

FOR YOUTH OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

THE **New Era**

APRIL 2010

**SPECIAL
ISSUE:
DATING FOR
BEGINNERS**



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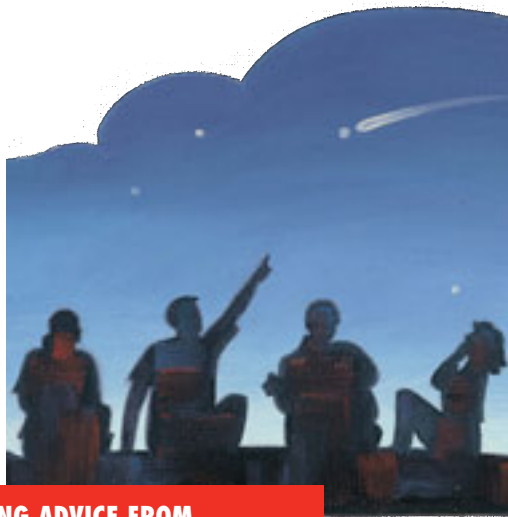
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**Special Issue:
Dating for Beginners**

“Does he like me?” “Will she say yes?” “Will I make a fool of myself?”

We can’t answer these questions for you, but when it comes to other questions about dating, this issue contains answers to some of the most important ones you’ll face. You’ll find:

- Advice from General Authorities and other Church leaders.
- Answers to frequently asked questions from LDS teens.
- Ideas for great dates.
- And much more.

We hope that this issue will help you steer clear of the pitfalls, look past the sweaty palms, and focus on the fun and friendship that dating offers so that you can prepare for the time when you’ll more seriously consider whom to marry for eternity in the temple.

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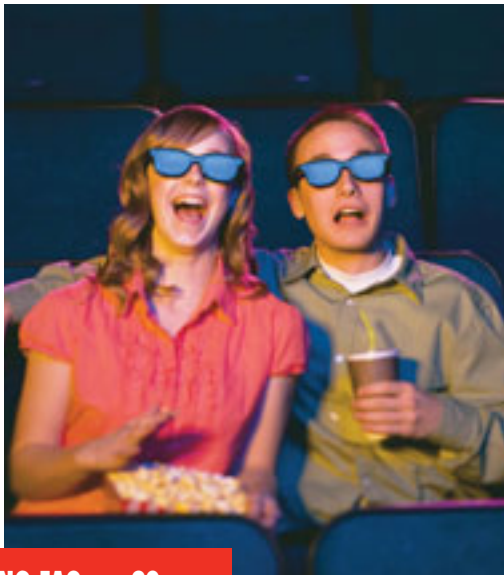
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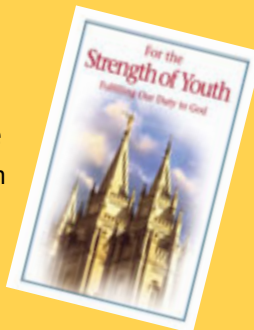
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WHAT'S ONLINE

Would you like to hear more about upholding high dating standards?

You can find videos with messages from Church leaders and interviews with youth in the For the Strength of Youth section of Youth.lds.org.



Do you have other questions about dating? Go to Youth.lds.org and find the link to the Dating topic page. There you'll find questions and answers, videos, articles, and more. You can also share your own testimony and experiences about how following the teachings of Church leaders on dating has blessed your life.

What's on the New Era Web page?

Go to NewEra.lds.org to find previous articles on dating, including Q&As, Mormonads, stories from teens, and messages from Church leaders.



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Cover: In this issue you can find some good tips for beginners on dating.

Cover photography: Jerry Garns (front) and Christina Smith (back)

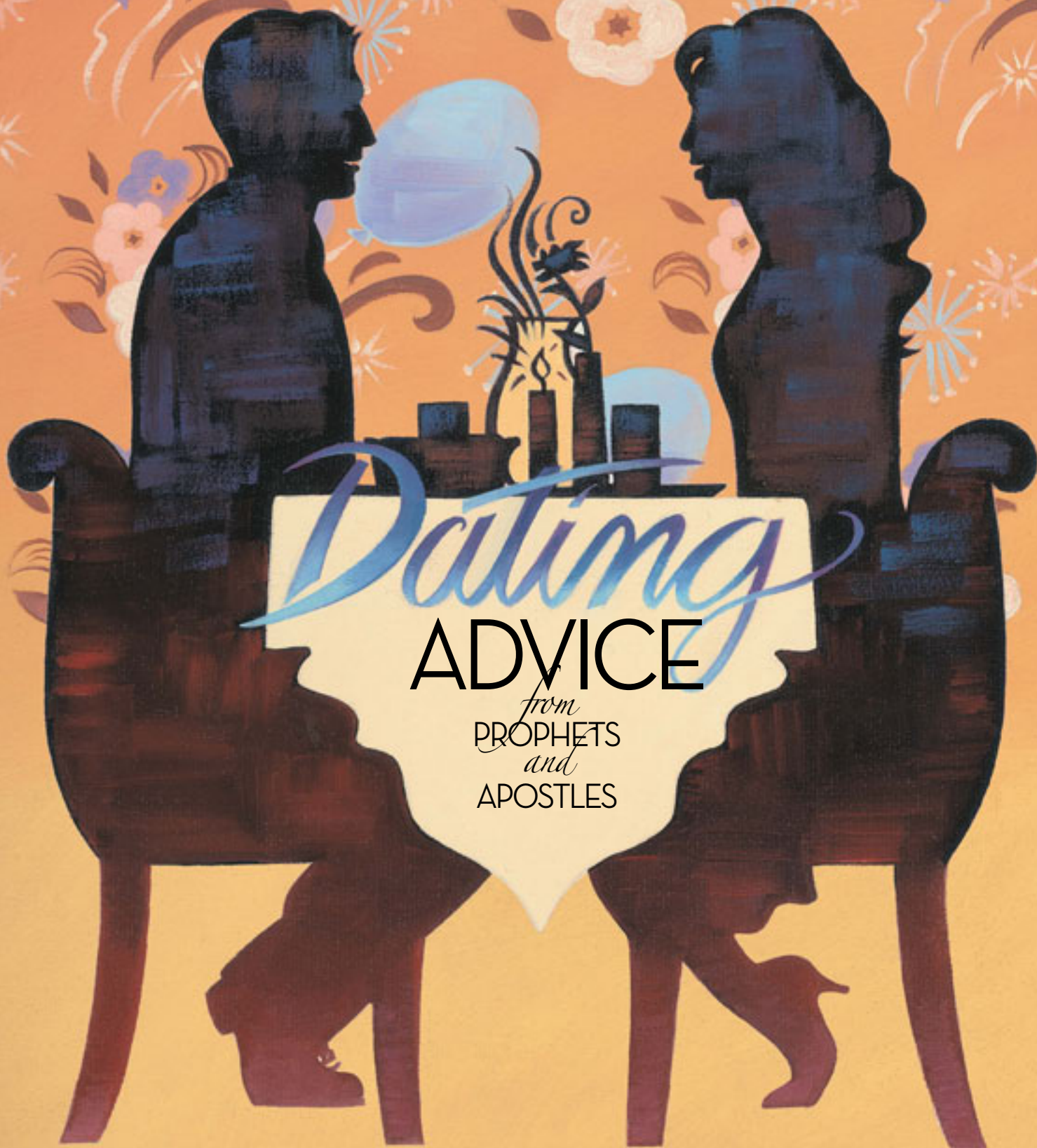
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Dating

ADVICE

from
PROPHETS
and
APOSTLES

What do the General Authorities have to say about dating?

You know there is wise and wonderful counsel on dating standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. This inspired pamphlet from the First Presidency is a great resource as you prepare for and begin dating. Below you will find additional insights from prophets and apostles about whom, why, when, and how you should date.

Choosing Whom to Date



“You young people . . . have an important responsibility in choosing not only whom you will date but also whom you will marry. President Gordon B. Hinckley admonished: ‘Your chances for a happy and lasting marriage will be far greater if you will date those who are active and faithful in the Church.’” (“Four B’s for Boys,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 41.)

President Thomas S. Monson, “Whom Shall I Marry?,” *New Era*, Oct 2004, 4–6.

“While you should be friendly with all people, select with great care those whom you wish to have close to you. They will be your safeguards in situations where you may vacillate between choices, and you in turn may save them.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 11.

“In a dating and courtship relationship, I would not have you spend five minutes with someone who belittles you, who is constantly critical of you, who is cruel at your expense and may even call it humor.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “How Do I Love Thee?,” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 6.

Good Reasons to Date



“Simple and more frequent dates allow both men and women to ‘shop around’ in a way that allows extensive evaluation of the prospects. The old-fashioned date was a wonderful way to get acquainted with a member of the opposite sex. It encouraged conversation. It allowed you to see how you treat others and how you are treated in a one-on-one situation. It gave opportunities to learn how to initiate and sustain a mature relationship. None of that happens in hanging out.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Dating versus Hanging Out,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 13.

General Counsel on Dating



“When you are old enough, you ought to start dating. It is good for young men and young women to learn to know and to appreciate one another. It is good for you to go to games and dances and picnics, to do all of the young things. We encourage our young people to date.

We encourage you to set high standards of dating.

“When are you old enough? Maturity may vary from individual to individual, but we are convinced that dating should not even begin until you are 16. And then, ideal dating is on a group basis. Stay in group activities; don’t pair off. Avoid steady dating. Steady dating is courtship, and surely the beginning of courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “You’re in the Driver’s Seat,” *New Era*, June 2004, 8.



“The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. It is beautiful when handled in the right way. It is deadly if it gets out of hand.

“It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating. This rule is not designed to hurt you in any way. It is designed to help you, and it will do so if you will observe it.

“Steady dating at an early age leads so often to tragedy. Studies have shown that the longer a boy and girl date one another, the more likely they are to get into trouble.

“It is better, my friends, to date a variety of companions until you are ready to marry. Have a wonderful time, but stay away from familiarity. Keep your hands to yourself. It may not be easy, but it is possible.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 13.

Be Careful

“Be careful to go to places where there is a good environment, where you won’t be faced with temptation. . . .

“. . . Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “That We May Touch Heaven,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 45, 47.

“Kissing has . . . degenerated to develop and express lust instead of affection, honor, and admiration. To kiss in casual dating is asking for trouble. What do kisses mean when given out like pretzels and robbed of sacredness?”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 281.

“In dating relationships with the opposite sex, making a wrong choice early may limit making the right choice later.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Where Do I Make My Stand?,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 21.

A KISS BEFORE THE FIRST DATE?

The first day I saw Frances, I knew I'd found the right one. The Lord brought us together later, and I asked her to go out with me. I went to her home to call on her. She introduced me, and her father said, "Monson"—that's a Swedish name, isn't it?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Good."

Then he went into another room and brought out a picture of two missionaries with their top hats and their copies of the Book of Mormon.

"Are you related to this Monson," he said, "Elias Monson?" I said, "Yes, he's my grandfather's brother. He too was a missionary in Sweden."

Her father wept. He wept easily. He said, "He and his companion were the missionaries who taught the gospel to my mother and my father and all of my brothers and sisters and to me." He kissed me on the cheek. And then her mother cried, and she kissed me on the other cheek. And then I looked around for Frances. She said, "I'll go get my coat."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Abundantly Blessed," *Ensign*, May 2008, 111.

"Any dating or pairing off in social contacts should be postponed until at least the age of 16 or older, and even then there should still be much judgment used in selections and in the seriousness. Young people should still limit the close contacts for several years, since the boy will be going on his mission when he is 19 years old.

"Dating and especially steady dating in the early teens is most hazardous. It distorts the whole picture of life. It deprives the youth of worthwhile and rich experiences; it limits friendships; it reduces the acquaintance which can be so valuable in selecting a partner for time and eternity"

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 96.

Safety in Standards



"How foolish is the youth who feels that the Church is a fence around love to keep him out. Oh, youth, if you could know! The requirements of the Church are the highway to love and to happiness, with guardrails securely in place, with guideposts plainly marked, and with help along the way.

"How unfortunate to resent counsel and restraint. How

fortunate are you who follow the standards of the Church, even if just from sheer obedience or habit. You will find a rapture and a joy fulfilled."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 6.

The Culmination of Dating

"Do you want capability, safety, and security in dating and romance, in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has everything to do with your romance, because it does. You separate dating from discipleship at your peril. Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness. How should I love thee? As He does, for that way 'never faileth.' "

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "How Do I Love Thee?" *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 8.

"I would admonish you to maintain an eternal perspective. Make certain that the marriage in your future is a temple marriage. There is no scene so sweet, no time so sacred as that very special day of your marriage. Then and there you glimpse celestial joy. Be alert; do not permit temptation to rob you of this blessing."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Whom Shall I Marry?" *New Era*, Oct 2004, 6.



To the **YOUNG MEN** on Dating



By the Young Men General
Presidency

What Is Dating?

Young men, dating is when you ask a young woman to participate and interact with you in a planned social activity.

Why Is Dating Important?

Dating can be a wonderful learning experience for both you and the young women you date. You can learn a lot about yourself, and you can develop understanding, respect, and appreciation for God's extraordinary and precious daughters.

It may seem a long way off now, but marriage is one of the most important decisions of your life. Your teenage years are not the time to make that decision, but proper dating will help you prepare to make that decision when it is appropriate. Dating will give you opportunities to develop social skills that will help you become confident and attractive to the young women you date. You'll come to understand and be attracted to those with the qualities and characteristics that will be important to you in an eternal companion. Proper dating will also help you be worthy

and prepared to marry in the temple for time and all eternity the right person at the right time.

All of this will contribute to your enjoying one of the greatest blessings of life: a happy and successful marriage.

What Are Proper Dating Standards?

The Lord's prophets have counseled you not to date until you are at least 16 years old. When you start dating, date only those with high standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards. Always participate in wholesome activities that allow you and your date to maintain self-respect and to remain close to the Spirit of the Lord. It is especially important to have pure thoughts and feelings. Avoid having a relationship where there is talk or behavior that is sexually oriented. Avoid being alone with your date or staying out too late. You are both responsible to help

each other maintain the sanctity of the priesthood and womanhood and to protect each other's honor and virtue. Always be kind to and respectful of young women when you ask for or accept a date and throughout all of your dating experiences.

When you begin dating, go with one or more other couples. Avoid going out with the same person too frequently or developing a serious relationship too early.

