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DEAF AND SINGLE IN AMERICA

Lucy Miller, Moderator

Panel: Lori Heir, Mary Lou Mistretta, Gary Talley

LUCY MILLER: Hello. We are missing one panel member, who may have had such a good time last night that she'll come late.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Maybe she's not single anymore! (Laughter)

LUCY MILLER: What I'd like to do is have each of you give us your name, where you are from, and what is your personal preferred style of communication. Then, each time I ask a question, we're going to pass this mike.

MARY LOU MISTRETTA: My name is Mary Lou Mistretta. I'm from Plantation, Florida, which is near Fort Lauderdale. My preferred method of communication is talking.

LUCY MILLER: And how do you best receive information?

MARY LOU MISTRETTA: I read lips, and I can hear some of it with my cochlear implant, although I don't understand everything and everybody, but I do hear with it.

LORI HEIR: Hello. I'm Lori Heir, and I'm from New Jersey. I hear pretty well with my cochlear implant, but I still might need some help from the captions, so I'll be using a little of both, lip-reading, listening, and also the captions.

GARY TALLEY: My name is Gary Talley. I'm from Richmond, Virginia. Incoming needs to be signed. I prefer sign or the captioning. I'm a pretty good lip-reader but I find

that very tiring and too often I just answer wrong. So, I'd rather have the incoming a little clearer.

LUCY MILLER: Thank you. We're going to do a panel format. I want to start just by asking a few short questions of my panelists, so we'll get a feeling for whom they are. None of them proclaim to be experts! That, you should know right away. We don't have the answers. We only have what we've tried, what sometimes works, and what sometimes doesn't work.

After about the first half of my asking questions, we will open it to the audience who may have questions, comments, statements and feedback. I am going to just have one big rule, and that is, nobody gets to talk for more than two minutes each time around. That way, we'll all have a chance to say our piece. At the end of about a minute and a half, when it's time to start thinking of ending whatever sentence you're on, I will tap the table and hold up a finger. Okay. My first question: Do you consider yourself a shy, introverted person, or an outgoing, extroverted person who mingles easily (Laughter)

LORI HEIR: Well, that's also true for me. I used to be very shy. Actually, when I was a hearing person, I was very shy. For a number of years when I was first losing my hearing, I was very shy. I isolated myself to a good extent. Then when I found ALDA, I started to come into my own, and my confidence grew. Now, I definitely categorize myself as extroverted, outgoing, and I usually make friends very easily.

GARY TALLEY: The same here. There's not a shy bone in my body.

LUCY MILLER: Well, believe it or not, even though I'm the moderator of this panel, I do consider myself a shy person. It takes a lot for me to get out there and try to meet new people. Especially when I'm in a hearing group. How do you navigate the communication hurdles when you're in a primarily hearing group? How do you work it so that your communication needs are met?

GARY TALLEY: Usually I don't go out by myself. I'll take somebody with me. One of the reasons I moved back to Virginia and Richmond in particular, not just the job but my sister lives there. She's very easy for me to lip-read. We're very close, and she will take the time to face me, interpret for me, mouth because I'm a pretty good lip-reader. I have trouble with my brothers, so at family gatherings, she's the one sitting directly across from me and repeating. She has a lot of patience. I've always got a support person with me. I tried it on my own and it's very difficult. You go out to social occasions, people all around you, you can't follow them. You just can't follow groups at all. Even when I'm in a big group, my focus is on one person and that's usually my sister or the person I'm with.

LORI HEIR: This is a little bit of a tough question for me because my life has changed so much recently, now that I just had my successful cochlear implant. I'm going to try to remember back to 17 months ago, when I was completely deaf, and then I can also tell you a little bit how I communicate now with a cochlear implant. When I was completely

deaf and I would go out with a group of my friends back home in New Jersey. With the exception of a few people from ALDA, my friends are hearing people who I've known for most of my life. When I would meet somebody new and I was with my friends, they would tend to help me along. If they knew some basic sign language, they would help me. If I was with a group of strangers, the first thing that I always found myself doing was just telling them that I was deaf. I told them that I needed certain things in order to understand them. Often I found that most people were really interested in my needs and what I needed to communicate. It was often an icebreaker and a conversation starter when I would tell people about my hearing loss. I would often show them some basic signs and I found that they just loved that.

