

Online Dating –

The digital fantasy meets flesh and reality

Online dating is no longer the scary thing it used to be. The stigma has passed. The stereotypical image of the teenager forever hogging the one phone line in the house has been replaced by the young adult that is too busy texting multiple friends to notice where they are going as they walk into ongoing traffic. In fact, younger generations are starting to feel more at ease with relating to each other through technology than they do in a person-to-person encounter.

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What will this hold for our future family builders? Time will tell. In the meantime, new technologies will also end up being just one more medium where boys and girls find themselves connecting.

OK, this is the scenario: You meet a great person months ago through a friend on Facebook. You don't do this type of thing EVER, but this person seems very intelligent and there is something interesting about them. You live in separate cities, but that does not stop you. You start exchanging some private messages that turn into long texts and then phone conversations. You are getting along very well. Things are going great and you find yourself in a long distance relationship with someone that you have not actually met in person. Soon, you start swapping sexy photos with promises of more sizzling excitement yet to come. Finally, one day, you decide that you are going to visit that special someone in your life for the first time. You meet, you have a great time, and you even have sex. Wow! Could life get any better? You agree to continue the romance after you return home. You start to think to yourself that you have finally found someone, and that maybe it's time for one of you to live with the other. All of a sudden the phone calls become less frequent. The texts become less personal, and you haven't spotted a sexy pic of your true love in your email thread since you can't remember when. You ask if everything is OK? Your partner tells you everything is fine, but you know it's not like it was before. Finally it becomes clear that the only

time you communicate is when you initiate it, otherwise it could be days if not weeks before you get a hello (or a poke or a wink depending on what social networking site you use.) You can feel it slipping away, so you decide to make one last ditch attempt and tell your future "spouse" how you are feeling and how important that person is to you. In response, your future spouse tells you that time is needed to think about the relationship and where it is going. Just a few months ago, that person couldn't get enough of you, but now?

You fear the worst and wonder if there is someone else. Did you do something wrong? What could have possibly happened when things were going so great? Is it you or is it the other person?

Online dating does have some major flaws that come with the medium. Aside from the potential dangers that generally exist when you meet anyone new that moves from the stranger to the lover position, online relationships struggle mostly because they are not real relationships. So much of what makes an online relationship work, especially if you factor in long distance and very little actual time together, is that most of where that relationship exists in your head. It is not based on reality, but often on what you want the other person to be. When reality collides with fantasy reality will always win. People who thrive in online relationships might be doing so as a means to avoid any actual intimacy. Easier to deal with people that you don't actually have to be with. When the reality of how a person really is around you does not, and simply can't, live up to the fantasy you have built in your mind as to who the other person is; it is just a matter of time before you have to acknowledge your feelings. The cold slap of reality is that the person you had feelings for might never have actually existed in real life.

If you have any love, sex, dating or relationship issues that you would like to see explored in this column of the West End Times, please send your story by email to info@westendtimes.ca