Remember to maintain balance in your life when you date. You should not date so often that it harms your family relationships or keeps you from doing well in school or developing skills and





"Friends are people who make it easier to live the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

talents. Make sure your parents meet and feel comfortable with the young women you date.

We encourage you to participate in well-planned dating activities that are simple, positive, inexpensive, and that will help you get to know the young women you date. **NE**

Advice to **YOUNG WOMEN** on Dating



By the Young Women General Presidency

Dating is fun! Dating is an opportunity for you to develop and expand your friendships with young men. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a simple and meaningful definition of a friend: "Friends are people who make it easier to live the gospel of Jesus Christ."¹ Date young men who make you want to be a better person. "Be your best self" so you can be a good influence to those you date.²

Become the Kind of Person You Would Like to Date

You can begin now to work on developing those qualities that will make you attractive and interesting.

- **Smile!** Yes, smile and be happy. And your smile will be infectious and help others enjoy your company.
- **Be spiritually fit.** Do those things that will draw you close to the Holy Ghost so He can be your constant companion.
- **Be physically fit.** Take good care of your body, be active, and practice healthy eating habits. Be well-groomed.
- **Develop your interests and talents.** Seek all the education you can. You could read great books, listen to good music, know current events, or learn another language.
- **Behave like a daughter of God.** Do not be forward, loud, brash, or suggestive. You may have seen this kind of behavior in movies, but it is not fitting for a young woman who understands her identity as a daughter of God.
- **Improve your social skills.** Be kind, inclusive of others, and considerate of others' needs. Practice communicating in person. Learn proper etiquette and manners. All of these things will help you become the kind of person others will want to be around.
- **Be interested in people.** Show interest in others and in the things they



like to do. Ask questions that will help them feel comfortable and help you get to know them better.

- **Set limits.** Do not allow others to take advantage of you. Maintain your purity.
- **Live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*.** Don't hesitate to share these standards with those you date. Do not lower your standards for anyone. If someone expects you to do so, he or she is not worthy of your friendship or companionship.
- **Help others become their best selves.** Make them better for having had a date with you. Even if you do not have many opportunities to date, you can smile and make new friends. Choose to be optimistic. Even disappointments in dating can help you grow. Every person you meet can enrich your life, and you can bless others as you share with them your best self.

Choose Wisely Those You Date

Dating is an opportunity to get to know young men in preparation for marriage. Be careful about those you choose to date. When you are considering going with a young man, make sure that he has high standards and will always help you live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself:

- Does he have a strong and good character?
- Is he trustworthy and dependable?
- Is he honest?
- Is he respectful and kind to others and to me?

- Is he unselfish?
- Does he respect my parents and honor his parents?
- Does he honor his priesthood?
- Does he motivate me to be my very best?
- Is he worthy to attend the temple?

Have fun and be fun on dates as you get to know others. Plan engaging activities together. Some of the most fun dates can be as simple as cooking a meal together. Or consider a service opportunity. You can observe and get to know the other person better by doing activities than by just sitting and watching movies.

Our prophet has said, "In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you."³ We know that you will be a positive influence in the lives of all the young men you date—and all your friends who see your righteous example.

As you continue to develop your gifts and talents, make wise choices in your friendships with others, and become a righteous influence, your years of dating will be positive, rewarding, and fun. This is a time to set your sights high, expect the best, and become all that our Heavenly Father intends for you to become. You are a daughter of our Heavenly Father; He loves you, and so do we. **NE**

NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, "This Is the Way; and There Is None Other Way," in *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 1981–82* (1982), 67.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 67.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Standards of Strength," *New Era*, Oct. 2008, 5.



PHOTOGRAPH OF MONTREAL QUEBEC TEMPLE © LAURENT LUCUIX

Looking toward the Temple



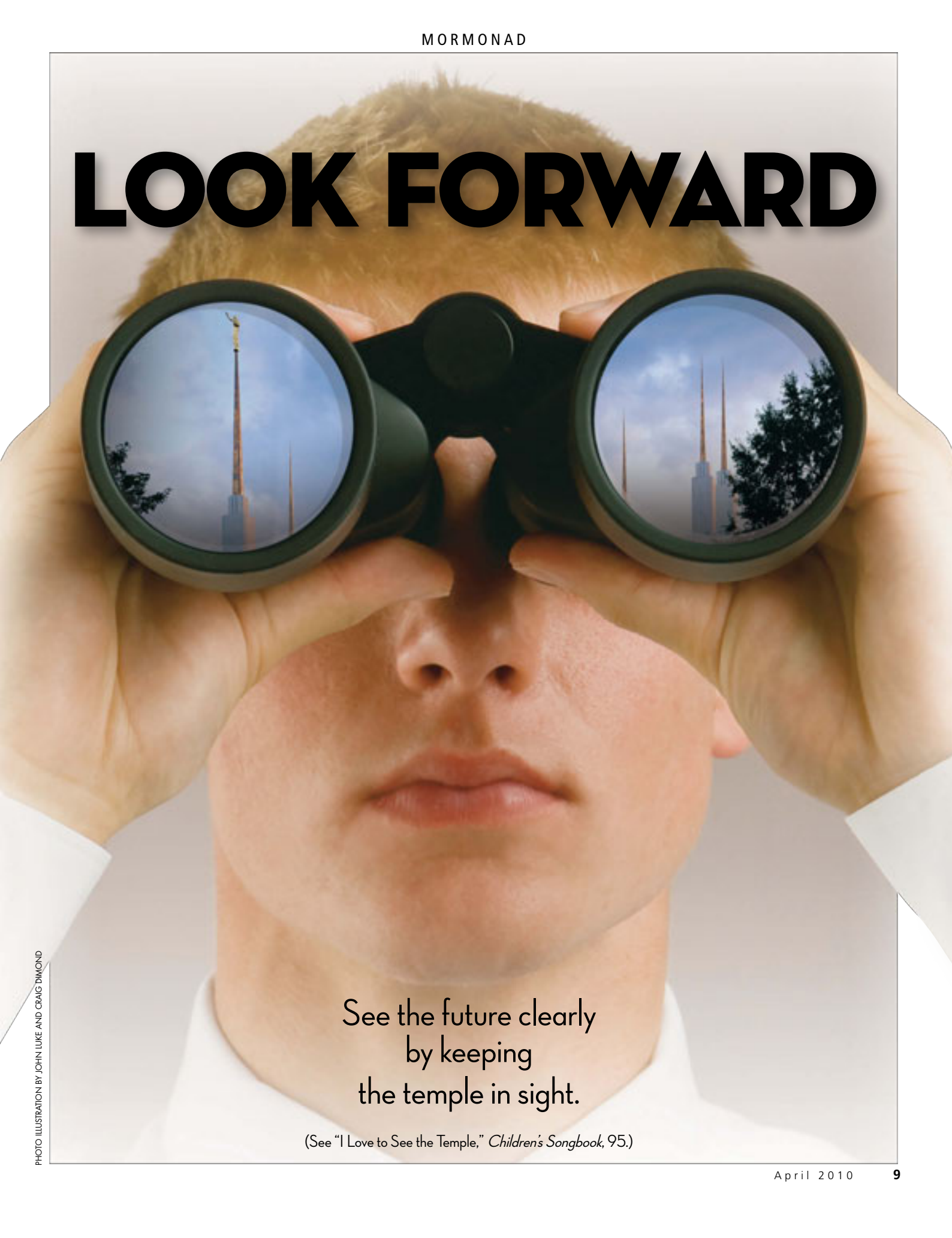
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"I would admonish you to maintain an eternal perspective. Make certain that the marriage in your future is a temple marriage. There is no scene so sweet, no time so sacred as that very special day of your marriage. Then and there you glimpse celestial joy. Be alert; do not permit temptation to rob you of this blessing."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Whom Shall I Marry?" *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 4, 6.



LOOK FORWARD



See the future clearly
by keeping
the temple in sight.

(See "I Love to See the Temple," *Children's Songbook*, 95.)

“How can I have clean thoughts when I see so much immodesty around me?”

It may seem like you can't go anywhere today without seeing people immodestly dressed, whether in person or in the media. You may not always be able to control your surroundings, but you can control your thoughts.

If you see an immodestly dressed person, you can quickly look away or remove yourself from the situation. If an unclean thought comes to mind, choose not to dwell on it, but rather crowd it out with clean thoughts. “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then . . . the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion” (D&C 121:45–46). Having clean thoughts will help you be happier and have the influence of the Spirit with you.

Make it a habit always to have clean thoughts. Try to be around people who dress modestly, and avoid situations where you might see immodest dress. Pray for Heavenly Father to help you. Memorize hymns or scriptures so you have good things to think of when you are tempted. Read the scriptures regularly, and attend the temple if possible. Then when you see someone dressed immodestly, you can think of something positive. **NE**

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

We Are Not of the World

We should remember that we are in the world but not of the world. We are special sons and daughters of our beloved Heavenly Father. For this reason, the adversary tempts us even more, but we must be stronger than the temptation. Worldly persons may dress immodestly, not knowing that the body is a sacred temple. But Latter-day Saints have this knowledge. Therefore, we should keep ourselves virtuous and pure. If bad thoughts invade our minds, we should immediately seek the help of our Heavenly Father through prayer, for there is no one better to help us than He.

Dayana H., age 19, São Paulo, Brazil

Ask Your Friends to Help



As the only Latter-day Saint sixth grader in my school, I am faced with vulgar language, immodesty, and pressure to follow the crowd.

But at the start of the year, I explained to my friends my standards and that I stick to them no matter what. They have learned through the months about my Church values. Your friends will help you if you explain your values and your standards to them. My friends' attitudes, clothing, and language have changed for the better. I have learned that if they are truly your friends, they will help you think clean thoughts and will help you stay on the strait and narrow path.

Celia N., age 12, Virginia, USA

Prayer Helps

I found that as I struggled to maintain pure thoughts, prayer was my real answer to keeping a clean mind and allowing the influence of the Spirit to be with me wherever I went. Praying every morning for Heavenly Father to help me have clean thoughts and to give me guidance throughout the day and thanking Him in the evening gave me a better relationship with Him and helped me steer away from immodesty and keep my standards.

A prayer each morning and night can help you invite the Spirit to be with you as you face worldly adversaries. “Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works” (Mosiah 5:15).

Gunnar R., age 16, Wisconsin, USA

We Are Temples



When people around you dress immodestly, don't criticize them, for you need to have good thoughts. Set an example to them by showing that you follow Church standards. And help people by loving them and telling them our Heavenly Father loves them and wants them to be morally clean both in actions and thoughts. Purity is essential to our salvation, because we are the temples of our God.

Maricris B., age 19, Quezon, Philippines

Live the Gospel Teachings

I know that we can have pure thoughts by studying the scriptures and putting their teachings into practice. When we put into practice all the values that are taught in church, when we read *For the Strength of Youth*, and when we go to the temple, we can obtain pure thoughts.

Jossi O., age 16, Antioquia, Colombia

The Mind Is Like a Stage



Preach My Gospel has a section that speaks about virtue. It says our mind is like a stage in a theater.

On this stage, only one person can act at a time. When we think pure, virtuous thoughts, our mind will remain focused on these thoughts, and the stage of our minds cannot be taken

over by unwholesome thoughts. Virtue is an attribute of Jesus Christ that we have been told to develop. At church we learn that we must always think of clean things, but when something impure tempts us, we can sing our favorite hymn or think of our favorite scripture. The greatest form of help can be found in 2 Nephi 32:9:

“Pray always, and not faint.”

Elder McEachron, age 21, Brazil João Pessoa Mission

Think of Others as Children of God

You control how you respond to what you see. Just because something is there, you do not have to promote it to the stage of your mind. You choose your thoughts; choose to keep them clean. Avoid seeing immodesty as much as you can, and always dress modestly. Then think of those you come in contact with as children of God, with divine potential, loved personally by our Father in Heaven. When I view others as children of God, it is hard to be anything but saddened by the immodesty I encounter.

Amy S., age 19, Utah, USA

NEXT QUESTION

“Why does my family have problems even though we go to church, have family home evening, and try to live the gospel? What more can we do?”



THINK OF SOMETHING GOOD

Some bad thoughts come by themselves. Others come because we invite them by what we look at. . . . These things surround you, but you must not participate in them. Work at keeping your thoughts clean by thinking of something good. The mind can think of only one thing at a time. Use that fact to crowd out ugly thoughts.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Making the Right Choices,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 37.

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WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH BOYS?

Are young men and young women too different to understand each other? Here's what they wonder about each other—and how they explain themselves.