I still find that, today, with my cochlear implant, I still say I'm deaf but I can hear with my cochlear implant. I always characterize myself as "deaf" first, and I still tell them my needs. I say that I still might not understand everything that they say, and sometimes I get the question, "Well, do you sign?" And I say, "Yes, I do sign a little bit and I'm not an expert at it but, you know, I have my own sort of code that I use. I show them some basic signs and I really do find that most people are very receptive to that. And they want to learn about my needs. So I would suggest to all of you if you are shy about telling people that you are deaf or whatever you call yourself, that you just come forward because a lot of people are more understanding than you might think and more willing to help you and actually learn about your needs.

MARY LOU MISTRETTA: I find it easier to communicate with people on a one-to-one basis. It's more difficult in a group, trying to talk to everybody, because you don't know who to lip-read first when you're with too many people. I do find that I've been very lucky all my life. Growing up in hearing world, I have had friends who have been very supportive and they're always there for me. Like, for instance, going to a movie. Of course I didn't have a hearing aid back then, and as soon as we were at the movie, my hearing friends would explain the entire movie to me. I was a little girl back then. I've always had friends like that. And even to this day, there are still people in my life who make sure not to talk to me unless I'm looking at them.

LUCY MILLER: Which of you have dated both as a hearing person and as a deaf person? And how has the deafness made a difference?

GARY TALLEY: A lot of difference. I've been single for about 16 years. I divorced I guess about 16 years ago. I have a very active social life. I present for a living. Most of my jobs have required a lot of presentations. I meet a lot of people, working for a hotel, a casino, and for the government. I travel quite a bit. That's why I'm not shy. I can't be. I couldn't make my living doing what I did.

After I lost my hearing, I lost my job and I did pull back for quite a while. At least a year, I didn't do anything, because I couldn't understand anybody. I still went to the same places I went to, but I couldn't interact with the people I had interacted with. I couldn't understand them. I could talk to them but it's all one-way communication and they don't like it and neither did I. So I just pulled back. It might make a difference that I'm Gay. I

don't know whether being straight or Gay would make a difference. I think it does. I'd never been a minority before. I don't like that. You know, being a white male, I liked that. I was kind of in the in-charge group and it's a different perspective now. All the communication onus is on me. Lip-reading or whatever, it's my job, and it's hard! Sometimes it's not worth it. I still date now, but they're hearing people.

LORI HEIR: I never really dated as a hearing person. I was a little bit too young when I started to lose my hearing. And as I said, I was very shy when I was a hearing person. I started to lose my hearing when I was 16, and didn't really date at that age. When I went through college, it was a hard time for me because that's basically when my hearing was dropping quite a bit. Being shy, I isolated myself a lot. I didn't have the confidence to approach people. I didn't know how to deal with my hearing loss, so dating was not really something that I thought I could even do.

When I found ALDA and started to become more confident, I started to date. I basically focused on meeting people on the Internet, and at the time, that was something that was becoming much more popular. I'm Jewish, and there's a dating service on-line called J-date. That's basically where I would post my profile and try to meet people on-line. That was great because you can use e-mail and you can use chat rooms and you don't really have to use the telephone. You can get to know a person pretty well just by talking that way, and you don't even have to deal with the face-to-face obstacles of communication when you have a hearing loss. So that's how I started out. I met a number of very nice people. Some of them became very good friends who I still have today, and I did have some very nice long-term relationships from those meetings that I had with people on the Internet.

I found that my first long-term relationship as a deaf person wearing hearing aids and struggling to hear with the hearing aids, that it was, by far, not perfect. In my first relationship, it was difficult because my boyfriend was controlling to an extent, and also kind of embarrassed about my hearing loss. He often put me down a little bit. I can give you an example. We went to a dinner/dance for his medical school. He was very concerned that people would be looking at us while we were dancing because I could not hear the music. He was just so conscious of that, that he made me feel terrible on the dance floor and he eventually just said, "Understand we're going to sit down."

My second long-term relationship that I had was very positive, and I had a boyfriend who was very supportive, tried to learn some sign language for me. I could understand him very well through lip-reading and honestly the hearing loss didn't affect us that much. It was a great relationship for me because it really helped me to build up my confidence at a time when I was also getting some support from other areas of my life.

