

Published on May 28, 2021 by Ditsa Keren

Find Your Perfect Match With GenePartner's Dating Sites Addon



GenePartner's biological matching method is designed as a complimentary service for matchmakers and online dating sites. Based on the genetic profile of the client, the GenePartner formula determines the level of genetic compatibility with the person they are interested in. In this interview, **founder Dr. Tamara Brown** discusses the science behind attraction and chemistry, and their impact on long-term relationships.

Please describe the story behind the company: What sparked the idea, and how has it evolved so far?

The idea for GenePartner started in 2004 when I was looking for a romantic partner on an online dating site. One of the issues I had was that, in many cases, I could have a really good interaction with someone online, but when I met them in real life, the chemistry didn't work. I met my husband fairly soon after, but it became a real time-waster for many of my friends and colleagues. I personally think online dating is great, but you cannot feel the chemistry online.

That was the notion that got me interested in genetic match-making. One of my friends, Joelle Apter, who already managed a paternity and genealogy testing company, knew how to run genetic testing, so we teamed up and started our research in order to locate the genes that play a role in relationship compatibility.

We didn't need to look far, our inspiration came from a Swiss professor. In 1995, Dr. Claus Wedekind in Bern, Switzerland, tested the pattern that works in all mammals and discovered that one needs a diversity of immune system genes for compatibility. In mammals, that's called

MHC. In humans, it's called HLA – a human leukocyte antigen. In his experiment, he let men wear the same t-shirt for three nights, and then women had to smell those t-shirts and rate their scent. His assumption turned out to be correct: in order to attract each other, we need genetic diversity. This is a primal mechanism that works in mammals and humans alike.

We took his research a step further. We wanted to see the HLA patterns in married couples. Since we were entirely self-funded, it took us about two years to find research participants and analyze the results. On top of the importance of diversity, we found two important patterns, which are now included in our GenePartner algorithm.

In 2008, we launched GenePartner as an add-on for online dating sites and matchmakers. Over time we partnered with some matchmakers, who found it very useful, particularly in Japan.

We believe that couples' relationship is not dependent only on the HLA genes. That alone is not sufficient for a successful relationship. One needs psychological and social profiling as well. That is why we built our systems as an add-on for matchmakers and online dating sites rather than a standalone tool.

To summarize, GenePartner is like a weather forecast. You know what's going to happen in advance. That means that you don't have to meet 50 different people to find your match. You can meet just five. It saves a lot of time and frustration and helps people focus their efforts on matches with greater potential, making it easier to find the partner they are looking for.

Here's a brief introduction to what GenePartner is all about:

New Matchmaking System uses DNA



What are some of the traits that indicate a good genetic match?

At GenePartner, we look at HLA genes only. HLA is a molecule that sits on a cell and warns T-cells about foreign peptides and proteins that belong to viruses and bacteria. Unlike Hemoglobin, which is exactly the same in all humans, HLA genes are highly polymorphous because they have a so-called lock-and-key system. There are thousands of different HLA genes, and they can bind antigens for a variety of different diseases. The more different HLA genes we have, the higher likelihood is that this particular HLA will be able to target a specific antigen and “show” it to our immune cells.

To place this concept into a romantic relationship: HLA genes are inherited, one set comes from a mother and the other from a father. To make it easier to understand, let's imagine that a person inherits only 5 HLA genes (we inherit a lot more but this is only for the ease of explanation). If a mother and a father share exactly the same HLA genes, it means that their child will have a duplicate of the same HLA genes, and hence will be able to fight only five diseases. If however, if a child's parents have different HLA genes, then the child receives ten different HLA genes and can fight off ten diseases. Once again, it is important to note this is overly simplified: a single HLA gene is responsible for a lot more than fighting off one specific disease.

So, when we meet our potential partner in real life, we feel this immune set up of another person, leading to a known pattern of inner chemical responses which we identify as chemistry. Even if people don't wish to have children, this instinct is there nevertheless.

I realize it doesn't sound very romantic, but it's an instinct, and it's a very important one because this is one of the principles that enabled us to survive as a species. Even if people don't want to have children, the action in the neurotransmitters happens nevertheless because it's an instinct, intended to have children that are more resilient to diseases.

What are some biological benefits of genetic match-making in terms of reproduction, infant health, etc.?

Our main goal is to speed up the search for the right partner. People who have been on online dating sites are usually there for months, if not years. Our goal is to cut that time short. Instead of dating dozens of people, one just needs to meet a few top matches and find a partner within weeks. It really speeds things up for people who are looking for a relationship.

In our research, we surveyed married couples and found out that people with a high GenePartner match have more passionate relationships. Of course, passion isn't the only factor to consider, but it's an important value that can help relationships, especially in the long run.

HLA genes also affect the probability of a healthy pregnancy. Of course, there are many other situations whereby a woman cannot get pregnant, but if she is healthy in every other way, and there is a problem with keeping pregnant, HLAs may well be the cause of unexplained infertility.

If the HLA match is unfavorable, there's a high probability that pregnancy will not occur, or that there will be an early miscarriage. That is nature's way of maintaining diversity and avoiding progeny between blood relatives. The pattern is well known in mammals too. Genetic diversity leads to healthy child development and better disease resistance.

What do you do to secure user data?

The security of DNA data is highly important to us. To ensure the proper security we devised a specific system of procedures whereby we have a headquarters in Switzerland where we deal with logistics and data maintenance, but cannot analyze the DNA; and the outsourced laboratory in the US, where they analyze the DNA, but have no knowledge of any personal details of our clients.

Once the DNA has been analyzed, the HLA results are sent to GenePartner where they are incorporated into our algorithm, while the laboratory discards all the remaining DNA.

We feel that this division enables secure handling of DNA and clients' private details.

What are your future plans for GenePartner?

GenePartner's algorithm is very accurate. I think that if people could use it across different online dating platforms, it would be extremely helpful. Our challenge these days is that many online dating sites want to have users on their platforms for as long as possible and speeding up the process of matching doesn't sound so favorable to them.

This is why we mostly work with traditional matchmakers. For them, the length of time spent with a client ending in a successful relationship needs to be short if they want to maintain a reputation. Currently, however, we are also in discussion with a start-up for a new online dating application that will integrate GenePartner with their social profiling system. They aim to match their subscribers both quickly and accurately.

Give us your opinion

★★★★★ 9.7 / 11 Votes

About Author



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Ditsa Keren is a technology blogger and entrepreneur with a strong passion for biology, ecology and the environment. In recent years, Ditsa has been specializing in technical and scientific writing, covering topics like biotechnology, algae cultivation, nutrition, and women's health.

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