



Handout VII-1: Student Objectives & Agenda

Lesson VII: The Dating World



Student Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Appropriately share insight gained from another person's perspective on their independent and social skills. Use this knowledge to set personal goals.
 2. Be aware of what to consider in order to find a date.
 3. Learn the social communication skills involved in dating (asking for a date, flirting, complimenting, signaling interest, what to tell, ending the date, interpreting your date's communication, etc.).
 4. Be aware of how to evaluate if a date was successful.
 5. Understand the first steps towards establishing a regular dating relationship with one person.
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Agenda (a 10-minute break will be included):

- ___ Discuss last assignment
- ___ Discussion – how to find someone to date
- ___ Outline of places to meet people
- ___ Video example of asking someone for a date and discussion of strategies
- ___ Outline of how to pick successful places/activities for a date
- ___ Discussion of things to do and say on a date (social communication) and video analysis
- ___ Overview of how to tell if your date is interested
- ___ Outline of what to do at the end of the date
- ___ Outline of what to do after the date
- ___ Overview of how to progress to regular dating and build relationships
- ___ Outline of this lesson's assignment
- ___ File handouts in binder

Available break activities today are:



Handout VII-2: Characteristics of Someone I Would Like to Date

If you do not yet feel ready to date, use this sheet to identify characteristics you would like in a friend.

In the table below, ✓ (check) what best describes your thoughts about a person you want to date. Write on the back any other characteristics that are important to you.

Characteristic	Very Important for the Person to Have This Trait or Do This Type of Activity	I Don't Mind if Person Has This Trait or Does This Type of Activity	I Don't Want to Date or Befriend Someone Who Has This Trait or Does This Type of Activity
A specific height (e.g., tall)			
A specific weight (e.g., thin)			
A specific hair color (e.g., black)			
A specific age (e.g., no more than 5 years older than me)			
A specific physical feature (e.g., blue eyes)			
Educational qualifications (e.g., must have attended college)			
Religious belief (e.g., must be same as mine)			
Has a job			
A specific type of job			
Is a student			
Owns or rents apartment/home			
Lives in a specific geographical area			
Smokes			
Sometimes drinks alcohol			
Has children from a previous relationship			
Would like children in the future			
Spends a lot of time doing physical or sporting activities			
Spends a lot of time doing an activity that I am also interested in			
Has an interest that I would like to try			
Has an interest that I would not like to try			



Handout VII-3: Places to Meet People and/or Go on a Date

The Best Places to Meet Someone

- Doing an activity that interests you (you will be more likely to meet someone you have something in common with). For example, a book group or video gaming club.
- Somewhere with a safe, familiar atmosphere.
- A place where you can see clearly, hear clearly, and respond to what the other person says.
 - Examples: Your neighborhood, sporting events as a spectator, grocery stores, laundromats, bookstores, restaurants, movies, dances, places of worship, volunteer activities, bus stops, political campaigns, team sports, individual exercising, gyms, health clubs, airports, planes, trains, classes (e.g., high school, college or continuing education), traffic school, cooking class, computer course, the internet/personal ads.



Although the Internet is a good way to access a lot of people, many people misrepresent themselves online (e.g., pretend that they are not married or that they are a different age). Plan to have only a couple of email chats and phone calls before you have a face-to-face meeting because otherwise the other person may lure you in with false information before you have been able to make a judgment about them. Also, make sure that you take a good look at the goals of the website. Some sites are for people looking for relationships and some for casual sex partners. Make sure that the site requires members to be of adult age. This will prevent you from risking legal problems by contacting someone who is underage. There are also some websites that are specifically for individuals with ASD (e.g., Aspie Affection [www.aspieaffection.com]).

- Parties or social events in a group. Group dates are common today. You can later decide if you want to ask a member of the group out for an individual date.

Avoid Looking for a Date in the Following Places

- Bars – it's dark; people may have altered perceptions (due to alcohol), too noisy to talk.
- Job/office – confuses your love life and work life. Could be a problem in your boss' view.
- Your immediate neighborhood and similar places. It would be difficult to avoid the person if it doesn't work out.

Note: Don't use your work computer for online dating – only use your personal home computer. Anything you do on your computer at work is public rather than private information.



Handout VII-4: Successful Ways of Asking Someone on a Date

Good Ideas

- Be friendly and casual (e.g., “I am going to get coffee after class, do you want to come?”).
- Be positive and honest without divulging too much information. For example, say “I’m working on getting a job in computers” rather than “It’s no good trying to find a job in this town. I have been turned down by 15 companies.”
- Be specific – avoid saying things like “Would you like to go out some time?” as it leaves no room for the person to know what he/she is committing him/herself to. Instead, try something like “Would you like to go out for coffee later this week?”
- Offer options about the date (e.g., day, time, transportation, activity). It will make you seem organized rather than rigid. For example, “Would you like to meet there, or do you want me to pick you up?”
- Try to give the other person some notice (e.g., a week to 10 days in advance for a first date).