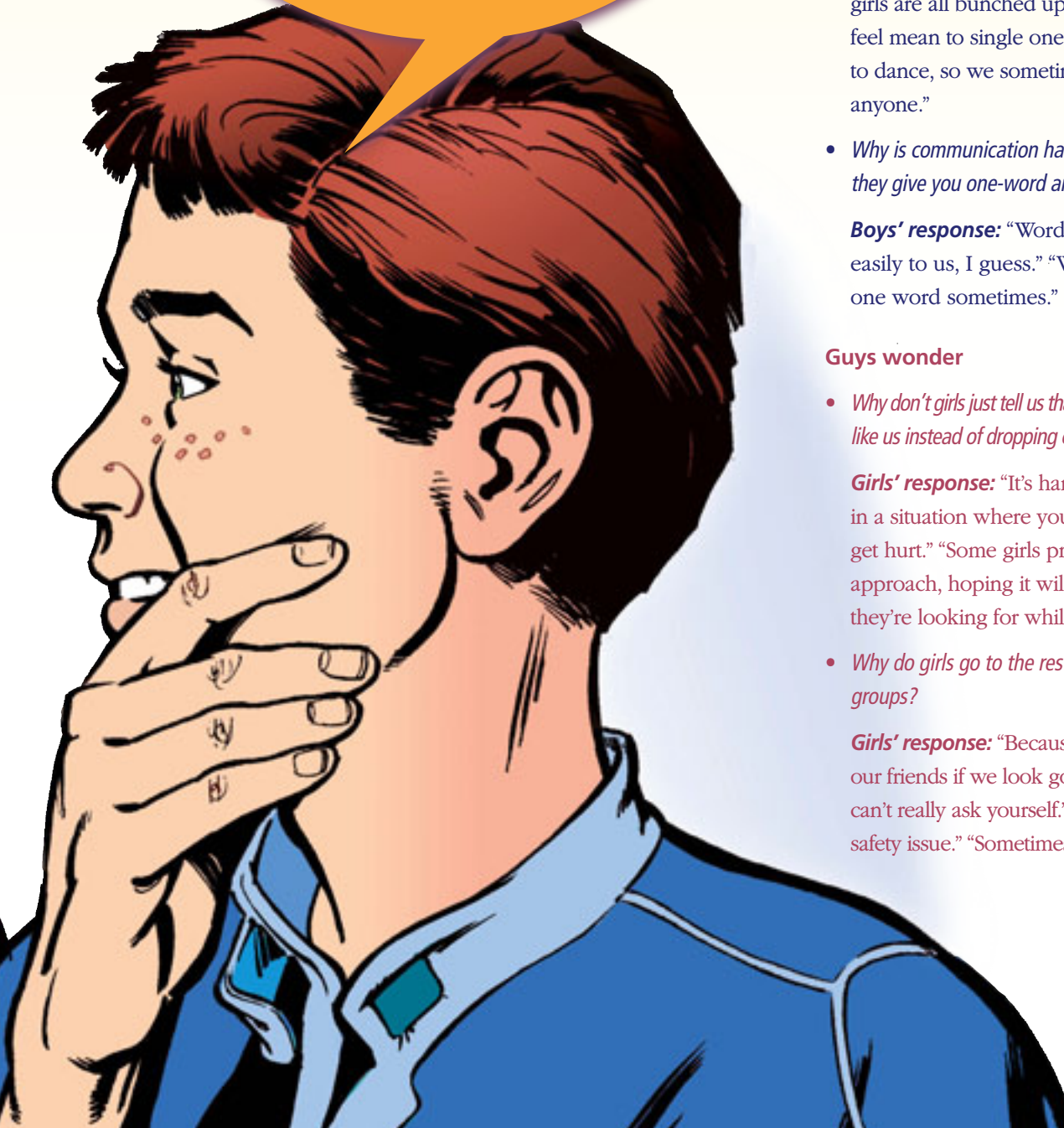
Sometimes young men and young women feel that they are too different from one another to really understand each other. But mutual understanding and respect can come in part from our knowledge of Heavenly Father's plan and our relationship to Him. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said:

“When we understand our relationship to God, we also understand our relationship to one another. All men and women on this earth are the offspring of God, spirit brothers and sisters. What a powerful idea! . . . What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could transcend all boundaries” (“Powerful Ideas,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 25).

To foster such understanding, the *New Era* spoke to some young men and young women of various ages and from a number of different places regarding the things that puzzle them about the opposite sex. Here are some of their questions, as well as some of their responses.



WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH GIRLS?



SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Girls wonder

- *Why is it so hard for boys to ask girls to dance?*

Boys' response: "Because we get embarrassed." "And we're not very talkative." "We're nervous." "Because they're too pretty to ask." "Because whenever they're around us, we don't act normal." "When girls are all bunched up, it makes us feel mean to single one girl out to ask to dance, so we sometimes don't ask anyone."

- *Why is communication hard for boys? Why do they give you one-word answers?*

Boys' response: "Words don't come as easily to us, I guess." "We use more than one word sometimes."

Guys wonder

- *Why don't girls just tell us that they like us or don't like us instead of dropping complicated hints?*

Girls' response: "It's hard to put yourself in a situation where your feelings might get hurt." "Some girls prefer an indirect approach, hoping it will give them what they're looking for while still saving face."

- *Why do girls go to the restroom together in groups?*

Girls' response: "Because we have to ask our friends if we look good or not. You can't really ask yourself." "Sometimes it's a safety issue." "Sometimes it just happens."



- *Why do girls think that guys always have to be the first one to start something, like a hello or conversation or phone call?*

Girls' response: "It's their job, isn't it?"

- *Why do girls sometimes play the whisper game with their girlfriends in a big huddle?*

Girls' response: "It happens when you are embarrassed or nervous." "Because we probably think something you said was really cute and we don't want to tell you because it's embarrassing." "Usually it's not something mean that we're saying; it's that a guy has done something cute."

- *Why do girls talk so much?*

Girls' response: "Because they're insecure." "If they get chitty-chatterly, it's because they're nervous."

- *What do they want us to ask them when we're on a date?*

Girls' response: "I want guys to actually tell me what they think when they're thinking it. For example, some guys will think a girl is pretty, but they don't want to say it because they think that maybe she doesn't want to hear it. Just say it. That's actually something she'd maybe want to hear." "Girls want to hear your compliments or something real and not just get asked 'What's your favorite color?'"

- *Why do some girls say they're fat when they're really not? What do they expect us to say to that?*

Girls' response: "Some girls say it out of habit, but sometimes I say it to get attention." "Just to get someone to talk to you or to reassure you, to know someone actually cares."

CHURCH

Girls wonder

- *Why do some guys think they are too cool for church? They will be there, but they won't really be there.*

Boys' response: "It's a social status with some guys. In church they just sit there and don't answer questions because they think they are too cool." "Because they think they are cool and act cooler, when deep inside they might be insecure and don't want to get the question wrong." "They don't want to be noticed. It's much easier to blend than draw attention to yourself." "For guys, it takes a longer time to get a testimony because we're not really emotional and we grow slower." "Girls are more mature."

- *Why won't guys sing in church?*

Boys' response: "Guys don't sing because some guys are tone-deaf, they can't keep beat, or their voice is changing." "I do! I love singing the hymns. The guys that don't probably are intimidated or embarrassed because they don't know how to sing. Or their voices are changing." "Puberty. Our voices crack, and the girls have such beautiful voices."

Guys wonder

- *Why can't girls understand that guys can be as into the gospel as they are, but they may not show it on the outside?*

Girls' response: "Good point, but how else are we supposed to know if you don't show it?"

DRESS AND GROOMING

Girls wonder

- *Why do boys like to sag their pants? It's not attractive at all. I don't want to see their underwear.*

Boys' response: "Even though you do walk like a penguin, it replaces the pressure around your waist. It's for comfort." "Some guys do it because they think it's cool, probably. My friends and I don't do that."

Guys wonder

- *Why do some girls wear their pants so low and their shirts so short?*

Girls' response: "Young women try to copy what they see in the media. Boys should show their appreciation for a young woman who keeps the Church dress standards." "Shorter shirts and hip-hugger pants are in style, and some girls don't bother to look for something else." "And sometimes girls just outgrow their favorite clothes without wanting to admit it."

- *What's the deal with the hair? Why do they do so many hairstyles?*

Girls' response: "I don't know." "Because we want to look cute."



BEHAVIOR

Girls wonder

- *Why do boys think they have to be so macho all the time? Why don't guys act like themselves the first time they talk to you?*

Boys' response: "Because they want to impress you." "Because it's fun." "I always act like myself."

- *Why do guys like to show off?*

Boys' response: "Because we want to impress girls." "Because we have a lot of energy." "Because we want to impress our friends."

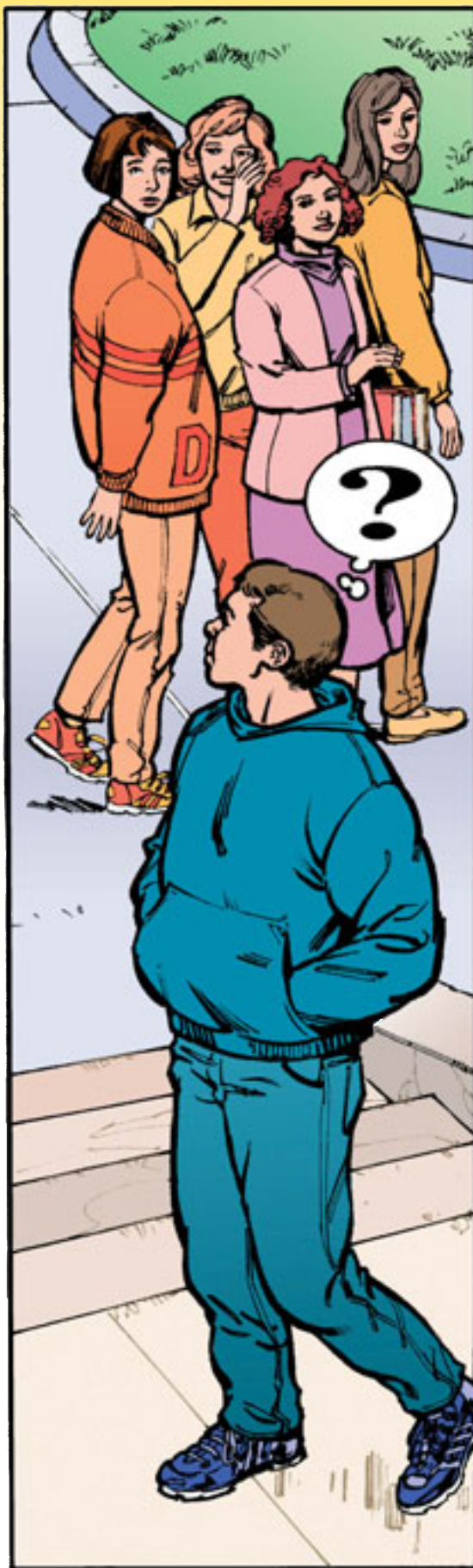
Guys wonder

- *Why are girls so emotionally complicated?*

Girls' response: "Because we think about too many things all at once." "Don't worry yourself about it. Just be nice to us."

- *Why do girls do so many tasks at once?*

Girls' response: "Because we can."



GOD'S GRAND DESIGN

In His grand design, when God first created man, He created a duality of the sexes. The ennobling expression of that duality is found in marriage. One individual is complementary to the other. As Paul stated, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11).

"There is no other arrangement that meets the divine purposes of the Almighty. Man and woman are His creations. Their duality is His design. Their complementary relationships and functions are fundamental to His purposes. One is incomplete without the other."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "The Women in Our Lives," Ensign, Nov. 2004, 84.

In his wisdom and mercy, our Father made men and women dependent on each other for the full flowering of their potential. Because their natures are somewhat different, they can complement each other; because they are in many ways alike, they can understand each other. Let neither envy the other for their differences; let both discern what is superficial and what is beautifully basic in those differences, and act accordingly."

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), "Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential," Ensign, Mar. 1976, 5.

WHAT GIRLS WISH GUYS KNEW

- We don't like them doing weird things, trying to show off.
- Most girls like a good, clean sense of humor in a guy.
- We really respect a thorough immersion in the gospel. We like it when guys are really interested in the scriptures, say prayers, participate at church, and respect their priesthood.
- We really like it when they sing the hymns.
- It's all right for guys to cry during their testimonies.
- Wear a suit to church. It makes you look nice.
- We really like it when guys are gentlemanly and respectful.
- We like it when you just try to be our friend.
- We interpret feelings and emotions differently than you do.
- When we're spending a lot of time on our hair and our makeup, it's for you. It's not because we're vain. Well, sometimes it is, but not usually.
- Kindness is more attractive than looks. We like it when guys are genuinely kind. Rudeness is not cool.
- Little things like opening doors and carrying books can go a long way.

WHAT GUYS WISH GIRLS KNEW

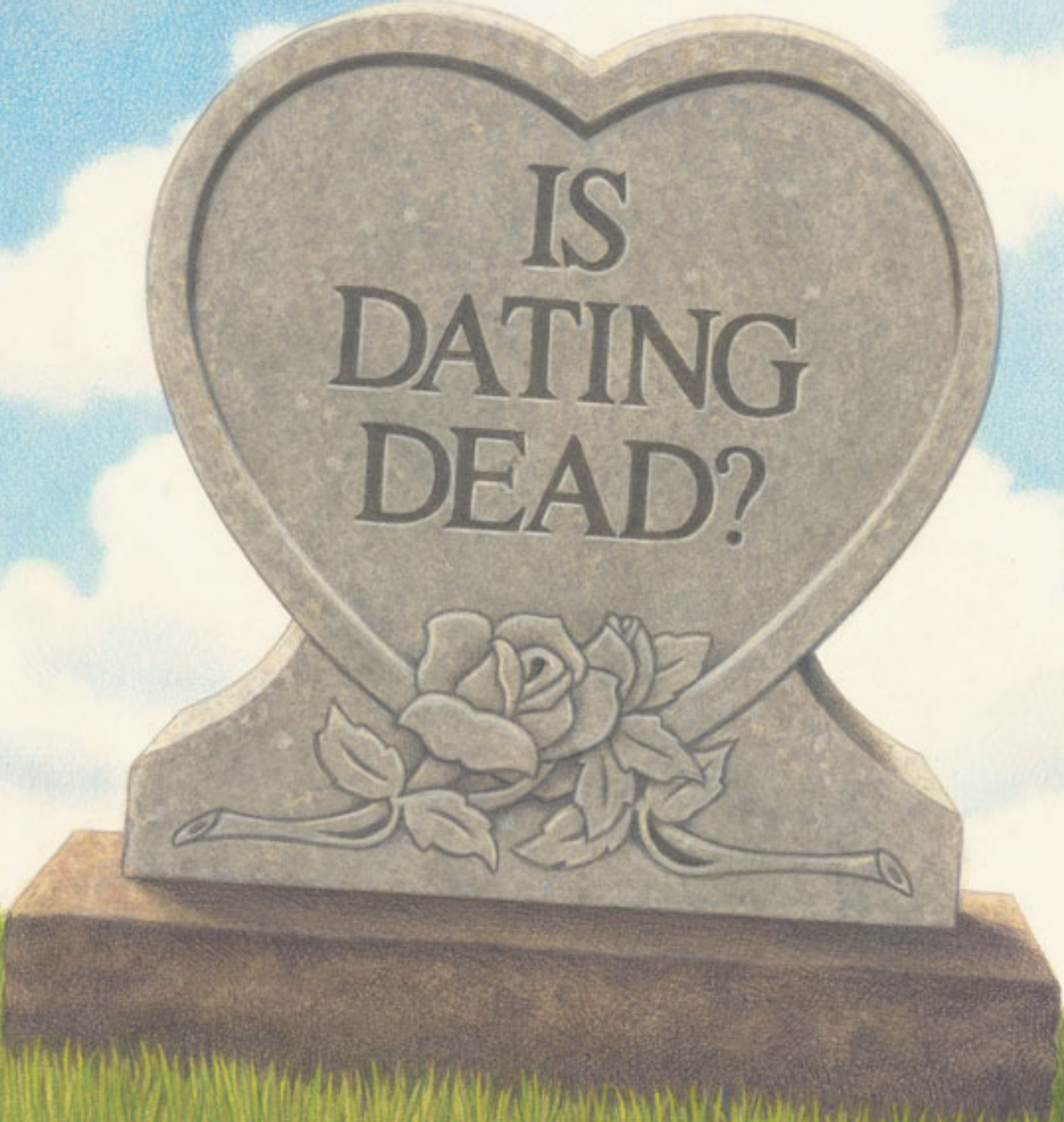
- When we're trying to show off, we mean it in a good way. We're just trying to impress you.
- We can be mature if we want to be.
- We don't need to be funny all of the time.
- We don't text 24/7, so if we don't answer right away, don't be offended.
- We like you for who you are, and you don't have to be someone you're not, like wear tons of makeup or not be yourself.
- You don't need to spend hours just getting ready for a date. We already think you're pretty.
- It makes us feel better when our dates are dressed modestly. And we are more comfortable talking to girls who are dressed modestly. It shows us they have respect for themselves.
- We like it when girls actually eat when we go out with them.
- We don't always mean everything we say; we joke around a lot. We don't mean to offend anyone.
- We like girls who are really kind and compassionate to everyone.
- We like it when girls ask us if we are going to an activity. It motivates us to go.
- We can be as into the gospel as you are, but we may not show it on the outside.

