



Cyber Romance Scams Finding Love On The Internet

In our busy modern lives we often look for more effective ways of seeking a romantic partner. But beware! Scammers often use dating sites and other on line communications tools like Facebook to target potential victims. In fact, romance scams are one of the top internet crimes according to FBI's latest Internet Crime Report with \$203 million lost by victims across the country last year, more than \$3 million just in Wisconsin. Here are a few simple tips to lower your risk.

Do not give out personal information: If someone asks for your address to send you a gift, tell the person that you can accept it if (and when) you meet in person. Information such as your address, phone number, Social Security number or place of employment can be used to steal your identity.

Be wary of people who seem to move too quickly: If someone you just started communicating with last week asks for your hand in marriage, it could be a red flag that this person has less than honorable intentions. You should spend quite a bit of time getting to know someone before you travel to see them or give them any personal information.

Don't send money to anyone you meet online: You have been talking to John in Baltimore for months now and you agree it is time to meet in person. He says he will pay half of the ticket and you just need to mail him a check for the other half. Sounds fair, except now he has your checking account number, your routing number and whatever other personal information you have divulged to him in your courting period which he may be able to use to drain your bank account.

If they seem too good to be true, they probably are: This is true with any scam and is just a good rule to live by. If a person contacts you and has the exact same interests, is physically perfect in your eyes, agrees with everything you say and instantly falls madly in love with you, you may be the luckiest person on earth... or you might be getting ready to be taken advantage of.

Using common sense and the above tips will help you protect your personal information while you search for your other half. You can learn more about internet scams and ways to protect yourself at <http://www.readywisconsin.wi.gov/cyber/default.asp>.