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Dating Older Boys

By CWK Network Producer

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A recent study entitled "Dating and Disclosure," published in the Journal of Adolescence, says that when it comes to sharing details about dating, teenage girls talk more with their parents – and it's more likely to be mom. Perhaps most parents would like their kids to kiss and tell – and some might have special worries about daughters dating an older boy. According to another study, it turns out they have good reason to be worried.

Sarah is 19 and her boyfriend is 22.

"Because I am dating an older guy, you know, I am very more open to alcohol, just because, I can ask him, 'Hey can you go to the store and buy me something?'" says Sarah, 19.

She says another risk of dating an older guy is being pressured into having sex. "I think a lot of guys especially in high school will go for younger girls just because they'll give it up, you know."

In fact, according to a study by the non-profit group Child Trends, one in five girls has dated a boy at least three years older and 10 percent say they've had sex with an older boy before they turned sixteen.

"Girls, definitely, tell me that they feel like they have to do the sexual requests, they have to honor the sexual requests of their boyfriends or they will get dumped. And there are a lot of girls that are feeling pressure that way," says Nancy McGarrah, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist.

What's more, according to the study, girls who date older guys are less likely to use protection, more likely to become pregnant, and twice as likely to acquire an STD.

"Frequently the younger girl is naïve. Sometimes she doesn't have the assertiveness to stand up for herself and demand that a condom be used," says McGarrah.

"When guys are older...girls will trust them, 'Oh he knows what he's talking about. He has more experience,'" says Lim.

Experts say parents need to set ground rules, they can only date someone one grade above or below, only group dates until they're sixteen and if they argue...

"Explain to them that you trust them and you know that they are a mature person but at the same time there's different levels of maturity and just like they are not ready to get married they are not ready to have babies they are also not ready to be in relationships with people significantly older than they are," says McGarrah.

What Parents Need to Know

When it comes to talking to parents about most dating issues, teen girls tend to disclose more than boys, and both sexes generally prefer to talk to their mothers.

However, a new study found that girls and boys are equally close-mouthed about issues involving sex and what they do with their dates while unsupervised. And in this case, teens were no more eager to talk to their mothers than they were their fathers.

Parents can talk with their teens about what it means -- and the qualities -- of a healthy dating relationship. When a boyfriend or girlfriend uses verbal insults, mean language, nasty putdowns, gets physical by hitting or slapping, or forces someone into sexual activity, it's an important warning sign of verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. Ask your teen to question whether his or her boyfriend or girlfriend:

- Gets angry when I don't drop everything for him or her?
- Criticizes the way I look or dress, and say I'll never be able to find anyone else who would date me?
- Keeps me from seeing friends or from talking to any other guys or girls?
- Wants me to quit an activity, even though I love it?
- Ever raises a hand when angry, like he or she is about to hit me?
- Tries to force me to go further sexually than I want to?

Hopefully, you and your significant other are treating each other well. Not sure if that's the case? Take a step back from the dizzying sensation of being swept off your feet and think about whether your relationship has these qualities:

Mutual respect. Does he or she get how cool you are and why? The key is that your BF or GF is into you for who you are — for your great sense of humor, your love of reality TV, etc. Does your partner listen when you say you're not comfortable doing something and then back off right away? Respect in a relationship means that each person values who the other is and understands — and would never challenge — the other person's boundaries.

Trust. You're talking with a guy from French class and your boyfriend walks by. Does he completely lose his cool or keep walking because he knows you'd never cheat on him? It's OK to get a little jealous sometimes — jealousy is a natural emotion. But how a person reacts when feeling jealous is what matters. There's no way you can have a healthy relationship if you don't trust each other.

Support. It's not just in bad times that your partner should support you. Some people are great when your whole world is falling apart but can't take being there when things are going right (and vice versa). In a healthy relationship, your significant other is there with a shoulder to cry on when you find out your parents are getting divorced and to celebrate with you when you get the lead in a play.

Good communication. You've probably heard lots of stuff about how men and women don't seem to speak the same language. We all know how many different meanings the little phrase "no, nothing's wrong" can have, depending on who's saying it! But what's important is to ask if you're not sure what he or she means, and speak honestly and openly so that the miscommunication is avoided in the first place.

Encourage your teen to think about the qualities they value in a friendship and see how they match up with the ingredients of a healthy relationship. Work on developing those good qualities in yourself — they make you a lot more attractive to others.

Resources

- [Nemours Foundation Kids Health](#)
- [Dating Apps Teens Are Using](#)

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