



Vulnerability Issues in the New Millennium

New Technology Creates New Ways to Exploit

By Ed Kiefer

Section One: Internet Dating

Those of you weren't at the Montana Developmental Disabilities Conference in Billings on November 1-3, 2000 missed what the Montanan press lauded as, "Hysterically funny ... Mesmerizing!"

This thought-provoking, critically-acclaimed theatrical event was missed by many and enriched a fortunate few. Okay, this may be a slight exaggeration. But we did act out role plays to help explain what it was we were trying to convey and one of the local television stations did film part of it.

Thesians we are not, but as human service professionals we felt the issue of technological advances and relating avenues of exploitation is a concern that will only grow as we advance into the new millennium. Awareness is the goal. The topics we covered included Internet-dating, mail ordering, long-distance calling plans, telemarketing, 1-800 and 1-900 use, cell phones, cable and pay-per-view TV.

Although we presented on all of these topics, we narrowed our skits down to three significant topics. These included: "Gone with the Windows" covering Internet dating and safe surfing; "Casual Calling Equals Not-So-Casual Phone Bill" touching on hazards of using the telephone; and "Don't Point Your Fingerhut at Me" illustrating issues involved with ordering merchandise or services through the mail and other relating issues.

Because the presentation was broken down into three main topics, we've decided to present the information to you in three installments. With each topic we have decided to include the corresponding script.

You can use these scripts not only for a good laugh but as a training tool. In reviewing any of the three scripts, feel free to pass information on to service providers who may be interested in applying it in a training or learning environment (for example, social skills training, monthly safety meetings, recreational fun). Acting it out can be a fun way to learn. I know it was for us.

The first topic of discussion involves Internet dating. Currently, there are 144 million Americans plugged into cyberspace with thousands more joining every day. If you don't yet know anyone who has dated someone as a result of chatting on the Internet, it is only a matter of time before you do.

The skit that follows on the next pages illustrates the potential risks involved with dating over the Internet. There will be further discussion after the "performance." ■



Gone with the Windows

CAST

Lex Spoiter Slezzy chat room man
 Lucy L. Lipps Our heroine, the victim
 Martha Spoiter Lex's long-suffering wife

ROLE

[Italics indicate our narrator.]

Narr: *Lucy has developed her surfing and browsing skills as she has become more accustomed to the way the Internet works. She has recently discovered Chat Rooms and finds talking to people on-line is a great way to pass the time and meet people. As we catch up with Lucy, she recently exchanged e-mail addresses with someone she met in an on-line chat room. They have been chatting frequently over the last week. Here she is trying to contact this special someone via e-mail.*

Lucy: Lex, are you there??? I'm in cyberspace and I feel lost without you. Am I reaching?

Lex: Yes, Lucy. I'm sitting here eating a sandwich waiting for you to get on-line with me.

Lucy: Lex, it has been so nice getting to know you on-line.

Lex: Lucy, I'm so glad we met in the Chat Room.

Lucy: Lex, the chat room was full of creeps. These two guys kept trying to get my friend and me to date them. They were perverts. They had the nerve to call themselves Ben There and Don That! I can tell you're much more of a gentleman than those screwballs. Lex, do you mind if I give you a call? I would finally like to hear your voice.

Lex: [typing slowly] Aaahhhh ... yeah ... sure. Call me in 5 minutes at 1-800-867-5309 and if I don't pick up right away, just hang up. I may still be in the bathroom. I'll talk to you in a few. Okay. Bye.

Lucy: Bye.

Narr: *Lucy waits the five minutes and anxiously awaits hearing his voice. She dials the number and he answers on the first ring.*

Lex: Lucy?

Lucy: Lex?

Lex: My, what a beautiful voice you have!

Lucy: Oh! Well, thank you, Lex. Let me start by saying that even though we've only communicated on-line, I feel like I know you so well — like we are soul mates meant to be. I can't believe someone like you doesn't have a girlfriend.

Lex: Lucy I've been holding out for someone like... [loud voice from offstage interrupts]

Wife: [offstage] Lex!!! Lex, are you on that damn computer again?!

Lex: Lucy, can you hold on for a minute? Someone is at the door. Thanks.

[mutes phone with his hand and calls out] Oh darling Martha, I'm on the computer e-mailing Ted, trying to get an idea just what the heck this HCFA review really means.

Wife: [offstage] Oh, okay. Good luck.

Lex: Lucy. It's the pizza boy. Can I chat with you on the computer after I eat — say in about a half hour?

Lucy: Aaahhh — sure. I can't wait. Bye.

Narr: *Lucy really can't wait. After only moments she decides she needs to hear Lex's voice again. She dials.*

Lex: Hello.

Lucy: Lex, it has only been a few seconds and I felt I needed to hear your voice.

Lex: [angrily] Lucy, I'm starving! I'll talk with you on the computer in a while. I have my son this weekend and he needs to eat too.

Lucy: You said last Sunday that you were sending me a picture of you and your son in the mail. Did you receive my picture?