Things That Are Likely to Put People Off

- Being obscene (e.g., making crude jokes or gestures)
- Being silly (pulling faces is not attractive in an adult)
- Being negative or whiny
- Using corny pick-up lines like “Do you come here often?” If you are not sure if a line is corny, check with someone you trust, like a family member
- Asking for a first date on a Friday or Saturday night. People may think you are too serious, as these are important nights for most people



Handout VII-5: Where to Go on Your Initial Dates

Think first about safety. Hold initial meetings in a public place and make sure someone you trust knows where you are. Initially, give out only your mobile phone number. Do not give out your home address and phone or your business phone or address until you know each other well enough to trust that the other person is not likely to misuse the information (e.g., show up at your place of employment inappropriately). If you are not sure, talk to a trusted person (e.g., a sibling) about it.

Then:

- Pick an activity that you enjoy. This gives the person a chance to learn more about you. Find an activity that only lasts a couple of hours. (If the date goes well, it leaves people wanting more; if it goes badly, then at least it doesn't last too long.) Ramey and Ramey (2008), a married couple, both of whom have ASD, state that one of the most significant steps they took in improving their social lives was making a written list of things they found interesting.
- Make sure that the place you choose allows you to talk so that you can begin to get to know each other (if you pick the movies, you may want to follow it with coffee to allow for this).
- Avoid competitive activities because they can cause too much tension between you and your date.
- Do something that is within your budget and doesn't require new clothes. (Otherwise the person may get a false impression of you.)
- Go to a place close by, as long journeys can be awkward if you don't know each other well.
- Pick an activity that doesn't involve a lot of alcohol, as this can cause problems. For most adults, having one or two drinks is okay, but if you usually never drink it is better to avoid alcohol altogether as it could impede your judgment.
- Don't involve other people who know you really well, like your parents, as this can make it feel like an audition for the other person.

Examples of good date places: Coffeehouse, taking a walk in a public area, street fairs, museums, sporting events, picnics, zoos, interesting restaurant (e.g., waiters dressed in costume), auctions, amusement parks, or indoor events, such as car shows, art shows, or a planetarium.

Examples of places that may be okay but need to consider details: Party (depends who is hosting it and where it is being held. If you are the only one who knows the people it's not a good idea); movies or plays (not much opportunity to talk unless you plan something afterwards; also need to make sure that you both want to see the same movie); dinner (many potential problems, such as sensory issues with food, deciding what kind of food, spilling, expense).

Examples of places to avoid: Beach (e.g., too much skin exposed and no end to the date), New Year's Eve party, a wedding, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving dinner. All of these events involve too much family and emotional investment.



Handout VII-6: Things to Do or Say on Dates

Who Pays for Things on the Date?

- The person who asks for the date should expect to pay
- The other person can offer to pay but shouldn't insist
- If one person is paying, it's okay for the other to offer to pay the tip, buy the popcorn, pay for the next date, bring the picnic, etc.

What to Say When You First Meet on the Date

- *Be friendly, positive, and start to build a conversation. Examples of good openings:*
 - Hi, good to see you
 - You look great
 - What did you do today?
- *Examples of things to avoid saying (can cause controversy or show you are insecure):*
 - Mind if I smoke?
 - Why are you late?
 - How do I look?

Next Step – Make Small Talk (Helps people to get comfortable)

- *Safe subjects:* Weather, location, friends in common, news events, popular culture (books, movies, TV)
- *Topics to avoid* (as these cause too much controversy): Sex, past partners, politics, religion, something very personal (e.g., how you coped with depression)

Begin to Add Some Conversation to Get to Know Each Other Better, Including:

- Balancing asking questions about the other person and telling information about yourself.
- Choosing topics such as the following to ask about or to tell about:
 - What school you attend and what you are studying
 - Your/the other person's job
 - What you would like to do when you leave school
 - Town you are from
 - What you like to do on the weekend or what music you listen to
 - Whether you have any brothers or sisters
 - Whether you have a pet or would like to have one

Include Some Flirting

Flirting is a form of human interaction, usually expressing a sexual or romantic interest in the other person. It can consist of conversation, body language, or brief physical contact. It may be one-sided or reciprocated ("Flirting," 2010).

