

2 DIGITAL DATING LESSONS TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MATCH

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If I've learned anything as a single woman in the last few years, it's that dating is never going to be simple. Meeting someone you're attracted to, getting to know that person, getting to the point where you actually have feelings for them, and then maintaining a committed relationship is not a smooth process. But as someone who always finds things in my life to focus on other than dating, *simple* is exactly what I wanted it to be. Enter my first experience with digital dating—downloading the Tinder app.

I'll be honest, it felt almost *too easy* at first. I didn't even have to set up a profile because the app used photos straight from my Facebook account, and I decided I wasn't 'into it enough' (meaning I was too lazy) to do something as stressful as write a profile summary, and yet here were all of these boys for me to reject or become a match. I didn't even have to get out of bed (which is great because I hate getting out of bed) and I had an inbox of messages ranging from 'Hey there cutie,' to ';)' to 'You and me. Cuddle sesh in 5.'

Simple as simple could be.

But alas, my days on Tinder were short-lived when I realized I wasn't using this 'simple' approach to dating as a way to actually date. I was using the app as a confidence boost instead of as an opportunity to actually meet someone I could potentially be interested in, which led me to my first digital dating realization:

1) You get out of it what you put in it.

When I downloaded Tinder, I had close to zero interest in dating anyone I met through an app—my thought process being, 'What if we fall in love and I have to bring him home to meet my family and they grill him about how we met and we have to say we met on Tinder? My grandparents don't even know what an app is, they'll never understand and they'll think I'm crazy.' Because of this, I didn't attempt to talk to anyone on a deeper level that is usually required to form a real connection with someone. I messaged guys about our favorite movies, what their plans were for the night, where the best hiking trails in our area were (and those were the good conversations).

Despite my inability to form a connection with someone, I do know many people who have met guys with whom they have had great conversations with, great dates with, and even great relationships with via digital dating apps. Coincidentally, those are the people who had a firm idea of what they wanted to get out of the experience and they took the process seriously. They didn't stop messaging a person after they ran out of small talk—they dove in deeper. They agreed to go out on real, physical dates with the matches they talked to. They weren't trying to see how many attractive people liked them back, they were trying to form connections.

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When it came to forming connections, I wasn't very willing in my pursuits. Every new person I talked to was someone I automatically judged based off of five obviously edited photos and no more than a few sentences of vague descriptions like, 'I love dogs, lifting weights, and having nights in with Netflix and ice cream.' I didn't view these people as living, breathing humans on the other end of the conversation, but as two-dimensional characters that I could sort through to find the perfect date. I wasn't putting in the required effort to get to know them.

Except for this once, when I ended up *gasp* talking to someone I actually liked!

I went on a real, physical date just with that one guy during my time on Tinder, and we had a great first date. We talked about everything from pizza toppings to religion, and ended up seeing each other a few more times. But after our first kiss, something became obvious—we had no romantic spark. Hence, leading me to my second realization about digital dating:

2) Good matches don't necessarily equal good relationships.

Obviously the goal of taking a dive at digital dating is finding a romantic relationship, but with that as the driving force behind your actions you're more likely to be judgmental of the shallow information dating profiles give you, then put too much pressure on the conversations or eventual dates you go on, and be closed off to the valuable friendships you could make. That guy and I still talk to this day, and we have a great friendship. Neither of us ended up meeting a significant other during our time digital dating, but we did meet a really great friend in each other. These sites connect you with people you may have chemistry with—but they won't always connect you with someone you'll want to date.

Digital dating is about connecting with people you probably wouldn't meet in your everyday life. The rest of the steps that lead to forming a relationship with someone—the complicated, messy, emotional, exuberating parts—should flow as naturally as they would with someone you met in the real world. Some people you'll click with, some people you'll have chemistry with, and some people you'd rather buy ten cats and call it a day than go on a date with again. The match is made on the website or app you choose; but what you make that match become is on you.

For me, I don't know if finding a significant other online is bad or good, weird or normal, and I don't know if I would ever try it again. But what I do know is that 'simple' and 'dating' are never going to coincide.