Lex: No! Lucy, I'll explain later. Just let me eat my pizza, will you? Wait at the computer and I'll chat with you very soon. Okay, bye.

Lucy: Bye, Cyber-Sweetie.

Narr: *"Cyber-Sweetie." I'm going to be sick. A half hour passes as Lucy counts the minutes. Finally, she receives the message from Lex.*

Lex: Lucy are you there?

Lucy: Of course... I've been here since we hung up the phone.

Lex: I've been thinking. I know you're in Montana and I'm in Texas but what do ya say my Longhorns meet your Big Sky?

Lucy: You have such a way with words, Lex.

Lex: I mean it. You've been talking about taking a bus down here. I don't see why we are wasting any more time.

Thinking About Our Skit

Lucy fell into a trap that happens more than you think. Within the realm of individuals we serve in Flathead County there have been a handful to fall for someone on the Internet, get on a bus, only to return on a bus feeling thankful to be around still to process the event. Other examples of victimization from national headlines, as you can imagine, are much less innocent. Our point is definitely not to advocate against Internet dating but to make people aware of the risks and to give people some tools to help keep themselves out of at-risk situations.

If you are going to date on-line, please consider the following:

1. When you profile yourself, never post your real name! Also avoid giving the following information: birth date, home address, gender or age-specific name or nickname. Referring to yourself by your pet's name never hurt.
2. Take time. Gradually get a feel for the individual. Note any red flags or suspicious behavior. Listen to your gut feeling if something doesn't feel right. If you hear chainsaws in the background, you might want to rethink this one.
3. Get a phone number. When you call, listen to the background. Do background noises match the information you have been told? Until you're comfortable giving your number out, block volunteering caller ID information via your phone company. Remember: if you're asked to dial a 1-800 number, your telephone number will appear on their bill.
4. Verify the phone number. Call directory assistance to insure that your date's phone number matches the name your date gave you.
5. Call at unanticipated times. Does someone unexpected answer? Does your date seem irritated that you called? If you really want to test the water, give your date a red eye call.
6. Ask for a photo. Pictures say a thousand words. If only three out of the thousand words say "America's Most Wanted," keep surfing.
7. Get an address and mail a card. Send it out with a return address that doesn't reveal your true identity. If the card ends up back at your mailbox, chances are the address is bogus.
8. Ask about previous relationships. Why did they end? Were they long term? Is the other person still involved? Are there any children? If it doesn't seem to add up right, beware.
9. If you decide the risks are minimal and you are comfortable meeting the person, always keep your guard up. Meet your date with a companion, in public, and avoid relying on your date for transportation. Other helpful hints include bringing or borrowing a cell phone, never leaving your food or beverage unattended, and letting somebody else know your plans. Remember: Think, Plan, Act. ■

I mean we are soul mates ... isn't it time our souls mate?

Lucy: [pause] Lex, I've been meaning to ask you: if your wife lives in Oklahoma like you say, what did you mean by, "I have my son for the weekend"?

Lex: Lucy, I have my son every weekend and every weekday. That's what I meant. Now are you coming down here or not?

Lucy: Well... Would there be a place for me to stay?

Lex: Well, you know I was thinking... how about we meet halfway — in Denver — and I'll drive you the rest of the way in my brand new Hummer.

Lucy: Oh you mean it? That would be so romantic! Well, I must confess that I've already looked into tickets and I can be in Denver by Wednesday at noon.

Lex: Denver. Wednesday. Noon. I'll see you then! And, I assure you, I'm the man you've been dreaming of.

Lucy: Oh! I can't wait! I guess I'll see you in Denver. Bye, Cyber-Sweetie.

Lex: See you in Denver, Computer Cutie.

Narr: *Wednesday arrives in Denver and Lucy meets the so-called man of her dreams. Tune in next time as we hear Lucy exclaim, "Oh Lex! I never imagined..."*

— End of Skit —



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Leading authorities in the fields of aging and developmental disabilities analyze critical issues in the lives of older adults with developmental disabilities.

Attainment Training: The Five-Step Strategy to Help People with Disabilities Learn New Skills

A pocket reference guide for hu-

man service professionals on training that covers task analysis, prompting, natural supports, shaping, chaining, fading, and generalization.

Community Supports for Aging Adults with Lifelong Disabilities

Shows service providers and caregivers of older adults with developmental disabilities how to help adults tackle the everyday challenges of aging addressing health concerns, living with families, maintaining a household, and participating in community life.

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Explores cultural differences in values and culturally responsive

methods of supporting self-advocacy, facilitating community inclusion, and interpreting challenging behavior.

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A video designed to equip staff with the necessary tools to help clients access the community in which they live in order to obtain goods and services for recreation, for work, and to perform civic responsibilities.

Desensitization Training

Discusses and demonstrates how to structure formal and informal programs to desensitize clients to routine medical or dental procedures. ■

QUALITY MATTERS

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Stay tuned for "Casual Calling Equals Not-So-Casual Billing" along with other relevant topics in the next issue of *Quality Matters*.

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