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The (cyber) dating game

Take care, be honest, couple says

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Whether it's searching for that perfect someone or looking for a good time, those looking for a date can look to cyberspace these days.

Sherry Nogle started her Internet dating dubious of its merit. A couple of friends conspired and signed her up on Cupid.com where she got a few matches.

One of them was Kyle, who lived just a few miles away. His kids knew her kids.

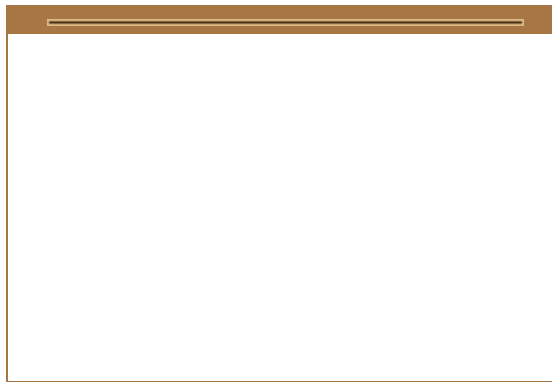
After exchanging guarded e-mails, she met him in a public place.

"I asked him later what he was thinking as he walked up to meet me," Sherry Nogle said. "He said, 'I was wondering what my wife would look like.'"

Kyle Nogle had also been wary of the online dating scene but decided to test his skepticism. The couple will celebrate their first anniversary June 13.

It is important to be careful and honest, Nogle said. Tina Robinson of Amarillo agreed that honesty is essential when meeting people online.

Although she was engaged a while back to a man she met online, he hadn't been honest about future plans and that led to the demise of the relationship. Robinson gets her matches from eHarmony.com.



Lunch Talk: Kyle and Sherry Nogle visit during lunch.

Henry Bargas / henry.bargas@amarillo.com

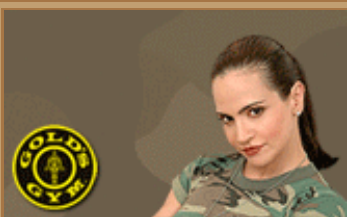
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"It is important to be upfront and honest," she said. "Right upfront I tell them that I have a disability and that I do have to use a wheelchair sometimes."

Robinson said she fills out the profile as carefully and honestly as possible.

"In all, it took me about two hours. I wanted to make sure I answered everything right," she said. "You don't just whip this right out, this is something to be serious about."

Although every once in a while she sees matches with guys who value things like hiking and camping, which she wouldn't be able to participate in, she tries to sift through the matches as soon as she can, she said.

Others, like Sarah Shipman of Amarillo, aren't looking for their soulmates just yet.

"I do believe in soulmates. I'm not necessarily 'looking' for anything," she said. "I'm just putting myself out there to meet more people - possibly a friend, just a fun date or maybe long-term relationships ... whatever happens, happens. I take it as it comes."

Shipman said she helps screen her dates through her father, who is a policeman. So far she has met two people offline that she met through the Internet. Both of them were interviewed by her parents or friends before they left for the date.

Because of the dangers of meeting up with someone who has been hiding behind a computer screen, Lisa Daily, who wrote "Stop Getting Dumped," said it is important to meet in a public place, to let someone know where you are and to take a cell phone if possible.

It is also important not to give out personal information before meeting up, such as where you live, work, a Social Security number or any other potentially harmful information.

Sherry and Kyle Nogle said that although they found love in cyberspace, it is still essential to be careful of the dangers that could loom.

"If a woman is going to meet a man, I'd tell her to take a friend along with her and to meet in a public place," Kyle Nogle said.

It is also good to rely on good judgment when checking out potential dates or mates, he said.

Several contacts who wished not to be named warned of the dangers of meeting up with someone from online without enough caution.

Another potential problem to watch out for while looking for love online is married people. One man e-mailed in, stating he was a married man who regularly looked for affairs with single or married women.



In Cyberspace: Kyle and Sherry Nogle pause after lunch at English Field Restaurant. They met through a dating service.

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