Now, I'm in my third long-term relationship, which is going to lead to a marriage in May. I'm engaged to be married right now, and my current fiancé loves that I'm deaf. He's loved that from the start. That was one of the things that attracted him to me. He started to learn sign language for me from the very beginning, and he just really took to this

whole ALDA thing. He loves to be around ALDA people, and he just really enjoys deafness. I would say that's really an ideal because he accepts me for who I am and there are really no flaws in the communication that we have. Now that I have the cochlear implant, he says that I used to be a good deaf person and now I'm a bad hearing person. (Laughter) He liked when I had to look at him all of the time when he signed to me. He liked when I had to lip-read him. Now he finds that I'm listening with my cochlear implant and my eyes are drifting a little bit away from him. He likes that focus that we had. That was the best part of which we were when we had to look at each other. So I have to sort of retrain myself a little bit and not be so lazy about watching him, because he says I do make quite a few mistakes and I don't always hear him as well as I think I hear him. I need to try to stay away from relying on the CI so much and get back some of that focus.

MARY LOU MISTRETTA: Okay. Well, I never dated as a hearing person. I never was a hearing person. I only had one date in high school, my senior year, and I really didn't date till afterwards. Back then, of course there was no Internet. You just met people through other people. That's how I met my husband. It was through my sister's boyfriend who stayed next door to us. It never bothered him that I couldn't hear. He just loved me for the way I was. And we got along great. Because I was hard of hearing, I was very naive, very shy, didn't know anything, and he just loved that. Just like Lori's fiancé. He liked to teach me things and that's how I learned a lot. My children, when they came, they always learned to get my attention also.

He passed away in 1990. When he did, I really felt that I'd lost my hearing because he was my ears. It just took two or three years before I really started dating again. I never really had any success in dating. All the people I met on-line wanted phone numbers, phone numbers. I never had the luck Lori did with chat groups. They just wanted phone numbers and they wanted to meet you and then they just want to bed you down. That's all. And I wasn't interested in that kind of stuff, so I never really dated that much. Now I'm getting older and I guess my dating days are almost over.

LUCY MILLER: So you can see we have some success stories and others are just telling you what it is for them.

I'm particularly interested, as I imagine you are, about the Internet dating that Lori mentioned. I think Gary has mentioned it, too. Internet dating does not appear to have a stigma attached to it. Not the way the classified ads did in the old days. Of course it comes with new kinds of dangers. You're not sure what you're getting. I wonder, are there special Internet sites for people like us? Or do we just jump in with both feet and find a way to let them know about our hearing impairment? How is that done? Let's start with Lori, and then we'll go from there.

LORI HEIR: For me, it was never a case of me defining myself as deaf in order to look for a particular website where I could find other deaf individuals. For me personally, the religious aspect of it was more important, and I was looking to meet somebody who was also Jewish.

That's how I guided myself in navigating to a particular website, and that particular website also came at the recommendation of several of my close friends. I had a level of trust in it, and I did find that once I experienced it myself, that it was pretty trustworthy, on the whole. There were a few bad experiences that I had with men who did not present themselves in an honest way. I had to find that out for myself.

I read very well, and I can judge people's characters very well, so I'm fortunate in that sense. I was able to read an e-mail or read an instant message chat and understand who is going to be on the level and who is not. I did make a few mistakes. But as far as trying to find a certain website that I wanted to use myself, it was based on my religious orientation. That might be something you want to consider. I know that if you have a religious preference, the sites that cater toward a certain religions tend to have more serious-minded people on them. This is opposed to a larger chat room type of group where just everybody is trying to come together and meet each other for possibly inappropriate situations, rather than to build a relationship.

I also just wanted to add one thing about something, Mary Lou mentioned people asking for your phone number. That was actually one way that I could weed people out for myself. If somebody was opposed to using an instant message or an e-mail to talk with me, I knew that person wasn't necessarily the person that was going to be right for me. Because they insisted being so vocal and listening on the telephone, I knew that we wouldn't be able to build much of a relationship. If I met a person who was eager to talk in a chat room or talk through e-mail, I knew from the start that that person was more in line with kind of communication that I needed to have.

GARY TALLEY: That's a good term "inappropriate." When I first lost my hearing, I went back to grad school, taking sign language. I don't know why, but a lot of my interpreters turned out to be Gay. I asked them about Internet. I was just a dumb old country boy and I was going, "oh, my God!" I didn't know stuff like that was out there. So I mean, you know, if you want a hookup, there are a lot of sites for that, but I never really found any for connections. Once I meet somebody through instant messaging. That's how we get across that initial communication. We can chat on line, instead of one the telephone, like I used to do.

