

# A Parent's Guide to Modern Teen Dating

Emma Kate Freatman, LPC

Silver Hill Hospital

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# What does dating look like now?

- Think of a hybrid between dating IRL and virtually.
- Going on dates, dating, hanging out in public and at each other's homes still happens; it is often the path to getting there and the communication that looks different.
  - Ex/ Orchestrating "running into my crush" in the hallway still happens, but it's not the only means of initiating contact
- Relationships are most often initiated online, and remain online for a while
  - "Graduating" from talking online to spending time together in-person
  - Often the struggle to take things "offline" is what might end a courtship
- In New Canaan particularly, there is a draw to dating people from other schools since so many of the kids have gone to school together since kindergarten.
  - Meet on social media, "through" mutual friends, parties

# What does dating look like now?

- Even in established, IRL relationships, most communication happens via FaceTime and social media
  - Instagram, SnapChat, Discord, and TikTok being the most popular (for now!)
  - Texting is not as popular
- Spending time with a s/o or a potential love interest might happen more in a group setting, especially with 9-10<sup>th</sup> graders.
  - Friends are often very involved in relationships
- There tends to be a shift to more 1:1 time when kids can drive themselves
  - Lines up with expectation and development of more independence and autonomy
- Physical hookup culture is not as prevalent on a high school level as it might be on the college level, but virtual sexual exchanges do happen
  - Sexting, pressure to GNOC
  - Disconnect between perceived risk and actual risk

## Common terms to know:

- **Sliding in the DMs** = Private messaging on social media. Different from texting! This might be how someone initiates talking with someone, usually after “liking” photos.
- **Talking Stage** = Usually means exclusively communicating with a love interest via social media. Nothing is official, we’re not “dating,” just “talking.” I might be “talking” to multiple people at once.
  - See Also: FOMO,Breadcrumbing/Benching
- **Ghosting** = someone abruptly, w/o warning cuts off communication. Very popular in the age of social media, since there might be little-to-no in-person interaction or mutual friends to be held accountable to.
- **Curving** = little sister to “ghosting.” Instead of cutting off communication , the crush slowly drops off communication while periodically returning and apologizing/making excuses for the long delays in communication. They act somewhat interested but eventually disappear.
  - See also: “Zombie-ing” and “submarining”

# Common Terms to Know

- IRL = In Real Life, offline, in-person interactions. When relationships start to happen IRL, it's an indicator they are more serious or "official." They have likely...
- DTR = Defined The Relationship. A lot of "just talking" doesn't make it to the DTR point. At this point there might be more public, obvious communication IRL or online, like flirty commenting on posts. Maybe there's even a relationship selfie!
- Cuffing = The winter-time trend of getting into a longer-term IRL relationship. In adult world, this is the season when everyone is getting engaged so we can plan weddings by Summer. In high school, it's motivated by being with someone for Valentine's Day.
- LOR/Left on Read = I can see, or assume, my crush read my message, but they haven't responded.
- Thirst Trap = Posting a ~hot~ picture, usually with the intention of my love interest(s) seeing it. "Felt cute, might delete later." It WILL be deleted if there aren't enough likes.
- "The Ick" = A disgust response to someone doing something "cringey" or awkward. Kids will often cite "getting the ick" as a reason why they curve somebody.