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

Satan . . . would have us believe men and women are so alike that our unique gifts are not necessary, or so different we can never hope to understand each other. Neither is true."

Sheri L. Dew, "It Is Not Good for Man or Woman to Be Alone," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 12–13.



A heart-shaped gravestone is the central focus, set against a background of a blue sky with white clouds. The stone is dark grey and has a double-line border. The text "IS DATING DEAD?" is carved in a serif font. Below the text is a detailed carving of a rose with leaves and a stem. The stone sits on a dark brown rectangular base, which is placed on a field of green grass.

IS
DATING
DEAD?

What would your response be to this question? We've asked young men and women all around the world, and while there hasn't been complete agreement, most of you have told us there's just not a lot of dating going on where you live—at least not a lot of dating in the traditional LDS sense.

For example, Felicity Lawrance says, "In England, the dating of my generation has become ridiculous. Here if someone asks 'Will you go out with me?' it really means 'Will you be my boy/girlfriend?' And if the answer is yes then you *are* boyfriend and girlfriend. It completely skips the period of getting to know each other!"

Some teens we talked to called this the "instacouple" phenomenon.

Kathryn Jones says that in Colorado traditional dating is "pretty much dead," particularly when it comes to dating a variety of people. She explains, "If an LDS guy went on a date with a non-LDS girl one week and then went out with another girl who was LDS the next week, the non-LDS girl wouldn't get it."

So, exclusivity seems to be implied right up front, making it awkward to follow the counsel to date a number of different people.

This trend away from dating seems to be pretty consistent, according to what LDS teens are telling us. So is that a problem? Probably not when you are 17, but what about when you are 21? Your best bet is to hold fast to the teachings of the gospel, always uphold your high standards, and follow the counsel of prophets and apostles.

One great source for gospel standards is *For the Strength of Youth*, where it says on the topic of dating, "Good friendships can and should be developed at every age" ([2001], 24). While you're a teenager, the point of dating is simply that—to make friends.

In that spirit, dating—or getting acquainted—will always be alive and well. **NE**

DATING: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

What has made dating an endangered species? I am not sure, but I can see some contributing factors:

1. The cultural tides in our world run strongly against commitments in family relationships. For example, divorce has been made legally easy, and childbearing has become unpopular. These pressures against commitments obviously serve the devil's opposition to the Father's plan for His children. That plan relies on covenants or commitments kept. Whatever draws us away from commitments weakens our capacity to participate in the plan. Dating involves commitments, if only for a few hours. Hanging out requires no commitments, at least not for the men if the women provide the food and shelter.

2. The leveling effect of the women's movement has contributed to discourage dating. As women's options have increased and some women have become more aggressive, some men have become reluctant to take traditional male initiatives, such as asking for dates, lest they be thought to qualify for the dreaded label "male chauvinist."

3. Hanging out is glamorized on TV programs about singles.

4. The meaning and significance of a "date" has also changed in such a way as to price dating out of the market. I saw this trend beginning among our younger children. For whatever reason, high school boys felt they had to do something elaborate or bizarre to ask for a date, especially for an event like a prom, and girls felt they had to do likewise to accept. . . .

All of this made dating more difficult. And the more elaborate and expensive the date, the fewer the dates. As dates become fewer and more elaborate, this seems to create an expectation that a date implies seriousness or continuing commitment. That expectation discourages dating even more. Gone is the clumsy and inexpensive phone call your parents and grandparents and I used to make. That call went something like this: "What're ya doin' tonight? How about a movie?" Or, "How about taking a walk downtown?"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Dating versus Hanging Out," *Ensign*, June 2006, 10.

NEmore

Is dating really dead? What can be done to counter worldly trends and attitudes about dating? Take a survey at newera.lds.org.

DATING FAQS

Here are some answers to teens' frequently asked questions about dating.

At the New Era we often receive questions about dating. We have also visited with youth from a variety of places and have found that there are some common questions that LDS youth would like answered. Here are a few questions from youth about dating, along with answers we hope are helpful.

Answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.



WHAT IS **DATING**, AND WHAT'S IT FOR?

What is the purpose of dating as teenagers? If we aren't "looking for someone" during high school, why bother dating at all?

For the Strength of Youth says, "Dating can help you develop lasting friendships and eventually find an eternal companion" ([2001], 24). Your ultimate goal is to spend eternity with Heavenly Father, and in His kingdom we will live as eternal families. So the ultimate goal of dating is to find an eternal companion you can make and keep temple covenants with. When you're a teen, dating helps you learn how to interact with others, make friends, have fun, and learn and practice respect and courtesy. These skills will be helpful in your social interactions and then later in courtship and marriage.

"When you are old enough [age 16], you ought to start dating. It is good for young men and young women to learn to know and to appreciate one another. It is good for you to go to games and dances and picnics, to do all of the young things. We encourage our young people to date. We encourage you to set high standards of dating."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 5.

Other resources: Matthew and Janine Clarke, "Why Date?" *New Era*, Aug. 2006, 38.



**What is considered dating?
How is it defined?**

Dating is when two people of the opposite sex arrange to pair up with each other and participate in an activity. Some teens use the word *dating* to describe a couple that has decided to be exclusive, but this is not the kind of dating you should be doing in your teens.

Is "going out" the same as dating?

Whatever you call it—"going out," "dating," or even "hanging out"—if you are pairing up with someone so that you can spend time together, it's pretty much the same thing. To know if it's a date, ask these questions: (1) What's in your heart and mind; what is your intent? (2) What do you hope to gain from the experience? (3) Are you pairing up—talking to and being close to one person exclusively—even while in a group of friends?

What is the difference between hanging out in a group and dating in a group?

Group dating means that everyone in the group is paired up for an activity. Hanging out in a group

means that you're just a group of friends doing things together. Some teens report uncomfortable situations where a couple of friends pair off and the rest of the people in the group feel like they are tagging along on a date. Avoid the awkward hybrid activity where some of you are paired up and others aren't. Make sure everyone is lined up with a date when you're group dating.

Also, don't tell your parents you're going somewhere with a friend just to get their approval and then meet up with someone else. This places your friend in the awkward position of being a third wheel on a supposedly accidental date. It's not kind to your friend, and it's being dishonest with your parents.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT 16?

Why do we wait to date until we're 16?

Modern prophets have counseled us to follow this standard because they know that it will protect us and help us to be happy. Turning 16 isn't necessarily a magical event that makes you suddenly ready to date. The counsel against dating before you're 16 is based on principles of physical, emotional, and spiritual safety.

Don't get stuck in the racetrack mentality—"ready, set, date!" It isn't about dating as fast and furiously as you can the moment you turn 16. The age of 16 simply means you can now begin dating when you feel ready, starting with group dates.

"Do not date until you are at least 16 years old. Dating before then can lead to immorality, limit the number of other young people you meet, and deprive you of experiences that will help you choose an eternal partner."

For the Strength of Youth, 24.

"The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. It is beautiful when handled in the right way. It is deadly if it gets out of hand.

"It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating. This rule is not designed to hurt you in any way. It is designed to help you, and it will do so if you will observe it."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," New Era, Jan. 2001, 13.



"In dating relationships with the opposite sex, making a wrong choice early may limit making the right choice later."

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Where Do I Make My Stand?" Ensign, Nov. 2004, 18.

How do you politely tell someone you don't date yet, but you can still be friends?

If you're not 16 yet and someone asks you on a date (or to "hang out" with them in a situation obviously very much like dating), simply thank them for the invitation, but tell them

you're not going to start dating until you're 16, or that it's a rule in your family not to date until you're 16. If they ask why, tell them that it's something the Church teaches. Don't apologize for the Church standard, but let the person know what that standard is.

Other resources: Q&A, New Era, Nov. 2008, 12.

What should someone do if they find themselves getting into a relationship before they are old enough to date?

Now that you've recognized what's happening, set limits. Your parents or Church leaders can help you establish some rules. If you're spending too much time alone with just one person, invite other friends or siblings to join you. But be sure that you really do include people rather than just using them as a shield to cover the fact that you're pairing off. Don't hang out at your home or the other person's home if no parents are present.

Other resources: Q&A, New Era, July 1995, 17.

Is dating before you are 16 a sin that must be repented of?

Modern prophets have counseled against dating before 16, so willfully disregarding this counsel should not be taken lightly. While dating early may not be something you need to confess to your bishop, you should repent by asking Heavenly Father's forgiveness for not following the standard set by modern prophets. Part of that repentance should include a change of heart and a commitment to stop dating if you are still under 16. If you need more help in this area, talk to your parents or Church leaders.

What kind of dates are OK when you first turn 16?

When you are just beginning to date, it is best to keep things light and fun. Focus on strengthening the friendships you already have. *For the Strength of Youth* says, “When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. . . . Plan dating activities that are positive and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other. Do things that will help you and your companions maintain your self-respect and remain close to the Spirit of the Lord” (25).

Other resources: For a list of fun dating ideas, see page 46.

Is it a type of sin not to want to date at all right now? What if I don't date until a little while into college?

No, delaying dating is not a sin. *For the Strength of Youth* says, “Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. Many young people do not date during their teen years because they are not yet interested, do not have opportunities, or simply want to delay forming serious relationships. However, good friendships can and should be developed at every age” (24).

Whether you're doing the right thing or not, however, may depend on how long “a little while” ends up being. Right now, relax, ease into dating, starting with group dates as you feel comfortable. When you're in your 20s, you should be looking to date with an eye toward

“For many years the Church has counseled young people not to date before age 16. Perhaps some young adults, especially men, have carried that wise counsel to excess and determined not to date before 26 or maybe even 36.

“Men, if you have returned from your mission and you are still following the boy-girl patterns you were counseled to follow when you were 15, it is time for you to grow up. Gather your courage and look for someone to pair off with.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Dating versus Hanging Out,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 13.

marriage, so don't let “a little while” turn into several years. It will be better for you and your future spouse if you gain some experience by getting to know people.



WHEN DO WE GO ONE-ON-ONE?



Why can't we single date as teenagers? When is single dating appropriate?

For the Strength of Youth says, "When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates" (25). Following this guideline will help you have more fun and stay safer. As the old saying goes, there is safety in numbers. If you've chosen the right kinds of friends, this is certain to be true.

Church leaders haven't specified an age when single dating is appropriate. When you are older and in a position to consider marriage, you most certainly should single date. Until then, talk to your parents about the decision to start single dating.

Are occasional single dates as a teen wrong?

Not necessarily, but make sure you understand why the Church encourages you to date in groups when you begin dating. Single dates always seem to be taken a little more seriously than group dates, and it's always best to keep your relationships on a light, fun level before you are old enough to date with the intention of finding a

marriage partner. For more specific advice, talk to your parents.

If I'm 18—a young single adult—but have never dated, do I start by group dating or single dating?

This is an interesting question, because it assumes that leaving the Young Men or Young Women program may signal the beginning of the single-dating era of your life. *For the Strength of Youth* says, "Do not date until you are at least 16 years old. . . . When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates" (24–25). Somewhere between 16 and the age when you're considering marriage, you will probably start going on single dates. But regardless of your age, if you haven't dated before, it may still be a good idea to go in groups to start out with, because it's less awkward, there's less pressure, and there's more opportunity to learn social skills. As always, it's good to talk to your parents about it.

Other resources: Q&A (group dating), *New Era*, Aug. 1998.

WHEN CAN WE PAIR OFF AND BE EXCLUSIVE?

Why should we not steady date until we are older? When is it appropriate? What constitutes steady dating?

You need to try to make many friends, even if there's one person you prefer being with. *For the Strength of Youth* says, "Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person" (25). The reasons for this counsel have to do with timing and safety. You're not yet ready for marriage, so steady dating has no real purpose yet. And people in that kind of exclusive relationship will probably want to begin to express their feelings physically. The longer the relationship goes on with no immediate prospect of marriage, the more likely a couple is to get into trouble.

"I realize the importance of setting your course, of knowing where you are going. Please date extensively. Please know the kind of person you want to be with. Please make sure that you help those you come in contact with. Please point them in the direction of associating with many people."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Preparing for a Heavenly Marriage," *New Era*, Feb. 2006, 5.

Other resources: For more on this topic, read "Unsteady Dating" on page 38.

How often can you date a certain person?

There is no set number. Talk to your parents and youth leaders about it, and learn from what other people have done and observed.

When is it OK to call someone your boyfriend or girlfriend?

The answer to this question depends on what these terms mean to

you and others. Many people would take them to mean you're exclusively dating one another, which is contrary to the Church's counsel on dating in the teen years. So, you should probably reserve the "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" designation for relationships leading to engagement. For now, just call them friends.

Other resources: Q&A, *New Era*, May 1996, 17.

Why is it so bad to steady date before guys go on missions?

Before his mission, a young man should not be looking for a serious relationship. It may distract him from the call to full-time service he will receive from a prophet of God. It just doesn't make sense to add the complication of a steady girlfriend when a young man is trying to prepare for a mission, and especially when he's on his mission. It might create temptations and even expectations regarding the relationship. It's not fair to him or the young woman. Neither of them needs that sort of distraction or pressure.

