Where the F*#@K Am I At?

December 13, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

I remember a time when online was a big part of my encounters, or to be politically correct, my dating life. Young people may not relate to the old form of technology before connecting to the internet where web pages loaded in seconds. They may not know what the sound of a modem connecting to your phone line is as a high pitch screech welcomed you followed by a web page that took literally minutes to connect. You could put in a web address, go get coffee and make a sandwich and still come back to see its loading. Those were the early days of the internet.

It was also a time when meeting others had transformed. No longer did you have to go to clubs or hang around a park or bookstore. You now had AOL which provided you virtual rooms of choices of people looking to connect.

For those who were HIV positive it was a great tool to overcome the face to face rejection of telling someone your status, as if they ended the conversation, you knew them by only their screen name so there was little emotional attachment. At the same time it was also a place to meet other people who were HIV positive as they had exclusive HIV positive chat rooms along with other interests you may be into.

That's how I met Phil. He lived in Texas and I was in Minnesota. We started chatting and sent pictures of what we looked like back and forth and soon a friendship started to form. It was also a time when I was looking to be in a relationship and having that one person I could connect with on more than a friendship level.

Phil and I had that connection and although he lived in Texas and I was a thousand miles away, my cup was so empty that his words quickly filled it up. There was hesitancy because I knew that the way we were talking and getting closer one of us would have to make the sacrifice of moving from their location. Long distance relationships can happen but are usually not always successful or comes with sacrifices.

After the umpteenth conversation and knowing he had a pool in his backyard and I had brown grass in mine, the conversation came about making that next step. Coming off of a cold Minnesota winter, I was willing to make that trade.

So after a quick yard sell and loading whatever I could fit in my car, I was on my way to start a new life with someone I knew only by mutual conversation. Was I in love? Especially someone who I knew from a computer monitor? Questions I should have asked myself before driving down the

highway through traffic.

Unfortunately when you look for that connection to be with someone you stop listening to your inner voice. You let your heart lead the way and put your brain on mute. Even today in our search of not wanting to be alone we leap into the waters before knowing how deep it is and what lies beneath. Yet dealing with the rejection or distance people give you based on your HIV status you sometimes settle for what you can get.

At the time I didn't think I was settling with Phil but when we moved in together, the dialogue we had on the computer was still there but that was the only thing we had in relation. I quickly learned we didn't have a physical or emotional connection and the brain finally found its voice as it helped me to realize our interest was in different places. He liked going to Home Depot every weekend (which I hated) and I liked going to the theatre (which he hated). It literally took me waking up in bed one day asking myself, "where the F#@k am I and who is this?"

This isn't to discourage online dating as there has been many successful cases of people making it work. Yet you have to use all your senses and listen to that inner voice. Words typed on a screen are only a small representation of a person. Phil was not a bad guy it was just that in person we didn't click and it took us both taking a chance and realizing that it wasn't going to work.

Everything in life is a learning lesson and shouldn't leave one bitter. Just take it for what it is. But for myself I learned that online dating is like reading a great romance novel where the language of the book is good but you don't necessarily want to sleep with the author.

But that's the great thing about life and love, we all have different experiences and without those experiences we'll never grow as a person.

Whether you're positive or negative, in the end, just like the modem we used to use, we all wanted to feel one thing: connected.

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