**“I wish my  
parents knew...”**

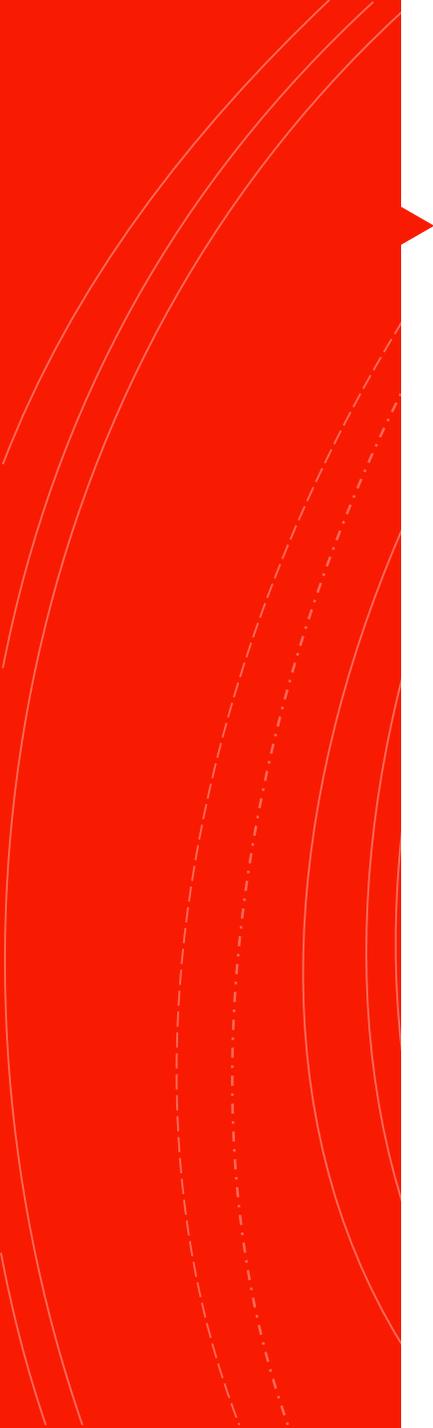
- **“That they can trust me.”**
- **“Not everyone is straight/heterosexual. Please stop asking my female friends if they have a boyfriend!”**
- **“That not every person I hang out with is my boyfriend/girlfriend.”**
- **“We’re not all having sex.”**
- **“That when I ask for privacy with my s/o, it doesn’t automatically mean I’m doing something you would disapprove of.”**
- **“To respect my privacy.”**
- **“I don’t want to date their friend’s daughter.”**
- **“That my relationship is important to me, even if they don’t see it as serious.”**
- **“Putting a bunch of rules in place around dating doesn’t create obedient kids; it creates good liars.”**
- **“Not to trash talk my partner.”**

**“I wish my  
parents would  
ask me...”**

- **“If I feel safe in my relationship.”**
  - **Lots of points about consent!**
- **“If I’m happy with my relationship.”**
- **“Questions instead of lecturing me.”**

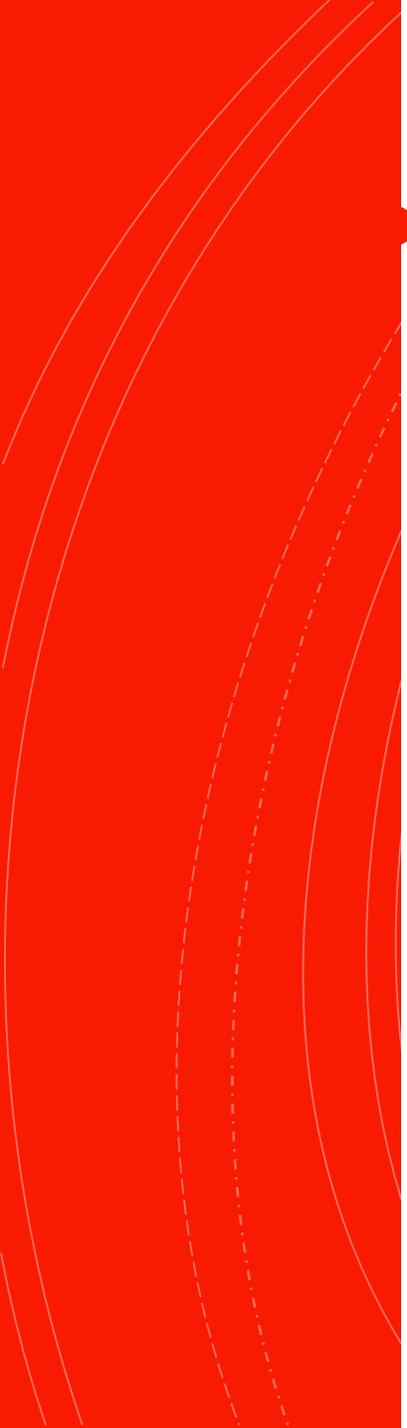
## Top Three Themes:

1. “I wish my parents were less awkward when they talk to me about dating.”
2. “I wish my parents would ask me kindly instead of demand information.”
3. “I don’t want my parents to ask me anything about dating, I’ll bring it up myself.”



