

Conditionals: Love on the Internet

READING
TEXT

We live in an expanding global village. Our towns are spread out and connected through virtual wires and cyberspace. Our world is growing smaller and our means of communication faster. The velocity of our lives is increasing. We are connecting more and more with other people, through email, chat rooms, web blogs, cyber communication, and virtual realities. Our global village is becoming smaller every day. We sit in front of our computer screens typing and surfing, moving with light speed from domain to domain, country to country, URL to URL. We look for everything now, including love, in front of our computer screens. Welcome to the world of the 21st Century. If we curl up, hunched over the key board, banging on the keys, do we really think we will find that special someone? Do we believe that even love can be found at the click of key, rather than through the arched turn of a smile? Or are we, in fact, lonelier than ever?

Love on the Cyber Highway is increasing rapidly. In their stressful and hectic lives, people are bypassing the old tried-and-true ways of meeting partners, for the fast and new connection called Cyber Dating. It seems everyone, from grandparents to teenagers has plunged into the search for an on-line partner. The marketing company Nielsen recently found that 21 million people visited on-line dating sites in just one month. It is reported that Americans alone spend an estimated \$313 million for subscriptions to on-line dating sites.

On-line service representatives advertise that everyone knows someone who found love on-line. However, if you ask most on-line daters, they'll say that before they found their perfect match they had to weed through a lot of strange and bad experiences. But, the Nielsen research group also reported that 10 percent of those who visited cyber-romance sites actually married someone they had met on-line.

Internet dating, however, appears to have many advantages for those who feel too overwhelmed by their daily life to date the old-fashioned way. The first advantage is that you can contact a large number of people, and make connections, without revealing your true identity at first. This might save you the embarrassment, hassle and expense of dating if the dating should later fail. You are also given the opportunity to meet people who you would never have met outside the on-line environment. For example, you can meet people from different cities or

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countries. Also, since you do not actually meet the potential-partner in real life at first, and you must communicate through correspondence, you can reveal your thoughts and feelings without the awkwardness of doing this in person. People feel more comfortable behind a computer screen because they're "protected" by a certain anonymity. There is also less stress involved in on-line dating. You can talk to someone on-line for as long as you like before you actually meet him or her. You're protected in your safe shell: your home. You also do not have to share anything you aren't willing to talk about.

Paradise, you might think. Well, it turns out there are as many pitfalls as there are golden arches. When you meet someone in person, you're looking right at them, listening to them, sensing their thoughts, seeing their expressions, hearing their voice. You can often sense how someone feels by something as subtle as his or her body language or reaction. You can often quickly learn if they have strange behaviors or exhibit weird habits. But online, people tend to leave out such facts or invent imaginary identities. A "25-year old athlete" may just be a 40-year old balding accountant. The beautiful starlet might just be a teenaged high school cheerleader. You might think that the person you have been talking to is just perfect, but when you meet in person, they may have a problem that you just can't cope with. On-line love is also hard to maintain, especially if you live in Montreal and your partner lives in Seoul or Istanbul. But probably the biggest obstacle to online dating is that people lie on-line, more so than in real-life. Because the relationship begins anonymously online partners often feel that they have nothing to lose by lying. So they do. Your partner tells you they're single. Only later do you learn that they have been married six times and have ten children.

So, is cyber romance valuable and worthwhile or is it only a fleeting fad? Well, the old wisdom probably still holds true. While love is indeed blind, any way that you can bring love into your life is valuable. In truth, there is no difference between the matchmaker, or friend of the friend, or the romance chat room. Love either grows or wilts according to the people involved. The place where people meet is less important than the people they meet. Cyber romance is part of our changing world. It will continue to grow as our lives become more connected and more reliant on everything cyber-based. However, that old adage, *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) still applies. So, as long as you are careful about the places into which you jump, open your eyes and jump right in!

Now, are you still lonely?

*Find examples of **CONDITIONAL STATEMENTS** in the passage above. Identify which kind of conditional they are.*

Write a sentence with each of the following words and expressions.

- 1. **GLOBAL VILLAGE** _____
- 2. **CYBERSPACE** _____
- 3. **MEANS OF COMMUNICATION** _____
- 4. **VELOCITY** _____
- 5. **TO BYPASS** _____
- 6. **TRIED-AND-TRUE** _____
- 7. **TO PLUNGE INTO** _____
- 8. **TO WEED THROUGH** _____
- 9. **SUBTLE** _____
- 10. **ANONYMITY** _____
- 11. **A FLEETING FAD** _____
- 12. **ADAGE** _____
- 13. **PITFALLS** _____
- 14. **PARADISE** _____
- 15. **TO COPE WITH** _____

Answer the following comprehension questions.

- 1. Why does the author think the world is becoming smaller?

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2. How has the internet changed how we meet and date people?

3. What are the advantages of using internet dating services?

4. What are the disadvantages of using internet dating services?

5. Have you used the internet to meet someone? If yes, what was the result? If no, why not?
