

Put the Smartphone Down. Now.

David Wygant | Updated January 2, 2013, 10:19 AM

Social media is what I'd call a romance contraceptive. It prevents romance from happening every single day.

Every day when I'm out and about, I'll see people in elevators, I'll see people in grocery stores, coffee shops, and at restaurants. And they're all checking Facebook! Or they're tweeting something to their 3.7 followers. We've become a society of people who are obsessed with what's happening in the imaginary world.

Facebook is an imaginary world.

Checking in on what your friends are doing at noon when you can be flirting with a handsome stranger or the cute girl next to you in line at Starbucks is a complete social block.

Just the other day, I was in a supermarket in Los Angeles and I saw this guy checking out this girl. He was standing next to her in line at the juice bar. He kept looking at her, and she kept looking down ... at the Facebook app on her iPhone.

Now, I know some of you right now are thinking, maybe she wasn't interested. That wasn't the issue. Because what I'm about to share with you is something most of you have probably done.

He gave up and disappeared. But I was crazy curious so I stood next to her in line and got real close and peeked at what she was typing into her phone.

Her status update: When am I going to meet a nice guy? It seems like all the good men are taken.

Think about what just happened.

She complained about not finding good men, but here was an interested man, standing next to her. Now, granted, nobody knows if the romance would have worked, but think about this: for every moment that you're checking your Twitter feed, or your so-called friends' updates on Facebook, you're missing another opportunity to connect with somebody in real life ... which could be another opportunity to fall in love.

Wake up, and walk away from the social media every once in a while. Drop the smartphone. It's not making you smart; it's actually making you pretty dumb. Save the social media checking for when you're home. When you're out and about, drop it, and be uncomfortable again. Sit in a restaurant, and look around, but don't read

Facebook: be present, and smile at the people that are around you. We don't need to be constantly doing things on our phones.

So, my advice to all of you who would like to find romance this holiday season: Leave the phone at home. Sit with the discomfort of being without your contraceptive coping aid — the smartphone — and start looking at all the available people that have been there the whole time wanting to meet you. Then, maybe you will return home and type a status update like this:

You wouldn't believe what happened today in Starbucks, I met the most amazing person; I can't wait to see him tonight.

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### **It's a Gift and a Curse**

Demetria Lucas Updated December 30, 2012, 7:01 PM

Facebook is the dating world's greatest gift and its greatest curse. For those seeking companionship, it opens up vast opportunities. It speeds up possible love connections by showcasing the bonds that tend to strengthen relationships: mutual friends, interests and points of view. Because so many users offer an intimate look into their lives through their status updates and photo albums, it's possible to remove a bit of the "blind" aspect that comes with dating a new person. Of course, this works best when the online persona and the actual person are one in the same, which is not always the case.

Facebook can be tricky for couples. It either encourages them to stalk each other or overshare, both of which can really kill the mood.

Most importantly, Facebook is a great place to meet potential partners, but not to date. After a few online exchanges, I think it's best to meet in person, or at minimum, on Skype.

MTV's show "Catfish" highlights the necessity of this approach. Each episode features a "love" affair where the participants have never met in the flesh. When they finally meet face-to-face, the outcome quickly becomes a reality check. Someone has used an outdated photograph, while someone else has created an entirely fictional character. I'm waiting for the inevitable episode featuring a married person with a "single" avatar. "You can be whoever you want to be," said one woman on a recent episode.

She's right, and that can be a huge problem.

Facebook can also be tricky for couples, so much so that I actually encourage partners not to befriend one another because of the numerous issues that can arise. Twenty percent of divorces involve Facebook and 80 percent of divorce lawyers

have reported a spike in the number of cases that use social media for evidence, according to a survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

There have been countless stories that cite Facebook as the cause of an affair. There is certainly a wide swath of potential partners available to married users who want to relive their glory days. But here, Facebook gets a bad rap; it didn't cause the cheating. It just made it more convenient to do (and perhaps easier to catch).

Even for the faithful, Facebook can exaggerate relationship problems. Some partners overshare in their status updates, allowing their "friends" glimpses into what should be private business. In other instances, there are "friends" who cross boundaries by leaving inappropriate comments on status updates and photos, which unsurprisingly can cause conflict in a relationship.

Finally, there's the issue of social media burnout between couples. If partners are intimately involved in each other's online lives, they don't get much opportunity to allow, if you will, absence to make the heart grow fonder. Occasionally, the over-familiarity, even if it's just online, can breed contempt...and that's just after two months of dating.