

'Why am I still single?'

You're sexy, smart and, as far as you know, don't smell funny, so why aren't you hitched and sprogging yet? Three singletons face the truth from the men who know best – their exes

There's a lot to be said for being single: impromptu nights out with the girls, not having to shave your legs... But when it goes on too long, you start questioning why the only man you ever see on a Saturday night is Graham Norton. Long-term singledom can really make you wonder what's going wrong, and these single women decided to get right to the heart of the problem...

'Am I too demanding?'

Petia Nedeltcheva, 25, a media planner from west London, has been single for almost two years

'I think my main issue is that I get bored too quickly. I'm keen to begin with, then I always start finding faults and end up finishing things. My friends say I have unfeasibly high standards when it comes to men, but I think I'm just scared of commitment. Perhaps I'll feel differently if the right guy comes along.'

WHAT DO HER EXES THINK?



Tom Dodd, 24, went out with Petia for three months while they were at university together

'Although I only dated Petia for a short while, we're still great mates. She's a total party animal, and I felt like I constantly had to compete for her attention. Eventually we realised that we both wanted different things. She wanted to party 24/7 and I wanted a girlfriend I could see more of, so we went our separate ways. In my opinion, she tends to go for men who aren't strong enough for her. She's easily bored, so I think she needs somebody who'll keep life exciting and stand up to her from time to time, as well as allowing her the independence she craves.'



Labi Kristisson, 25, went out with Petia for eight months in 2003

'I'm surprised Petia hasn't been snapped up, as she's such an outgoing girl. I met her through a friend and for ages we were just mates. Then we started going out

when we were 21. She's a real social butterfly and was so popular that I had to share her with lots of people, but when we were alone I loved having her undivided attention. I think she needs a guy who can calm her down without stifling her. I suppose that will only happen when the time is right.'



Artem Zelikov, 25, went out with Petia for three months in 2004

'I only dated Petia for one summer because we went to universities at opposite ends of the country, but she was such fun to be with. She's really intelligent and confident and is as happy at the pub watching football as she is in a nightclub. I found this ability to enjoy herself in any situation really attractive. We didn't go out



long enough for there to be any major issues, but Petia is really flirtatious, which might have bothered me in the longer term. She needs somebody confident enough in himself not to be jealous.'

SO WHY IS PETIA SINGLE?

Petia says: 'Both Tom and Labi mentioned the fact they were fighting for my attention – I wasn't really aware of that, but I can be quite self-centred and just love having a good time. I think it's also true that I go for men who are a bit of a pushover, which is maybe why I get bored. I do feel ready for a serious relationship, so maybe I'll start looking for a stronger man.'

Relate counsellor Mo Kurimbokus says:

'Petia is a perfectionist who's constantly looking for the ideal relationship. She enjoys the honeymoon period, but when things get more serious she bails out, so it's hard for anyone to get close to her. A perfect relationship requires two perfect people, and as they just don't exist, you're always going to end up disappointed unless you adjust your expectations.'

'If you get bored easily, try reviving the things that thrilled you early on, whether it was a place you both enjoyed going, or an interest you shared. The honeymoon period does wear off, so you have to work at sustaining things beyond that. The hardest thing if, like Petia, you're not used to letting someone in, is sharing how you feel. If you don't do this, you'll never get what you want out of the relationship.' ▷

Petia gets easily bored in relationships

'At 35, am I untouchable?'

Rachael Thompson, 35, an interior designer from Surrey, has been single for five years

'In the past I had a string of great boyfriends who I'm still on good terms with, but when I hit 30 it all dried up. I don't know why – it's not as if I was focusing on my career and didn't go out and meet people. I want to settle down with someone special, but I now wonder if that will ever happen.'

WHAT DO HER EXES THINK?



David Phillips, 33, went out with Rachael for a year when she was 19

'Rachael and I were practically high school sweethearts and I still count

her as one of my closest friends. She was a great girlfriend, with a quirky sense of humour and lots of energy. I did notice her mindset shift when she entered her 30s though, as she spoke more about wanting a family. I wonder if Rachael's inadvertently giving off "I want to settle down" signals and scaring off potential boyfriends.'



Paul Budd, 31, went out with Rachael for five months in 1994

'Rachael and I met on a plane to Spain and by the time we landed, we'd

arranged to meet again. It was her lively personality that first attracted me to her, but perhaps some men view her as one of the lads more than a girlfriend. We eventually split up because we were living too far from each other – she was in Suffolk and I was in London. I've met some of Rachael's exes and we're all similarly strong willed and outgoing. I think maybe she'd be better suited to somebody a bit more reserved.'



Phil Rogers, 36, went out with Rachael for a year in 1996

'Rachael's the funniest, most energetic person I've met. We had a holiday romance

in Crete that carried on when we got back to the UK. I was living in Chester at the time and she was living down south, so it was a long distance relationship. She was so much fun to be around it didn't matter, but in the end we drifted apart. I know Rachael wants to settle down, but I think she needs someone who can match her energy levels and keep up with her. I'm not sure I could!'

SO WHY IS RACHAEL SINGLE?

Rachael says: 'I was quite surprised that David thinks that I've started talking about settling down a lot, but then Phil mentioned it too so maybe I do give off something without realising it. I would definitely agree that I'm "one of the lads" – I think blokes can find it difficult to work out if I fancy them or not because of this. I'm not so sure about going for somebody who's more reserved, but having said that, there is a guy I've had my eye on lately who's a lot quieter than my usual type.'

'I had a string of great boyfriends, then I hit 30 and it all dried up'

Mo Kurimbokus says: 'Rachael doesn't appear to know what to do next. A part of her wants to have fun, while the other part wants to have a family. She's sticking to her comfort zone – the carefree, being-one-of-the-lads side of herself, but then wondering why she's not satisfying the other side.'

'If you want to settle down, you have to explore different relationships and open your mind to different kinds of men. When it comes to finding out if someone wants the same thing as you, avoid going in all guns blazing, but do sound out potential prospects as soon as you can to save yourself wasting time. Casually putting your cards on the table can be useful – if he does run a mile, you'll know he wasn't right for you anyway.'



Rachael's ready to find someone special after a five-year dry spell

