

The definition of a nerd: knowing the three phases

On March 20, 1992, I was blessed with the ever-awaited coming of age. Since then, I've spent a great portion of my evenings in that formerly-forbidden territory, commonly known as the Lincoln bars. Although I did enjoy my first few episodes of bar hopping, once the novelty wore off, I realized how disappointed I was in the bar scene. This is mainly due to the clientele.

Most people are able to solve this problem by narrowing down their hangout spots to those select few places where they can find people from their preferred social circles. I have never been so lucky. In fact, I've found that there are representatives from every social circle who share an annoying common denominator.

Until recently, I could never quite put my finger on it. Then a few weeks ago, a friend introduced me to the Three Phases of nerdism and everything seemed to fall into place.

Phase One: You're a nerd. C'mon, admit it! If you're like most of us, you've been there. You probably started out thinking that nothing was wrong with you, but other people soon let you know that, no matter what you did, you were a nerd.

Maybe you studied a little too hard, maybe your socks just didn't quite match, or maybe, no matter how friendly and interesting you tried to be, you were just plain socially clueless.

Once you realized this, you could no longer be the happy-go-lucky eccentric you once were. Insecurities and self-doubt developed and dominated your personality. You began beating yourself in the butt for being a nerd but knew that it wouldn't make any difference. You were destined to be a nerd.

Eventually, all nerds get tired of beating themselves up and passively accepting their nerd status. Hence,

Phase Two.

Phase Two: The period of over-compensation. This is the time when you set out to prove to the world that you're not a nerd; the time when you firmly resolve that you, yes you, are going to be COOL and the world is going to know about it.

Some identifying details of a nerd in Phase Two are their passion for being surrounded by the right people and the attitude of gracing others with their presence. Phase Two-ers are everywhere, but the best place to run into them is at parties.

They're the ones who can't speak five words without throwing in a ref-

erence to their politically correct views (not to mention their artistic awareness). Phase Two-ers pride themselves on dressing creatively, but own nothing that isn't black, and they never let you forget just how drunk they are that evening, unless they're recounting details of every other drunken episode they've had in the past five years.

As annoying as these behaviors may seem, they are very effective. Nobody recognizes a Phase Two-er as that once-upon-a-time nerd. Nobody, that is, except people in Phase Three.

Phase Three: The end result. You no longer have that burning desire to

prove yourself. You are free to behave as you choose without the constant fear that someone may suspect you as a nerd.

In Phase Three you just want to amuse yourself. You're just out to have a good time. Unlike the Phase Two-er who claims not to care what other's think, but whose behavior is dictated by others, a person in Phase Three is self-motivated. It doesn't matter if nobody is amused or impressed by them, as long as they're enjoying themselves. One of the pluses of Phase Three is that it gives you a licence to regress back to Phases One and Two at will.

As an ex-Phase Two-er, you know that a Phase Two-er's greatest fear is that others in this phase might be (oh my god!) pulling it off better than they are. This makes it very enjoyable to try to out-attitude a Phase Two-er and watch their anxiety when they realize that you're onto their game.

And as for regressing back to Phase One, what's wrong with being a nerd once in awhile? Nerds, like Phase Three-ers, have no need for inhibitions. And as a friend once told me "Inhibitions out, impulses in!"

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