

Finding Romance in 2015

Many of us want a meaningful and sustainable relationship to enhance our sense of wellbeing. With Valentine's Day approaching, let's consider some healthy ways to approach finding a partner. An estimated 50% of single people use mobile apps and online dating sites to meet potential dates.

Sara, a friend of mine, recently told me that she and many of her friends had met their partners through online dating and social networking. But another well-educated, successful woman described her experience as both disappointing and amusing. She had a blind date with a man she met through Match.com. They rendezvoused at her local coffee shop. Unfortunately, several of her children's friends' parents dropped by her table to say hello, which embarrassed her because they knew she was on a blind date. One woman greeted her date and reminded him that they had met in line at the unemployment office, which humiliated him. It was not a happy experience for either of these people looking for love.

February brings Valentine's Day, evoking images of happy couples cuddling with chocolate and champagne. For people of all ages who are single and looking, Cupid's functions may be outsourced to the person you see in the mirror every morning, assisted by technology, especially mobile technology, for instant gratification. Forbes reports that we spent \$2.1 billion dollars on online and mobile dating websites in 2014, an increase from \$469.5 million in 2004. How can you use technology and social networking wisely to find a partner? What should you look for? Here are some suggestions you should consider in using technology.

Technology is a tool. It doesn't have a conscience and it doesn't think for you. It offers you choices. You have to be the planner and decider.

Familiarize yourself with mobile apps and websites such as Match.com, EHarmony, OK Cupid, Tinder, JDate and the many others and decide which is the best fit for you. Some mobile apps use appearance-based matchmaking which some find superficial and shallow. People on free websites may be more interested in "casual dating" than LTRs (long term relationships). Other

websites encourage extensive self- disclosure, which may be time consuming and too much sharing of personal information. Since websites provide little screening of clients, there may be people who mislead or lie about themselves. Common exaggerations include weight for women and height for men, as well as age and professional accomplishments for both men and women. Prepare your personal profile carefully and honestly, perhaps asking friends for their input. Set modest expectations.

When you find someone you'd like to contact, do so but don't take it personally if they are not interested. Exchange enough email and text to find out if there is enough in common to justify a telephone call. Make the phone call relatively brief to discuss meeting. Be careful in your online and phone communications to share your interests and some activities, but beware TMI (Too Much Information) when a prospective relationship doesn't have the scaffolding to support such revelations. And don't give your last name, your home or work address. Use a non-work email and cell phone.

Meet in a public place for coffee or a drink, or to take a walk for an hour, after which you have another commitment, even if it's just doing your laundry. Conversation should be general and not too revealing, especially about past relationships. You are each interviewing and auditioning for a second date if there's mutual interest. The kindest way to handle a lack of interest is simply to let your date know that while you've enjoyed your conversation, you don't think there's a match and wish him/her good luck.

Even if your date leads to another, remember that technology may bring instant results, but there are no shortcuts to getting to know someone well over time.

By Bonnie Teitleman

BU Faculty and Staff Assistance Office

Sources

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