

Television

From Netflix's The One to Soulmates, TV has a bleak outlook on the future of dating

Could DNA matching be the future of dating tech?



The One sees people matched with their true love via DNA (Photo: James Pardon/Netflix)



By Emily Baker
TV Editor

March 25, 2021 3:28 pm



Calling all single people: the answer to all your romantic woes has arrived. Turns out there really is such a thing as “The One”, or a soulmate, or whatever you want to call them. Even better, there’s a way to find yours. All it takes is a simple DNA analysis – from a strand of hair, for example – and you could be matched with your ultimate love.

Sound too good to be true? That’s because it’s just the plot of [Netflix's latest TV series, The One](#). The company at the forefront of this revolution in dating, MatchDNA, is just fictional, so apologies if I got your hopes up.

But perhaps that’s actually a good thing; *The One*, currently the second-most watched show on the streaming service in the UK, imagines plenty of scenarios in which finding your one true love via DNA matching would spell trouble. In the show, divorce rates around the world shoot up as unhappily married people search for the person they feel they should really be with.

i's TV newsletter: what you should watch next

[Sign up](#)

Relationship and dating coach [Kate Mansfield](#) doesn't see much good coming out of such advancements either. “Finding a partner is nothing to do with DNA,” she says, “It’s a fun concept but totally inaccurate. It’s potentially very misleading and could prevent people from taking responsibility for their own healing. Love cannot be measured that way.” Even given the option, Mansfield wouldn't get herself matched or encourage her clients to do so.

The One isn't the only series to imagine what dating might soon look like. Earlier this year, *Soulmates* starring Sarah Snook (*Succession*) and Kingsley Ben-Adir (*Vera*), premiered on Amazon Prime Video, introducing another dating tech company, Soul Connex, which has developed tech that can point you to your soulmate with 100 per cent accuracy.

As ever, Charlie Brooker was ahead of the curve and explored the concept of being matched with a perfect companion in a 2017 episode of *Black Mirror*, “Hang The DJ”, which sees the protagonists use a dating app, Coach, which pairs them with different partners for varying lengths of time depending on the predetermined strength of the relationship. If you were matched with a one-night stand, for example, you would be paired for 12 hours. Matched with a soulmate, though, and your pairing could last for the rest of your life.



Sarah Snook and Kingsley Ben-Adir in Soulmates (Photo: Press)

The idea that there somewhere exists a perfect partner for each of us is a seductive one. I'm usually a practical person but I confess I find myself drawn to the notions of fate and serendipity. But in our real-life searches for true love there are psychological processes at work, not all of which bode well for contented partnerships.

Mansfield says that the concept of who we might determine as a soulmate is cemented at an early age: “We are deeply and unconsciously attracted to partners who mirror our core wounds from our childhood. Most people will choose a partner who repeats the same patterns that they experienced with the most problematic parent, because we tend to define love as something that feels familiar, as opposed to a logical or conscious decision.”

In other words, *The One*, rather than being biologically predetermined, might be someone who has shared similar rearing experiences; nurture rather than nature.

DNA matching isn't here quite yet – a company attempting to do just that, Phermor, was launched in 2018 but did not last a year. Another app never made it to launching after fielding accusations of promoting eugenics when its founder said matches resulting in “illnesses that cause very premature deaths, often with pain and a lot of medical costs” would be restricted.

We are increasingly used to allowing technology, in the form of dating apps, to handle our search for love, and that technology is ever evolving. One such app, Hinge, has seen a huge increase in video dating among its UK users, mostly due to the pandemic stopping us meeting people in the real world. Some 64 per cent of Hinge users have tried a video date for the first time in the past year.

“Video dating will continue to be a low-key, safe, and efficient way to assess compatibility, and it will help people confidently decide who they want to meet in person,” says a spokesperson for the app, citing research that says one in three Hinge users find video dates easier to arrange than in-person dates.

However, Mansfield thinks that once lockdown lifts and life gets back to normal again, those looking for love will begin to turn away from technology.

“Covid-19 has sparked an extremely positive, mass emotional awakening amongst people, but especially among single people,” she says.

“Everyone’s typical hiding places have been exposed, and we have all sat with a deep sense of loneliness and desire for true authentic connection. I think when we come out of lockdown we’re going to see a surge in physical dating and people meeting through real life experiences.”

Struggling to find your next binge watch?

The **i** on TV newsletter is a daily email full of suggestions of what to watch as well as the latest TV news, opinions and interviews. [Sign up here](#) to stay up to date with the best new TV.



Topics

[Amazon Prime](#) / [Dating](#) / [Netflix](#) / [TV Features](#)

Essentials

- News
- Sport
- Lifestyle
- Culture
- Opinion
- ibuy

Useful links

- Contact Us
- About
- Advertise
- Subscribe to i
- i competitions
- i newsletters
- i app
- Sitemap

Follow us on