This is a good question to ask your father, uncles, or youth leaders, as well as recently returned missionaries. They will have a good perspective on the problems that come from steady dating before missions.

"Temple marriage should wait until after a young man has served an honorable full-time mission for the Lord. And I would admonish you to date only faithful young women who also believe this and give you that encouragement."

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), "To the 'Youth of the Noble Birthright,'" *Ensign*, May 1986, 44.



WHAT'S A GUY OR A GIRL TO DO?



How should we ask someone on a date?

Calling someone on the phone or speaking to them in person is best. Ask them if they would like to go with you to a dance or on a date on a certain day and at a certain time. You don't have to go to great lengths or spend a lot of money just to ask someone on a date. People should not feel pressured into a date and should be able to decline without feeling uncomfortable.

Is it appropriate for girls to ask guys out?

This is a good subject to ask your parents about. Follow their advice and make sure they approve of your dating choices. For events such as girls' choice dances, girls are expected to do the asking.

But generally, these events are the exception rather than the rule.

The boys I know don't ask girls out on dates. How do we girls let them know that we'd rather date than hang out?

It's easy just to show up at someone's house to "hang out," and it may be hard to break this habit, but it's worth the effort. If activities are more organized, guys may begin asking girls on dates more often. Also, simply telling guys that you'd prefer dating should change their minds, as long as it doesn't include too much pressure or expense.

How should a guy treat a girl on a date?

Young men should use good manners, even if the activity is casual. Go to the door to pick the girl up, and say hello to her parents. Pay her compliments. Even if she is a good friend, go out of your way to make sure she is enjoying herself.

"The young women want young men to respect them and show them common, sincere courtesy. Do not hesitate to show good manners by opening a door for them, taking the initiative in inviting them on a date, and standing as they enter a room. Young women, you can also show respect and dignity by being considerate and polite, extending simple courtesies to others."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Away from the Blinding Dust," *New Era*, May 1991, 50.

"In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Standards of Strength," *New Era*, Oct. 2008, 2.

"In a dating and courtship relationship, I would not have you spend five minutes with someone who belittles you, who is constantly critical of you, who is cruel at your expense and may even call it humor."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "How Do I Love Thee?" *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 6.

"Happiness abounds when there is genuine respect one for another. . . . [To show respect, two people] need willingness to give and take in the search for harmony; and they need unselfishness of the highest sort—thought for their partners taking the place of desire for themselves. This is respect."

President Thomas S. Monson, "In Quest of the Abundant Life," *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 2.

Should guys really have to pay for every date?

Not necessarily, but if the young man is the one who asked the young woman out, he ought to pay. However, don't fall into the bad habit of taking advantage of the one most willing or able to pay.

Dates don't always have to cost money. With a little planning, ordinary activities can become dates, such as going for walks or playing games. Most teens don't have enough money to go out to dinner and a movie regularly, so creative dating that doesn't cost much is the thing to try. When two people enjoy each other's company, then even simple activities can become fun and allow you to get to know each other better.

What are proper manners for a girl on a date?

A girl has the same obligation to show good manners as a boy. She

should appreciate the efforts he goes to and thank him. She should talk to him and help him have a nice time. She should never be texting others during a date. She should never "ditch" him to go do something with others during the date. She should make every effort to be pleasant and talkative.

Is there anything wrong with flirting?

Showing interest is all right—smile, laugh, talk, be friendly—but flirting can cross the line if it's too aggressive. You may not even be totally aware that you're flirting. And because it isn't just what you say but how you say it (including body language), flirting can also be easily misinterpreted. People who are overly flirtatious often make others feel uncomfortable and may send the wrong messages about their intentions.

"How you speak says much about who you are."

***For the Strength of Youth*, 22.**

"What may appear to be harmless teasing or simply having a little fun with someone of the opposite sex can easily lead to more serious involvement."

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1984), "The Law of Chastity," *New Era*, Jan. 1988, 6.

Why does *For the Strength of Youth* say, "In cultures where dating or courtship is acceptable"? Are there cultures where dating and courtship aren't appropriate?

Customs concerning dating may vary widely from one country and culture to another. What is important is to apply the principles and standards from *For the Strength of Youth* to your situation. For example, if dating is not encouraged in your culture, you can still find appropriate ways to form friendships and to learn social skills.

WHAT ABOUT BEING PHYSICALLY CLOSE?



When is it OK to hold hands? How serious is holding hands?

Holding hands, in and of itself, is pretty innocent. Usually the meaning of holding hands changes with the situation and with how two people feel about each other. For instance, if they are friends and are trying to keep track of each other in a crowd, it is simply a common courtesy and usually isn't serious. However, if two people hold hands all the time, it's like announcing that they're a couple, or dating exclusively, which is not what teens should be doing.

At what point is it appropriate to kiss?

There's no rule, but it's wise to save your kisses. A person once told of making the mistake of trying to kiss a girl on their first date. He realized he did not think kisses were special, but she did. That experience changed his mind. He then said, "There are good reasons why you should be discriminating and self-controlled in your giving of affection. . . . Once a couple begins to share affection in a physical way, this activity tends to become the focus of interest" ("Speaking of Kissing," *New Era*, June 2001, 32).

Other resources: Bruce Monson, "Speaking of Kissing," *New Era*, June 2001, 32; John Bytheway, "What Do Kisses Mean?" *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 39.

What about hugging?

Some people are very casual with hugs, and others are not. What might seem normal to you may be interpreted by another as quite intimate. And hugs are much more common in some cultures than in others. A brief hug can be a nice way to show

affection without being too serious. For instance, at the end of a date it can show appreciation without becoming inappropriate. But don't use hugs as an excuse to initiate contact that someone else doesn't want or appreciate.

Where do you draw the line on a date? How close can you get on a date?

The question is never "How far can I go?" but rather "How can I stay safe?" Just because you know where the line should be drawn in order to be morally clean, that does not necessarily mean that any physical contact short of that line is OK.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) once said about crossing the line on dates, "Conscience tells the individual when he is entering forbidden worlds, and it continues . . . until silenced by the will or by sin's repetition" ("President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *New Era*, Nov. 1980, 41). In other words, we know when things are getting into a dangerous or wrong area, and we must not keep ignoring these promptings until we don't feel them anymore.

The good thing about group dates is that opportunities for inappropriate behavior are lessened. The difficulty with physical attraction is that people often want more than they had the last time they were together. Opportunities for "crossing the line" usually come through little things.



Is a public display of affection a bad thing?

Usually when people speak of public displays of affection, they are talking about couples kissing, wrapping their arms around each other, or engaging in other kinds of touching in public. This kind of behavior shows a lack of self-control and self-respect, and it is also self-centered and inconsiderate, because it often makes others feel uncomfortable.

"Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage. Do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person's body, with or without clothing. Do not allow anyone to do that with you. . . . Always treat your date with respect, never as an object to be used for your lustful desires. Stay in areas of safety where you can easily control your physical feelings. Do not participate in talk or activities that arouse sexual feelings."

For the Strength of Youth, 27.

"Of course you are to socialize . . . , to date, to have fun of a wholesome kind in a hundred ways. But there is a line which you must not cross. It is the line that separates personal cleanliness from sin. I need not get clinical in telling you where that line is. You know. You have been told again and again. You have a conscience within you. Stay on the Lord's side of the line"

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008),
"Be Ye Clean," *Ensign*, May 1996, 48.



DOES MODEST DRESS REALLY IMPRESS?

How can guys encourage girls to dress modestly?

Guys, let girls know you notice and appreciate it when they dress modestly. Compliment them on their modest clothes, and then show that you mean it.

“When strong young priesthood holders see a girl immodestly dressed, most will not want to date her because her standards are not consistent with their eternal perspective. Immodesty in women cheapens their image. It causes embarrassment and loss of respect. It is not likely to win them the hand of a worthy, honorable young man who desires to marry a righteous young woman in the temple.”

**President James E. Faust (1920–2007),
Second Counselor in the First Presidency,
“Womanhood: The Highest Place of Honor,”
Ensign, May 2000, 97.**

“Young men, let . . . young women know that you will not seek an eternal companion from those that are overcome by worldly trends. Many dress and act immodestly because they are told that is what you want. In sensitive ways, communicate how distasteful revealing attire is to you, a worthy young man, and how it stimulates unwanted emotions from what you see against your will.

“Those young women who do embrace conservative dress standards and exhibit the attributes of a devoted Latter-day Saint are often criticized for not being ‘with it.’ Encourage them by expressing gratitude for their worthy example. Thank them for doing what is pleasing to the Lord and in time will bless their own husband and children. Many young women have returned to righteousness because of the example and understanding support of a worthy priesthood bearer. Perhaps a group of you could frankly discuss your concern in an appropriate setting such as a Sunday School or seminary class. Will you begin a private crusade to help young women understand how precious they are to God and attractive to you as they magnify their feminine traits and divinely given attributes of womanhood?”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Sanctity of Womanhood,” *New Era*, Nov. 2008, 4.

Why does it seem like boys date girls who dress immodestly?

Some national surveys in the U.S. have shown that most boys prefer modestly dressed girls. Yet many girls, especially LDS girls, have the opposite impression. This may come because immodestly dressed girls are sometimes more outgoing and assertive toward boys. And often boys are uncomfortable with what girls wear but don’t know how to tell them. So, boys, make your true feelings about modesty known. And girls, enlist the help of seminary teachers or Church leaders to get the message across: LDS girls expect LDS boys to favor modesty.

IS THERE A RULE ON THAT?

Should I date someone who is not LDS?

Possibly, but don't date anyone (LDS or not) who, because of low standards, will drag you down. Including friends who share your standards in your group dating can build wonderful friendships and may create missionary opportunities.

"Date only those who have high standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards."

For the Strength of Youth, 24.

"Choose friends who share your values so you can strengthen and encourage each other in living high standards. A true friend will encourage you to be your best self."

For the Strength of Youth, 12.

Other resources: Q&A, *New Era*, June 1977, 18.

How do you get out of a bad date?

If the group or activity makes you uncomfortable, ask your date to take you home or change the activity (such as leaving a bad movie). Let your parents know where you are going, and if you have a cell phone, use it when you need to. There is nothing wrong with standing up for yourself. If nothing inappropriate is going on and you're just not having a good time, then consider how you can help the situation without being rude to your date.

How do you react to a date when he or she doesn't show proper manners?

The best way to help someone with manners is by setting the example yourself. If that doesn't work, take them aside and kindly explain what is bothering you and what they need to do. Make sure they understand that the object is to help them, not embarrass them. If you are afraid that you don't know proper manners, ask your parents or youth leaders to give you some pointers. You can always practice at home or during Mutual or other activities with a group of familiar people.

Other resources: Lynn Scoresby, "How to Treat a Girl," *New Era*, Feb. 1987, 12; "My Worst Date Ever," *New Era*, May 1998, 27.



How long should a date last?

The length of a date depends in part on the activity you choose, but a good rule of thumb is: don't overdo it. Dates that are too long or complex or expensive usually aren't as much

fun anyway. Keeping a date to a reasonable amount of time may leave your date wanting to spend more time with you later. Also, always be sure to honor curfews—your date's as well as your own.

Is it rude to use a coupon on a date?

Not at all! Go ahead and use coupons if you want. Some of the best, most memorable dates are the free or inexpensive ones.

What if someone else I really want to go with asks me after I've already accepted another date?

You can simply tell the second person how sorry you are and then offer to go another time. Plan to go with the one you already agreed to go with, without making a fuss about your dilemma. Make sure your date has a nice time.

Why is it important to take time to plan a date?

Planning an activity in advance shows respect and consideration for your date. Also, planning is good for practical reasons: you will be less likely to run into awkward situations (movie is sold out, restaurant is full), you'll be able to tell your parents and your date's parents where you'll be, and it lets your date know how to dress for the occasion (you don't want to go formally dressed to a picnic or casually dressed to a fancy restaurant).

How do you turn down a date politely?

Be courteous when you need to turn down a date. Don't say anything that might hurt feelings. Simply thank them for the offer and say that you would rather not go or that you are unable to go with them.

"If we are to persuade young men to ask for dates more frequently, we must establish a mutual expectation that to go on a date is not to imply a continuing commitment. . . . Young women, if you turn down a date, be kind. Otherwise you may crush a nervous and shy questioner and destroy him as a potential dater, and that could hurt some other sister."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Dating versus Hanging Out," *Ensign*, June 2006, 14.

What should you wear on a date?

You should, of course, dress modestly. Take time to look your best. This is a way of showing respect to the ones you are with. This is also one of the reasons to plan dates in advance. It lets your date know what you are going to do so that they can dress appropriately.

Other references: "Social Survival," by Margaret Wilding, *New Era*, Mar. 1983; "How to Be a First-Rate Date," *New Era*, Oct. 2004; "A Question of Honor," Alma Yates, *New Era*, May 1983.

What can you do not to feel nervous about a date?

Let's see . . . remember to breathe. That's always good. Imagine yourself not making a fool of yourself. Be prepared; have a plan. Pray. Keep busy. Try listening to good music, or reading the scriptures or another good book, or doing your homework, or doing chores. Then go on your date and have fun.

NEmore

To see more answers to dating questions, go to the Dating topic page at Youth.lds.org.



Stories

FROM GENERAL AUTHORITIES

on Dating

The True Ideal

We all need a standard, something to compare our behavior with, to help us decide what a practical goal of goodness is. And most of us choose people to compare ourselves with. I learned long ago that it matters who you choose for that comparison. Let me tell you how I learned.

Years ago, before adolescence hit me, I read a book called *Gospel Ideals*. It was a collection of excerpts from the talks of President David O. McKay. One chapter described how you would know when you were in love and, therefore, how you should view and treat women. His lofty words more than touched my heart: I felt a confirmation that they were true. Without telling anyone, I took David O. McKay's words as one of my standards of goodness. Five or six years later, I was playing basketball with a very fine team in a league in a city. . . . Up to that point, I had never had a date. And I had no sisters, so what I thought I knew about girls and how to treat them came mostly from the visions I got from *Gospel Ideals*. I remember riding home one night from a game. . . . I sat in the back seat of the car. They talked about girls. . . . I can remember, as I listened to them, the thought coming into my mind: "I have been wrong. Those ideals about girls and how you should feel about them, how you should treat them, they are unrealistic."

