



When dating feels anxious

A gentle plan before and after meeting someone

You might want to meet someone and still feel a knot in your stomach when a message arrives. That can be tiring. This sheet offers a few ways to make the next step more manageable. Choose what fits; taking a break from dating is an option too.

1 Decide what you want from this meeting

Try a modest aim: find out whether you enjoy talking with this person, ask about something that interests you, or share a little about yourself. A date gives you a chance to notice how you feel with them.

One thing I would like to discover or enjoy

2 Make a plan you can choose freely

A short coffee or another familiar public setting may feel manageable. If meeting someone new, let a trusted person know your plan and keep a way to leave. You can change your mind about meeting or staying. [1, 2]

Words you could adapt

I'd like to meet. Would a short coffee somewhere quiet suit you? I find it easier to get to know someone that way.

3 Return to the conversation

If you notice yourself checking how you look or sound, gently return to one thing the person is saying. Ask a question you are curious about. A pause, a blush or a stumbled sentence can be part of an ordinary conversation. [1]

A question I am genuinely curious about

Keep the supports you need, including accessible places, a quieter setting or time to reply. You do not have to hide your identity, disclose private experiences or accept unwanted closeness to make a date go well.

Pressure, disrespect or feeling unsafe deserve attention. You may leave or decline contact. A date, gift or previous intimacy never creates an obligation to have sex. [3]



After a date or a message

Making space for your feelings and your next choice

Give yourself a brief and fair review

You could give yourself a brief, kind check-in: What did I enjoy? Did I feel respected? What would I like next? If you notice yourself replaying every sentence, put the review aside and return to something ordinary. A reply delay leaves uncertainty; it does not tell the whole story.

Something I noticed about what matters to me

Let the next message sound like you

You could say, 'I enjoyed talking with you. Would you like to meet again?' Or, 'Thank you for meeting. I don't feel the connection I'm looking for.' You can be clear and kind. Respect the other person's decision too.

If it hurts or becomes overwhelming

Disappointment deserves care. Speak with someone you trust, take a break from the app, or do something that helps the rest of your day continue. If anxiety, panic, repeated checking or low mood keeps limiting your life, a GP or qualified therapist can help you explore it. [1]

Safety and consent come first

Freely chosen consent can change at any point. If there is intimidation, coercion or violence, seek specialist support rather than treating this as something to practise tolerating. If sexual violence has affected you, Ireland's National Rape Crisis Helpline is 1800 77 8888. [3]

Someone to talk to in Ireland

Samaritans: 116 123. Text About It: text HELLO to 50808. Both offer free support day and night. For urgent mental health concerns contact your GP, out-of-hours GP or mental health team. Elsewhere, use local services. [4]

Sources and further reading

Original practical prompts informed by independent guidance.

1. HSE: [Social anxiety](http://www2.hse.ie) (www2.hse.ie)
2. An Garda Síochána: [Meeting people online safely](http://www.garda.ie) (www.garda.ie)
3. Dublin Rape Crisis Centre: [Consent and communication](http://www.drcc.ie) (www.drcc.ie)
4. HSE: [Urgent mental health support](http://www2.hse.ie) (www2.hse.ie)

Sources checked 3 October 2026. The organisations cited have not endorsed this resource.

More free information and support routes

[More about dating anxiety and support](#)

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