

Columnist

Love's Great Adventure

By Mik Scarlet



Mik Scarlet talks about finding love in the 21st century...

People seem to fall into two groups when it comes to love and relationships. They either have no trouble finding someone to love or they find the whole relationship game a total mystery. I've been lucky enough to fall into the first group, even though I have been disabled since birth. When I chat with other disabled people about this subject I am regularly told that 'it's alright for you', as if I was born with some inbuilt confidence that allows me to navigate love's maze with ease. Actually I grew up sure that I would not find someone to love. A mixture of believing that no one would find someone 'like me' attractive, that no one would accept some of the ways my disability impacted on me and that it would be unfair to saddle someone with a disabled partner led to me thinking that love's great adventure was not for me. So how did I end up happily married to a woman I had fancied from our first meeting?

Now this might sound crazy, but when I started using a wheelchair fulltime at the age of 15 and my disability had much more of an impact on my life, I found the life changing experience gave me a new confidence. After I came out of hospital on wheels I decided to take life by the horns and live life to the fullest. I stopped listening to that voice of doubt in my head

and thought if you don't ask you'll never get.

But how did I meet prospective partners? I met my wife in a nightclub. We were both clubbing around five or six nights a week at that point (party animals or what?) and we also played music and sang, and so we formed a band together. This allowed me to

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spend loads of time with her and after a while we fell in love. I have always felt that the best bet is to find pastimes that you enjoy, as you'll not only have fun doing them but you'll meet other people with similar interests. Whatever your thing, join social clubs and groups. Nowadays there are also groups like Enhance Your Social Life, www.enhancetheuk.org, who match up people, disabled or not, with similar pastimes and interests all over the country or Shape Tickets, www.shapearts.org.uk, that provide assisted visits to arts events in London, taking away the worry if you need help with access. The great thing about meeting people with a shared interest (even if it is clubbing way too

much) is you already have something to talk about, which is half the battle.

Another important factor in finding love is looking good. Yes it does sound shallow and I don't mean we have to either look like a model or give up, but we do live in an image obsessed world. So I always tried to make the best of myself. My Mum used to tell me to dress up even if I was only popping to the shops as you 'might meet the girl of your dreams'.

Lastly I always got back on the horse. Rejection is a major part of the search for love, for absolutely everyone. Even Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have been turned down or dumped. I used to turn rejection to my favour. I thought if someone said 'yes' it must be because I'm fanciable and they have good taste, but if they said 'no' it's because they are shallow and obviously turned me down because I was disabled. Who wants to be with someone like that?

Now this might all seem a bit glib, and I know that there is a serious side to how the search for love can affect people but it's worth giving it a go. So if you feel that there is a hole in your life that only love can fill, get out there. Trust me the old adage is true, 'it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.' ■