Luckily, in a few years I learned that they were wrong and President McKay was right. Or perhaps, in fairness to those young men, I learned that what I thought they had said, what I thought they had felt, what I thought they actually did, were not the true standard of goodness.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Choose to Be Good," in *Brigham Young University 1991–92 Speeches* (1992), 5.

Learn to Laugh

There is an antidote for times [of testing and trial]: learn to laugh. . . .

. . . I remember when one of our daughters went on a blind date. She was all dressed up and waiting for her date to arrive when the doorbell rang. In walked a man who seemed a little old, but she tried to be polite. She introduced him to me and my wife and the other children; then she put on her coat and went out the door. We watched as she got into the car, but the car didn't move. Eventually our daughter got out of the car and, red faced, ran back into the house. The man that she thought was her blind date had actually come to pick up another of our daughters who had agreed to be a babysitter for him and his wife.

We all had a good laugh over that. In fact, we couldn't stop laughing. Later, when our daughter's real blind date showed up, I couldn't come out to meet him because I was still in the kitchen laughing. Now, I realize that our daughter could have felt humiliated and embarrassed. But she laughed with us, and as a result, we still laugh about it today.

The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1917–2009), "Come What May, and Love It," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26–27.

No Regrets

A few years ago my wife and I and another General Authority and his wife were on a Church assignment. The other man's wife and I had dated when we were both in high school. I was glad, and I am sure she was glad, that we did not have any bad memories of that date. Both of us could speak of it to our spouses and both of us could speak to a Church audience in the presence of the other without embarrassment.

When we are young, we sometimes behave as if there were no tomorrow. When we are young it is easy to forget that we will grow up, marry, raise a family, and—note this significant point—continue to associate with some of the same people who are witnesses to or participants in our teenage pranks or transgressions.

Young men, the girl you are dating may be your wife in a few years, but probably she will not. Possibly she will turn out to be the wife of your bishop or your stake president. Young women, the fellow you are dating may turn out to be your husband, but more likely, he will not. He may turn out to be the husband of your sister or your best friend. He may even be a counselor in your bishopric or an employee you supervise at your place of work. Conduct your life today so your tomorrows are not burdened with bad or embarrassing memories.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sin and Suffering," in *Brigham Young University 1989–90 Speeches* (1990), 7.



In the DRIVER'S SEAT

By Wendy Kenney

For parents, sending a child out on his or her first date can be just as terrifying as letting a son or daughter get behind the wheel of a car for the first time. But eventually, as teens log more hours of trustworthy driving, parents become more comfortable with turning the car keys over to them. Does the same hold true for dating? Will your parents be more comfortable with your dating as you demonstrate that you can be trusted? It all depends on the type of relationship you have with your parents.

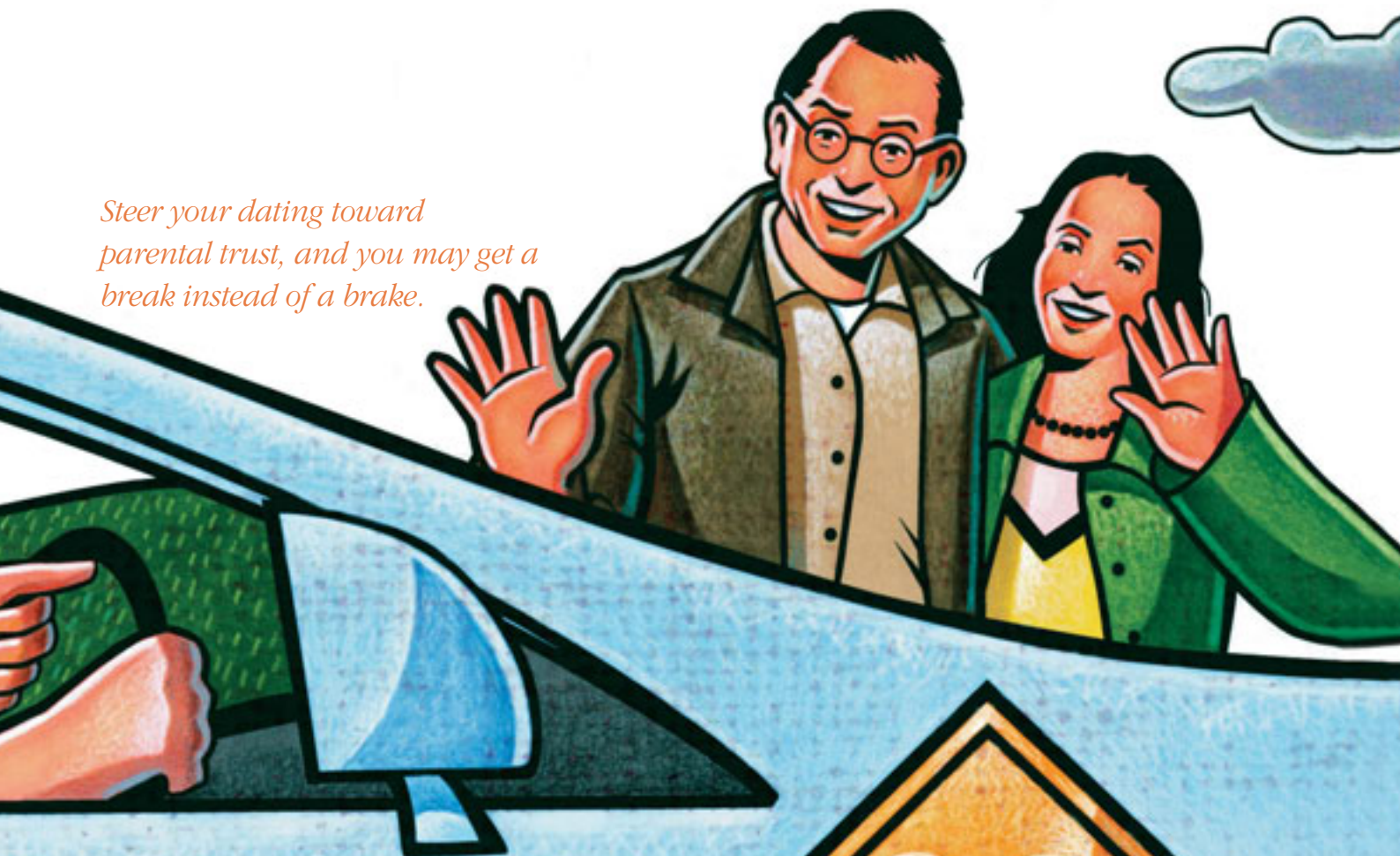
Map your plans

If you've built a relationship of trust with your parents through years of open, honest communication, then they are more apt to trust you as you venture out on dates. But whether you're hanging out with a group at a friend's house or going on a date, it is normal for your parents to ask you about your plans. And you will increase their trust in you if you are prepared to give specific answers.

Of course, they'll ask the obvious questions: Who are you going with? Where are you going? What are you doing? When will you be home? They may also want to know who's paying, who's driving, or what movie you'll be watching. And they may want to be assured that your friend's parents will be home if you are planning to go to their house.

If you're wondering why your parents need to know so much, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has given the answer: "If you are old enough to date, you are old enough to know that your parents have not only the right but the sacred obligation, and they are under counsel from the leaders of the Church, to concern themselves with your dating habits" ("You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 6).

Steer your dating toward parental trust, and you may get a break instead of a brake.



Accelerate communication

Some teens have a very open relationship with their parents and willingly tell them about their plans before the date. Then they come home and recount the entire evening. On the other hand, some teens are more private and may even resent having to supply so much information to their parents. Which type are you? Are you more conversational or more close-lipped? Consider what one mother confided about her family: the teenage daughter who is more open in her communication with her parents tends to get more freedom than her less communicative sister. If you're on the tight-lipped side of the scale, try offering information to your parents *before* they ask. You may be pleasantly surprised at how easy it is when you initiate the conversation and are already prepared with answers.

"I like telling my parents what I'm planning to do when I go on a date. I feel like they trust me more," explains Aubrey from Pleasant View, Utah. "And when they trust me more, I can do more things, because they don't worry about me."

Oh, and one more thing: be honest. Parents know when you're not being completely honest with them.



TALK TO YOUR PARENTS

"Be open with your parents. Communicate with them. Discuss with them your problems. Have prayer with them before a date. . . . 'Honour thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee' (Ex. 20:12)."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 9).

Certainly, outright lying is wrong and will damage your relationship with your parents, as will breaking a promise to them. That's essentially what you do when you don't come home when you say you'll be home or when you do something different from what you said you would do. To respect and honor your parents, and for your own protection, you need to inform your parents of a change in plans. Never hesitate to keep them informed. And if one of your parents calls you while you're on a date, answer your phone. You may assume your mom is just checking up on you, but more likely she has some important information to share. Just as you would never ignore your parents if they were speaking to you in person, you should never ignore a call from home while you're on a date. Make a good impression on the person you're with by showing them how well you can get along with Mom and Dad.

Pull over for parents

Do you want to impress your date's parents? Tell your date you'd like to meet his or her parents. *For the Strength of Youth* counsels, "Make sure your parents meet those you date" ([2001], 25). After your date introduces you to them, tell them a little about yourself and how much you appreciate being able to go out with their son or daughter. It may be a bit uncomfortable at first, but it will earn you their trust and approval, which goes a long way in the world of dating.

As Nick from Sandy, Utah, explains, "It's always scary meeting my date's parents for the first time, but what her parents think of me is important. If they like me, it may affect whether she likes me or not." Nick says he follows his father's counsel—stand up straight, look them in the eye, and give them a firm handshake.

Whether it's maintaining open, honest communication with your own parents, or taking the time to make a good impression on your date's parents, the more informed you keep both sets of parents, the more trust you'll earn for yourself and your date. **NE**



RESCUE PLAN

It's important to talk to your parents about what to do if you find yourself in an unsafe or uncomfortable situation while you're on the dating road. Some families have a code word or phrase that alerts the parents that someone's in trouble and they need to be rescued. One father explains, "If my daughter calls and says, 'Dad, Joe's here,' I know she's in trouble and I need to go pick her up."

Make sure you always have a way to phone your parents. If you don't have a cell phone of your own, but your parents do, ask if you can borrow it to take it with you on a date. If you can't reach your parents, call a relative, a youth leader, or even your bishop to come get you.



FAMILY INTERSECTION

For the *Strength of Youth* suggests, "Invite your dates to activities with your family" (25). Ask your parents if you can bring a date on a family outing. Your parents will be pleased to meet someone you're dating, and your date will be glad to get to know your family in a more informal setting.



"It's your fault, Daddy! You're six-foot-five, 300 pounds, a black belt, a bishop, and a dentist! What boy is going to be brave enough to ask me out?!"

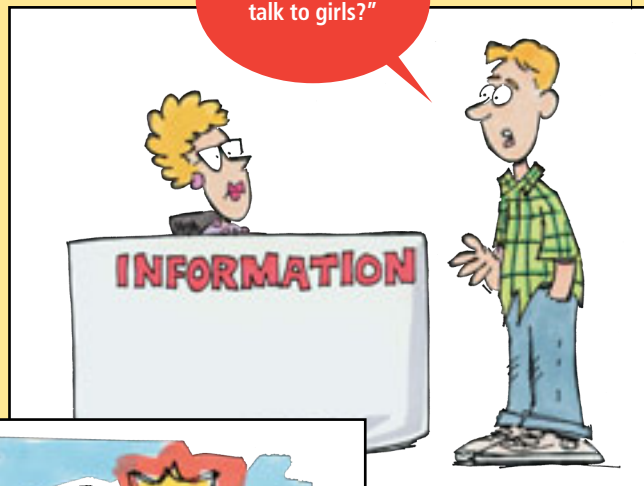
RYAN STOKER

"You really didn't have to provide a resumé when you asked me for a date."



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

"How do I talk to girls?"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



"XOXOXOXO ... I thought this was a LOVE NOTE, not your bowling score."

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

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UNSTEADY

By JeaNette G. Smith

If you're dating casually, you don't expect a relationship to become a romance. You have fun; you do a variety of things with a variety of people.

Let's see if you can correctly answer the following question: At what age are Latter-day Saint youth allowed to date? Of course, you probably immediately said, "16," showing you've paid attention to *For the Strength of Youth*, as well as your parents and Church leaders.

OK, then, how about this one: At what age are you allowed to have a boyfriend or girlfriend?

You may be thinking, "Um, 16. Didn't I just answer that?"

Well, if that was your answer, then, even though you aced the first question, you missed the second one. Just because you can date when you turn 16 doesn't mean you should immediately start looking for a steady boyfriend or girlfriend.

For decades, prophets have preached that youth who are in no position to marry should not pair off exclusively. For instance, President Hinckley (1910–2008) said, "When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. *When you reach an age where you think of marriage*, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in *high school* don't need this, and neither do the girls" ("Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51; italics added).

So what does this counsel really mean, and what are the reasons for it?

Two Kinds of Dating

To begin with, the general term *dating* may be a little confusing, since nowadays it sometimes seems to imply something a little more



DATING

Make the most of your teenage dating years by keeping it casual.

serious than what we intend it to mean in relation to youth in the Church. There are two different types of dating: *casual* dating and *steady* (or *serious*) dating. The distinction between the two has to do with exclusivity.