“I wish my parents were less awkward when they talk to me about dating.”

- Acknowledge the awkward!!
- Practice! Try to normalize dialogue about dating. Start talking about dating/relationships early and often.
- Ask ourselves: Am I uncomfortable bringing this up? What might be creating the discomfort? Am I nervous about what I might learn? Do I need to educate myself?
- Remember **GIVE**:
  - Use a **G**entle Tone
  - Appear **I**nterested
  - **V**alidate
  - Have an **E**asy Manner



“I wish my parents would ask me kindly instead of demand information.”

- Ask ourselves: Am I experiencing an unpleasant emotion? Am I regulated right now? Is this about something else?
  - Rule of thumb: Avoid having a challenging conversation when you are not emotionally regulated
  - Could my own experiences be creating anxiety?
- Filter the need-to-know from the nice-to-know info
- Differentiate being effective from being “right.”
- Have a couple of go-to coping strategies ready to go for when conversations go awry
- Again, use GIVE!

# “I don’t want my parents to ask me anything about dating, I’ll bring it up myself.”

- Translation: “I’m uncomfortable talking about this so I’m going to avoid talking about it.”
  - Adolescents have very little tolerance for discomfort!
  - “This might be awkward. And it’s important! So we’re not going to avoid it.”
- Assess: Does my child typically come to me when they need help? Do they actually need prompting from me? How often?
- Model open, honest conversations with your child
  - “I trust you AND I want to make sure I’m able to help if you need it.”
  - “I want us to get more comfortable talking about this together. “
  - “Are you worried you’ll be in trouble?”
  - “I know this might feel awkward, it’s weird for me too! You don’t need to tell me everything.”
- Respect their privacy, and discuss what that means together

# “I don’t want my parents to ask me anything about dating, I’ll bring it up myself.”

- Use DEAR MAN to break the ice!
- **DESCRIBE**
  - “Last week you asked if you could go out with Matt on your own.”
- **EXPRESS** how you feel
  - “I’m so glad you remembered to ask me, and I’m noticing I’m feeling a little nervous for you to go out on your own with him because I don’t think I’ve met him.”
- **ASSERT**/Ask
  - “I would really like it if Matt could come by the house before you guys head out to dinner.”
- **REINFORCE**
  - “If he stops by for a few minutes, then you can head out without me.”
- Stay **MINDFUL**
  - Don’t engage in “You always do this!” or “No one else’s parents do this!”
- **APPEAR** Confident
- Be Willing to **NEGOTIATE**
  - “I’m getting that you don’t love that idea. Let’s meet in the middle. What ideas do you have?”

# Questions?

Emma Kate Freatman

- 203-801-2312
- [EFreatman@silverhillhospital.org](mailto:EFreatman@silverhillhospital.org)

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# Consent

- “Tea” Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU>
- Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/article/how-talk-kids-sex-consent-boundaries/>

# Sex

- Psychology Today: When and How to Talk to Kids About Sex <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-myths-sex/202001/when-and-how-talk-kids-about-sex>
- Washington Post: How to Talk to Kids About Sex according to a Sexual Health Teacher: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/on-parenting/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-sex/2017/08/29/2c994fce-77c5-11e7-8839-ec48ec4cae25\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/on-parenting/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-sex/2017/08/29/2c994fce-77c5-11e7-8839-ec48ec4cae25_story.html)