

The Mating Game

(This article appeared in Greater Manchester of Disabled People's Magazine 'Coalition: (1996) Special Edition on Disability and Sexuality (pp. 27-28).

The doubts and uncertainties that go with engaging upon any kind of sexual relationship can be multiplied a hundred-fold when either one or both of the people involved is a disabled person.

Eowyn Amath discusses some of the factors that make "The Mating Game" a serious business for disabled people.

The "mating game" is bad enough for anyone, but for disabled people it can bring its own problems - and amusements.

It begins as a child, or youngster. Children "practise" - the 4-year old's "girlfriend" or "boyfriend" develops into the 10-year old's embarrassment and giggles, and finally reach the teenager's entrance into the "real thing".

This process can be halted, or become a complete non-starter, due to the segregated school system. Boarding schools can "forbid" even the slightest contact between the sexes, or preach the "evil" of sex.

If a young disabled person survives this obstacle course intact, the amusing, or really frustrating part can begin...

The old clichés - "their eyes met across the room" or "he walked in, and instantly they drew together" - yes, all the boring old stuff of romances which (unfortunately) most kids are brought up on by unenlightened media, parents and teachers - doesn't seem to be practical.

It's a bit difficult to meet someone's eyes across the room if you need to be three

inches away from them to achieve it!!! On the other hand, you could appear to be "eyeing someone up" for an evening without even realising it!!! This last idea amuses me greatly, and when sat in a pub I often wonder who I must appear to be staring at!

Obviously, so far, this is only from my point of view, but there are added issues - the problems posed in even getting into a pub, club or other place can deny the dubious pleasure of even attempting to gaze across the room.

The next hurdle is the old curiosity factor- "I wonder what it's like to date a..." or "what would it be like to have sex with someone who's..." - a difficult one, and not so amusing! No problem if you're dating a politically correct person who knows and supports the issues - but what if you're not? You just take the chance, I suppose. Perhaps we need a modern-day version of the chastity belt -you can only get into it if you can answer truthfully and can demonstrate that you support the issues around equal opps!!!

If you've not been so lucky as to escape the segregated school system without the hang-ups, what do you do? Do you use the old body language as a defence mechanism? Do you vocally declare all men to be bastards so that they won't come within a mile of you? Or - if you find someone you like -do you take the plunge and hope for the best without the back-up of teenage experience to start you off on the right track?. Never mind sex - if you've got that far it's something - what about the bits before??? To use the old Radio 4 phrase -"answers on a postcard please".