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## Dating?

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# Dating?

Dominique Mitchell

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Background: This essay is meant to be interactive. Anywhere that there is a (Y/N), it means to insert you, the reader's name and (F/N) means 'friend's name'. This is meant to be read as if you, the reader, are going through this process yourself. The character who is narrating it meant to be you, or if you want to spice things up, whoever you want it to be instead. Enjoy!

*Oh, there's a dolphin,* I thought to myself as I stared up at the popcorn ceiling. I searched for shapes in hopes of tricking my mind into believing that it didn't have anything better to think about so I could —finally— go to sleep. I glanced at the clock beside my bed for the tenth time in hopes that it would display some ungodly time, but no. The numbers nine-forty-five glared back at me, taunting my inability to wind down for the night. While I was not new to dating, I was definitely still inexperienced. Based on general life experiences, I already had a basic understanding of dating. Like I knew that (because of a bunch of different reasons), it's pretty difficult, difficult lemon difficult (as opposed to easy peasy lemon squeezy) to date outside of our "type". Once you factor in: hormones, long-term relationships, outside opinions, and physical versus emotional attraction, trying to decide who to date gets pretty convoluted.

And yet, the conversation between my friend (F/N) and I left me overthinking, causing me to pick it up and reread it yet again.

"(Y/N) I promise you they are an ideal match! They fit your type and everything!"

"It's not that I don't believe you, I'm just worried. I am so conflicted about dating. I don't know if I'm ready to explore that part of my life yet."

“(Y/N), it’s not that hard. You’re overthinking all of this.”

“Well what do you recommend I do then,” I asked.

“If you’re really asking for my opinion, then I think you should just do some research. If you’re really that freaked out, then just do some Googling.”

The last message held a very fair point. It felt weird Googling things that I should learn through experience, but I guess desperate times call for desperate measures.

Since I obviously wasn’t going to be falling asleep anytime soon, I pulled my laptop onto my lap and sighed. (F/N) set up a group “date” so to say that involved someone they thought I would be just —perfect— with, hence why I was having some trouble getting to sleep. The nervousness was eating away at my brain and stomach.

I shook off the icky feeling and opened Google. I decided that the best place to start would be with the knowledge I already have. I figure I should just expand on what I know in order to calm my nerves a little. Besides, there’s nothing a little scientific research can’t help with!

I sat staring at my screen as I waited for the search results. Human hormones were the first thing I decided to look up, since they, of course, play a significant role in dating. I pulled the blankets over my shoulders and head undoubtedly making me look like a gremlin, but that was the sacrifice I had to make for warmth.

I scanned the page for a source that looked reliable until my eyes found the holy grail of articles: a study conducted by actual scientists! I clicked on the link and got to reading. I nibbled on my fingernails as I soaked up the information. One particular quote caught my eye more than the others. It read, “females who were ovulating were found to indicate a preference for a short-term relationship with a ‘highly masculine’ male” and that “this preference was more pronounced among females exposed to a human pheromone” (Bjornsen). I found this quite interesting, as it was something I had not thought of before. I knew that ovulation released a surplus of hormones, I just had no idea that ovulation actually had an affect on choosing a partner.

As I continued reading, I found a bit on male hormones. The sentence said that, “males rated chosen “females” more sexually attractive when exposed to androstadienone than other stimuli (Insert superscript that correlates to a

footnote about these hormones)" (Bjornsen). I never knew hormones played this big of a role in choosing your type. Like, it's common knowledge that hormones affect your mood and such, but choosing your type? All this is pretty wild.

I finished reading the study, feeling full of knowledge about hormones, and went back to the good ol' Google. With the new knowledge in mind, I went onto my next topic of interest: long-term relationships. Afterall, if this person I'm meeting is —the one— then I'm going to have to be prepared for our future together. The search results only yielded a few interesting sources. One of which being a journal written by a professor named Victor Karandashev, and a student (chosen by the professor) named Brittney Fata. The other source that I wanted to read was a study conducted by people by the name of Kristen Mark and Debby Herbenick. I opened the second source in another tab and got to reading the first. I set my laptop at the edge of my bed and laid on my stomach to give my back a break. Taking a quick glance at my clock, I saw that it was nine-fifty-eight. *Perfect* I thought *plenty of time left in the night to continue researching.*

I went into this search remembering a quote from a study I read a while ago in class about how long-term relationships can be stronger than short term. It said that, "in long-term relationships, sexual desire is intertwined with passion and feeling in love, and the benefits of sex, such as pleasure and closeness, contribute to relationship satisfaction and stability" (Jong). With this information in mind, I typed away at my keyboard, eager to see more information on this topic.

