

Adolescent Dating



- **Dating has been called an “American cultural phenomenon” (Arnett, 2004).**
 - Why?
- **That is because dating in other parts of the world do not exist the same as in America.**

In the early 20th century, dating was a more formal activity than it is today. During that time, the guidelines of dating were clearly and rigidly defined. Typically, a male would ask a female to go to some specific event with him.

Examples of these events could include:

A football game.



A romantic dinner.



A movie.



Then, he would pick her up at her parents' house, meet them, tell them when he would bring her home, and then, they would go on their date.

- **Today, dating is not as formal and the times have changed. For instance, nowadays:**
 - Groups of people go out on dates.
 - Females ask males out on dates.
 - Parents usually do not meet the person their son or daughter is dating on the first date.
 - Parents do not usually know all the details of what the date will entail beforehand.

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- **Six of the main reasons adolescents begin dating (Arnett, 2004)**
 - Recreation
 - To learn
 - Social status
 - Companionship
 - Intimacy
 - Courtship

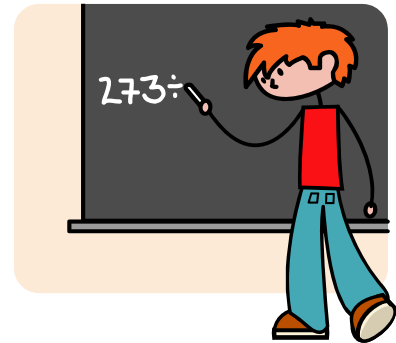


- **Why is dating recreational?**

- It allows one to have fun and enjoyment with someone whom they are attracted to.

- **What can adolescents learn from dating?**

- They can become more skilled at dating and romantic relationships.



- **How can dating affect social status?**

- It can allow adolescents to become more popular and build up their reputation.

- **What is the difference between companionship and intimacy?**

- Companionship is the ability to be able to share pleasurable activities with another person.
- Intimacy is the establishment of a close, personal, emotional relationship with someone else.



Courtship

- **What is courtship?**

- Courtship is finding someone to have as a steady dating partner in a monogamous relationship.
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- **Elements of Dating**

- The four step developmental sequence (Arnett, 2004).

Step #1: Adolescents get together in same gender groups and go to places, such as malls, where they hope to find groups of the opposite gender.

Step #2: Adolescents partake in social events arranged by adults, like dances or parties.

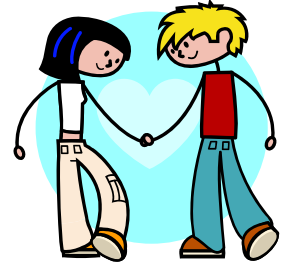


Step #3: Adolescents arrange by themselves to get into mixed gender groups to go out somewhere, such as a movie, or bowling alley.



Step #4: Adolescent couples go out to an activity, like a movie, dinner, or mini-golf.

Dating Benefits

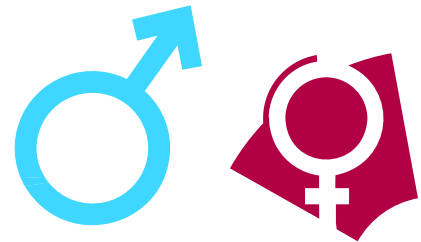


- **So what are some benefits of dating?**



#1. Dating allows you to mature socially by gaining experience interacting with members of the opposite sex (“Teen Friendship”, n.d.).

#2. It gives you a chance to explore your sexuality and confirm your sexual identity.



#3. Dating can create stronger acceptance in your peer groups (“Teen Friendship”, n.d.).

- **When does dating affect you?**

- Dating usually affects adolescents from early adolescence (pre-teen years to early teen years) through late adolescence (mid to late teen years) and into emerging adulthood (late teen years into early 20’s).
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Dating Influences

- **Does dating influence adolescents the same?**

No, it appears to depend on age. For example, Arnett (2004) examined one study that investigated reasons why adolescents dated in order from most important to least important.

- **Early adolescents in 6th grade & late adolescents in 11th grade shared similar reasons for dating.**

According to them, recreation was the most important reason for dating, followed by intimacy, and social status (Arnett, 2004).

- **College students, in emerging adulthood, ranked their reasons differently.**

Intimacy was the most important reason, then companionship, recreation, and social status.

- **Research has also shown that adolescents in 5th and 6th grades spend more time thinking about the person that they are dating and spend less time with that person (Santrock, 2007).**

By the time adolescents are in the 10th and 11th grades, however, they begin to spend less time thinking about the person that they are dating, and they spend more time being with the person they are dating (Santrock, 2007).





Furthermore, research has also shown that males spend approximately half the time thinking about females that they are dating than females think about the males whom they are dating (Santrock, 2007).

The results of this research suggest females feel more attached to males than males feel towards females.

What do males and females look for in a dating partner?



Females rate interpersonal qualities such as support and intimacy as the most important things they look for. On the other hand, males rank physical attractiveness as one of the most important qualities. **However, the qualities that females *and* males look for in a dating partner change over time.** By late adolescence, interpersonal qualities become more important to males than physical attractiveness.

Sternberg's Theory of Love

After dating for a while, you may fall in love. The best-known theory of love is Sternberg's theory of love.

According to Sternberg, there are three fundamental qualities of love. These qualities are passion, intimacy, and commitment.



Together, these qualities, in different combinations, can comprise different types of love as shown in the table below.

Love type	Passion	Intimacy	Commitment
Liking		X	
Infatuation	X		
Empty love			X
Romantic love	X	X	
Companionate love		X	X
Fatuous love	X		X
Consummate love	X	X	X

Application of Sternberg's theory to adolescent relationships

Most adolescent relationships last only a few weeks or months, which indicates a lack of commitment. Therefore, it would seem most adolescents only experience three of the seven love types. They experience liking, infatuation, and romantic love; but not companionate love, fatuous love, and consummate love.

Useful Links:

Ideas for dates: <http://dating.about.com/od/ideasfordates/> - This website is pretty self-explanatory. It gives ideas for dates.

Sexual Identity:

<http://www.utdallas.edu/counseling/selfhelp/sexual-identity.html> - A helpful resource for anyone who is unsure of their sexual identity.

Sternberg's Theory of Love:

<http://www.yale.edu/rjsternberg/#love> - A description of Sternberg's theory of love by Sternberg himself.

Teen Advice Online – Dating:

<http://www.teenadviceonline.org/dating/> - This website contains a collection of stories from teen counselors regarding dating issues. Take a look here to see if you are going through, or have gone through, a similar dating issue. You may find some advice here to help yourself out regarding a particular issue.

References:

Arnett, J.J. (2004). *Adolescence and Emerging*

Adulthood. Pearson Education, Inc, 2nd edition. 272-278.

Santrock, J.W. (2007). *Adolescence*. McGraw Hill,

11th edition. 330-333.

“Teen Friendships Are Important!” (n.d.)

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