



Meeting People

BY JONATHAN RHOADS, LCSW-C

WHERE TO MEET?

YES

The best places to meet people are places where people gather to share a common interest. Here are a few examples of places and ways YOU can meet new people.

- **Websites listing special interest groups that hold public gatherings:** book club, bike club
- **Internet-based special interest forums:** gaming, art, theater
- **Community-based organizations:** local recreation club, organization running social groups
- **Skills groups:** social skills building group, dating skills group, learning to draw
- **Various social media sites:** Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr
- **Music events:** concerts, playing music with others
- **Conventions:** COMICON, HISTORICON, OTAKON, etc.
- **Sporting events:** going to a game, watching an event with a group
- **Intramural sports:** non-professional team sports, pick-up game
- **Volunteer opportunities:** church flea market, habitat restoration, animal shelter
- **Shared political interest groups:** environmental awareness, human rights
- **Faith-based social groups and events:** a retreat or holiday celebration
- **Advocacy events:** rally, charitable event such as a dinner or race
- **Education:** college or school

WHY MEET HERE?

- **Because of shared interests:** shared interests remain the strongest way people connect and bond.
- **People are passionate about what they do:** absolutely loving your interest helps build connections even faster!
- **Because of the environment:** there is no shortage of conversation material so you can spend less time worrying about what to talk about when you talk about the event
- **Plenty of distractions:** these can work for you and against you, but generally distractions can provide an exit from the conversation or help get through difficult moments
- **Plenty of people:** if you don't have a good conversation with a person or do not feel a connection, you can talk to someone else
- **People feel safe:** usually many people attend these events so the opportunities for unwanted creepy interactions can be fewer
- **Common experience:** when people share a common experience such as a concert, they have a connection that can be used to grow a relationship as it allows them to connect around the emotions of the experience

WHERE NOT TO MEET

NO

Before listing places that are not the best to meet new people, you need to know that it is NOT impossible to meet others in these places. However, for most of the places listed below the chances of success are very small, especially if you are just starting to meet people.

- **Places where you might think you could meet people:** bars and clubs, the mall, the gym
- **Places where you run errands:** grocery store, bank, retail stores, doctor's office, etc.
- **Certain public spaces:** public parks, hiking and biking trails, campgrounds, swimming pools, library, etc.
- **Emergency and healthcare related places:** the hospital, doctor's office, pharmacy, community clinics

WHY DO PEOPLE NOT LIKE TO MEET AT THESE PLACES?

- **Time issues:** for most people they have a goal to accomplish and taking time to have a conversation takes time away from what they need to be doing
- **Can be distracting and unwanted:** a person who is running errands or is working out at the gym is focused on what they are doing; they won't be able to pay attention to you! Talking to them can mess up their "flow" (their performance of the task)
- **Can be CREEPY!!!** many of the activities people do are either solitary or involve already known people; approaching someone can make them very uncomfortable because these are not places where it is usually expected to meet someone
- **Bad news for you!** Given the social concerns in our community, approaching someone at one of these places combined with their being interrupted can lead to you getting in trouble or in the least, shut down
- **Negative impression:** sadly, first impressions can make all the difference and approaching someone who is busy trying to exercise or do their banking can result in a negative first impression of you being both creepy AND annoying!
- **Info Note!** You certainly CAN meet people at malls, bars and clubs; many people do! However, most people at these places are already there with friends and are not necessarily looking to meet someone new



What about Online Dating?

BY JONATHAN RHOADS, LCSW-C

Online dating has become a very popular way to meet people and start a relationship. There are many different online dating websites available to meet different peoples' needs in a relationship.

WHAT IS ONLINE DATING?

Online dating is an internet based service where a person who is interested in dating someone, making friends, or entering into a romantic relationship creates a profile of information about themselves in the hopes of connecting with someone who shares their interests and values.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

After signing up with a dating website or company providing the dating service, people either pay a fee before creating their profile or sign an agreement to follow the rules of the website.

After creating their profile, people will search for other people who they feel attracted to or appear interesting. They will then send a message or some other form of opening contact such as a wink, nudge, like, or sign of interest, hoping the other person will respond the same way

People also expect that other people will start contact with them as well. Many people start contact with multiple others to try to increase their chances of meeting someone

People often spend a period of time, which depends on personal comfort, getting to know the person online via the website, before using it as an event planner to set up a real life meeting

IMPORTANT TO KNOW...

If you are contacted by someone claiming they are a celebrity, then it is not true. Celebrities have people who work for them whose job is to contact others to set-up talks and get-togethers.