The first source was actually pretty interesting. It talked about how attraction can either grow or deteriorate as a relationship goes on. It said things like, "as the quality of evaluation of a person increased so did one's attraction to that person" (Karandashev). I thought this to be quite intriguing, as it essentially stated that attraction only increases as time goes on, not decreases. I continued reading, and slowly realized that this journal related more to emotional and physical attraction, and less of long-term relationships, so I set it aside and opened up the other tab, feeling a tad frustrated at the misleading title.

The other article proved to be much more rewarding in regard to the information I was seeking. The authors of this study provided some very useful knowledge. They explained that there can be this concept called 'fatal attraction' which is essentially when "a sequence in which attraction to a particular quality in a partner ends in disillusionment with that same quality that was once appealing" (Mark). The big words confused me for a second, but I finally

dumbed them down to 'it's when something you thought was good about a person ends up being something bad'. I was pretty proud of myself for being able to decode that scientific talk, but I needed to stay focused. No time for gloating now. This study proved to be very informative, and I finished reading with a sense of relief settling in. The more I read, the better I felt about this blind date I had to go on.

As I sat there nearly ready to finally settle in for the night, I suddenly remembered that there were still two other topics I wanted and needed to look up. I sighed in defeat as I, yet again, dragged the google homepage into view. I was pretty nervous to look into the aspect of dating that I didn't really want to delve into; dating outside your type. It just wasn't something that really made sense to me. Why would you want to date someone who is the exact opposite of what you want?

The author of this particular article was a lifestyle and entertainment journalist by the name of Dani-Elle Dubé. She seemed to relatively know what she was talking about, so I continued reading her entry. She explained that "our type [often] comes down to someone who is similar to us in facial features, lifestyle (like foods, movies, outing preferences, etc.), sexual preferences and sexual lifestyle and future dreams and goals" which made sense (Dubé). Like, obviously you would want to date someone who is at least a little like you.

Right?

I continued reading while starting to question my beliefs. Maybe I should try to date someone who isn't my type? I mean, Dubé even said that "dating someone outside your comfort zone forces you to ditch your "must have" list and it allows you to be challenged by someone who is the opposite of you", but did I really want to do that (Dubé)? I don't think my 'type' is unhealthy. Like, I don't find myself chasing after troublemakers. Maybe I just need another opinion? I pulled up another article that talks about dating outside your type, and essentially confirmed my hypothesis. This article is all about the author, Kaitlyn Wylde's, "misadventures as a serial dater and love seeker" (Wylde). She talks about how her 'type' led to some pretty toxic relationships that involved "man-children who could have once appeared on an Abercrombie and Fitch bag and might inspire psychologists to use the words "borderline" or "narcissistic personality"" (Wylde). Essentially saying that she needed to date outside her type because all her previous relationships ended in disaster.

So really, you should only date outside your 'type' if your 'type' consists of negative qualities. I guess that's kinda hard to just find out though. You'd

definitely have to go through some trial and error relationships before you really figure out that you're messing up. Dating really is hard.

My eyes darted over to the clock once more and saw that it was ten-twenty-seven. It was starting to get a little on the late side, so I decided to wrap things up with my final inquiry. I pulled the previous webpage back up (the one about physical versus emotional attraction) and continued where I left off. I was pretty excited to learn more about this particular topic due to the fact that I felt very indifferent about emotional and physical attraction. I felt that you definitely need to have both in order for a relationship to be successful. I also believed that these two concepts tie in perfectly with your 'type'. Karandashev stated that, "emotions act as communicator of one's contentment in the current relationship" and that "emotions can be used as a measurement of how close an individual currently feels to their partner" (Karandashev). This of course, makes perfect sense. If you can connect with your partner, then obviously you're going to like them more. The same goes for Karandashev's bit on physical attraction. If you like the way someone looks, of course you're going to like them more! Furthermore, if this person has the looks and personality that fit your 'type' then you don't have much to lose. Maybe dating is a little easier than I thought.

I don't really know what I was so worried about. All of this information was essentially things I already knew in the back of my head. I guess I just needed validation more than anything.

Feeling satisfied, and a little more relaxed, I exited out of all the tabs I had open and closed my laptop screen. I put my laptop back in its original spot and snuggled into my blankets, finally feeling comfortable enough to sleep. My eyes found the numbers on the clock one last time, this time with the numbers eleven-o-two calmly looking back. I think I am ready for tomorrow. Now that I know for sure how hormones, long-term relationships, outside opinions, and physical versus emotional attraction play into your 'type' I feel much more at ease and confident about this date tomorrow.

Just as I started to close my eyes, it began to rain. I always loved the rain. It's like the world around you pauses; it's very relaxing. I took this as a good omen and finally fell into a deep slumber. Tomorrow is going to be good.

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