

Just click for love

Looking for love on the internet is now as common as shopping, blogging or chatting to friends online. But guidelines are needed to meet the challenges in internet dating. CATHERINE LAMBERT reports

PEOPLE used to meet at church groups, family gatherings and dances.

Then they started meeting at bars and clubs. Now, they often meet on the internet, especially if they're over 30.

What used to be a step up from seedy personal ads is now the domain of people whose lives are built around the internet, whether it's for shopping, chatting to friends, making new friends or widening their business network.

Finding a life partner is no more unusual a purpose, even though it may still be for some of the desperate, a few of the lonely and a splattering of charlatans.

Yet research shows that 30 per cent of Australians have tried online dating and three out of four know someone who met their partner online.

The main dating website in Australia, RSVP, reports that each month 1200 people form loving relationships on the site.

In the US, 550 people marry every day having met on e-Harmony.

Yet it is still a difficult path to navigate for people who are used to locking eyes with a potential partner across the office floor or party venue.

Internet dating starts with information and follows with chemistry.

Australian relationships expert Dr Buzz McCarthy (right) is a fan of dating on RSVP because, aside from its success, she believes it is a healthy way to clarify what is needed in a relationship and it opens up a deeper level of discovery.

"There are some fabulous men on the internet," Dr McCarthy says.

"That old belief that there are no good men and lots of great women is wrong. It's the way of the future.

"Everyone knows there needs to be a shift in how we do dating because we all have very busy lives and we want to short-circuit things.

"The internet is now being used by more people around the world to form relationships and it's a genuine way to change your life. It offers a lot more certainty than you have picking up a guy or girl in a bar."

But Dr McCarthy also accepts it can be challenging, there are some dangers and it requires a whole new set of guidelines to succeed.

Her book *Internet Dating: Men to Avoid, Men to Enjoy*, profiles the various types of traps to avoid from Mr Sex Only to Mr Predator and Mr Remote.

HER job as a relationship strategist, working with others in a similar field such as Anthony Robbins, John Gray and Deepak Chopra, has expanded to the internet.

"Dating on the internet is a mixture of science and emotion which has made it a difficult path," she says.

"It is a numbers game. You can afford to be really choosy. People should go for their wildest dreams and the internet lets you do that because you can be more creative and conscious of what you really want.

"On the internet you have an opportunity to have

conversations in a way that you wouldn't if you met someone at a party or a bar.

"It's a deeper attraction because it's about ascertaining each other's values, which you can do in the first couple of dates.

"That provides a safety net that you can be attracted to because you know they are available if they share the same values."

Having enjoyed dating on the internet herself and getting to know some like-

minded men, she saw a need to offer others guidance through the smorgasbord.

Though at times she sounds clinical — "always let him make declarations of love first because that is his job" — she is also wise.

"Relationships are places to give, not places to get," she says.

"If you go to get, your well will always be empty."

She has talked with many women who have had a bad experience on internet

dating sites and she believes there is likely to be at least one, given that 30 per cent of the men who say they are single are actually married, but she insists they stick at it.

Statistics show that each time a member leaves one of the dating websites and returns a few months later they are less likely to be successful because their commitment wanes.

"I am adamant that if you make the commitment to

find the loving relationship you want to nurture your soul and magnify your being, that commitment is something you must not deviate from," she says.

"Look at things as learning experiences, hang in there, move through disappointments and stay in the driver's seat."

Internet Dating, \$29.95. Available from MenToAvoidMenToEnjoy.com



Picture: JON HARGEST

TIPS FOR INTERNET DATING

WOMEN

1. Start with the end in mind - know what you want and what your non-negotiables are.
2. Be very clear what you are prepared to give.
3. Never lower your standards.
4. Enjoy being a woman: let him find your radiance.
5. Look for the uncut diamonds - you can always change his wardrobe.



Internet Dating: Men to Avoid, Men to Enjoy. Global Publishing.

MEN

1. Remember that being a hunter is in your DNA.
2. You'll win points for congruence - do what you say you'll do.
3. Be prepared for some non-sexual time if you really want her.
4. Ask her what she wants and listen to the answers.
5. She wants to be heard, not have things fixed.