I find it hard because you do miss the nuances of tone. I used to teach leadership and communication classes, so I know about communication and all these little subtleties and I could -- man, I could spot a guy who was full of it a mile away just by listening. Well, when they're typing, it's a little bit different. Because the typed words, you miss so much of the subtleties of communication. I used to tell people that 93 percent of communication was nonverbal. Seven percent of all of our communication is through the words we use. Twenty-five thousand words in the English language and they're only 7% of our communication! We get the rest of meaning through nonverbal means. Well, when I lost my hearing, I lost that.

MARY LOU MISTRETTA: I have tried Internet dating, and I have never kept my hearing impairment from anyone. I've told everyone I've spoken from the get-go that I

couldn't hear. Let's them know that I couldn't use the phone. After a while of communicating back and forth, there was always, "I want to meet you, I want to meet you." I always met them at a well-known coffee place, not far from my house, of course. I let them drive, not me. So I would meet them. I guess I'm one of those people that when you meet someone, you have to have that chemistry. Either you like them or you don't. There was never, never chemistry with any of them I ever met for coffee, so that's why I guess I was never happy with Internet dating.

LUCY MILLER: One more comment from Gary on this topic.

GARY TALLEY: One of the good things about websites that's different than the phone is if you give someone your phone number and you don't make that connection, they can still call you and call you and call you. Most of the websites allow you to block this user. So that's always a good thing to do.

MARY LOU MISTRETТА: Never give out your phone number!

LUCY MILLER: I remember the old days when a guy -- usually a guy, double standard here -- would say, "I'll call you" and you knew that meant you'd never hear from him again. So there are unspoken rules, not always good rules, but it seems to be -- you know, sometimes we like to talk about how things should be, but we also have to talk about how things are.

Have any of you had any funny things happen to you?

LORI HEIR: Well, this was one of the crazy guys that I met on the Internet. This is about one of the first men that I started to communicate with on-line, and I could tell that he wasn't somebody that I really wanted to meet. I was very young and sometimes I'm a little bit too open-minded and optimistic. I didn't trust that gut feeling, and I kept up a correspondence with him when I really knew in my heart that I should have stopped. Well, I was a little bit nervous about meeting him. Since I was pretty young, my parents insisted that if I wanted to meet him, it had to be in a public place and they had to drop me off and pick me up. I told this young man that, and he was very nervous that he would run into my parents when they dropped me off or picked me up. I said, "Well, I can't meet you. My parents are insisting that they drop me off and pick me up." Finally, I got him to agree.

We met in the lobby of a hotel where they also had a restaurant. I figured we could meet in the lobby, walk to the restaurant, and then I could be picked up easily at the door. My parents would just drive around to the front. He was late by about 45 minutes, and I'm sitting there in the lobby. Across from me was a couple sitting on a couch. Finally he waltzes in 45 minutes late, and immediately goes over to the couple, sitting on the couch to shake their hands because he thinks they're my parents. (Laughter) I do everything I can to get his attention. "No, no! They're not my parents," I say and finally he realizes that he was making a fool of himself. The funny thing about it was, the

woman sitting across from me on the couch, she was very, very pregnant. It was so clear that she was not my mom. (Laughter) That was probably the funniest thing that happened to me. And the whole date was just awful! We sat in that restaurant and I felt like I had one of those big police bright lights over my head because it was just question after question after question. They were questions like, "What do you want to date me for? Don't you want to be with a doctor or a lawyer?" And I'm like, "Well, I'd rather be with a monkey right now, but that's okay." (Laughter)

GARY TALLEY: With the Internet dating, once again, I don't like the sites because you can't really trust some people. They don't post pictures, which is probably smart and often sometimes when they do, it's an old picture. I had actually agreed to meet somebody, and I didn't recognize him because the picture must have been 10 years old.

MARY LOU MISTRETTA: That happened to me, too, but I don't have anything funny to share. The only thing I can recall is when I was 19, and we were living in Miami, I started a deaf group. I had never met anyone like myself. It was called the Miami Society for the Deaf. I just walked in one day and asked if there were any people my age there, and at that time they just gave me a list of people's names and addresses. There was no such thing as privacy then. I wrote to all of them on the list and told them that we were going to have a meeting at that place they let us use. I got to meet a lot of people my age, the first time in my life ever.

There was a young boy there who asked me to go to the movies. I agreed to go. Well, his mom called my mom and told my mom to tell me not to go out with him because he was deaf and he was not allowed to go out with anybody. (Laughter) I told my mom, "I'm going. I don't care what anybody says, I'm going!" I've only really dated like three deaf people in my entire life.

