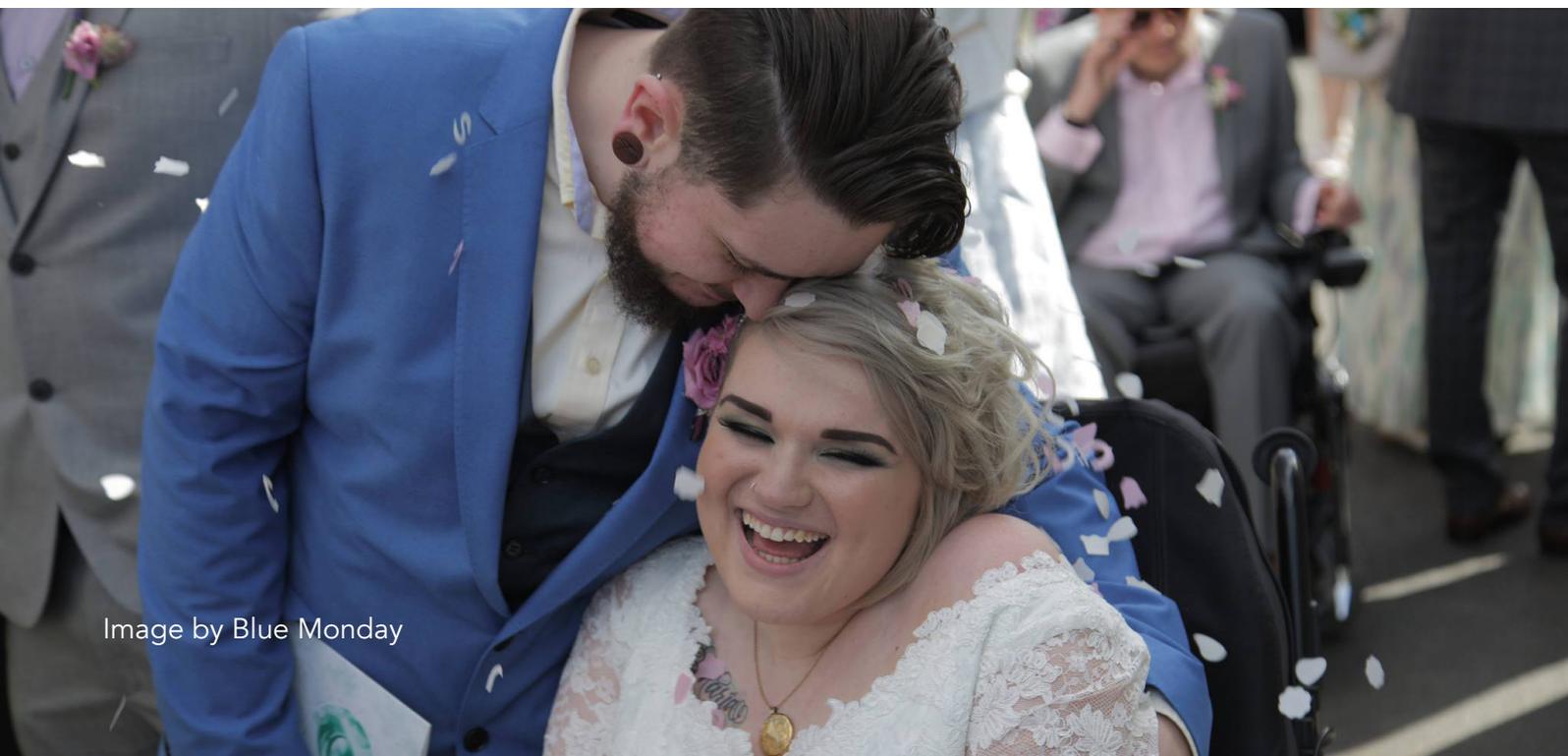


Relationships, love & respect

I was always a sexually outgoing teenager, maybe a little too much so! I always tried to over compensate for my disability and tried to prove (probably only to myself!) that I was attractive and that I “could” have normal relationships! Which is an awful game that left me in a few bad relationships and a few dangerous situations.. But that is for another time! This is about Me and Jaz my husband. When I met Jaz at college initially, we were 16 and we were both pretty similar and we were both trying to prove things in our own way! Jaz is gorgeous but never really “fit in” to any group and he was always trying to pull to show the “lads” that he could and in a way that he was just as good (if not better than them!). This was the start of our competitive, beautiful relationship! I could be myself with Jaz and we both opened up to each other about our insecurities.

Our relationship was fiery, tumultuous and the sex was great! In short he was the love of my life before I even realised it. When we were nineteen we went our separate ways because of work and uni but when we were reunited it was as if we’d never been away. We carried on our crazy, perfect romance.. It was unpredictable, it was exciting and it was.. NORMAL! When I’m with Jaz it’s like I’m a “normal person” as we never notice or



pay any attention to the chair, we love each other's souls and obviously the fact that we are both stunningly attractive helps haha! Our marriage is the same as any other marriage.