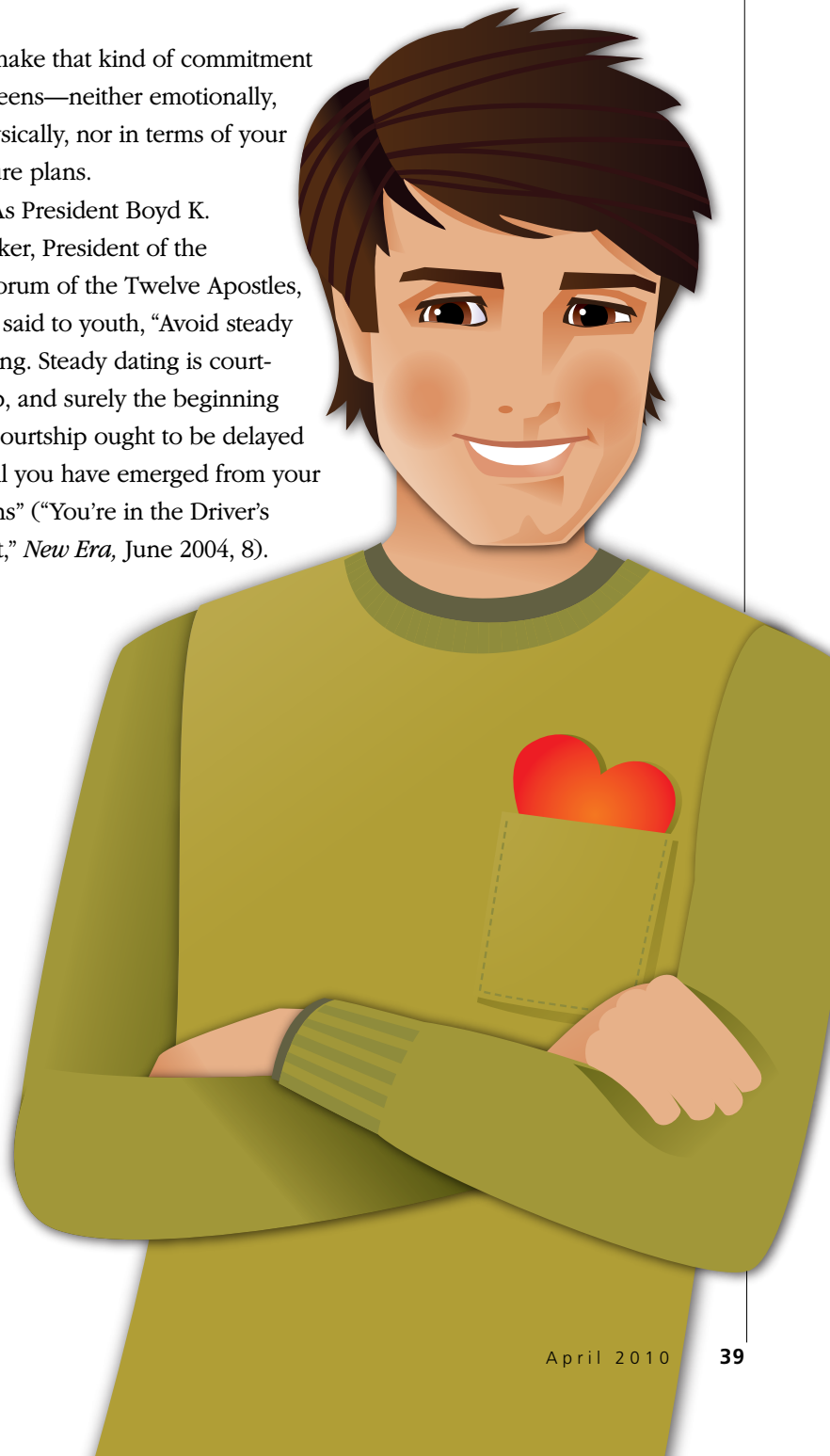
Casual Dating. With casual dating, there is no exclusivity. The two people aren't "a couple" or "an item," and they don't refer to each other as a "boyfriend" or "girlfriend." They don't pair off. People who are casually dating are simply friends. This is the kind of dating the Church encourages you to do after you turn 16. You should put aside a need to find a "one and only." If you're dating casually, you don't expect a relationship to become a romance. You have fun; you do a variety of things with a variety of people.

Steady Dating. On the other hand, steady dating means the couple is exclusive with one another. They expect each other not to date anyone else or to be emotionally or physically close with other people. Couples who date seriously consider the future, because there is a real possibility they could stay together. This is the kind of dating the Church encourages young adults (generally, people in their 20s) to progress toward, because that's the age when they should be thinking of marrying.

You should avoid becoming exclusive as teenagers, because an exclusive relationship requires a high level of commitment from both partners, and you're not in a position

to make that kind of commitment as teens—neither emotionally, physically, nor in terms of your future plans.

As President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said to youth, "Avoid steady dating. Steady dating is courtship, and surely the beginning of courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens" ("You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 8).



Relationships have different stages of emotional connectedness. The important stages for teenagers in their relationships are friendship and casual dating.

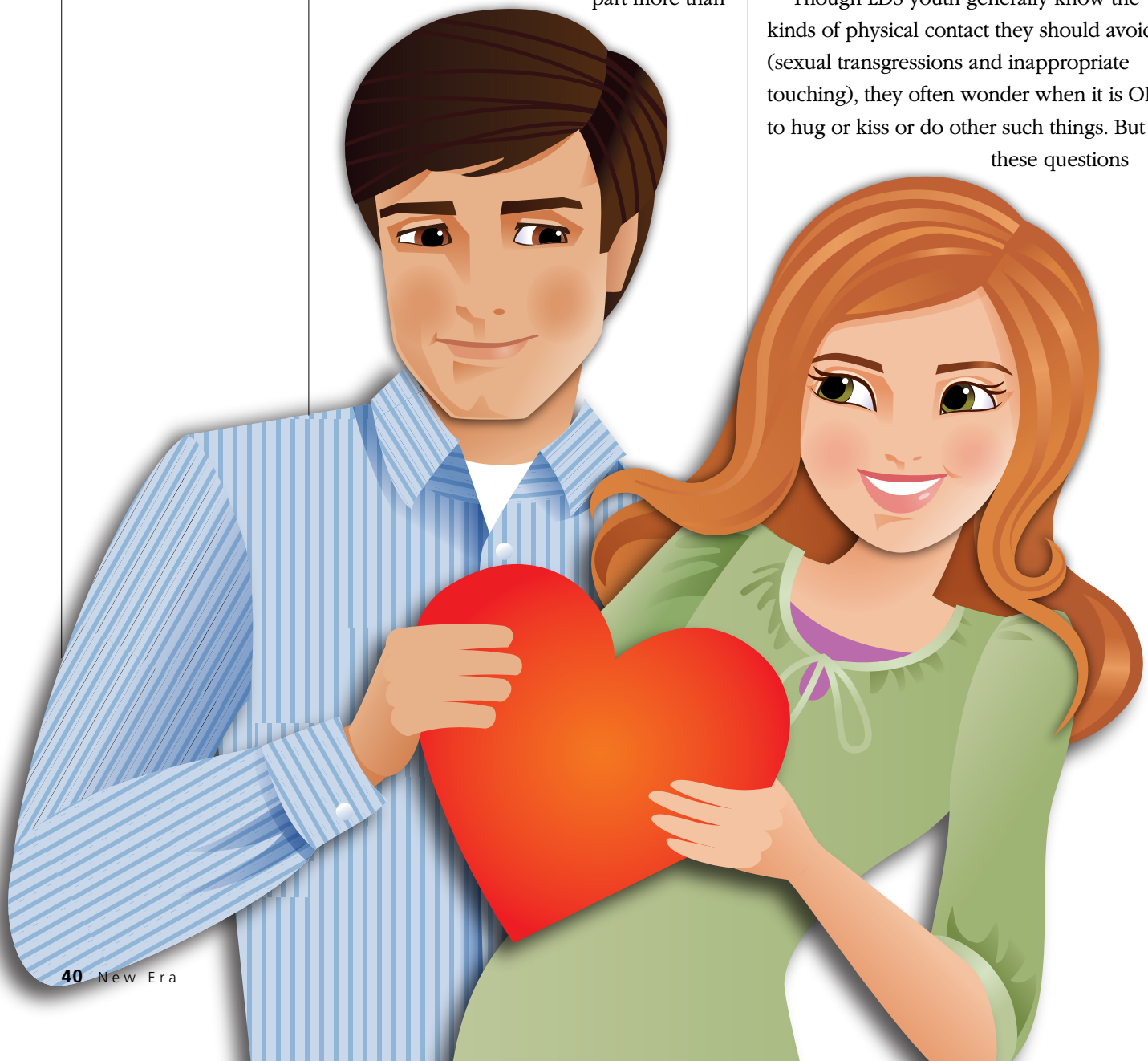
Emotional Intimacy

The problem is, a lot of teenagers jump the gun. They think these friendship-type relationships are only for younger kids, and they plunge into romantic relationships more appropriate for young adults (people in their 20s), who are in a position to think about marriage.

These romantic relationships have two components: physical and emotional. Generally speaking, boys crave the physical part more than

girls do, and girls crave the emotional part more than boys do. Because boys have less of a desire for emotional closeness, they are usually in control of how deep this aspect of the relationship will become. Likewise, because girls are less driven by a desire for a physical relationship, they are generally in control of how far that aspect of the relationship will go. Marriage is where these two components come together in more perfect harmony.

Though LDS youth generally know the kinds of physical contact they should avoid (sexual transgressions and inappropriate touching), they often wonder when it is OK to hug or kiss or do other such things. But these questions



ignore the emotional half of the equation.

The question is not simply where you put your hands, but it's where you put your heart. Often two teens (especially LDS youth who know the Lord's commandments) will be tempted to become physical only if they've already established the kind of relationship that would permit it—one that has already reached a level of emotional connectedness and commitment.

After high school (and a mission, for a young man), if young adults become emotionally intimate and naturally desire physical intimacy, they are in a position to do something about it: they could get married. But if teens become emotionally intimate and naturally desire physical intimacy, they can't do anything about it. They're not in a position to marry, so they either break the law of chastity or break one another's hearts by ending the relationship.

President Hinckley said, "Steady dating at an early age leads so often to tragedy. Studies have shown that the longer a boy and girl date one another, the more likely they are to get into trouble. It is better . . . to date a variety of companions until you are ready to marry" ("A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 13).

Fostering Friendship

Relationships have different stages of emotional connectedness (see the figure on "The Funnel Theory"). The important stages for teenagers to experience in their relationships are friendship and casual dating.

Friendship is when two people discover they have similar interests, similar views—things in common. They talk with one another, validate one another's views, and choose to spend time together. They may

FABULOUS FRIENDSHIPS FOR TEENS

Here are some reasons why, for teenagers, friendship is healthier than romance.

Friendship is more about fun. You get to do more things, meet more people, learn more about the world, and become more well-rounded than when you're in a romantic relationship as a teen.

Friendship is less stressful. It's not as scary when the person you're with really believes in friendship rather than romance. Friendship is casual. The stakes aren't so high.

Without romance, you can better balance your time between all of your friends, both male and female. There is less pettiness, jealousy, and disappointment in friendships among teens.

Friendships can last a lifetime. Without the complications of romance, you can build healthy friendships that can continue far beyond high school.

It's easier to be authentic. Teens have an easier time being honest in a friendship than a romance. Friends accept each other. They feel less of a need to put on a show or try to impress the other person.

Friends are more likely to boost your self-worth. Friendship among teens is more often based on something like character or common values rather than looks or attractiveness. The one will help you feel better about yourself, the other has a greater potential to make you feel worse about yourself.

Friendship is a foundation. When people are mature enough to engage in romance and decide to fall in love, they are more likely to succeed if they first were friends, having built a foundation of trust.

You can find true compatibility. Friends can determine what they truly like about each other (character, personality, sense of humor) rather than having to deal with the complications of romance.

Friendship makes you better at choosing a marriage partner. Youth who choose a wide variety of friends rather than restricting themselves to a single relationship will be better informed in choosing a marriage partner.

Friendship makes you better at marriage. Friends learn to communicate honestly, to make personal sacrifices, to be independent, dependable, and decisive. Dysfunctional adolescent relationships put people at greater risk of having dysfunctional adult relationships. Functional, healthy adolescent relationships—friendships—are the best preparation for healthy, unscarred adult relationships.

Casual dating has the same basic characteristics as friendship. It is casual, no-pressure fun that keeps you from getting too serious with one person.

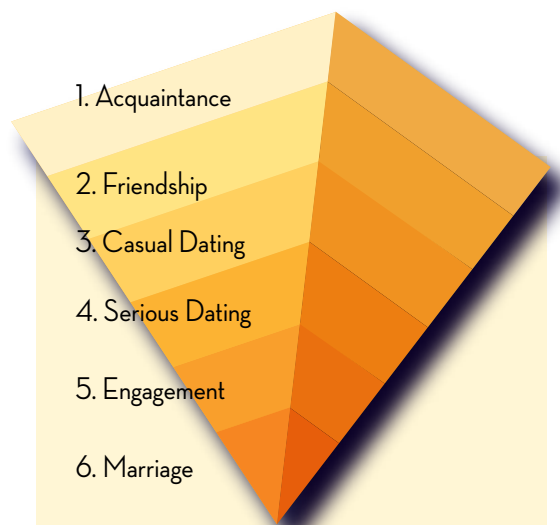
hang out in the same social circle, study together, or participate in activities they both enjoy. In the teen years, friendships between guys and girls should look like regular friendships, which have an inclusive attitude of “the more the merrier.” Casual dating has the same basic characteristics as friendship, except the friends may be paired up for the duration of an event or activity.

If you choose to date after turning 16, the Church encourages you to date in groups. The brilliance of group dating is that it prevents you from becoming too attached to one person of the opposite sex. It allows you to get to know a number of people and to interact with everybody else in the group, fostering a feeling of friendship. Friends follow a philosophy of inclusion—friendship is casual, no-pressure fun that keeps you from getting too serious with one person.

Whether you’re old enough to date or not, remember that “good friendships can and should be developed at every age” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 24). And the teen years are a great time to be building those kinds of friendships, whether you’re dating or not.

As you take to heart the counsel of modern prophets, you will see how fulfilling your relationships can be, without having to deal with the complications (and potential sorrow) of teenage romance. **NE**

JeaNette G. Smith is a licensed marriage and family therapist and licensed mental health counselor. This article was adapted, with permission, from her book Unsteady, published by Covenant Communications, Inc.



THE FUNNEL THEORY

This diagram shows stages in relationships with members of the opposite sex. The top three stages can be categorized generally as “friendship” stages. Most relationships will stay in the Acquaintance and Friendship stages. The bottom three belong to the “romance” category. As you progress through these stages toward marriage, the number of members of the opposite sex you interact with gets smaller and the depth or seriousness of the relationship gets greater.

Stage One: Acquaintance—You know or have met each other.

Stage Two: Friendship—You have things in common with and choose to do things with each other.

Stage Three: Casual Dating—Same as friendship, except you’re paired together for an activity.

Stage Four: Serious Dating—You are in a position to marry and commit to date each other exclusively.

Stage Five: Engagement and Courtship—You have decided to marry one another.

Stage Six: Marriage—You enter a sacred covenant together and are sealed to one another eternally.

