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Feature Article

Beware of the online dating scammers

With the ongoing technological revolution, more and more people are now using internet for several reasons – business, employment search, education, medical, banking, modeling, keeping in touch with families and friends and even to find love.

People all over the world use dating sites, social networking sites, and chat rooms to find love by meeting their soul mates and many do forge successful relationships.

Unfortunately, some use these dating sites to make money where some scam artists create false online identity in the hope of luring people into romantic relationships.

Like other websites and social network pages, chain emails, mobile phone text messages and post mails, these scammers create fake profiles to build online relationships, and eventually convince people to send money in the name of love. Some even make wedding plans before disappearing with the money.

It is very easy for some people to lose their common sense when they are being reeled in by an online imposter who tries to play with emotions to win love.

Always create and use a different email address from your personal and professional addresses when setting up a dating website profile.

The consumers who are hooked to these dating sites have to be cautious and avoid disclosing too much information about their finances especially bank account details, pin numbers and passwords of their emails/facebook accounts to their new found love.

The reality is with advancing technology, you may end up losing all your money as tech-savvy people can use online banking facilities to withdraw money, irrespective of which part of the world they are from. All they need is your passwords and pin numbers!

For instance, if your newly-found love on cyberspace, tells you that he/she has sent you money through a bank transfer and asks you to deposit a bank fee on his/her account in order to get the transfer completed – avoid such transactions.

There will be some who may request for gifts. Avoid making an online purchase for someone you barely know.

Always ask the person you are dating online to send you a photo where he/she is holding their own name which can be used later if things go wrong. Ask to have a live video talk using Skype. Someone reluctant to speak on live video, claiming shyness or that they cannot find a camera, should be a red flag. Professional photos are a red flag. Look for amateur photos - and more than one.

Use a Googlesearch to see if the photo they've shared with you can be spotted elsewhere online. If you see it shown with a watermark or in other settings like modeling websites, it's likely that it's fake.

Introductory letters on dating websites are often copied by catfish scammers. See if the same information appears in other places or has been copied from somewhere else by searching for it online. Out-of-country scams often can reveal inconsistent information such as landmarks and cultural events that don't add up.

Be a prudent lover – lose your heart but not your money!

Remember: You are not an ATM Machine - If they ask for money, lock them out of your life. Shut off communication immediately if you have a hint that it is a scam.