

# Go for the Gold



rethink

BOUNDARIES • SUCCESS • DATING

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THIRD EDITION

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# Go for the Gold

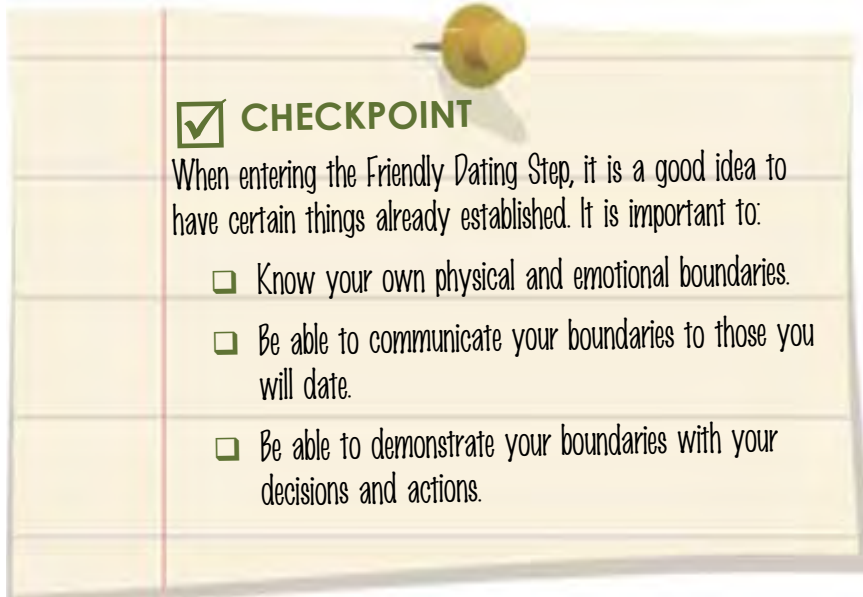
You may desire to find true love, but how do you know when you've found it? How can you tell if your relationship is a good one? How do you know if you're in it for the right reasons? How do you know if someone is using you? Some teens have been left with painful scars, so how can you make sure that doesn't happen to you? Many teens ask, "Could there really be someone who would want to love me for the rest of my life? How can I find someone who *will* love me for the rest of my life?"

Having a love that lasts can seem as rare as striking gold. People have risked everything to obtain this precious metal. They wanted the best. Your love life can be the gold they struggled to find. This book uncovers ways that you can go for the gold—ways to develop skills that can help you build a love that can last forever.

In the following chapters, you will discover the steps of dating that, if followed, will give you the strong foundation you need to have a lasting love. Chapters 1 and 2 explain the steps of creating healthy relationships and how those steps develop into healthy dating. Chapters 3 and 4 explain the elements of unhealthy relationships and unhealthy dating, particularly focusing on behaviors that are manipulative, destructive, and even dangerous. Chapter 5 continues with the elements of serious dating, and the later chapters delve into skills and practices that are helpful to take relationships to even deeper levels of communication. The final chapter discusses the ultimate goal of dating: marriage.

The ideas you find in this book represent the collaboration of many educators who recognize how confusing dating has become in a culture boasting fewer examples of life-long love than ever before. Much of the information on recognizing healthy and unhealthy relationships comes from the curriculum *Unmasking Sexual Con Games* from Girls and Boys Town. The information from these and other resources can pave the way for successful, healthy relationships to be possible for every teen.

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.”\*



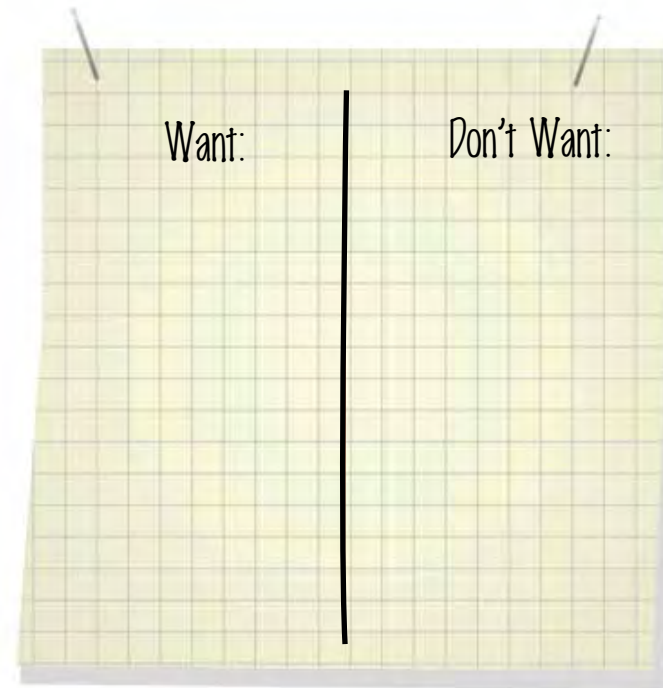
## How Do You Want to Be Treated?

When setting healthy physical and emotional 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 gender. 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 gender.

1. **Under the “Want” Column:** Make a list of the ways you want to be treated in a relationship. Now that your standards are written on paper, you can check back here when you’re

considering dating someone to see if that person matches either column.

2. **Under the “Don’t Want” Column:** Write the ways you do not want to be treated by members of the opposite gender. 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!”



### Relationship Trouble Signs

- Have I been cut off from my friends?
- Do I fight with this person all the time?
- Is my attitude toward my future goals and plans changing?
- Does this person get jealous when I talk to others?
- Do most of my family and friends disapprove of this person?
- Does the other person do or say hurtful things they say they don't really mean?
- Do I change around this person so that he or she will accept me?
- Am I afraid of this person?
- Does the other person put me down?
- Have I compromised my values for the other person?
- Do I feel free or relieved when the other person is gone?
- Do I have to justify what I do, where I go, who I see?
- Has the other person threatened me?
- Has the other person ever physically hurt me?
- Does the other person ask me to keep secrets about our relationship?

If you have answered "yes" to any of the above, you may be in an unhealthy or even abusive relationship.

How do you know if you are in an unhealthy relationship? How do you know when to end a relationship? Here is a list of trouble signs in a relationship. Take a look at it and at your relationship. Answer the questions. They may help you determine whether you are in an unhealthy or even abusive relationship or not.

### Getting Help

If you think you are in an unhealthy relationship, find a trusted adult with whom to talk. Be sure to talk to someone you trust – a parent, a professional counselor, teacher, or other adult who will listen and offer help.

If you think you may be in immediate danger, the **National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline** is **1-866-331-9474** or see **[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)**.

### Risky Dating

You may not be in a dangerous or threatening dating relationship, but there are other factors that could eventually place you in dangerous dating situations. By choosing to participate in certain behaviors, you can end up with life-changing consequences.

### Where You Go on Dates

Decisions about where you choose to go and where you choose not to go on dates are important. Plan to go places that will help you maintain boundaries that demonstrate respect. Make a plan beforehand for the time you will spend with a date. Have something to do or some place to go. That way your hormones won't determine your activities. Spending a lot of time alone together in secluded places can lead to physical levels of intimacy that do not match the relationship's true level of commitment. Choosing situations that will support your commitment to protect the best interests of your date

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.”