

# Let's Just Be Friends

Random Thoughts on Teenage Dating

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## Author's Note

“Let's just be friends.” Those words can be the death of a young person who wants a relationship. The challenge of dating is something so important to a young person in today's society. I know I have struggled with and continue to struggle with many of the issues that come with the excitement of a dating relationship. I hope you will find this entertaining and truthful, and at the same time I hope that you will re-examine the way you view certain aspects of dating. If you know what your standards are and hold firm to them than this experience can be more wonderful than you could ever know.



## Chapter 1

It all began in elementary school. That first day of school is the first time a kid gets to interact with people his age on a daily basis. Mommy's not there all the time and the toys aren't just for you. To some kids that in itself can be shocking. But when you throw in the fact that the people you're playing with are of the opposite sex, then it gets really scary.

As a guy it was difficult for me to understand that not all girls were like my sister. I couldn't treat them the same way I did her. And no offense to my sister, but a few of these girls were much better-looking. I remember it really hitting me in kindergarten just how pretty girls could be.

But there were none prettier than Olyvia Burchett. Every single guy in my class would have melted if the rumor was that Olyvia liked him. I think she was the reason why I had perfect attendance my kindergarten year.

Of course things with guys and girls ran a little differently back in kindergarten and throughout elementary school. Five year olds didn't make it a habit of going to the movies with their sweethearts every weekend. The fancy Valentine's Day dinner was one of those awesome heart candies with the messages on them that we all gave every person in our class. If you liked somebody, that was the person who received the

“I love you” or “Kiss me”. If you were really hooked on somebody, they might even get a card with a note on it.

But sending love candies and notes to your crush was about the extent of showing affection. In fact, affection during those elementary school years had an entirely new meaning. I mean, every kid knew that Billy liked Sarah because Billy was always pinching Sarah during nap time. And when Tommy hit Katie, everyone knew it was because he was hooked.

The infliction of pain was the number one way for a guy to show that he liked a girl. And I do believe that in those years it is the boy who instigates much of what occurs in an elementary crush. The girl sits there and soaks all the attention up. All this proves is that hormones are most definitely at work in the body of a seven year old; it just comes out in a different way than it would a teenager.

When middle school begins, however, the relationships between boys and girls begin to change. To boys, the girls who used to be the enemy species now are quite pleasing to look at. To girls, the boys who just had nasty coodies back in elementary school are now turning into cuties. The entire view of the opposite sex is transformed during this period.

I think middle school relationships could easily qualify for being one of the most pointless things on the planet. It's almost comical to watch

a “boyfriend and girlfriend” in the seventh grade. This is when girls start to believe that in order to win the heart of the hottest guy in class they have to dress a certain way and act a certain way as well. Even though this should not be the case, the guys always do go after the girls who lower their standards. My psychology professor this year mentioned to our class that there is now a shift in the years when people hit their point of lowest self-esteem. That time in a person’s life is now shifting from the high school years to the middle school years. Way too many lives are being destroyed at this age.

Both my elementary and middle school years were a joke when it came to relationships. Although it was slightly different back then and there was not as much pressure to be in a relationship that early in life like there is now, I had nothing to worry about. I spent my entire kindergarten through high school in a small Christian school. In elementary the guys in my class would compete so hard to be the most athletic in our small classes that we forgot about the girls in our class. Then the worst possible thing happened to me: I got braces. I had the dynamic duo of braces and a buzz-cut to scare away the chances I had of a relationship in middle school.

Looking back on those years, I’m almost thankful for being considered a dork. Elementary school doesn’t matter when it comes to

relationships, crushes just occur. Middle school is a different story. In middle school there is such a poor outlook on what a relationship should be. Everything is based on the outward appearance instead of personality and character. My high school friends and I would always make fun of the preteen girls in short skirts at the movie theater during close to freezing weather. These “prostitots” are a perfect example of why it’s best to stay away from any form of dating in middle school. I can guarantee that there have been more suicides that come from a low self-esteem in middle school than there are successful relationships that began at the middle school level.

