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Investigate potential mates with DateSmart

Love's not the only thing that may be lurking around the corner. The Internet exposes people to multitudes of possible dates, but it also exposes them to potentially bad people, said Carmen Naimish, a local private investigator and the principal of DateSmart.com, a service that specializes in online dating security investigations.

The DateSmart motto is "If you date ... investigate," and Naimish, who founded the company in 1997, knows from whence she speaks. "What really brought it to my attention was my own personal experience. I found if I would have checked out one thing about this person ... to question his intention ... it would have caused me to make different decisions. ... I thought, 'I need to tell others about this.' ... Pay attention to your gut and your feelings and if you feel something is wrong, you're probably right."

While DateSmart is located in Santa Barbara, it has clients from all over the country. Most of Naimish's clients have visited her website and recognized one or more of the red flags, which include:

- Does it seem too good to be true?
- Have they told you their "ex" and/or parents are deceased?
- Are they secretive or elusive regarding their past?
- Have they told you they're in the CIA?

These or any number of other odd behaviors may not pass your sniff test.

The majority of DateSmart clients are women, but the company serves many men and is often hired by the suspicious parents or children of someone who is involved in Internet dating. About 80 percent of the time their fears or concerns turn out to be warranted, said Naimish. So it's important to listen to your gut as well as your heart and your hormones.

"I think most people want to be in love and live happily ever after. But in that desire to meet someone ... they sometimes close their eyes to potential problems," said Naimish.

IF YOU DATE, INVESTIGATE

For more information visit www.datesmart.com e-mail incase@datesmart.com or call 888.842.4325.

– Leslie Dinaberg