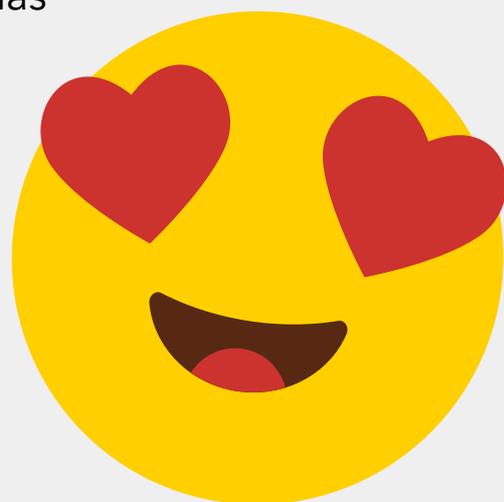
Finding a relationship is difficult for anyone, and to find happiness, disabled or non disabled, I feel you've really got to trust someone and learn to bare your soul! Most souls are beautiful and I find the human race truly fascinating, I think it's about finding the right person to trust with the "real you" and then jumping in head first, and make sure all progression is natural, don't force milestones.. Whatever will be, will be.' // //

Kelly Perks-Bevington, @KellyPeebz

As Kelly says, it's really important to be the 'real you' in any relationship you get into. For anyone to love and respect you in a relationship, regardless of if you have a disability or not, you firstly need to love and respect yourself and understand your worth, expecting nothing less than care, support and encouragement from those around you. Abusive relationships are hard to spot and stay away from if you do not know your value. Disabled women are nearly three times as likely as non-disabled women to get sexually abused, so it's vital that we all learn to love ourselves, and quickly!

The good times

So how do we learn to love ourselves, so we can expect nothing less than respect in all our relationships? Well, here are 5 things Enhance the UK's Emily Yates has learnt about her disability, and what it can bring to relationships...

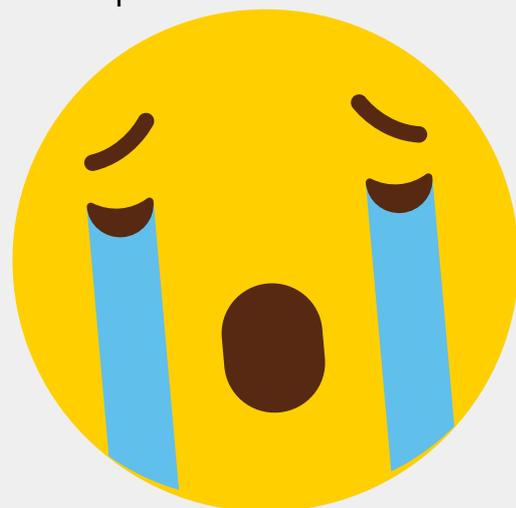


- 1. Focus on your Assets** - Be that a winning smile, a cracking sense of humour or the gift of the gab – there are many things that define you aside from your impairment
- 2. Patience is a Virtue** - Slow and steady often wins the race. Things may take more time and effort with a disability, but man, the reward is sweet.
- 3. There are many perks to the job** - To balance out some of the rubbish, painful days, there's nothing quite like getting around Disneyland in a day, a free cinema ticket for your boyfriend/carer or getting to your car in 30 seconds in a thunderstorm
- 4. It really filters out the people you wouldn't want to date anyway** - Disability isn't seen as very sexy to many people, but it's great to know that anyone who is interested has enough about them to not care what anyone else thinks.
- 5. If you've got it, flaunt it** - Actually, disability can be flipping sexy! And it's up to you to show that.

And the not so good times

So we've spoken about how to feel great about yourself and worthy of respect and love, but what if that care is not what you are experiencing at all? It's sometimes the most difficult thing to say 'No' and be the bigger person and leave when things are turning sour, but in the long run, it will help.

Here are 5 ways to feel better about yourself from our friends at www.brook.org.uk



- 1. Spend time with people who make you feel good** - If you're having a bad time, spend more time with people who make you feel good about yourself
- 2. Do fun and enjoyable things** - Having fun things planned into your life can help you to feel better and enjoy life more
- 3. Keep a diary of nice things people say about you or do for you** - It's easy to only look at the bad and forget the good. If you're feeling down on yourself make a record of good things people say about you or do for you. You might discover that there's a lot more good in your life than you thought
- 4. Think about what's good about you** - Making a list of what is good about you can help you feel better. Maybe also ask your friends and people you trust what they like about you
- 5. Look after yourself** - Getting regular exercise and eating well helps you keep fit and will help you feel better about yourself too. Drinking alcohol or taking drugs may make you forget about your problems while you're drunk or high. But they're more likely to make you feel worse about yourself in the long run.

Extra support

Feel free to contact Mik or Emily at The Love Lounge:

www.enhancetheuk.org/enhance/the-love-lounge/

These guides are part of Enhance the UK's **#UndressingDisability** campaign: Sex Ed for Teenagers. Show your support by following us on Twitter and Instagram! **@EnhancetheUK**

