

## Dangers of Online Dating

By Mike McManus

My wife and I know a never-married woman about 50 who met a man online who seemed spectacular. He sent a photo of himself as an airline pilot flying a military plane, with a rugged, handsome face. Our friend, who is a bit overweight, went on a crash diet, losing 10 pounds. She told us she was in love.

Her friend said he wanted to put some of his savings into her bank account, where she could keep whatever interest was earned. She told her brother, who had served in the military and he warned her, "Be careful. Do not give him any information about your account. He sounds phony to me. If he got your account number, he might drain your savings account. Ask him for details of his military service, and let me check him out."

Sure enough, the man did not check out. His alleged credentials were phony. He was a scam artist.

On the other hand, last year alone, twice as many marriages occurred between men and women who met online vs. couples who met in bars, clubs, church or other social events combined, according to one source.

However, it's worth taking the time to protect yourself from online scammers and sex offenders. Be aware of the risks which are involved, 70% of which are targeted at women, half of whom are over age 40.

Dating Metrics ([www.datingmetrics.com/online-dating-safety-guide-for-women](http://www.datingmetrics.com/online-dating-safety-guide-for-women)) reports that a tenth of people you meet online are scams. Victims lose an average of \$5,000 in these scams. In Britain, rape reporting's have soared 6-fold in 5 years from victims meeting online. A tenth of sex offenders use online dating as their private hunting ground.

**This website recommends three steps for web-wise dating safely:**

1. **Remain anonymous.** Create a generic username to protect yourself. Hide your contact details. Don't share your personal email. Don't share your Facebook and Instagram accounts. Use fresh selfies for your dating profiles. Never upload photos from Facebook. Online fraudsters can track down your personal details via Google.
2. **Be a web-wise owl and play detective.** If asked for money or financial information, especially to help pay for "emergency" medical bills - dodge such questions. Beware of job offers or get-rich quick schemes. Avoid contacts from another country. Beware of instant expressions of love for you. Avoid directions to other sites, live chatrooms or pornographic sites. Beware of messages with bad spelling and grammar.



3. **Trust your gut.** Take your time to get to know someone before exchanging contact details or meeting in person. Use well-known dating sites such as eHarmony, Match.com which employ fraud prevention specialists. Never send money. Suspect anything fishy? Google their name or Facebook page.

I am grateful to Joe Thomas, a British expert who created dating metrics, the email of which is above, who offered this advice. He responded recently to a 2003 column of mine on eHarmony.com.

Fully 70% of Americans have experienced divorce in a failed marriage or as a child. By contrast, in such nations as India, where parents preselect potential mates for their son or daughter to consider - divorce is rare. Clearly, Americans are doing a terrible job of mate selection.

EHarmony was created by Neal Clark Warren, a psychologist who has written eight books on marriage and counseled thousands over 35 years. He created a matching system that has led to 600,000 marriages - 4% of America's 2.2 million weddings a year!

No wonder 20 million people have signed up for eHarmony. However, a similar number are registered with Match.com, a competitor.

What's the difference between them? You will get a date more quickly on Match.com because eHarmony requires you to answer 400-500 questions that take two to three hours to answer. However, the result is much better matches on eHarmony.

Couples are compared on 29 Dimensions of Compatibility for lasting and fulfilling relationships. It can be difficult to determine the level of compatibility of a potential partner through methods of conventional dating services - browsing classified ads, online personals or viewing profile photos.

Match.com charges \$35.99 for one month of standard service, followed by \$19.99 monthly. EHarmony is a bit more: \$59.99 for an initial month and \$39.99 monthly afterwards.

If your goal is to narrow the field from thousands to people with an excellent prospect for you to build a quality relationship, choose eHarmony.com.

On average, 438 couples get married every day who met on eHarmony. Most important, only 5% of eHarmony couples have divorced.

Those are unbeatable statistics.

---

Copyright (c) 2016 Michael J. McManus, President of Marriage Savers and a syndicated columnist. To see earlier columns go to [www.ethicsandreligion.com](http://www.ethicsandreligion.com) and hit [Search](#) for any topic.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Mike McManus is President of Marriage Savers**  
and a syndicated columnist, writing Ethics & Religion weekly  
[mike@marriagesavers.org](mailto:mike@marriagesavers.org)  
9311 Harrington Dr.  
Potomac, MD 20854  
301-978-7105