BREAKING BOUNDARIES

THE HOW OF SEX
This Any Way to Find True Love?

BY PAMELA GARBER
A long time ago, in a
galaxy far, far way, single people
met other single people in real life,
choosing their dates and eventual
life partners from those they met at
school and work or
through introductions by friends.
There was an interactive setting
at a bar called a happy hour.
Alcohol and small talk, including
flirting, would ensue. Phone
numbers would be given out or
denied accordingly and people
unofficially began the process
of getting to know each other. I still
remember my grandmother
singing the lyrics from The King
and I – “getting to know you,
getting to know all about
you, getting to like you,
getting to hope you like
me” as she reminisced of
meeting my grandfather,
her second husband.
Their mutual friends
from synagogue arranged
the introduction. There
was a certain sameness
to meeting potential
mates from the time my
grandmother, part of
the Greatest Generation,
through the generation of
the now-aging Boomers
all the way through
Generation X, those now
in their thirties and forties
and having children of their
own. Meeting others and
falling in love was seen as
a normal part of life, the
by-product of a modern,
free, human world.

Today, all of that
has changed. Dating
is orchestrated largely
by dating sites (on the
computer) or apps (on cell
phones), virtual arenas that
match people based on self-
constructed profiles and
formulas programmed into
the machines. These sites
read like a classified real
estate section, complete
with the property, or
rather the person’s photos,
background and age. They
are geared for efficiency:
Some phone-only apps
limit communication to
minimal word counts and
sliding fingers on your
phone to the left, for no or
Apps make it easy to play the dating game.

Dating is orchestrated by virtual arenas that match people with profiles.
Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, professor at the University of Haifa in Israel and author of [[ITAL LoveOnline: Emotions on the Internet.]] But “they are not beneficial for establishing long term love because someone new is next in line.” Swiping is exhilarating and addictive, but with so many options it’s hard to move past a desire for excitement and settle down. The dating scene online makes it easy to meet new people constantly, says Ben-Ze’ev, but profound love take focus and time.

### How It Works

Dating apps offer an immediacy and accessibility that is nothing less than revolutionary. Just by posting a profile, a person has a full audience of potential mates, access to each audience member’s bio and an ability to contact and be contacted by each. All the “members” of a site or app can send each other texts. In ultra-modern apps, such as Tinder and Bumble, communication can be geared to swiping left and right. In these modern apps, geographic range is taken into account so you only “see” people in your area. Typically, phone is the next level to follow written communication. It is the next recommended level because it is important to get good information before meeting the person. Lefabvre points out that amorists exists. There is a real need for caution on a basic level of physical safety and unfortunately this is overlooked. She suggests keeping in mind that this person is still, in fact, a stranger and that caution is needed. Sandra Brown advises limited initial dates to coffee under a half hour. This is to avoid the illusion of comfort that alcohol can bring and to avoid getting mesmerized by someone risky. The population of disorders—those who have psychological disorders that are exploitative in nature are able to forge chemistry and intensity. Keeping the meetings at a limited set time will interfere with this and more than likely run them off.

There is a physiological reaction when using these sites that produces a boost to dopamine the way drugs do. Each time someone receives an email, expectations and curiosity are stirred. There is a way to scientifically count the exact frequency each person receives texts and emails, however no such data is widely published. This is also the case when it comes to finding information about the algorithms. Dr. Scott Stanley says, “they will not reveal their algorithms”. Like a restaurant with a secret sauce, much information is guarded. The research that does exist

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*The How of Sex*
is pretty broad in scope and data is collected in categories. Questionnaires are the norm rather than interviews as the research is geared to providing answers based on the volume of users and not from an individualized experiential perspective. It is important to actively screen the people you are communicating with to ensure that the goals of those you communicate with match yours. *Betty, age forty-nine describes a constant influx of dates since her divorce last year. “I have to schedule dates with myself, but all the time involved has not to lead to a relationship. I did have some fun, but am burned out on all of it. It takes a lot of time.” She reports being on a break for the time being.

