

# Mission Moments

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## **On the (Dating) Scene**

When you think of February, chances are that a small, meteorologically-inclined rodent pops into your head, or maybe a vision of hearts, chocolates, and plump, flying, arrow-wielding cherubs comes to mind. If you fall into the second camp, then you are probably familiar with Valentine's Day, that infamous holiday, which impressively raises the popularity of boxed chocolates and long-stemmed roses, if only for just a day.

No matter which side you occupy in the great debate over the validity of Valentine's Day as a holiday, we can all agree that the search for companionship, be it romantic or platonic, is an important part of life. And we can probably further agree that the whole process of meeting new people can be downright scary, especially for those who are shy. This is something Tony knows all about.

When Aireya, a Tangram employee, first started working with Tony, in November she said they did what was most comfortable for Tony—played a lot of video games. After doing that for a couple of weeks, Tony expressed an interest in meeting new people and maybe even dating.

As they started looking around for events that would allow Tony to wade into the dating scene, they found Lock and Key Events—a unique take on speed dating where singles meet at a bar and women are given locks and men are given keys. The idea is to chat your way through the crowd until you match a key to a lock.

In the weeks leading up to Tony's first Lock and Key event in January, he and Aireya prepared by going out to dinner, walking around the mall, and working on conversation starters. Tony admittedly struggles with social anxiety, making the dating process, which is already uncomfortable for most people, a little more stressful for him. But he had a secret weapon—Aireya—who pushes him a little beyond his comfort zone, but always has his back.

"I noticed Tony became more relaxed and comfortable with himself. He is really funny with a great personality and can hold a conversation really well," reported Aireya about Tony's preparations for the event.

When the event rolled around, Tony said he was "panicky at first, but then relaxed." He counts the event as a success, recalling one woman who kept exchanging her lock in hopes of finding one that would match Tony's key. "[Before the event], I would never talk to strangers, let alone females I found attractive," said Tony. And when asked what he thought of the event, he said, "It was fun!" So fun, in fact, that he already plans to attend the March Lock and Key event, something that he set up on his own, without encouragement from Aireya.

"He is more outgoing and less afraid of starting conversations. His confidence has really improved!" said Aireya.

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