

## Computers, Adults, Sex and ...

It was all new and fun in the beginning. Meeting electronically with people from literally everywhere; exchanging ideas; getting to know them and their lives, interests and so on. We even engaged in “compusex” so called because you and your partner(s) would “talk” sexual activity via the computer. Many of the situations were outrageously funny as people would be “out of sync” with each other and ending up in physically impossible positions. Still, it was fun at times and interesting, to say the least. On the other hand, it got old rather quickly and intelligent conversation returned. It was good too, being able to get a diverse group of, otherwise unrelated, people together and orchestrate a “conference.” Some conferences lasted for a number of hours and I think most of us learned a lot in that time.

Other times I was engaged in serious one on one discussion, often helping my 'online' friends with personal/family problems and/or being helped in return. Helping friends cope with personal disasters, infidelity, divorce, whatever, was immensely satisfying. In a way these things and the online conferences compensated for the otherwise wasted time spent on compusex and idle chatter.

Over the years I have grown away from the sex chat thing in favor of discussion. Flirting is still fun though and that isn't a whole lot different from flirting in person. Perhaps the most important thing is that, being online, I was able to meet a lot of people I might not have had a chance to meet at all, some in person, others not at all even to this day, and see through the usual prejudices we all have, whether or not we admit to them. Talking to people on a computer link breaks down the barriers to communication. Race, religion, even sexual orientation/identity, have no meaning in the context of making friends. Neither do physical appearance, handicaps or voice. All you have is words and letters on an electronic display. You are left with a ...

person.

Not black, yellow, white, gay, lesbian, French, English, Italian, Jewish, whatever. You actually get to KNOW someone, perhaps far better than you normally do in real life. This is especially profound, in my opinion, after you meet in person. Some of the people I have actually met from online I would have crossed a street to avoid based on appearance and nothing else. Makes you think it does.

One time, at a place of employment, I was with a group of people who were talking over lunch about computers in general. One man said, “Next thing you know they'll be having sex on the computer.” to which I replied, oh hell, we've been doing that for years.” So he asks, quite seriously, “How do you know if you are talking to a black man?” How indeed DO you know? My answer was this. “I have my screen set up such that I see yellow text on a blue screen so, as far as I am concerned, I talk to yellow people. What difference does it make?” There was no answer to that except possibly some laughter and the discussion moved on from there.

Another time I was talking to a man online and he, rather offhandedly, told me that “you know I'm black” to which I replied, “so?” And another barrier was trashed. Over the years I have talked to people online whose sole window on the world was their computer as they were handicapped and restricted mainly to their homes; people in wheelchairs; even people who were deaf or blind and were using specialized equipment which opened the larger world to them. In the end, nothing mattered except that we got to know one another better and learned that we were all people, each of us, though different, basically the same no matter what our location, race, color, creed or circumstances. Too bad many others haven't learned this. And yet, even those of us who HAVE learned this, still judge others, from time to time, based on how they look or sound in person without ever learning a thing about them as persons. In the ever shrinking world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is sad. To think that the world is still divided by trivial matters; fighting over politics, race, religion, whatever it is that we feel allows us to think we may yet be better, more worthy, than someone else. Only ourselves and our private deities or demons know for sure.