## Chapter 2

The first crush is always an important person in a kid's life. The feeling you had for that person was unlike any other feeling prior to that point in your life. I don't know if someone ever forgets who their first crush was.

There are times, however, when a person would like to forget about their crush. The knowledge that your crush hates your guts can be devastating to a third grader. It can be devastating to a grown man. The response to that devastation can be seen in different ways.

Revenge is a popular way of trying to forget about the situation. If that person has made your life miserable by not feeling the same way about you that you feel about them, you have a right to be angry and get back at them, right? I don't think so. Yet so often you see a people lash out at their crush because they feel like they have been wronged.

I find this response a little funny. The point is to forget about the person that caused the hurt, yet all the focus is on that person and ways to carry out the revenge. In my opinion this makes the process even more painful. The more you think about that person, the angrier you become. Forget about it. Don't waste time trying to ruin someone else's life because in the process you'll ruin your own.

The other popular route is justification. “Oh, she doesn’t have much of a personality anyway...” or “He’s really not that cute...” By downgrading the other person, one hopes to boost his own confidence about the situation. This doesn’t work either. Once again too much focus is put on the former crush. This also can mess with self-confidence. When somebody starts having the justification mentality, it usually has a reverse effect. By trying to think you’re a better person you actually feel worse.

It may take a while to forget that first crush, but the less you think of that person the easier it will become. Friends are huge in this area. In any rejection, first crush or five hundredth crush, a good friend can get your mind off of the pain. I know I’m so thankful for my friends who encouraged me during my tough times. Too many days can be wasted thinking about something that doesn’t matter; enjoy each experience.

For some lucky people, though, there is that situation where the crush feels the same way about you. The joy from that experience is difficult to describe. I was one of those fortunate people who got to establish a relationship with that first crush.

I guess I had misunderstood her when she said no to my proposal on the playground in second grade, but five years later I was doing back flips knowing that she really was tempted to say yes. It was hard to believe that this dream could come true.

I know in that first relationship for me I had no clue how to act. I guess I was still living in a dream world because I thought that no one liked me and then I was hit with the wonderful reality that the girl I liked felt the same way about me. I was hooked, some would say to the point of obsession. Even though I knew how I felt, I was awful at putting my thoughts into action. I was not a smooth “boyfriend.” I was surprised the girl stuck with me after hitting her in the head twice while attempting to put my arm around her. I eventually figured out that since I was so terrible at the physical displays of affection, I better stick to just talking and typing.

Talking and typing were the two things that got me in trouble. Instant messenger became my hero, and the phone was stuck to my ear. Looking back I can see just how much time I let slip away. I’m not going to say that time was wasted, because I enjoyed every minute of it; I just know that my time management could have been much better. I would encourage anyone in a relationship to not be willing to sacrifice so much time for one person until the relationship has become “serious”. And by serious I mean college dating that could lead to marriage, not stupid early high school flings like my situation. I can see in those two years of spending so much time with an individual how I let a couple other friendships slip through my fingers and how I completely gave away my dreams and aspirations in the sport of golf. Do not

get me wrong; I'm not saying that people in a relationship should not spend a lot of time together, but in an early relationship, other priorities must be taken into consideration as well. This way one can enjoy his or her relationship and not sacrifice dreams and friendships to keep the relationship.

## Chapter 3

All good things must come to an end, and that's a tough one to swallow, especially when you don't see it coming.

I didn't think life could be any better for me my sophomore year in high school. I was still living in that dream world of being with my crush who I had liked for so many years. But then I heard those awful words, "Let's just be friends."

I cannot even begin to describe the effect those words had on me as a fifteen year old. Somebody had just unloaded an automatic into my back, changed magazines, and unloaded again; this time in my heart.

I know the first feeling for me during this change which is very common is shock. The dream I was living in was supposed to last. Then came the sadness. A broken heart is never a fun thing to deal with, especially after a relationship that seemed to be doing well. I took the path of many and decided to wallow in my misery.

The more I thought about the situation, the angrier I became. I did not deserve this. I had been severely ill-treated and I wanted to do something about it.