LUCY MILLER: Thank you. I thought of a couple of funny things that happened to me. I haven't dated very much either. My husband died 8 years ago. Two years later, his best friend, who lives in California, (I live in Hawaii), made it known that he would like to start seeing me. I said, "Okay. 3,000 miles away, that's pretty safe." He bought one of those plane tickets that give you unlimited round trips, so he thought he'd be over every weekend. I realized I couldn't call that very safe.

The next person I dated was someone I saw on-line, looked interesting. We e-mailed each other a couple of times. By the third time, I realized I knew him. (Laughter) I knew him when I was a married woman. He remembered me, I remembered him. We actually dated for about a year.

Then I seem to spend about two years recovering from these things. I dated somebody for a while and then I didn't, and then I didn't even want to look. So this spring, I decided to try again. I reactivated my profile, as they call it, meaning they could find me if they wanted to. And the one who did, again about the third e-mail began to sound familiar. I asked him if he was who I thought he was. He said, "Yeah. I knew who you were all along." This one lives on the same island I do, and it's a small island. It's not a very big

field out there. I can only say it's a good thing I'm not taking it too seriously because I'm having kind of an interesting time. It's not going anywhere, but...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just wanted to mention that I tried on-line dating and I absolutely stunk at it. No luck. So I don't even try anymore. But the thing that I'm most worried about is even handing out your phone number these days. I know you can take a phone number, Google it, and it will show you a map with directions to your house. That's why I don't even want to give people my phone number anymore, because you don't know who you're dealing with. So that's another reason why I don't try Internet dating.

MARY LOU MISTRETТА: I know what you're talking about, but Google stopped doing it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No. You can still do it. I do it all the time. I mean when I need to get to my friend's house, I just did it last weekend.

LUCY MILLER: What he means to say is something we all need to be aware of. Safety issues. I make rules for myself. We meet in a neutral place, as someone has said. I pick Borders bookstores, and we meet in the little cafe there. There were several whom I met there and decided that was as far as I wanted it to go. They never know my last name, much less phone number.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd like to say two words: Caller ID. They get your phone number, they call you, and if they have caller ID and you call them, they know your last name. You can have it blocked beforehand, but sometimes you don't think.

MARY LOU MISTRETТА: But you can star-67 before you call anyone. Or there's another number: star-71 for incoming calls so you can block our identity out. There are ways to block it out.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sometimes you get so happy someone is calling you and you pick it up. It's all a game to some people. I'd be very careful with caller ID and having someone drop you off at your home.

LUCY MILLER: Yes. Well, again, just like the old days, there are dangers and we need to provide ourselves with safety. And most of us who are deaf are not that comfortable on the telephone. I don't give my last name, as I said. If my name was a really, really unusual name, I would even change my first name.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I can make this short and sweet. How many of you have seen the movie "Brokeback Mountain"? I saw it about three or four times because I wanted to figure out why the relationship got so strong. I asked my friend, who has been married for 36 years to the same girl, and we were talking about relationships and how they worked. My friend said, "It just happens. It's a chemical reaction that people have.

Between two people, in order for that to work, that's just the way it is. It just happens. Can't explain it. I can't explain how I'm attracted to both men and women, but it just has to happen, natural. It's a blending of chemistry and all that. So that's what I think, too

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I haven't dated in about a hundred years, and I just was so isolated when my hearing loss worsened. A few months ago I decided, okay, let's try to find a male friend. You know, someone whose voice is deeper than yours, someone to talk with, and do some things with. I'm not interested in getting married again, and so let's just try this Internet thing. So I filled out my profile, and I didn't have any pictures. Of the people I matched with, the one guy said, "If you won't post your picture, you have something to hide." Well, they sent me all these profiles of these men who were interested to be matched up with me. I checked their profiles and every one of them highlighted their turn-on. Every one of them marked "skinny dipping." What is it with you guys and skinny-dipping? (Laughter) So I told this guy, "I don't skinny dip, I chunky dunk." I wrote questions like where did you grow up? Have you been married before, what do you like to do? I wrote just five or six questions. He immediately wrote back: "Too many questions. You need to find someone else."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I want to change the subject a little bit. I live alone, but I live in a big condo where there are lots of people. It's very interesting that some of the people I meet just ignore me. Most of the people in the condo are very nice to me, except the lady who runs the social programs. She didn't know how to deal with somebody who has a hearing problem, so she would kind of not look at me when I would come up. Finally, I got her so that she will say hello. Now, she says "Hello, friend." Sometimes it takes a little time for people to more or less adjust to your handicap.