For individuals with disabilities, the choice whether to tell about their disability on their profile is very difficult. Telling about the disability in the profile can result in fewer responses from others, especially when considering social views about disability. Not telling can get more responses online, however the in-person meeting can be emotionally devastating for the person since they have to experience the reaction of the other person to their disability. Making this choice can also be damaging to possible dating opportunities because of mis-trust over not sharing information. the choice to tell or not to tell online is personal and must be carefully thought about.

WHAT ARE THE UPS OF ONLINE DATING?

- Provides distance to practice communication without the stress of having to meet
- Provides a way to connect with people with the same interests
- Provides many different people to connect with
- Provides a sense of community around goals for using the website
- Provides some match services to find possible connections with stronger shared interests
- Provides a sense of safety from the stress of unpleasant social environments
- Provides high rates of success for many individuals

WHAT ARE THE DOWNS OF ONLINE DATING?

- Not guaranteed to work
- Can reinforce first impression making as most dating sites only allow you to view a picture of the other person before you start communication
- Some dating sites can be very expensive, especially those that provide additional match-making services
- Information is not private and can be stolen
- Can encourage "shopping" and "pick and choose" behavior by permitting many connections at the same time
- Can increase anxiety and negative self-esteem around not getting replies or any signs of interest
- Can lead to mis-understandings and mis-readings of emotions via the unclear nature of writing
- Can be dangerous
- Can be a significant vector for cyber-bullying and online harassment
- Can set users up for being "cat-fished" (people pretend to be someone they are not)
- More vulnerable persons may be targeted by predators or led to believe they are being contacted by celebrities



"TEXTIQUETTE"

BY JONATHAN RHOADS, LCSW-C

TEXTIQUETTE is the social skills that teach us how to use phone texting safely and respectfully to communicate with people who give us their phone number.

WHY TEXTIQUETTE?

- TEXTIQUETTE is good communication! Remember we need good communication to let other people know what we are thinking and feeling.
- TEXTIQUETTE can be very helpful in stopping confusing and unclear messages caused by not having visual social cues to look for.
- TEXTIQUETTE stops the person we are interested in from thinking negatively about us if we have poor texting skills.
- TEXTIQUETTE helps tell the person we are interested in them and care about keeping them interested in us.
- TEXTIQUETTE makes the person we are interested in feel comfortable and safe when they communicate with us.
- TEXTIQUETTE can help make social media-based relationships stronger.
- TEXTIQUETTE helps cover up anxiety about rejection, starting text-based communication, and worries about keeping the special person interested in you.

TEXTIQUETTE DOS:

- DO pay attention to your anxiety about texting. If you let your anxious thoughts be in charge, then you are more likely to make TEXTIQUETTE mistakes.
- DO think of texting like you are talking in-person. How do you talk when you are with people in real life? Text the same way you talk with other people.
- DO learn texting slang and abbreviations so you can understand what you are reading.
- DO send a text message if the other person gives you their phone number. Show interest back.
- DO let people know who you are and where you know them from when you send your first text.
- DO check your message for mistakes two times before sending.
- DO have the courtesy to wait for a response before sending a follow-up text.
- DO send a reply text message as soon as possible, but not immediately; if you cannot respond for an long time, apologize for the delay when you send you next message.
- DO pay attention to what the other person writes back and stay on topic.
- DO ask questions! Even if you don't know what the other person is talking about, asking questions helps you stay in the conversation and shows that you care.
- DO keep your texts short. Long messages get boring, overwhelming, and annoying.
- DO know when to call it quits! If someone asks you to stop texting or needs to end the conversation, you need to respect their request.
- DO know when to give up! If you have not received a text back after several days, try sending a message about a topic of interest. If you still get no answer, as tough as it might be to think about, it is likely they are not interested.
- DO put effort into managing your anxiety about the time it takes to get a response. Remember that people are busy and may not be able to respond when you send a message.
- DO practice TEXTIQUETTE safety! If you don't know the name or number of the other person texting you, do not respond and get help!

TEXTIQUETTE DON'TS:

