**Under embargo until 00:01, on Wednesday 15th May 2019**

**HALF OF SINGLES AFFECTED BY A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE –**

**WITH TRIGGER POINTS INCLUDING BAD DATES, GHOSTING AND THEIR LOOKS**

* Over half of singles (54%) are affected by a mental health issue and a significant number (43%) think it makes it harder to find a relationship
* Stress-points for singles on the dating scene include bad dates, being ghosted, first-time sex and someone criticising their looks
* Meanwhile, half (50%) of relationships are affected by a mental health issue, but a similar number (48%) believe their relationship has a positive influence

Over half of singles (54%) are affected by a mental health issue with rising rates of diagnosis a contributing factor.[[1]](#endnote-2)

This is according to a new study from the experts at eharmony in collaboration with psychotherapist Lucy Beresford. The research, in line with Mental Health Awareness Week, revealed that singles are most commonly affected by anxiety (39%), depression (39%) or sleep disorders (18%).

The brutal nature of casual dating can be a factor in exacerbating mental health issues. Being ‘ghosted’ – whereby someone you’re dating disappears – unsuccessful dates and being worried about sex with a new partner are the most common mental health triggers amongst singles. *(See table two for top mental health triggers for those dating)*.

Influencing this, one in three (33%) singles say that struggling with body confidence has made their love life more difficult.

Meanwhile, over one in ten singles (13%) cite ‘gaslighting’ from a potential partner as a mental-health concern. This is the term originally associated with the 1944 film, Gaslight, starring Ingrid Bergman in which a woman is deliberately forced to question her sanity by a manipulative partner.

However, the picture is beginning to change, as just shy of a third of singles (30%) think that in modern-day dating, it’s no longer taboo to have a mental health issue. This parallels strides being made towards reducing the stigma surrounding it.

And for singles with mental health issues concerned about missing out on love,

research demonstrates that these can be successfully navigated within relationships, providing traits such as empathy, adaptability and altruism are present. What’s more, while the overall picture is similar for couples, with half (50%) saying they too are affected by a mental health issue, more than half (56%) say their relationship ended up stronger after they opened up to their partner.

Similarly, almost half (42%) of people in relationships said that they felt safe and empowered to discuss their specific issues with their partner, and half (48%) indicated that being in a relationship had a positive impact on their mental health.

However, some do still find it harder to open up to a loved one, with a fifth of partners (21%) taking more than a year to do so. This is particularly the case amongst those older than 35, who are four times more likely to hold off on disclosing a mental health illness – possibly a hangover from an earlier, less tolerant society (17% v 4%). Evidently, it’s millennials who are leading the way in removing the taboos around mental health.

**Lucy Beresford, psychotherapist, comments:** *“What’s massively encouraging from this research is that so many people – whether they’re dating or in a relationship – are benefitting from starting a conversation about their mental health. Intimate relationships can provide the support people need to improve their mental wellbeing, and can allow us to experience tolerance, understanding and being loved for who we are.*

*“At the same time, it’s useful to be reminded that relationships and dating can create negative triggers for mental health. Whether it’s anxieties around body confidence or sexual performance, feeling like your mental health diagnosis is misunderstood, or confusion around modern dating protocols, knowing that your mental health could be affected means you’re in a better position to take your self-care seriously. If mental health issues are affecting you or your relationship, professional help is available and can make the world of difference.”*

**Rachael Lloyd, relationship expert at eharmony, adds**:*“We applaud both singles and couples for admitting they sometimes battle mental health issues. The reality is most of us will have an experience of depression or anxiety in our lifetimes and, hopefully, gone are the days of having to pretend it’s not happening.*

*“We encourage those battling anxiety-related conditions to be bold in their search for love. We know that high levels of neuroticism can impact on overall relationship satisfaction. But even if there are mental health struggles present, couples who communicate well, score high on conflict resolution and are adaptable can and do have happy relationships in the long term.”*

To find our more, or for additional support and advice visit: [insert link]

**ENDS**

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**Table 1: Top anxiety triggers for singles**

1. Being ‘ghosted’ – 20%

2. Being worried about having sex for the first time with a new partner – 19%

3. Unsuccessful dates – 19%

4. A new date not texting back – 18%

5. Having mental health problems misunderstood – 16%

6. Sexual/ physical intimacy – 16%

7. Getting into an argument with someone they’re dating – 16%

8. A date being critical about looks – 15%

9. A date being critical about an element of their personality – 15%

10. Experiencing ‘gaslighting’ –13%

**Table 1: Top anxiety triggers for those in a relationship**

1. Getting into an argument with my partner – 20%

2. Having my mental health problems misunderstood by my partner – 17%

3. Issues around sexual activity or physical intimacy – 16%

4. My partner being critical about an element of my personality – 16%

5. Getting naked in front of my partner – 14%

6. My partner not contacting me back when I was expecting a response – 13%

7. A partner having previously cut off communication with me – 12%

8. My partner being critical about my looks – 11%

9. Experiencing ‘gaslighting’ – *a term to describe being manipulated into questioning their own reality* – 9%

10. Interacting with my partner’s friends – 8%

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**About the research**

Unless otherwise stated, research was conducted by Opinium on behalf of Third City in April 2019, among a nationally representative sample of 4,000 UK adults.

About [eharmony.co.uk](http://eharmony.co.uk/)

eharmony launched in the UK in 2008 with a clear vision: to create more lasting love in the world. The experts at eharmony use an intelligent compatibility matching system (CMS) to match singles, according to 18 dimensions of compatibility. These are powerful indicators of relationship satisfaction. Today eharmony proudly serves a like-minded community of 60 million members globally. On average, someone finds love on eharmony every 14 minutes. Find out more: [www.eharmony.co.uk](http://www.eharmony.co.uk/)

1. Mental Health Foundation, Fundamental Facts about Mental Health 2016 (4.2 - How many people seek help and use services?), [access: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/fundamental-facts-about-mental-health-2016] [↑](#endnote-ref-2)