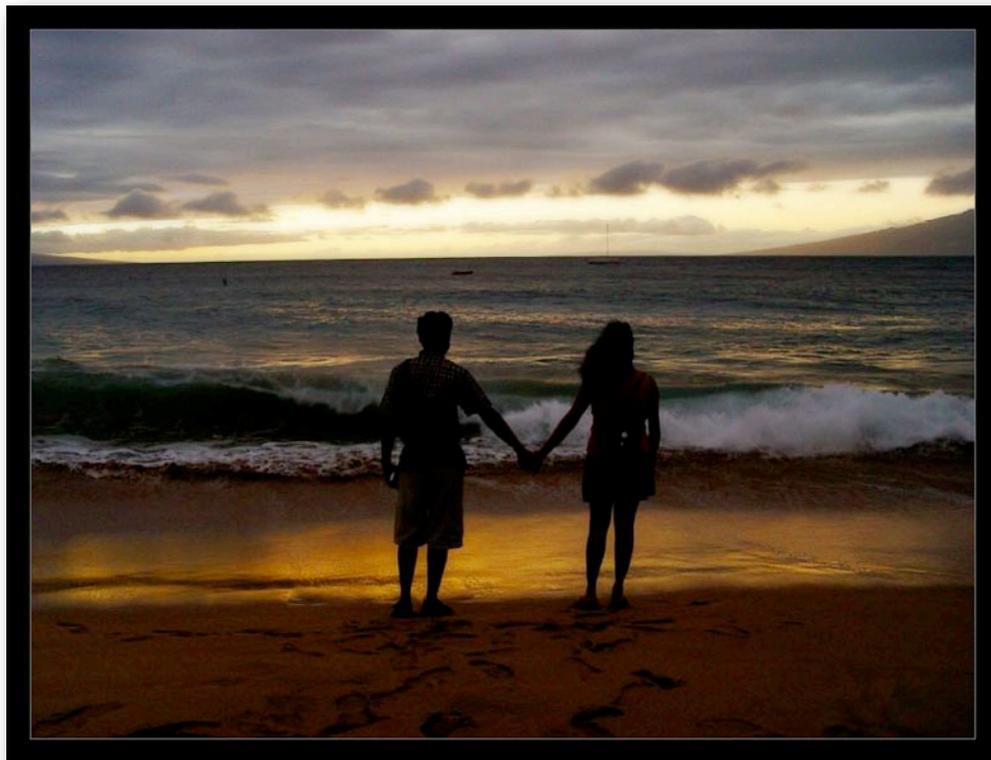


OBU

COUNSELING SERVICES



"I'll take Dating, without the broken heart, please."

Hello Students,

Many have approached me asking how to steer clear of unnecessary pain while dating.

It might not be a bad thing for young men and women to make it their aim to adhere to a kind of hippocratic oath, and "do no harm" while dating. *Why? -Because too many students come into counseling seeking to mend the hurt their last relationship left with them. Obviously, no one can assure us that we'll never be hurt in our human relationships. Dating can present a minefield of risks (or at least a smidgen of heart-ache), but a little wisdom and understanding, like a good metal detector, can come in handy to get you through it safely.*

My father-in-law is a man with whom I enjoy spending time. He loves sailing and I do too. When sailing with him, once the rigging has been set and we're moving along the water safely and in the desired direction, he can be heard to announce, "Well, now we're moving along smartly."

My goal is to help you **move along smartly** in your dating experience. If you do, you may spare yourself "a whole lotta hurt."

First, you need to ask yourself, **"What's your objective, aim or hope while dating?"** For some, dating is an arena

where they can test and refine their flirting skills, and an opportunity to see who they can attract. The process brings a kind of emotional rush for them. Some are seeking to boost their ego by having the most attractive, talented, or otherwise desirable person possible on their arm while strutting around campus. Others enter the dating scene with such a poor self image that they appear heartened that someone has expressed interest in them, and affirmed their worth, however immature, "full of him/herself", irresponsible, or exploitive this person may be.

