

NOT DATING?

YOU'RE
NOT ALONE



For Latter-day Saint teens, the modern dating scene can look complicated. Here are a few thoughts and tips to put things in perspective.



So, you're a Latter-day Saint youth, you're 16 or older, and you're able to start dating in groups (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4). Yet for some reason you're numbered among the many in this age group who don't date. Why? Well, the reasons can be broken down into two basic categories: "I just don't want to date" and "I would like to date, but there are obstacles." Let's look at both of these groups.



**JUST DON'T
WANT TO DATE**



**WOULD LIKE
TO DATE**

I JUST DON'T WANT TO DATE

This group has various reasons for not wanting to date—for instance, they're preparing to leave on missions and don't want to be distracted, or they just plain don't feel comfortable or ready to date. The fact is, dating is not something every teenager absolutely needs to do.

Now, keep in mind that dating can have benefits. As *For the Strength of Youth* says, "It can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, [and] have wholesome fun" (4).

If you don't want to date, you shouldn't completely shun members of the opposite sex, of course. Look for other ways to make friends with them and gain the social skills associated with dating (for instance, Mutual, youth conference, and other activities that help you get to know people in a wholesome setting), because later, "as you enter your adult years," you should "make dating and marriage a high priority" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 5).



I WOULD LIKE TO DATE, but There Are Obstacles

Some obstacles to dating have always been around; others are new and culture-specific. Let's look at seven common obstacles and see if there are any solutions to them.

1. There's nobody to date around here.

Of course, unless you live alone in the middle of a vast desert or something, this isn't literally true. So what's really going on?

Well, for instance, you may look around and see an utter lack of datable people, meaning those "who have high moral standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 4). Though this is unlikely, if it is true, then you're probably right not to date.


More common is the feeling of many LDS teens that the only people they can ask on dates are the few other LDS teens in their area, because the non-LDS teens might misunderstand your intentions (see obstacles #2 and #3 on the next page) and it would take a lot of awkward explanation and coaching to

get them to understand and accept the way LDS teens are counseled to date. If you are in this situation, you could deal with it in one of two ways: (1) make the effort to plan some group dates with good people you know, taking care to ensure that everyone's expectations are the

same, or (2) don't date but still

seek out friendships and wholesome fun with a variety of people. As you counsel with your parents, leaders, and your Heavenly Father, you'll be guided to make good decisions.



 **More on Dating**
For advice, stories, videos, answers to questions, and more on dating, visit lds.org/go/dateNE2 and lds.org/go/datingNE2.



ADVICE FROM AN APOSTLE

“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.”

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

2. Around here, “dating” implies a physical relationship, and I don’t want that reputation.

In many places throughout the world, when youth walk down the halls of their schools, they see quite a few of their classmates hugging, kissing, and so on. For the passersby, it can be quite uncomfortable. But for LDS teens, it also makes dating awkward because this kind of behavior is often what’s expected of “dating couples.” So, for instance, if you were to tell people that you went on a date with so-and-so, they may assume that you and so-and-so had started a physical relationship.

What to do? The best thing is to let your standards be known so that nobody gets the wrong impression about you or the person you go out with. Not dating is also an option, but even then, people ought to know what your standards are. (See also obstacle #3.)

3. “Mormon-style” dating (going out with different people) just isn’t done around here. It’s all about boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. You’ll get a bad reputation if you date around.

This is a tough one, because the culture of much of the world is following a trend in which boy-girl interactions among teens center around “relationships.” So if you tell people you went on a date with Person A one week and then went on a date with Person B a couple weeks later, they might think that you’re

cheating on Person A or that you’re just promiscuous. So what do you do?

Well, you could try to educate people and change their attitudes and judgments (maybe show them the “Dating” section in *For the Strength of Youth*), or you could go ahead and date the way you’ve been counseled to date and just ignore everyone else’s comments. One thing is certain: you should make sure everyone knows what your standards are, regardless of whether you date or not. There should be no question about your character. Then, if you decide to date, people will be less likely to whisper.

4. No one ever asks me out.

This is a very common feeling for young women, who are told that “young men generally take the initiative in asking for and planning dates” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 5). Sometimes it seems that there aren’t a lot of guys who are asking girls on dates or that only certain girls are getting asked out. Whatever you do, don’t ever let these thoughts affect your feelings of self-worth. Not being asked out on dates may be difficult, but it’s not a reflection of your value as a person. Some youth just don’t want to date, so you shouldn’t take it personally if they’re not asking you out. Of course, girls can occasionally ask guys on dates too, so you may consider getting together with other young women to organize a group date—just to get the ball rolling. No matter what, your value as a child of God is eternal and has nothing to do with whether you’re being asked out on dates.



5. I'm too shy.

Shyness is a very real and sometimes crippling feeling for many people. If you're interested in overcoming your shyness so that you can have the confidence to start dating, you can find some good tips in the article "From Shyness to Strength," published in the June 2011 *New Era* and available online at lds.org/go/shyNE2.

6. Dating is too expensive.

For the Strength of Youth encourages you to "plan dating activities that are . . . inexpensive" (4). However, in some places there seems to have emerged a dating culture in which formal and elaborate—and therefore expensive—dates are the norm. This need not be the case (see obstacle #7).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once gave some advice to young single adults that also applies to teen dating: "The meaning and significance of a 'date' has . . . 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. In addition, a date had to be something of an expensive production. . . .

"All of this made dating more difficult. And the more elaborate and expensive the date, the fewer the dates. . . . Gone is the clumsy and inexpensive phone call your parents and grandparents and I used to make. . . . Cheap dates . . . can be frequent and nonthreatening, since they don't seem to imply a continuing commitment" ("Dating versus Hanging Out," *Ensign*, June 2006, 12–13).

7. It seems like a lot of work to put together a group date—arranging the group, asking people, planning the activity, and so on.

Sometimes this feeling comes from the unrealistic expectation of what a date should be (see obstacle #6). But sometimes it can seem rather daunting to put forth all of the effort needed just to pull off a simple group date. It doesn't have to be complicated, though. For instance, simply getting together to play board games and eat popcorn can make for a great evening. (For additional creative, inexpensive dating ideas, see "Fun Dates That Don't Break the Bank" on page 26 of this issue.) If you believe the effort is worth it, go for it. And even if you're not so sure, give it a try. In some way or another, these experiences will prepare you for the future, and you may just have a good time. **NE**

