

Romantic deal breakers

Sexologist to lead discussion at Philosophers Cafe

By Wanda Chow
NEWSLEADER

When it comes to dating and relationships, there's a myriad of quirks, baggage and other deal-breakers people face as they search for "the one."

Add the complexities of a cross-cultural relationship, and a whole other giant hurdle presents itself, says Dr. Faizal Sahukhan, a Burnaby sex therapist and registered counsellor.

Sahukhan, 41, will be the guest speaker at the next Simon Fraser University Philosophers Cafe event on Sunday. He'll speak on the reasons relationships don't work.

The "sexologist," who has a PhD in psychology, specializes in cross-cultural relationships. A registered counsellor since 1997, he became a sex therapist when he discovered there were only a handful in the specialty in B.C. and none of ethnic origin, with an understanding of how such cultures work.

He says there are many reasons multicultural romances fall apart.

Statistics show that of all the people dating in Canada, 21 per cent are in cross-cultural relationships, but only three per cent of marriages are cross-cultural.

"Though they date, it doesn't always lead to a walk down the aisle."



MARIO BARTEL/NEWSLEADER

Dr. Faizal Sahukhan, a registered counsellor and sex therapist, is the guest speaker at Sunday's SFU Philosophers Cafe.

Much has to do with the differences between western culture and that of ethnic groups—which he defines as being first, second or third generation immigrants from Asian, South Asian or Middle Eastern countries—which abide by an eastern collectivistic world view.

"Caucasians date ethnic people the same way they would date Caucasian people. But it's very different, the

rules are very different."

For one thing, the ethnic partner's parents may oppose a mixed relationship out of fear that they'll lose not only their child but any grandchildren to another culture where they might not speak the language or share the religion.

In some ethnic cultures, there can be a gender bias in the family's expectations around sex, forbidding pre-marital sex, for instance.

"Western society looks at pre-marital sex as a functional and very viable part of the dating ritual. You need to test drive the car before buying it."

But while an ethnic man may have sex with a Caucasian woman, he'll sometimes lose respect for her.

"Most ethnic men have this expectation and fantasy of marrying a virgin."

Sahukhan, whose parents emigrated from Fiji, said he'll often advise female clients facing this situation to delay having sex until they know their boyfriend is serious about the relationship.

"If his mother likes you, go ahead and have as much sex as you want," he added with a laugh.

"My job as a therapist is to let people know these complexities do exist and work on them."

The SFU Philosophers Cafe, is at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 19. Entitled The Dating Game: Deal Breakers, it is at La Fontana Caffe, 3701 E. Hastings St. (at Boundary). Everyone welcome, no registration required. Admission is \$5.

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