

## **Mr. Right**

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This topic is very private and personal. What I'm about to share could upset a few people who know me personally while others might empathize with me. Some might say I was wrong in doing what I did while others might say they would do what I did if they were in the same position. Whatever your reactions are doesn't change the fact that these things have happened. Many of my friends have been able-bodied. In many ways, I'm told that I don't think like a "disabled person." I think and act like an "able-bodied" person although I was born with cerebral palsy. I use a wheelchair and use various AAC devices to communicate as well as my own speech. I grew up with all the "normal" feelings, thoughts, and desires. It never occurred to me that I might not find "Mr. Right" one day.

I still haven't given up totally, but my expectations are starting to be more realistic. My "Mr. Right" had always been able-bodied and very capable of taking care of me with my disability. He was able to love me for who I was. Today, I'm a little more open to the fact that "Mr. Right" might be disabled and he might not be able to take care of me 100%. All I know is my "Mr. Right" will be my best friend and will be supportive of me as I will of him. We will love each other, hopefully till "death us do part." Whether "Mr. Right" will be able-bodied or disabled is an unknown and whether I will ever have the title of "wife" applied to me is unknown but I'm certain of this, I have been fortunate in having some "learning experiences" along the way.

I had "boyfriends" when I was a pre-teen and a young teenager. These guys were in the same class as I was. In spite of the fact that we were all in wheelchairs, we found ways to kiss. We held hands and experienced all the things that "puppy love" has to offer. Things didn't progress further than "puppy love" primarily because we each went our own ways. Also, it was very difficult at that time because local accessible transportation was unheard of. The feasibility of dating was a joke. If we did get to go out on a

"date", one of our parents would have to come along to provide the transportation and assistance. How are you supposed to "neck" when your mother is sitting next to you?

My first real experience with what I thought was love happened in my late teens, when I was 18 and living away from home. I was in an independent living facility where attendant care was provided. The janitor and his wife befriended me. They would have me over to their place quite often. Slowly, the janitor and I developed an attraction to each other. Obviously, I didn't have the intention of carrying out the fantasies I had for him. He was a married man. I certainly didn't want a married man. Everything I believed in was against married people being unfaithful to their partners. Unfortunately, to my dismay, this didn't stop my feelings and my responses to his "come-ons."

First, it was heavy necking and fondling. That felt physically gratifying. He was doing things to me that I physically couldn't do to myself. Unfortunately, it didn't stop. Eventually, we went "all the way" and had intercourse. Precautions were taken so I wouldn't conceive. It was very consensual. I don't want people thinking I was raped because I was not. We kept this up for some time. My physical desires were being met and I felt loved. I felt special and I was told that I was a very capable and satisfying partner. What more could I want? For the first time in my life, my disability wasn't an obstacle. Since he was able-bodied, he could do everything: undress me, put me on the bed, then dress me afterwards.

About a year and a half after the relationship started, it finished. He never returned - no explanation. He just walked right out of my life. I saw him a few years later and he said he wanted to come over and offer an explanation. Years later I have given up on waiting to hear from him.

This indeed was an extremely hard lesson for me. I learned a few facts about myself, though. I was comfortable with who I was. I knew I could have a relationship with a man that was both emotionally and physically intimate. I knew there were men out there who could look beyond my physical disability and see the person inside my body.

Shortly after this relationship, I met somebody else. We had an actual dating relationship. We would go out. He was able-bodied so he could transfer me in/out of the car. Our relationship didn't go anywhere but I don't

think it was due to my disability. It was due to the two of us being too different.

Some years later I got myself into another situation with another married man. Once again, I didn't initiate the romance. We attended a lot of the same functions. This individual provided transportation for me and sometimes would feed me while we were out. He was very accepting of my disability and was comfortable with me. Things started happening. Part of me wanted to run but the other part was longing for an intimate relationship again. I missed the touch, the closeness, and the emotional support of having a "special someone". This relationship was more emotional than any other relationship I had had before. I could share things with him and know that they were safe. Likewise, he could share things with me. Yes there was the aspect of an intimate relationship. He was able-bodied so he could do whatever I needed in order to be intimate with him.

This relationship lasted six years. But very few people knew about it. I was the one who broke it off since it was not going anywhere. He assured me that I would make someone a wonderful wife someday since I was able to give everything needed to be a good wife. I understood Wm emotionally and was able to be supportive and encouraging besides providing the physical intimacy. Unfortunately, circumstances in his life weren't right for providing me with what I really wanted - a husband.

As I look back on these experiences, I realize that my speech impairment hasn't been a barrier to a relationship once the person has gotten to know me. Yes, my speech impairment and physical disability may hinder men from approaching me at first but people who get close to me can understand me. As well, I feel there's an unspoken language between two people who share love and intimacy. I still long to find "Mr. Right". But I'm also content in knowing I have experienced intimate relationships - regardless if they were right or wrong.