WHAT MAKES A PERSON

Datable?

By Jourdan A. Strain

Have you ever wondered what makes one person seem more datable than another? Here are a few traits that can help you become prime dating material:

1. A positive attitude. It's no fun being around someone with a bad outlook on life. Be optimistic and cheerful, and others will naturally want to be around you.

2. A smile. No amount of makeup or expensive clothing can compete with a sincere smile. Consider it your best accessory!

3. A well-groomed appearance. People who take good care of themselves often take good care of others. Practice good hygiene and keep the dress and appearance standards in *For the Strength of Youth* ([2001], 14–15).

4. Confidence. Take pride in who you are and what you believe. But don't be arrogant—nobody likes to be around people who are condescending.

5. A ready ear. A good listener will always be a good friend or date. Show genuine interest in what people have to say and they'll always want to talk to you.

6. Ambition. Have worthy goals and don't be afraid to work toward attaining them. Don't be afraid to try new things.

7. Respect. Show consideration for everyone, whether they are strangers, friends, parents, family members, or people you would like to date. Honor your priesthood and don't misuse it or live unworthily. Respect your womanhood by dressing modestly and living gospel standards.

8. Clean language. Refraining from using foul language shows restraint and a dedication to the gospel, as well as respect of yourself and those around you.

9. A testimony. Testify of your love of the gospel by serving others and sharing your beliefs with them.

10. Being an example. Make good decisions that are consistent with the teachings of the Church. People will admire you for your commitment to the gospel and Christlike behavior, and you will be happier. **NE**

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT

"As you go through your dating and courting relationships, I would hope that you will assess the spiritual inclinations of the individuals you're getting to know better. How is their testimony? How do they treat their parents? How do they treat their brothers and sisters? Do they respect authority? Do they love the Lord, His servants, and the scriptures? What plans do they have for their lives?

"It isn't enough if they are handsome or beautiful, if they are rich or poor, what kind of car they drive, what kind of clothes they wear, what kind of athletic ability they have, or what kind of intellect they are. You should be seeking to understand the gifts they have that will be eternal in nature."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Gifts of the Spirit," *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 19.

ILLUSTRATION BY CARY HENRIE

DOUBLE DATE

By Jourdan Strain

Hardly considered myself a dating machine, which is why I was stunned when I was asked out not once, but twice in the same week. I couldn't believe my luck. I scheduled

a date with one boy for Friday and the other for Saturday. I was feeling pretty smug about how popular with the young men I had become.

My Friday night date went as planned. We had a nice dinner and then went to meet a group of his friends to play a board game. We arrived at his friend's house and waited for the rest of the group to arrive. People trickled in every few minutes, but I didn't really notice. There wasn't going to be anyone I knew here.

Until I locked eyes with someone I recognized. I froze.

My Saturday night date was staring right back at me.

I could have died. I suddenly didn't feel so proud of myself for landing two dates that weekend. I tried to give

my Saturday night date some kind of facial signal that expressed my embarrassment over the situation, but to my surprise, he looked like he was trying to keep from bursting out laughing. He gave me a meaningful nod to indicate that this would be our little secret. We went about the rest of the evening without discussing the mishap so as to spare my current date, who had no idea his friend had asked me out for the following evening.

When he picked me up the next evening for our date, we were able to laugh about what happened the night before. I know how lucky I was that his feelings hadn't been hurt when he saw me on a date with his friend. The Church encourages dating different people when we're young, but I



became more aware of how my dating decisions could hurt others if I was not careful. Even though it was an accident, the experience taught me an important lesson about treating dates with the consideration and respect they deserve. **NE**

BETTER THAN BEAUTY

By Malinda Williams

My junior prom was a little less than a week away. All my friends and classmates were happily chatting about how they had the perfect date, dress, or shoes lined up for the occasion. It made me sick. I hadn't been asked yet, and the way things were looking, I wasn't going to be. Everyone seemed to have a date except me, and it hurt.

I told myself it didn't matter and tried not to take it personally. I even helped decorate for the dance with the rest of my class, but as prom approached, the hurt only worsened. I knew prom didn't matter in the eternal scheme of things, but I was convinced this was a tragedy.

One night while reading my scriptures, my eyes were staring at the words on the page, but my mind was elsewhere. I just couldn't get over myself. Maybe if I were more beautiful I would have had a date. I started thinking of things that would make me more beautiful in the world's eyes. Make-up, jewelry, more fashionable clothes; surely these would make me more attractive. I came to the conclusion that had I used them, I would have a date for prom.

Then I glanced down at my scriptures in an effort to remember what I had read. I was surprised when a verse in the middle of the page caught

THE LETTER

By Julia Woodbury

I wasn't expecting a letter from my dad. I was away at college, just trying to keep up with my studies, when it arrived. It wasn't my birthday or any other special occasion, so I thought the envelope just held some insurance information or some other document I had forgotten at home.

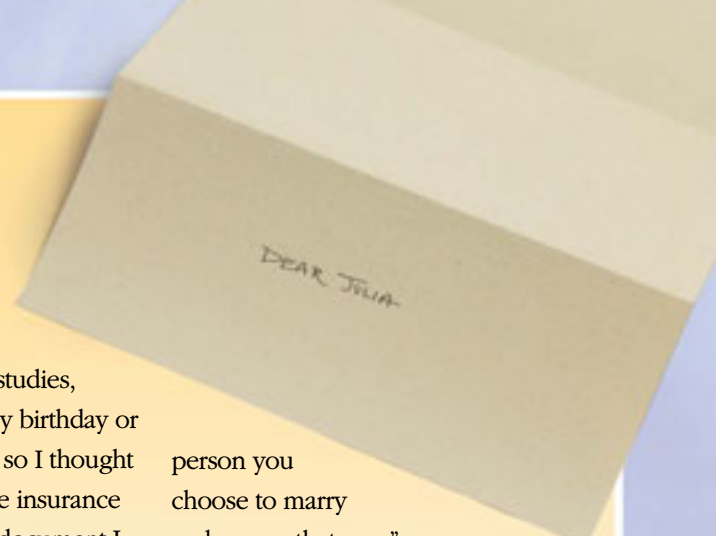
Instead, when I opened the letter, I found a short, three-paragraph note from my dad. He had written it during his free time on one of his business trips. It was his way of showing his love, but the words he shared also taught me a valuable truth I have never forgotten.

Dad told me a little about his trip. He also mentioned how he appreciated me. It made me feel so special that I had been on my father's mind during his busy days of travel and work.

Then, in the last few lines, he wrote these simple words: "I am really excited to be going home to be with your mother. I haven't seen her since Tuesday, and I miss her. She makes me better when I am around her. I hope the

my eye. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chronicles 16:29).

The phrase "beauty of holiness" hit me hard. I knew this was the Lord's way of telling me that I didn't need material things to be beautiful—I could be even more beautiful inside if I worked to be closer to Him. This little reminder gave me an overwhelming sense of His love, and I knew that no matter how things



person you choose to marry makes you that way."

My throat tightened and I got teary-eyed as I read this. I was so grateful for my dad's love and appreciation for my mom. Their marriage has been the best example I could have on dating and relationships. I also was glad for dad's subtle advice to me to associate with young men who help me to be a better person. It was a great reminder to me of what I really should be looking for and focusing on in my relationships.

There are people who really do care about who we date. Most importantly, Heavenly Father cares, because if we choose well, the people we are with will help us to be better and happier. And that is what Heavenly Father desires: for us to be filled with joy. **NE**

turned out, it would be all right.

I did manage to find a great guy to take me to the dance, and we had a fun time. But I know that even if I hadn't found anybody to go with, I would have been able to get through it with help from the Lord. I know that there is no better way to be and feel more beautiful than through a strong relationship with Him. I also know that He can help us through our difficult times, no matter what they may be, because we are His children and He loves us. **NE**

MAKE A

Great Date

By Julia Woodbury

Educational
Inexpensive

- Have you ever toured your own city? Set out to discover what draws tourists to your town. Tour historical buildings, see your local zoo or aquarium, go read the plaques on memorials. See how much there is to discover right in your own town.

Educational
Athletic
Free

- Take turns sharing your sporting skills. Teach the group how to play your favorite sport, and then take a turn being the student and learn from everyone else.

Artistic
Free

- Borrow a video camera and make a movie with props that you find around the house. Divide your group to make different movies and have an awards ceremony after viewing them all.

Service
Food
Free

- Go on an ingredient scavenger hunt. Go to people's homes to collect all the things you need to make delicious cookies, and then after you bake them, deliver samples to those who contributed.

Athletic
Free

- Be a kid again. Head over to the park and play childhood games like hide-and-seek or capture-the-flag.

Educational
Artistic
Inexpensive

- Sign up for a one-day class at a local arts center and spend some time learning about photography, pottery, painting, or something else. Or, look around in your ward for someone who can teach you a unique talent and ask for a lesson for the group.

Food
Inexpensive

- Can't go on a picnic? Get a group date together for an evening at "camp." Put some cutout star constellations on the ceiling, make shadow puppets, play card or board games on the floor, and make some tinfoil dinners in the oven.

Educational
Artistic
Inexpensive

- Tour a local art museum. You can try taking turns playing "I Spy." Who can find a painting with a dog in it, or a sculpture made out of some strange material?

Service
Free

- Want a great date? Serve! You can rake a neighbor's leaves, wash windows, visit a nursing home, or volunteer at a homeless shelter. If you want to add some daring, do secret acts of service, like quietly shoveling someone's snow or leaving cookies on doorsteps.

Athletic
Free

- Switch up the seasons. If it is winter and there is snow on the ground, try playing croquet or golfing with brightly colored balls.



Plan some great group dates with these fun ideas.



Service
Free

- Make a date out of giving a date. Know a couple who would like a night out? Offer to host their date by making and serving a candlelit dinner for them.

Athletic
Free

- Have a nice afternoon in a local park. Take a walk, ride bikes, throw a Frisbee, rollerblade, feed the birds, fly kites, have a picnic—a park has all sorts of fun possibilities.

Educational
Inexpensive

- Try an afternoon as a thrifty spender. Check out a nearby garage sale, thrift store, or farmer's market and see what fun items you can find. For a fun twist, shop with a theme in mind or make a game of it to see who can find the strangest item.

Athletic
More expensive

- Go to a local amusement park or carnival where you can play in the batting cages, ride go-karts, play miniature golf, and play appropriate arcade games.

Food
Inexpensive

- Try going out at a different time of day. For example, go out to breakfast on a Saturday morning.

Food
More expensive

- Take fast food by storm and have a progressive meal. Select different restaurants around town and go to each one. Order drinks at one, appetizers at another, go somewhere new for your main course, and top it off with your favorite dessert in town.

Educational Food
Inexpensive

- Take a world tour from your table. Pick a place and make a meal from that country. Try learning more about

that particular country by looking at tourist books or watching a film about it.

Athletic
Free

- If you have a park or large open field nearby, set up an obstacle course and have a tournament.

Athletic
Free

- Play sports together. If you feel like changing things up, try switching around the rules or adding funny new ones to make it unique.

Service
More expensive

- Buy some flats of flowers, plant them in beautiful arrangements in planter boxes, and give them to people in your neighborhood.

Service Athletic
Free

- Split into teams and go on a walk along a trail. Pick up any garbage you see and, at the end, give prizes for the strangest objects you find.

Service
Free

- Make someone else's night by offering to babysit for some young couples in your ward. Make assignments within your group for games, snacks, and entertainment for the kids.

Educational
Inexpensive

- Go on a nature hike and learn about the plants and wildlife that you see along the way. Or, you can try an early morning hike. Pick a nice spot, bring along a picnic breakfast, and watch the sun rise.



Educational
Free

- Take a turn being bookworms. Go to a local library or bookstore and browse through the books. You can take turns reading children's books to each other. Or look for the most interesting title, or the funniest chapter.

Artistic
Inexpensive

- Feeling dramatic? Put on a reader's theater. Find a play that everyone is interested in, assign roles, and let the play begin!

Educational
Free

- Does your school have free music concerts? Make a date out of it and go see your school's band, orchestra, or choir in action.

Athletic
Free/Inexpensive

- If you're looking for a winter activity, try night skiing, sledding, building a snowman, or even having a snowball fight.

Athletic
Inexpensive

- Do you have friends who play sports? Go support them at a sporting activity. Show your spirit by wearing their colors.

Athletic
Free

- Learn how to swing, ballroom, or country dance and then show off your steps to your friends. Or, get in a group and learn a fun dance routine together.

Artistic
Free

- Find a poetry reading to attend, or create your own with food, friends, and your favorite poetic stanzas.

Artistic
Free

- Have a photo scavenger hunt or see who can get the most interesting shots of the same subject. If you're using digital cameras, have a computer slideshow of all the photos you take.

Artistic
Free

- Write a song or work on an original melody together. Or try writing a new verse to one of your favorite songs.

Artistic
Inexpensive

- Have an art date. Make sculptures out of play dough, paint rocks, decorate or tie-dye shirts, or finger paint.

Educational
Inexpensive

- Have a starry, starry night. Study some astronomy, go to a planetarium, go stargazing, and make star-shaped cookies.

Artistic
Free

- Ever tried creating an outfit out of newspaper? Collect some bundles of newspaper, get a group together, make costumes, and have a fashion show to see what kinds of outrageous creations you can come up with.

Food
Inexpensive

- For something out of the ordinary, have a formal dinner in the park instead of in a fancy restaurant.

Artistic
Free

- Near a beach? Build sand castles. Make them as elaborate as you can and then have passersby or some friends judge your creations.





WALKING in the Park

By Sara Israelsen-Hartley

I didn't fall for you,
or you for me;
yet we were in love,
in love with the world around us,
in love with the beauty of life.
And we enjoyed each other's
company
as friends.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As we began preparing for this issue on dating, we wanted to make sure we talked to real teens who had real questions so they could

get some real answers. We started

by talking to teens as we traveled and corresponded. Then we arranged to meet with teens attending Especially For Youth sessions. They came from all over the U.S., as well as from other countries. We asked for volunteers to meet our editors and tell us what questions they would like to see answered. We loved these talkative teens who made us laugh and told us what they really think. And we captured a lot of their advice in several articles in this issue.

Check out “Dating FAQs” and “What’s the Deal with Boys? . . . What’s the Deal with Girls?” on pages 12 and 20.

SEE US ONLINE AT WWW.NEWERA.LDS.ORG