Don't buy into this presumption: "If I can just find the right person [to love and accept me as I would like], then my life will feel complete, fulfilled." That won't do it.

"If you try to find intimacy with another person before achieving a sense of identity on your own, all your relationships become an attempt to complete yourself."¹

The fact is...
that some of you may not yet be quite ready to date.



THIS MIGHT BE YOU, OR YOUR DATE, IF:

- ▶ You're **not ready or able** to exercise **self-control** over your sexual desires. Marriage won't fix this problem.
- ▶ **Anger problems** keep arising. This is a **BIG RED FLAG**.
- ▶ You're **unable to set firm limits** or say "No" to others.
- ▶ You find yourself **placing demands** on or voicing criticisms of those you're dating.
- ▶ Intense **jealousy or controlling** behavior is displayed.
- ▶ Your date **isn't totally trustworthy**. S/he is sometimes dishonest with you **or** others. If s/he will lie to others, s/he will eventually lie to you. Remember: You'll marry someone you dated. You **DO NOT** want to find yourself married to someone you can't trust!
- ▶ **You've espoused the notion** that if you don't find a spouse when in college, you're **afraid you'll be passed up for life** - and alone.
- ▶ You or your gender are **put-down/belittled** in any way.

SO... what are some **GOOD REASONS** for (and benefits of) dating? Here are just a few:



- ◆ To spend time getting to know a person
- ◆ To learn more about how the opposite sex communicates, thinks, feels, makes choices, & relates to others.
- ◆ To obtain a better grasp on who you are. Relationships can often serve as a

helpful mirror showing us things that we might not have seen on our own.

- ◆ To further clarify the qualities and characteristics, temperaments, values, priorities and life goals that are most important to you in a wife or husband. Most people discover when married that they are **VERY** glad they didn't marry the first person they dated.
- ◆ To learn how to develop deeper friendships with the opposite sex.
- ◆ Dating a strong believer can inspire you and buoy up your own walk with God.
- ◆ To discover the right life partner.
- ◆ Dating can help us heal from past relationship wounds.
- ◆ Dating can help us develop important relationship skills,

like listening, encouraging, & how to handle conflict.

- ◆ Dating, and the close observation of others dating, can help illuminate what's healthy, and what's not.

In his book, *I Kissed Dating Good-bye*, Josh Harris contends there are too many inherent dangers with dating. With these in mind, some choose to pass up "dating" until at the life stage when they're prepared to marry. But, for most, dating is the liminal space between single life and marriage.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO DATE, HERE ARE SOME USEFUL THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER:

Don't date someone you wouldn't choose as a friend.

If your date has an anger problem, don't walk away, run!

Nurture your other friendships, don't let dating isolate you.

If your dating life becomes your life, you're in trouble.

Back up, and remember that this other person does not define who you are or your worth, God does.

Sexual contact in dating can become the glue that keeps you in a bad relationship!

Avoid becoming a "people pleaser" and shaping your plans and behavior around what you anticipate will most likely keep someone attracted or interested.

Sexual contact prior to marriage will derail your efforts to grow more relationally or emotionally intimate. In this context it acts as a counterfeit for true intimacy.

Have fun! Laugh a lot. Don't get too serious, too quickly.

Ladies, watch out for the guy who announces to you, *just before or after for first date*, that God told him you're to be his bride. Tell him you'll get back to him as soon as God sends you the same message.

Group & double dates can be less stressful, provide more LOL fun, and feel a bit safer.

It's TWIRP week! Girls, make a new friend this weekend!

There's a huge amount of fun, growth and maturing you can enjoy amidst dating, if you're **moving along smartly**.

-Dan

1. Parrott, Les & Leslie. *Relationships*. (1998) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, p.20

Need to talk?

- phone: 245-5591
- email: jarboed@obu.edu
- walk-in: Evans Student Center - Student Services Office



These letters are intended to address many of the issues that you, or other students around you, may soon be facing. You are at a critical juncture or crossroads in life, and *who you'll become* is taking shape rapidly. We want you to become all you were meant to be, and "We're here to help" isn't just a polite gesture. It's for real.