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“Here’s an interesting point, one that is often lost in today’s world. Since friendship is the foundation for a good marriage, and dating is the means by which most people meet and decide whom to marry; then dating is really a form of friendship.

Dating, formerly called courtship, is not and never was intended to be a sexually intimate relationship. The purpose of dating is to learn how to be friends with and have fun with members of the other gender. And for many, the ultimate purpose of dating is to find a suitable spouse.”*

✓ CHECKPOINT
When entering the Friendly Dating Step, it is a good idea to have certain things already established. It is important to:

- Know your own physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries.
- Be able to communicate your boundaries to those you will date.
- Be able to demonstrate your boundaries with your decisions and actions.

How Do You Want to Be Treated?

When setting healthy physical, emotional and spiritual boundaries, you should be deciding how you want to be treated and how you do not want to be treated by members of the opposite sex. Try this activity. Here is space for you to write down a list of any kind of behavior you have decided not to tolerate from the opposite sex.

- 1. Under the “Don’t Want” Column:** Write the ways you do not want to be treated by members of the opposite sex. The things on that list are your “deal-breakers.” If you recognize any of these “deal-breakers” in future relationships, the deal is automatically off for you. Your decision is easy: say “goodbye!”
- 2. Under the “Want” Column:** Make a list of the ways you want to be treated in a relationship. Now that your standards are down on paper, you can check back here when you’re considering dating someone to see if that person matches either column.

Want: | Don't Want:



Some boundary violations include:*

- Interrupting a conversation
- Taking one of your possessions without permission
- Teasing or making fun of you
- Asking very personal questions
- Gossiping about others
- Touching your body without your permission
- Telling other people stories about you
- Telling other people private information about you
- Always being around you – making you feel uncomfortable by invading your ‘private space’
- Using offensive, vulgar, or sexually explicit language in your presence
- Forcing you into doing something sexual
- Physically abusing you

Usually, an apology from the boundary crosser can go a long way toward rebuilding trust and the relationship. But remember, some boundary violations are serious enough that you should never let that person emotionally, physically, sexually, or spiritually close to you again.

Don't waste time blaming yourself. There are no excuses for using another person, especially in physical or sexual ways. If some-

one has severely crossed your boundaries, focus on maintaining healthy boundaries in the future rather than blaming yourself.

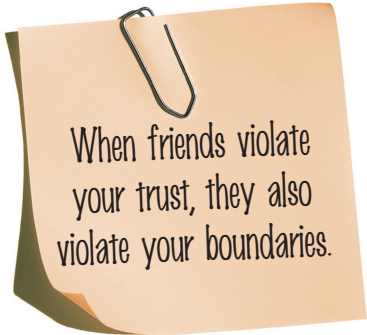
Decide how to handle similar situations in the future. Developing good communication and refusal skills can help you resist giving in to threats or coercion. Build strong relationships with trustworthy adults you can go to for advice.”*

These suggestions on how to spot boundary problems in yourself and others will equip you to be smart about dating. Setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries gives you the freedom to reject selfish “love” that uses, and prepare yourself for true love that is a life-long gift.

Knowing My Boundaries

When setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, how do you know what physical communication should go with each emotional boundary ring? One way to have healthy boundaries is to ask yourself: Do our levels of emotional and physical intimacy match how well we really know each other and our level of commitment to each other?

“Talk to your parents or another trusted adult about how far is far enough – how physically and sexually close you should get to someone you are friendly dating. We suggest going no further than hand holding or hugging when dating at this level.”* Keeping physical affection at a lower level of intensity allows you to learn how to show affection in ways that don't result in sexual arousal. The more aroused you get, the more your body will want to take you to bonding steps that would go beyond your actual levels of commitment or emotional intimacy.



When friends violate your trust, they also violate your boundaries.

When deciding whether or not to confront someone, ask yourself:

- Is this a situation that must be addressed, or am I overreacting to the situation?
- Is there a hidden or underlying issue?
- Am I angry now because I see that it's happened before and it seems like a pattern?
- Am I at fault?
- Is the other person at fault?
- Are we both at fault?

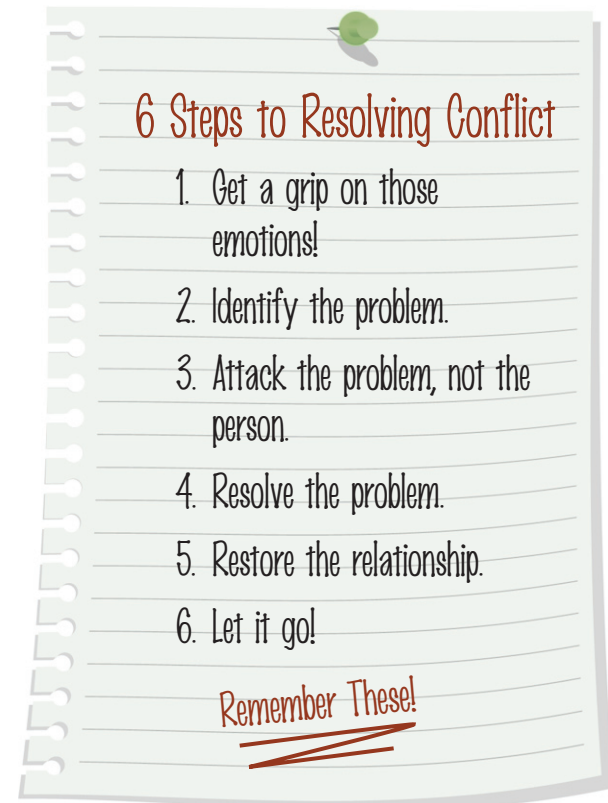
The answers to these questions can help you to decide whether the resolution to the problem involves confrontation before it can improve. Once you have decided to confront someone, it is helpful to prepare for that conversation.

Before you confront, spend some time:

- Trying to work out possible solutions.
- Talking to one trusted person. (If it's a serious issue, getting the opinion of someone with wisdom and experience can help clarify your thoughts.)
- Preparing to speak for yourself only – your side of the story as opposed to “we all think...”
- Finding a time when you can talk privately.
- Remembering that being assertive means standing up for yourself while being respectful.

Step 3 – Attack the Problem, Not the Person

Have you ever seen two people begin a conflict on one topic, but completely forget about the problem sometime during the argument and start attacking each other? People get defensive when they think they are being blamed or attacked, and they want to fight back. That is why communication is extremely important in this step. It



is much easier for communication to take place when you keep the conversation focused on your own reactions and feelings instead of the other person's.

When people actually get to the confrontation, two things must happen in order for there to be any resolution: speaking and listening, and both must be balanced.

Speaking: The assertive way to confront is to point out specific instances that occurred and specific statements that were made, instead of talking about general thoughts and feelings. It is also important to use “I” statements like, “I feel (an emotion) when you (an observable behavior) because _____.” Example: “I felt nervous when you started talking so loudly because that's the tone of voice you use when you are angry.”