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## KARMACHROME

You've done it. Beaming at computer-suitors from the top corner of your online profile is a dazzling picture of you, replete with a "killer" smile. So why are so many felons responding?

As an online dating consultant, I often hear complaints from both sexes that the people who they're colliding with onscreen aren't the people they'd choose to collide with in a dark alley. Or a well-lit one, either.

Before you get frustrated, note that some of those new fans of yours are just peripheral cruisers who don't ever read a headline, so much as an essay. I lump those into the "Hey-you're-good-lookin'-so-am-I" chuckleheads, emailing, winking or IM-ing you right along with the rest of the blonde population on the West Coast. Since they haven't bothered to look at anything about you except your picture, don't even give it a second thought when you push "delete." They probably won't even notice.

But what about the rest of the responses? You clearly stated that you were sort of active—you only sat on your couch once when you were overcome with the plague, and next weekend you've signed up for a twelve-city cycling marathon, hoping to best your personal best. Yet the people who are knock-knock-knocking on your monitor are strictly nightcrawlers who think a five-hour workout on the latest incarnation of an Xbox is all the exercise they need.

First and foremost: Rethink the pictures. Since online window-shopping for better halves is a visual medium first (come on, you do it, too!) the first thing that catches the eye are the photos.

Therefore, it's extremely important to post arresting pictures. (I said "arresting," not "arrested"—no wonder felons are responding). As the Karma Kaptain of your own destiny, those pictures need to reflect not just who you are (hairbrushed, not airbrushed), but by literally photographing your interests, those same pictures can also reflect who you want to meet. And don't worry about attracting a twin. We're all too varied for that. On the other hand, if you and your date actually have some common ground to walk on other than that clichéd beach at sunset, wouldn't that be terrific?

And now, let's get down to the practical ... what? nuts and bolts? Apertures and lenses? Zooms and pixels? As the photographer would say right before taking a shot, "Hold it."

As recommended by most online dating sites, posting three pictures gives a good variety, with a close-up, a midrange (from the waist up) and a full body. As stated in my prior "Love Bytes" column, no photos taken of you, by you. They don't work, you simply look weird. Get a friend. If you don't have one ... check Craigslist.

Though the close-up needs to be just that, the picture should welcome the viewer, as if you were throwing open your front door to favorite guests, and saying "Come on in." Even with this shot, though your smile needs to be genuine, your eyes animated, looking straight into the camera lens, you could play with a slightly subliminal background. While taking pains to avoid too much background clutter, if you loved the mountains, stand in front of one. If you're partial to genealogy, how about a background of a picture of a family tree? Speaking of trees, if gardening is your main hobby, the picture will come in loud and clear if you're standing in front of six-foot tomato vines the size of your wrist.

On to the midrange and full body pictures: Here's where you can go to town. (Unless of course you only like a rural setting.) If you love biking, then take action shots mid-pedal. If cooking is your passion, then chop and sauté your way through the photo shoot but again, keep the background as clutter-free as possible. If your dogs are your life, then go ahead and include them in the shot. But no pictures of the dogs without you. Computer-suitors want to see YOU, not how the live volcano looked as you snapped that picture from the plane. [National Geographic](#) does a fine job depicting nature, probably better than you. But since National Geographic doesn't usually come to your house with the intention of helping you post your online photos, that's where you and your shutterbug friend come in.

With action shots, you'll need to take a ton, since candid photos are particularly difficult to get just right. A digital camera is best, since you can keep re-shooting without investing in 2,000 rolls of film. And sorry, even if the sun is shining in your eyes, it's better that you move into the shade than actually wear shades. The eager dating public won't be able to get a good sense of you if hats, sunglasses and/or veils are covering half your face.

Your picture-taking session is a perfect photo op: The more involved you are with the action at hand, the less you will be aware of the camera lens, and the less self-conscious you'll feel. And activity shots that convey what you love, reflect a sense of who you are.

You might feel vulnerable in front of that lens, but here's where karma comes in: By signing up for that online dating service, by writing up the profile and taking the pictures, you've made monumental steps in order to elicit change. Feel strong. These are your choices, your call. Even though that camera is shooting from the outside in, in truth, if you choose to convey your truth, you're really showing us a view of you from the inside out.

And nothing could be more attractive. Especially to another, karmically-kindred soul.

