



PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN PASSINO
Diane Carlson has cultivated her interest in the arts by volunteering with the Racine Theatre Guild and Sixth Street Theatre.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAN KRAJACIC
Anna Clementi has friends who range in age from their 20s to their 60s.



PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN PASSINO
Stephanie Crane has challenged herself to step outside her comfort zone by performing karaoke and teaching Zumba class.

Happily single

By Julie A. Jacob



PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAN KRAJACIC

Amy Anderson is director of Oakwood Clinical Associates in Kenosha. She says a single woman has the best chance of meeting other single adults at events such as art gallery receptions, book clubs, jazz concerts and adult sports leagues.

A woman who is single is in good company. More than 40 percent of adults in the United States are never married, divorced or widowed, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and 30 percent of women under the age of 65 live alone.

Still, in a family-oriented area like southeastern Wisconsin, a woman who is not married or in a committed relationship may sometimes feel like a fish out of water. As a woman's friends marry and their priorities shift, a single woman may feel left out, said Amy Anderson, director of Oakwood Clinical Associates in Kenosha and a therapist who has worked with many single women.

"At various social activities, a lot of conversation revolves around children and families," Anderson said.

Sometimes, navigating it all can be hard.

"Sometimes it is difficult to connect because I am not married," said Stephanie Crane, a single mom who lives in a family-oriented subdivision in Kenosha and works as a marketing and sales manager at a manufacturing company.

However, it is possible to forge a fulfilling and busy social life as a single woman, even in a small, family-focused community, and Anderson and four single women offered suggestions on how to do it.

> Build upon existing social connections

Sue Hayek, a lifelong resident of Racine, structures her social life around the family and friends she has known for years.

"Someone is always extending an invitation for me to join them," she said.

It's important to stay connected with long friends, even as they marry and become less available, said Anderson. As the flip side to that, Anderson recommended that women who are married or in committed relationships

make a point of squeezing in time to get together with friends — and when they ask their single friends about their activities.

Tapping existing work and business connections is another

way to expand one's social life. Crane is involved with Y-Link, an organization for young professionals in Kenosha. Anna Clementi works for Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce in downtown Racine, participating in the Leadership Racine program.

She has also taken continuing education classes at Gateway Technical College.

"I've met a ton of new people and have a lot of new friends," Clementi said.

THREE FOR ME (EMOTIONALLY)

> Get out of the house, pursue your interests

Figure out what you're interested in and then do it, the women emphasized, whether it's sports, politics, the arts or animal welfare. Racine resident Diane Carlson, for instance, has cultivated her interest in the arts by volunteering with the Racine Theatre Guild and Sixth Street Theatre.

"There is nothing like working on a shared goal to bring people together, and you already have something in common," Carlson said.

> Seek out activities geared toward adults

As fun as a "Frozen" sing-along in the park may be, a single woman has the best chance of meeting other single adults at events such as art gallery receptions, book clubs, jazz concerts and adult sports leagues, Anderson said. Not sure what to do? The Kenosha News, Lake Geneva Regional News and Racine Journal Times websites list upcoming community events.

Hayek, for example, enjoys attending outdoor festivals, and she goes with friends to First Fridays and Party on the Pavement in downtown Racine.

> Look beyond your immediate community

A single woman's social life does not have to be limited to southeastern Wisconsin. Racine and Kenosha are within easy driving distance of Milwaukee, Chicago and Madison, all of which offer a plethora of restaurants, festivals and concerts. Hayek, for instance, often goes with friends to Milwaukee for social activities. She also visits other cities regularly.

"I love to travel and have many friends who have made their lives in different parts of the country, and because I am single I make it a point to see them all regularly," Hayek said.

Carlson recently fulfilled a lifelong dream and went on a cruise in Alaska by herself.

> Step outside your comfort zone

Yes, it's nerve-racking to eat at a restaurant by yourself, go to a movie alone, or sign up by yourself for a volleyball team. Still, it's important to push yourself outside your comfort zone, the women stressed. Crane has challenged herself by performing karaoke and teaching a Zumba class. Carlson suggested finding a cozy neighborhood restaurant or pub and practice striking up conversations with other customers.

It's also helpful to be open to developing friendships with people other than other women who are around the same age.

"I have friends who are 21 and friends who are 60, single and married," Clementi said.

> Finally, be happy with yourself and your stage in life

Anderson suggested looking at being romantically unattached as a chance to blossom.

"Embrace it and make it a time to get to know yourself," she said.


After all, being single isn't any better or worse than being married or in a committed relationship. It's just different. And a woman's status as unattached or attached is not set in stone: the most contented single woman may meet someone unexpectedly and surprise herself by planning a wedding, while a happily married woman may abruptly become divorced or widowed.

The best way to connect with other people, Crane said, is to be happy with yourself.

"Be positive and people will gravitate to you," she said. ♀

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