The first thing I had to do was find out why things didn't work out. I'm so happy I had friends then who were willing to slap me in the face and tell me that I was stupid. In my mind, there had to be some reason why things didn't work out that

would be the girl's fault. Not once did I consider that it was just a change in feelings. I'm thankful that my friends were honest with me and called me out when I was wrong in pointing blame.

That didn't keep me from finding the reason at first. Once again I believe we try to justify ourselves by putting blame on the other person involved. In my case, which is normally the case with any younger guy-older girl relationship, I thought the reason was the age difference. Girls just wanted the older guy with the car that could take them places and had the money to buy them nice things. I think in the older guy-younger girl case the reasoning is that the guy thinks he is being held back by a younger girl and wants to pursue "better things." My reasoning throughout this situation was absolutely ridiculous. I tried so hard to make it her fault that I ruined my own life.

I let the results of this "heartbreak" affect me for far too long. I didn't want anything to do with my friends because I thought they would just do the same thing to me. I lost touch with my social-self. I didn't enjoy hanging out with friends anymore, I never talked online, and I most certainly did not pick up a telephone.

The other thing that was affected my unwillingness to move on was my ability to forgive the person. I created tension in our relationship afterwards by avoiding her. The only thing that I accomplished by avoiding her was screwing up a year that could've been spent

repairing a friendship with her. Don't hold on to grudges against those who you believe have hurt you. This only causes more pain for both parties and ruins the chance of reconciliation. I am very happy to say that the friendship between me and this girl has been completely restored and I know that restoration can take place in many broken relationships. Looking back on the situation where, as my friends say, I received "the shaft", I recognize that the joy I had in restoring a friendship with the other individual far outweighed the hurt I suffered in the separation.



## Chapter 4

Once a person has had a dating relationship with someone, I think it is just natural for them to want to have that feeling again. Many times that gets people into trouble though. A person running on desperation is a person bound for even more painful relationships.

It all starts with that desire to be accepted. I believe we all have that God-given desire to have relationships with people. Acceptance is at the core of human experience. However, it should not be an essential. When acceptance is a must, disappointment will be the result. No one will ever be exclusively accepted, no matter how “cool” they are. Nevertheless, the drive to be accepted affects everyone, especially teenagers.

In some cases a person who has just experienced a difficult break-up will try to find love and acceptance in something other than people. Things such as sports, music, and work become the places of refuge for a teenager experiencing hurt. That is easily seen in the guy that sacrifices every other aspect of his life to become better at basketball or in the girl that locks herself in her room for hours a day in order to make the best grades. Do not misunderstand me, pursuing excellence in sports and school is not a bad thing at all; I think it should be encouraged. The bad thing is when the person idolizes those

things because he or she feels like that is the only place where he and she can be accepted.

Then of course the exact opposite can happen and a person believes there is no such thing as acceptance or love. This, in my opinion, is the most unfortunate case. I remember thinking how crazy Nihilists were because they believed life was meaningless and death should be desired. The reality was people all around me were adopting this viewpoint, consciously or unconsciously, when they chose to shut down and not allow anybody or anything to get involved in their life. Examples are the kids who quit sports because they lose interest or those who see a steady decline in their grades because they have chosen to stop putting forth the effort required to succeed. Friends of these people have a big responsibility in helping them get back to normal.

But of course the popular option for most teenagers is to get back in another dating relationship. People have different views on how a dating relationship should begin. One view is that if a person is attracted to another person that he or she should ask the other person out and the relationship should develop from there. Personally I don't think this is the right way to approach things. I do not think you can be attracted to someone until you know their personality, and if you don't know their personality than all you're going on is physical attraction. I'll go on the record and say that a relationship that began solely

on physical attraction will not work out in any situation. Another thing that happens when you date somebody before you have established a friendship is you have ruined any chance of a good friendship after the break-up. We'll talk about that later though. I believe that the best relationships begin with a strong friendship that develops into something more.

