedigree chart?" That's it.

Dating Principle #2:

It's all about them. Everyone loves to talk about themselves, so your job is to get them talking! If you see something in their pedigree chart, or even in their username, that has you

interested in them, ask them specifically about that. Perhaps, "I see the name Gwenellyn in your pedigree chart, which happens to be the middle name of my ancestor that I am researching. What more can you tell me about your ancestor?"

Dating Principle #3:

Everyone needs encouragement. Let's face it, first dates are fraught with insecurities, and most of our matches are no different. It is no secret that many of our matches don't have a pedigree chart posted. As more and more people flock to DNA testing services, there will be more and more of them who have never even heard of a pedigree chart. So they need some encouragement. They need a cheerleader! Try, "I see you don't have a pedigree chart posted. It is really easy to start one! If you need help, try here www.yourdnaguide.com/add-pedigree" Remember that today's newbies are tomorrow's genealogists, so we need to do our part to encourage their curiosity, not bombard them with queries of dates and places and tales of census records.

Dating Principle #4:

Have an escape plan. Let's be honest, not all first dates go well, so you need to provide a polite, but easy way out. In your DNA match correspondence, this means that you need to provide a way for them to

immediately respond to you, even if they aren't interested, or don't have time to talk right away. I always close my correspondence with something like, "Even if you don't have time to look this up for me right now, please reply so I know you are out there." More and more I hear from genealogists that they have several unanswered inquiries in their DNA mail inbox because they feel like they aren't qualified to talk DNA with anyone. They are reticent to engage in a conversation in which the terms and outcomes are unfamiliar. So put them at ease, and reassure them that we are all in this together, and big discoveries can begin with simple conversations.

Hopefully these simple dating tips will lead you to the relationship that just might change your life. Or, at least the life of your pedigree chart. ☪☪



Growing up with the budding genetic genealogy industry lead **DIAHAN SOUTHARD** to her current position as Your

DNA Guide, where she provides personalized, interactive experiences to assist individuals and families in interpreting their genetic results in the context of their genealogical information. She is also the author of the Genealogy Gems DNA Quick Guides, available from the *Your Genealogy Today* store.