Navigating dating apps as a man

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"Thinking of trying out online dating? Don't!"

That's what most of my friends said about going into online dating. Honestly, having experienced these apps for myself for almost two years, this has also become my default answer. Maybe with an addition of "try Bumble, it's better."

However, I think there is more to it than meets the eye. While I can only speak in terms of my experience as a man, I think dating apps can be a lot of fun under the right circumstances.

If you are someone who is in a relationship, or currently seeing someone, know that the grass always looks greener on the other side. When I was in a long-term relationship around 2019, the popularity of dating apps was skyrocketing.

All of my single friends were on some app or the other, meeting interesting people, swiping right and left like a video game, meeting 3-4 people within weeks of each other, and just overall having a great time. I sometimes even felt envious of my single friends. It was by the end of the year, when I became single and started signing up for Tinder myself, that I finally realised how wrong I was.

Navigating these apps, all the while trying to meet even one person, feels like you're on an island of hay, with no needle to find in it. But, if you do it right, then I believe that there are endless positives rather than negatives.

As a guy, dating apps aren't usually that difficult. I hate to break things down into such simple concepts, but I think there are three major things men need to have for success on these apps, and you don't even need all three.

You need to be a combination of interesting, funny and conventionally attractive. Two out of three is fine. If you are interesting and funny, you can cover up for anything you lack in terms of your physical appearance. You are what society calls good looking? Well, you can be a little funny to go along with it, and you are set up for success.

The bar really is that low.

However, despite the many positives, these apps can be a harrowing experience if you suffer from self-esteem issues. If validation is what you crave, then this isn't the place to look for it. You won't fit into a "type" for too many people, and that is fine. Not everyone is going to like you, and neither will you like everyone. As long as it's not from a place of prejudice, it's okay.

Finally, the best piece of advice I have for men who are just getting on dating apps, is to temper your expectations.

You are not just one swipe away from finding the love of your life or your soulmate. Quite often, the people you swipe right on, will not swipe back, but don't let that demotivate you. Just like in real life, with time, you will find someone you're into, who also digs your vibe.

Aaqib Hasib will someday finish writing his book. But not today. Write to him at aaqib.hasib@ thedailystar.net.

DESIGN: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

Online dating experience for women
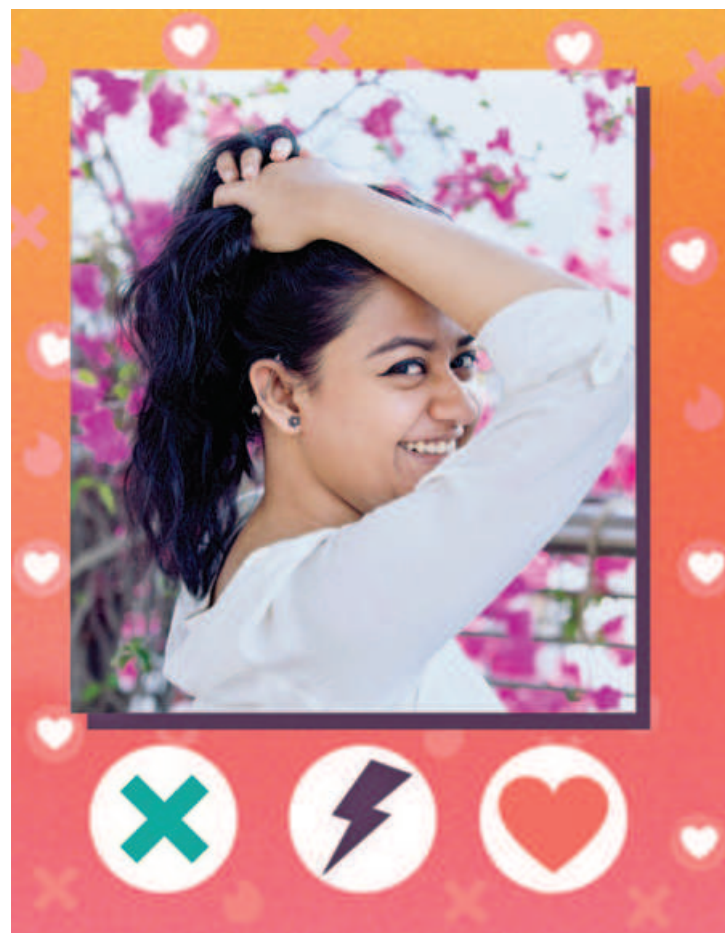
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A few years ago, one of my friends and I decided to conduct an experiment. We used face apps to generate gender-swapped images of ourselves and created accounts on dating apps to see how our experiences differed.

Now, before you think about whether or not using face apps that probably stole our data is worth it or not just for a simple "catfishing" experience, let me put your questions to rest. No, it was not worth it.

However, we did gain some valuable insight at the end of the experiment. My friend's female counterpart reigned supreme with around 30 matches in 24 hours. On the other hand, my male counterpart with his roguish charms of a near-sighted STEM student barely mustered up 10 matches.

Even now, I still think the experiment encompasses the dating experience for women (and men) pretty well.

Speaking from personal experience and anecdotes from friends, online dating is generally skewed in favour of women. Getting a decent number of matches is accomplished with little to no trouble, whereas men might have to go to great lengths to get the same results.

For women, one of the general expectations from dating apps is perhaps to get a sense of validation. There is a weird sense of affirmation in getting match after match, or seeing that a ton of people swiped right on you. Achieving this usually does not require a ton of effort as I've had decent results with merely a few average-looking pictures and either a bland bio or nothing at all.

Clearly, the bar for standards is in hell at this point.

However, if you're looking to actually talk to people and make meaningful connections, then things start to get a little tricky. Statistically speaking, women do tend to get more options than men in terms of matches. Additionally, men often feel the burden of messaging women first.

This cuts down on a lot of effort from our end, as the first messages require some forethought. Unfortunately, with this comes the caveat of having to filter through some "interesting" messages.

The task of sorting these messages from your matches can be quite distressing, to say the least. These texts can range from a simple "Hello, how are you?" to massively inappropriate things you should never say to people, let alone a stranger.

You are Sisyphus and the invasive messages are your rock.

In order to streamline this process, it would be beneficial to have a somewhat solid idea of what it is that you're actually looking for. From my experience, women tend to avail the use of dating apps to make friends and socialise. On the other hand, some women are looking for casual dates or even a full-fledged relationship. Others are open to see where things go from the app.

Keeping what you want in mind will help the other party to see if their goals align with yours, which will save time and energy for you both.

However, if things do get out of line, the unmatch button is always there.

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