Relationships that come from desperation are generally unsuccessful ones. It's so hard to look around and see all of your friends dating and being the single one in the group. It's even harder when you have to face the reality that you are moving down the totem pole because of these boyfriends or girlfriends. I know in my own life I was ridiculed at times for not having a girlfriend. And, being myself, I responded by going out and looking for relationships in the wrong places.

Looking back I really don't know why I did some of the things I did back in my high school tenure. I think that part of the drive for dating came from that lingering past of hurt. I honestly thought that I would feel better if I hurt somebody in the same way that I was hurt. Ladies and Gentlemen, that was dumb. I got into so much trouble flirting and then dumping the same night. I am not proud of the fact that I made some people's lives miserable. The life I made the most miserable, however, was my own. I could not even explain the reason for my behavior. Part of it has to do with the fact that I'm a guy, and as my

good buddy Steven Dykstra says, “Guys are just horny bastards.” The other half of that was just my unwillingness to learn from my past. Instead of learning from my past I tried to go back and fix it. That will never work out.

My all time lowest point involving dating came when I actually dated someone. The reason it was so bad was because I approached it the wrong way. I know I just told you that you should be friends before you move onto anything else, but I decided that I didn’t like that reasoning anymore. I had tried to live that way all throughout high school and it had only brought me grief. I could not stand to hear those words, “Let’s just be friends.” To me that meant that, “Yeah right, you think I would go out with you?” I decided that girls would never want to be more than friends with me so I would just have to start dating someone that I wasn’t even friends with.

This brain fart occurred my senior year in high school. I was feeling more and more pressure knowing that I still had not had a serious girlfriend and I was almost out of high school. Then the worst possible thing happened to me; I found out somebody liked me. That was it. The idiot switch in my brain clicked on and I went for the relationship with someone that in reality I was not attracted to at all. I wanted the relationship more than I wanted the person.

Those two months had to be the most miserable ones of my life. When you do not value

the person you are with, you do things that you regret. I didn't care about the effect the relationships would have on the people involved because that didn't matter to me. All that mattered was that I finally had a girlfriend.

Then the harsh reality smacked me in the face; this relationship sucked. I had wasted my time doing stupid things with someone I didn't even take time to care about. Luckily the girl felt the same way too and we didn't have to continue making mistakes. But the consequences that came after the break-up were awful. There was no possibility for me to have a good friendship with this girl anymore, and that frustrated me. I had grown close to her, and I did want to pursue a friendship with her, but every second I was with her was awkward. To this day there is very little communication with her and the communication there we have is just simple small talk. Now I look back and regret so much putting a relationship ahead of an individual.



## Chapter 5

Wanting a relationship with someone who does not feel the same way can be extremely painful. It does not mean you're not content with being just friends, but you can't hide your feelings. Never let your feelings get in the way of the friendship. And if the person you have feelings for tells you that they can't be friends with you because of how you feel, then thank them for letting you know what they're really like and find a true friend.

Never, ever, ever compromise. Do not settle for something that you know is not right. The right relationship will come if you have patience. I know that is a perfect case of something being easier said than done, but it is so true. When you settle for second best you're only hurting yourself.

Also, allow yourself to learn from the experiences of the past in order to be more prepared for things you will face in the future. Learning from your mistakes will help you in every aspect of life, not just dating. I hope I will never again put dating over an individual.

Don't look for a relationship in the wrong places. Value the person you are attracted to and spend time getting to know the person before you get serious about possibly dating him or her. Keep your priorities straight as well; do not lose a good friend during the process of pursuing a dating relationship. Surround yourself with friends that

will speak the honest truth to you when you are screwing up and please, listen to what they have to say. So many times my friends have bailed me out of situation when I'm wallowing in my own misery.

Don't value dating over friendship. One of the biggest difficulties in dating is maintaining a good friendship with the person you are dating. Don't be afraid to say no either. I am so worried that I will hurt somebody's feeling that I allow both of us to get hurt. Do not think any less of a friend if he or she wants to be in a relationship. In those situations, it is alright to say, "Let's just be friends."