There is an overlooked choice to all of this. Dr. Lefabvre points out that “alone is still a choice. Living a life of independence does count as an option.” Dr. Stanley describes an environment where from the college kids engaged in hook ups from apps, to the grown ups actively dating, the dating arena can make it seem like there is great urgency for everyone to get coupled up. ASAP! People may be on these sites because they just want to meet friends. It is the job of each person to vet accordingly. This is done through being specific in your profile and in how

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**the big players**

**THESE FIVE VIRTUAL ARENAS OFFER WELL-VETTED SITES AND APPS FOR MEETING ROMANTIC PARTNERS.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>key players</strong></th>
<th><strong>mechanics &amp; features</strong></th>
<th><strong>psychology</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>tinder</strong></td>
<td>Mandatory Facebook verification. Contact initiated by swiping right. Focus on meeting in person, limited texting.</td>
<td>Reputation as a hook-up site (this varies by case) OK to pursue friendship. Important to be in same geographical area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>match.com</strong></td>
<td>You can see who viewed your profile. Fees for additional features. You can hide your profile and block users. Profile can be long and comprehensive. Questionnaire is detailed and specific. Ease of use. Matches sent to in-box. Swipe feature is optional.</td>
<td>Knowledge is power – know who you want and what you want to communicate. You can match with people who want the same things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OK cupid</strong></td>
<td>You can see who viewed your profile. Profile is less comprehensive than Match. Swipe option with phone app or e-mail. Designed for less communication before meeting. Fees for additional features. You can search with your profile hidden and block users.</td>
<td>Questionnaire based on social values and lifestyle. Values based, honesty, transparency, similar values on social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bumble</strong></td>
<td>Can connect, set up profile and browse via Facebook. Swipe-enabled. Women make the first move. Match disappears after 24 hours. Targeted communication to people in your area.</td>
<td>Women have control, local oriented, friendships are supported, not about hook ups.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>e harmony</strong></td>
<td>Psychological profile is constructed from the questionnaire you fill out. Lengthy process to post profile.</td>
<td>Thorough Mental Health driven assessment.</td>
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you conduct the first communications potentially leading up to a first meeting. Psychologist Sandra Brown cautions against sharing too much personal information. She explains that the chameleon like quality of predators will enable them to make you think they are just like you, causing you to let your guard down and throw caution to the wind.

Many dating apps now have scientific advisers compiling data and creating personality tests. This can arguably support their selection process in the automatic matches they send each person, but this certainly does not screen for safety. Even the most sophisticated battery of psychological testing relies on self-reporting. No test is a foolproof guarantee, so -with a dash of hope- buyer beware.

The App Advantage
With a completed profile and final click agreeing to terms, someone has remedied the problem of meeting others. There is no arguing the convenience factor. In less than fifteen minutes you can read ten profiles, have emails in your inbox and a list of potential matches waiting for your left or right swipes.

Dating sites and apps allow you to initiate communication while being comfortable in your own surroundings. From your office, home office, living room sofa or favorite coffee shop, you can type away to your heart’s content with people screened to specifics of age, location, relationship goals and lifestyle.

There is that famous saying, “be careful who you date, you never know who you may fall in love with and not be able to marry”. The point is that specifics matter. Spiritual beliefs, political ideology, social habits and socio-economic comfort level are all more important than chemistry and even love. Because love does not conquer all, it is a key advantage to have strong information upfront. Saying “love conquers all”

An advantage of this cut-to-the-chase approach is that if you are not interested in someone, you can easily back out. And apps make it possible to pre-arrange meetings with strangers, so that you may put safety first. You could have a friend nearby, or Google the date in advance.

Cautionary Tales
Whether apps and sites are mostly a plus or drawback may depend on your goal, especially in terms of the depth and longevity of the relationship. Sometimes even concrete goals, such as meeting someone who also wants a long-term, meaningful relationship can be kicked to the curb in lieu of endless chatter and swipes from multiple people. It is far too easy to shift away from your true goal and yield to the lure of someone new.

Feelings of loneliness...
It's a throwback, but you can still meet... can make it tempting to dive in blindly. “The extent of loneliness has increased tremendously in the last few decades,” Ben Ze’ev says, as meaningful social interactions have declined. Social networks make connection between people faster and less profound.”

And the barrier enabled by the Internet makes it easy to lie. Members of paid apps like E-harmony, who fill out intensive questionnaires, are usually more truthful, but everywhere you look, those who stretch the truth or lie by omission abound.

You can protect yourself by giving a relationship time and meeting multiple people. By keeping several people on your dating calendar, you force yourself to take time and get to know each person, until you are ready to see someone exclusively. For the emotionally disordered, time without intensity usually equals boredom and boredom cripples their motivation like kryptonite. Those who want mere hookups will also fall away if things take too long.

In the end, dating is a numbers game—and apps offer greater numbers. But it’s important to offset the draw of the next new thing with the more sober act of focusing on a relationship if you have met an individual who seems right. At that point, advises Ben Ze’ev, the best laid plans could be topped by the next text or swipe. His advice is to disconnect from all apps once you meet someone promising to give them a chance.