One of the things I did ask her to do was about captioned movies. On Friday nights they show a movie at 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. They were not captioned. I asked her some time ago if she would show a captioned movie. She said, "No way!" She was not going to show a captioned movie.

I'm beginning to get more confidence so I'm going to go back and ask her if she couldn't, at either 4:00 or 7:00, show a movie with captions or subtitles. I have found that if you just take a little time and people begin to understand that you don't hear too well, you can actually make a couple of good friends.

Another thing I do is play Bridge! We don't have to voice our bids. Instead, we have bidding boards and we hit our bid out on the table like this (indicating). That's so helpful for anybody with a hearing problem. There are quite a number there who wear hearing aids, and of course they were all very interested when I got my cochlear implant in June. I'm still in the process of learning how to hear again. But it's coming along.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: One thing I'd like to point out is that my dating relationship drastically changed when I became late-deafened. I do less dating now than I did when I was a hearing or a hard of hearing person. The most difficult part of a relationship I have is intimacy. We have to lip-read. You're sitting in the car, your date is driving or you're walking along the beach under the starry night, you can't lip-read. And then

when you go to have sex, you have to say, "Can we leave the light on?" (Laughter) So how do you resolve that situation?

MARY LOU MISTRETТА: Because I was already hard of hearing when I married my husband, he knew to leave the light on. It was no big deal. I could read his lips. I could take my hearing aid off. Just do what you have to do. Whether I heard him or not was no big deal, because I don't know what I'm supposed to hear. I just never had a problem.

LUCY MILLER: I remember a long time ago, someone who was inappropriately trying to pick me up by asking me, "How do deaf people make love?" My answer... In Braille

MARY LOU MISTRETТА: Just like everybody else!

LORI HEIR: Well, I was going to say something similar to Mary Lou, that when you meet the right person, it doesn't really matter. You figure out ways to do things. You lose that embarrassment of leaving the lights on. When you're walking somewhere in the dark or you're in the car in the dark, you just are quiet. Actually my fiancé signs for me. He signs while he drives, and turns the light on in the car. I have no idea how he drives that Camaro with the stick shift and signs at the same time, but he does that. You just work it out. It just has to be with the right person. The only thing that I can tell you is if you feel at all insecure in those types of situations, you may not be with the right person. If you're not with someone whom you feel comfortable leaving the lights on with, or asking for help in a dark car or when you're walking in the dark, then you're probably with the wrong person.

You just have to be patient. I heard a lot of people here being impatient with the Internet dating. People want it to happen fast and want it to happen right away. People expect to click, but I'm telling you, it took me years and probably hundreds and hundreds of guys before I found my fiancé. I didn't give up. You have to just keep going and you can't let yourself get down, but you have to trust your instincts too.

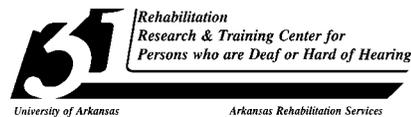
When I met my fiancé, I wrote to him first. He's four years younger than me. We lived in the same town. I wrote him and I said, "I think you're cute but I'm four years older. I don't know if you want to meet me or not." He said, "Sure I want to meet you." He was actually the one who suggested that we talk on-line and Instant Message. I didn't even have to ask him to meet me in a chat-room. I didn't have to overcome the obstacle of the phone. Things just started to fall in place right from the start. I usually meet a stranger in a public place, but he wanted to pick me up at my house to take me on a 4-hour boat cruise around New York City harbor. I said, "What the hell," and I went because there was just something in my heart that made me trust him. We do have these instincts and I told you before that I had bad instincts that I didn't follow and I had bad experiences, too. You need to really follow what you're feeling and read between the lines when you get those e-mails because it does help. If you're with the wrong person, you'll know it. Those things in the dark should really fall into place very easily.

LUCY MILLER: I hope you found this as interesting as we have. It took courage for my panelists to come up here and reveal themselves to you, just as it did for the rest of you to ask the questions you did. We can see, just by the number of people in this room that a lot of us are single and deaf, but you can't point us out in a crowd, because it doesn't show!

Since our time is up, I'd like to suggest that you continue talking to each other at lunchtime, talk to each other tonight at the karaoke party. We can learn a lot from each other. Thank you all very much. And thank you, panelists.

Biographical

Dr. Lucy Miller is a Marriage and Family Therapist who has studied and taught human behavior and relationships professionally for 40 years. On a personal level, she was a divorced single mother in her 30's before remarrying in 1980; and became single again in a radically changed world when she was widowed in 1998.



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