- DON'T wait too long before sending the first text message! Even though sending the first text can be scary, not sending a text sends the message that you are not interested.
- DON'T send a message saying just "hi" or "hey". If you don't say who you are, sending this message can make the other person uncomfortable. It also sounds lazy.
- DON'T send text messages at times of the day such as late at night or during work hours. Doing so can send the message that you are not considerate of others schedules.
- DON'T send text messages with pictures of yourself or objects you like. When you first start texting, sending this type of message not only can be creepy but can result in the other person thinking you care too much about yourself.
- DON'T "carpet-bomb" the other person with text messages. Text carpet bombing sends the following messages that you are desperate, annoying, creepy, and do not respect their personal space. Text carpet bombing can feel very overwhelming to the person receiving the text messages.
- DON'T dominate texting conversations with questions or talking about your interests. You will use up all conversation topics and send the message that you do not care about the other person.
- DON'T use emojis, slang words, or abbreviations too much. Doing so can be confusing (mixed messages) and send the message that you are lazy and either don't know how to have a conversation or don't care enough to make the effort.
- DON'T set expectations for when the other person should respond to your text. You will get more anxious about rejection.
- DON'T try to find deep meaning in texts; it will make you more anxious.
- DON'T BE PUSHY!! Give the other person time to respond to your text!
- REMEMBER! It is always ok to be nervous when texting someone you are interested in, especially if you cannot be there to see their reaction or tell if they are interested back.

I AM GLAD I KNOW THAT NOW! ANYTHING ELSE?

Good TEXTIQUETTE, like real-life social skills, is a real-life social skill that needs practice! Practicing good TEXTIQUETTE is not only good communication, it makes the chance that the special person who gave you their number more likely to stay interested in you. Staying interested is the most important step to having that next date, or get-together, so you can continue to make your new relationship stronger.



My Social Checklist

BY JONATHAN RHOADS, LCSW-C

- Remind myself "What is my goal when I socialize with other people?"**
- What is my PLAN A to achieve my social goal? Do I understand all the tasks that need to be completed for my Plan A to succeed?**
- What is my PLAN B? If Plan A does not work, do I have a back up plan that can help me achieve my social goal?**
- Have I done my homework about where I want to put my plan into action?
Do I know ...**

WHO

Who am I trying to meet?

WHAT

What is the environment and situation like where I am hoping to put my plan into action?

WHERE

Where am I most likely to find the people I want to socialize with when I arrive at my location?

WHEN

Do I know when the right time and situation will be to introduce myself to others? Do I know when the wrong time will be?

WHY

Remind myself of my goal again!

- Check in with CREEPDAR! Identify and change behaviors/physical CREEPDAR warning signs.**
- Am I confident? Do I believe I can succeed (YES!!!!) Can I accept failure?**
- Review my checklist once again and go for it!**



CREEPDAR!

My Radar for Identifying Creepy Behavior

BY JONATHAN RHOADS, LCSW-C

WHY CREEPDAR?

Creepy is another word for scary. When we are scared by another person's behavior, we are "creeped out" by them. CREEPDAR is here to help you identify just how creepy your behaviors and appearance may be to people so you can succeed in social situations.

HOW DOES CREEPDAR WORK?

CREEPDAR is very easy to use. Have someone tell you if you are doing a creepy behavior and find it on the CREEPDAR creepy behavior watchlist below to determine your warning level and if you need to fix it.



LOW WARNING

- You do not need to stop these behaviors, but they may give you difficulty when meeting people
- Bad hygiene (not being clean)
- Wearing dirty or damaged clothes
- Clothing not appropriate for time of year or occasion
- Posture (how you stand)
- Lack of eye contact or no eye contact
- Staring or glaring
- Interrupting
- Aggressive stance
- Quick body movements in your personal space (self-soothing)
- Inappropriate or exaggerated (too big) facial expression

MIDDLE WARNING

- Makes other people feel more "creeped out"
- Loitering (standing around a group of people you do not know)
- Listening in on others' conversation; trying to be part of the conversation
- Out-loud self-talk or other sound making
- Inappropriate or exaggerated (too big) expressions of emotions
- Quick walking or walking around like you are lost
- Quick body movements near other people; running up to someone you don't know
- Going to and quickly away from people
- Yelling at people to get their attention
- Refusing to stop staring; staring at a person at the same time you are walking around
- Obvious looking away when caught staring

RED ALERT! BIGGEST WARNING

- You MUST stop these creepy behaviors!
- Getting in another person's personal space
- Touching a person again and again
- Trying to attack someone
- Making comments (talking trash) about a person's gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Following a person
- Stalking
- "Showing up" where the other person is. This is a form of following and can be part of stalking
- Forcing yourself physically or by using words onto other people (making them socialize with you)
- Approaching a person many times after they ask you to stop
- NOT RESPECTING "NO!" If someone asks you to stop or leave them alone or tells you "no!", you need to stop!

WHOOOPS! IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR CREEPDAR IS BROKEN!

Sometimes we may be doing more than one creepy behavior at the same time (wearing dirty clothes and following people we may want to talk to). These can raise our CREEPDAR warning level past **RED ALERT WARNING**. If your CREEPDAR is broken, it means that you are doing two or more creepy behaviors and need to exit the social situation.