

Solitude @ net: relationship in the Internet

All its existence humanity has developed and improved ways of communicating, from verbal and oral communication to written, and now, with the development of technologies, we have a possibility to have cyber communication. Thus, this new way of communication has generated a new form of relationship – relationship on the Internet or, as some scientists call it, cyber relationship. Nowadays it is a very widespread form of relationship. Through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messengers and other means people have a possibility to share their aspects of daily lives, talk about interests with likeminded others and keep in touch with family members and friends. Thus one can feel close to family or friends even if he or she is far away from them. But there exists another form of relationship and it is called as cyber love.

This rather new term describes the notion of romantic relationship that is taking place on the Internet. A good example of cyber love we can see in the book written by Polish writer Janush Wisniewsky “Solitude @ net”. This book tells us a story about two people who live in different countries (Poland and Germany); they met in one of the chats, started to correspond and soon their friendship grew into a strong passion and love. They have met once, but due to some circumstances they have never met again. This is a sad story, but a colorful example of Internet relationship.

Many people consider that making new connections and relations on the Internet is much easier due to secrecy and anonymity that exist there and produce greater intimacy and closeness. ‘There are aspects of the Internet that enable partners to get the usual obstacles or “gates” that in traditional interaction settings often prevent potentially rewarding relationships from getting off the ground’ (McKenna, Green and Gleason, 2002). The anonymity of Internet interactions greatly reduces the risk of disclosure, especially about intimate aspects, thus one can share one’s beliefs

and emotional reactions with much less fear of disapproval. Another factor which pushes people to commit with stranger from the Internet is disability of a stranger to access person's social circle, and thus the boundary cannot be violated. One can see that this factor was the one which forced Eva (the main female character in "Solitude @ net") to write Jacob (the main male character) an email where she spoke about her marriage problems.

Я все еще немножко влюблена, еще полна остатками бессмысленной любви, и мне так грустно сейчас, что захотелось кому-нибудь сказать об этом. Какому-нибудь совершенно чужому человеку, который не сможет меня обидеть.[...] Я выбрала тебя, потому что ты достаточно анонимен, находишься достаточно далеко и достаточно долго живешь в Германии. Для меня это гарантия, что ты не подстроишь мне какой-нибудь сюрприз...

(Вишневский, 2005)

'A second reason for greater self-disclosure on-line is the lack of the usual "gating features" to the establishment of any close relationship – easily discernible features such as physical appearance (attractiveness), an apparent stigma such as stuttering' (McKenna, Green and Gleason, 2002), or shyness or social anxiety. In the Internet these features are not initially in evidence and thus they do not stop potential relationships from getting off the ground.

Interacting in the Internet is similar in some respects to interaction in a darkened room, in that one cannot see his or her partner, nor can be seen. First impression thus is formed based upon the information provided by the other person and perhaps by the positive effect of one's own acts, rather than upon physical features (Collins, Miller, 1994). Thus one is able to feel freely without any pressure and embarrassment.

Third reason why some people prefer to make relationships on the Internet is that there exists a possibility to communicate with people from all over the world. One can easily and quickly establish friendship with a foreigner. Internet is as if deleting borders. Thus it is very easy for couples who had relationships in real life and had to be separated due to some circumstances, to keep in touch and not to lose their relations.

Above were described the positive sides of Internet relationships, but there exists also a negative side which affects lives and destinies of those who are trapped in Internet relationships. One of the main traps which exist on the Internet is a possibility to create a completely different image of what you are in real life; chat rooms and other means allow it very easily.

Another serious problem is addiction from relationship which may be doomed to failure from the beginning. One group of people can become strongly attached to those with whom they are corresponding, but others are perceiving such relations as a light entertainment and does not take them very seriously, thus if such relationship is breaking up it can be dangerous for addicted and attached person to get through such stress, especially if a person has social anxiety, fear of commitment or other problems connected with communication. As an example we can take the ending from “Solitude @ net”, where the main character after breaking up with Eva decides to put an end to his life:

Сегодня мужчина пришел на эту станцию в последний раз. Потом он уже никогда не будет одинок. Никогда. Нет ничего хуже одиночества. Дожидаясь поезда, мужчина был спокоен, он примирился с собой. Он испытывал чуть ли не радость.

(Вишневецкий, 2005)

And the main problem of internet relationships is that from cyber love one cannot have children. Scientists are already speaking about the existing problem of the decline of human race. If humanity will choose cyber love instead of normal relationships, our population will decrease gradually. But the problem is not only in disability of having children, but also in disability of any physical relations. Choosing relationship on the Internet one deprives oneself many beautiful moments and feelings that one can experience and feel in real relationship.

To sum up, one can say that one must choose by oneself rather he or she wants to be involved in real relationship or cyber relationship, because both of these types have their own pluses and minuses. And it does not matter what type one has chosen as long as one is feeling happy in his or her relationship.

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