

DEALING WITH DATING

Youth Group Dating Standards

- No physical contact.
- No couples in isolated areas alone.
- No Jr. High with Sr. High.
- No single dating to or from youth activities.
- Sr. High teens can sit together on the bus within the first three rows.
- Couples must always stay with the group at all times.

Dating Suggestions

1. **Balance Rules with Relationships.** Maintain a close balance between being too strict and being too loose. Teenagers don't need complete restriction from interacting at all with the opposite sex, but they really don't need complete freedom and license to do whatever they please.
 2. **Be the Authority.** You set the ground rules. You lay the boundaries and the consequences of both keeping and breaking the rules. You stay in control.
 3. **Be an Understanding Friend.** Remember what it was like to experience these feelings for the first time. Remember the mistakes you made and why. As much as you seek to set and enforce rules and guidelines, also seek to understand the way they feel and the emotions they are dealing with. You are helping learn how to relate and they need daily guidance and help.
 4. **Communicate Clearly and Openly.** Nothing can replace open communication in a teen/parent relationship. If you don't have this, you must get it! You must be able to talk with them openly about what you expect and why. Explain your reasons. You are protecting the purity of those who do not yet realize its value, in a world that is trying to destroy it. Whether or not they agree, don't give in.
 5. **Realize That Things Start to Change in Junior High.** There is a natural change that takes place in these formative years. They will be attracted to the opposite sex. Don't try to stifle that God-given change, but deal with it wisely. Dads, maintain a close relationship with your daughters. This will help to balance their "boy-craziness." Don't be threatened by these changes. Handle them seriously in your heart but lightly on the surface. Make fun, teasing lightheartedly, about these types of things. Try also to have occasional serious talks with your teens on the subjects of relationships that please God.
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6. **Maintain a Group Spirit in All Dating.** Constantly remind yourself... they do not need to be alone. The constant temptation from the Devil will be for them to isolate themselves from protecting friends and family. Dating with a group provides a safe atmosphere in which to nurture a healthy relationship and avoid temptation. Always keep a group togetherness spirit, rather than allowing isolated, concentrated times of "dating." Sitting together as a family, doing things as a family, family outings and family nights should never be replaced with "isolated togetherness" with a boy or girl. Their nature is to try to be alone..., but be mindful that this will only lead to wrong. Treat wanting to be alone or not enjoying the group as a danger sign.
 7. **Help Maintain the Right Pace in a Relationship.** They want to move FAST! They need you to help set the pace... slow it down and keep it simple. If they aren't ready to get married, then don't allow them to become exclusive and consumed with each other. Hours on the phone, talking in a corner at church, wandering from the group, lower grades, always wanting to be together are warning signs for which you need to look.
 8. **The Teen Years are the Lab and You're the Instructor.** The teen years are truly the laboratory in preparing for adult life. As your teen grows from Jr. High to Sr. High, moving toward graduation, gradually begin helping them prepare for a life long relationship in marriage etc. They need your involvement constantly in these matters. They need your guidance. The Devil's plan in this area is to distance teens from parents. Teens try to get alone and apart. Parents tend to be too busy or disinterested or just ignorant on how to deal with the situation. (eg. double dates with parents, talks about having a home... always keep a very close hand of control in every relationship right up till marriage.)
 9. **Encourage a "Friends" Philosophy Until Graduation from High School.** If they aren't on the road to marriage, then there's no real good reason to get wrapped up in one relationship. It only tends to distance the heart from things that really matter, and leads to real misery when the eventual break up occurs. Don't discourage relationships... just encourage light ones.
 10. **Watch for Three Danger Signs: Isolation, Extended Time, and Physical Contact.** These three areas lead to problems, and two of the three are not necessary until marriage. By watching certain T.V. shows, movies and listening to certain types of music you may be fueling a fire in these areas.
 11. **Be Approachable About Dating.** One of the biggest mistakes that parents make in this area is that they are completely unapproachable. Whether from fear, business, or ignorance. Your teens will go somewhere for answers, and there are those in the world who are only too eager to give them wrong answers.
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12. **Be Involved as a Parent.** Nothing can combat the world's fleshly influence in this area better than a strong relationship with Mom and Dad. Be close to your teen. A lifestyle of neglect and apathy leads to broken hearts and homes.
13. **Don't Push Your Teen to Date.** For some reason, some parents tend to go to the other extreme. Rather than being uninvolved, they are too involved. This is not natural or healthy. Seriously evaluate your involvement and make sure it is what God wants. You cannot have too much concern or caution... you can have too much restriction, which in turn breeds rebellion. Have a heart for your teen's feelings, help regulate and manage them. On the other hand, if there is no fire burning, don't bring out the matches and firewood.
14. **Don't Take a Breakup Lightly.** Don't take it lightly when your teen loses a boyfriend or a girlfriend. This is one of the most traumatic experiences that a teenager faces. Help them through this time. Expect them to take it harshly. Seek to understand how they feel.

Conclusion:

Don't panic just because your teen notices a boy or girl. After all... you did too when you were their age. It's a normal, God-given occurrence that needs to be carefully controlled by God-given parental authority...just as long as you don't give them the same freedom your parents gave you.

Set the standard for your home, enforce the standard with determination, draw the line and don't allow it to be crossed; then at the same time love your teen, understand them, build a relationship with them that communicates complete acceptance. They will respect and honor this approach for years to come. On the other hand, rules without relationships breed rebellion."
