

Prologue S2 Episode 1

Why I want to talk about dating apps

This transcript was made with Good Tape and edited by Judith Zoe Blijden

Judith Zoë

[00:00] Welcome to The Digital Period, the podcast where we examine our relationship with technology.

Dating app user 1

[00:06] To be honest, sometimes I found it very overwhelming.

Dating app user 2

[00:08] So using Bumble, it was a very interesting app.

Dating app user 3

[00:10] The verification of dating people present the best version.

Judith Zoë

[00:17] Hi, I'm Judith Zoe. I'm your host. Welcome to the first episode of the second season of The Digital Period.

[00:24] This season, we're talking about dating apps and vulnerability. In this episode, I'll explain how it got started, what vulnerability is, and how I personally navigated dating apps. I initially started the digital period in 2022 because I was, and still am, concerned

[00:41] about the direction our world is taking. A direction in which fundamental rights are increasingly fragile. I wanted to think together with others about how we relate to technology and how technology relates us to ourselves and each other. And so the digital period was born. In the

[00:59] first season, I looked at autonomy and period apps, what they promise, what they collect, and what they make possible. Throughout the first season, there was one concept that kept resurfacing. The concept of vulnerability. This season, I want to explore how vulnerability isn't

[01:14] just something to be fixed, it can also be the source of connection. And I wanted to understand if and how technology makes space for it. That's why this season we turn to dating apps, a digital space where vulnerability

[01:28] is everywhere and unavoidable for everyone. I use the technologies I discuss because I don't want to be an external observer. I want to be subject, just like most of the people I talk to.

[01:42] So this time it meant it was time to start using dating apps. So to be honest, I was very wary of dating apps when I started. To put it bluntly, I thought dating apps would suck. I really wondered how they could lead to

[01:57] love. We give them power to rank, sort, filter, profile, and frame how we relate, not just to others, but also to ourselves. I thought dating apps left very little room for intention. The

[02:09] swiping is fun, but it also makes it completely feel like a game, where you just intuitively swipe and don't give anyone really much thought at all. I was also afraid that sharing intimate information on the app would mostly be misused by the

[02:24] companies behind it, making the entire experience more about collecting intimate data for a for-profit company than about forming actual intimate relationships. Lastly, I feared that dating apps reinforced the idea that other people are not really real, that they're

[02:41] products to consume. That dating apps offer a market where you can buy what you want. We live in a moment where control and a weird form of efficiency are ideals. And I was afraid that

[02:54] applying these ideals to finding a person could be really harmful for my self-image and the search itself. But damn, oh, oh, oh, I started using dating apps to meet people, understand how the apps worked, and maybe to see if I could find love.

[03:11] Quickly, I realized, while my critique was legitimate, I didn't do dating apps justice. Yes, I faced a bunch of men that were chatting to me as if they were buying a disposable object. Yes, I fell in the trap of swiping as a form of entertainment while I was bored. And yes, I was worried when I noticed that Hinge was using voice notes to

[03:32] train AI and was exclusively showing me Black Man. But mostly, I really loved using dating apps. And before I tell you about all the positives, I want to say that I know my experience is not

[03:47] the experience. This is also the reason you will hear personal stories of many people using dating apps throughout this season. Because there's a great diversity in experience, and mine really does not do them all justice.

[04:01] But nonetheless, this was my cup of tea. I loved my time on dating apps because they connected me to people I would have never met otherwise. I also enjoyed talking to strangers. I like learning about people's interests and hobbies.

[04:17] Mostly, I had wonderful chats. Mostly, I met kind, interesting men with interesting lives and good manners. And then, well, something happened that I hadn't really thought was possible. I never considered

[04:30] myself a romantic, nor have I been very successful in love in the past. But what happens, happens. Only after using the apps for three months, I fell deeply in love. Or, as Bell Hooks, a great feminist, would want me to say I am now loving because love is both an intention

[04:50] and an action. I'm loving a wonderful man I met through Bumble and an amazing wonderful man is loving me. This changed everything. My approach, my questions, my sense of what this project could be.

[05:05] Once again, the digital period wasn't just a method for thinking, it's also doing. Already making this season, head again, a major impact on my life. So yes, this season is

[05:18] about dating apps, but really it's about what they reveal, that we are all vulnerable and that our vulnerability deserves care, not control. In a culture that prizes domination, vulnerability is

[05:30] too easily mistaken for weakness. This leads to the risk of losing the very thing that makes connection possible. That's why we need to talk about it, because how we treat vulnerability says everything

[05:42] about the kind of society we want to live in. This season is filled with people sharing their personal stories navigating dating apps. Academics sharing their insights about what dating apps are and how we should look at

[05:54] vulnerability in the digital age. And developers explaining how they are trying to build tools for connection. Working on this podcast warms my heart, and I hope it warms yours too.

[06:07] Last season brought community and this season brought me love. Let's see what else is possible. I'm so glad you're here with me.

[06:20] Enjoy.

[06:27] This season wasn't sponsored, but making it did cost me money. If you like this project, consider supporting it. You can find more about how you can do that at thedigitalperiod.com. There are many options, from printing a Digital Period podcast poster

[06:42] and hanging it in your university, to simply donating money. This episode was created by me, Judith Zoë Blijden. The jingle was made by Kristel Scholtens and me. Bye!

Thomas Crul

[06:54] All of the people that fall within these hard cuts become your possibilities.

Carlota Memba Aguado

[06:58] So the question is never vulnerable who appearances and race do play a role in the first time that you have a long-lasting relationship

Lindsay Ferris

[07:06] There's also a bit of a scarcity mindset especially if you're someone who doesn't get a lot

[07:11] of attention