- *What to do:*
 - Make eye contact for about 5 seconds at a time and then drop your gaze. Do this about three times in a 10- to 15-minute period.
 - Lean forward slightly.
 - Smile – must be a natural smile. Practice.
 - Make light, fun remarks.
 - Pay attention to what the other person is saying; act interested (e.g., when appropriate, nod, smile, and laugh at what the other person says).
 - Use compliments:
 - ▶ Must be sincere and fairly realistic (e.g., don't say "you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen").
 - ▶ Don't use too many compliments because others won't believe you.
 - ▶ Compliment what the other person is saying (e.g., "That's impressive that you give so much time to volunteering").
 - If you compliment other persons' looks:
 - ▶ Don't touch their body when you compliment.
 - ▶ Don't mention body parts from neck down (except feet or shoes). Instead say, "You have a great smile" or "you look great in that jacket."
 - Use brief nonsexual touch (e.g., brush against the other person's arm).
 - Women only – Expose your neck by tilting your head to side, flip hair, or look over your shoulder.
 - Women only – cross legs.
 - Men only – stand or sit tall with shoulders back, hold your head up.
- *What not to do:*
 - Say something nice without the accompanying body language (appears false). For example, don't say "It's great to see you" while frowning.
 - Smirk (i.e., inappropriate or false smile).
 - Be too direct (e.g., tell someone he/she is incredibly hot).
 - Touch in too intimate a way.
 - Continue to flirt when the other person is signaling that he/she is uncomfortable. Someone might show he/she is uncomfortable by looking away, looking down, turning away, or changing the topic.



Handout VII-7: How to Tell if Your Date Is Interested

- **Signs of Interest**

- Nodding
- Good eye contact
- Relaxed posture with palms up
- Leaning slightly forward
- Touching (warm [e.g., lightly tapping his/her shoulder] rather than suggestive [e.g., putting your hand on his/her knee])
- Mirroring by unconsciously copying the other person's behavior at the same time (e.g., both crossing leg at the same time)
- Asking you about your likes and interests

- **Warning Signs of Lack of Interest**

- Yawning
- Frequent nodding
- Arms crossed (but people also do this if they are cold)
- Open mouth – you may not be giving the other person a chance to talk
- Hands on mouth – could be a sign that they are trying to stop themselves from talking
- Arms behind head – could be a sign of attempt to gain dominance
- Looking around the room or attempting to talk mostly with other people in the room
- Repeatedly looking at watch
- Cutting the date short by making an excuse to leave early
- Moving away when you move closer (this can also be a signal that you are invading somebody's personal space)



Handout VII-8: Ending the Date

- **If you think the date has gone well and you would like to see the person again:**
 - Mention the possibility of another date (e.g., “I’ve had a great time. I’d like to go out again. Could I get your cell number or email?”).
 - Opt to end the date with a hug or a kiss. If so, move slowly towards your date. If he/she moves away, back off as this is a sign he/she is not interested or ready to move to this level. If you attempt to kiss the other person’s lips and he/she offers a cheek, this could mean that the person is not romantically interested in you, or it could be that he/she would like to get to know you better before kissing on the lips.
 - Follow up with a call, email, or text to suggest a second date.
 - Do not have sex on the first date. Sex signifies intimacy and exposure and should not be taken lightly. Even if you think you can take it lightly, you don’t know the other person’s perception. Get to know the person better.
- **If you are not sure how you feel about the date:**
 - Tell your date you had a good time and that you need a few days to think about the experience. If your date says something like that to you, say “great” and leave.
 - Don’t have sex. You are not ready for this if you are unsure how you feel about the date.
 - Think about whether you want another date. Did you have fun? Were you comfortable and honest with your own needs?
 - Follow up with an email or call only if you decide you want to try another date. If the other party was unsure and/or doesn’t reply to your follow-up, move on and date someone else.
- **If you didn’t enjoy the date and have no intention of seeing the person again:**
 - Tell the truth, but be polite, even if the other person suggests a second date. Use the phrase, “I’m going to be really busy over the next few months and don’t think I’ll have time to do anything.”
 - Don’t say you’ll call or email even if the other person asks. It is better to be honest and say something like “I enjoyed this evening but I think we are very different people and honestly not compatible in a dating sense.”
 - Don’t have sex; it will signal to the person that you are in fact interested in them even if you say you aren’t.



Handout VII-9: After the Date

Use the experience to learn:

- Write a list of the things that you thought were positive about the date (e.g., information about the person, comments he/she made, activities you did).
- Write a list of the things that were negative, uncomfortable, or activities you didn't like.
- Look at the lists, write down anything you would do differently next time or different traits you would want in a person you date.

Follow up after the date:

- If you are interested in seeing the person again and told him/her that you would call, wait about two or three days and then call or email. People can feel intimidated if you call the next day as this may be too intense or appear desperate. On the other hand, if you wait too long (e.g., 10 days) the person is likely to assume that you aren't interested.
- If your date told you he/she would call but doesn't, or if you leave a message and he/she doesn't call you back:
 - Wait about a week and then call or email. Keep your message friendly and casual such as "Hi, this is ... I was just calling to say I had a good time at ... Let me know if you would like to go out again;" then leave your number.
 - If the person still doesn't get back in touch with you, assume that he/she isn't interested.
 - Think about what he/she said or his/her body language on the date and what he/she was trying to communicate. For example, if the person said something like "I am going to be really busy during the next couple of months, so I don't know if I will have any time to socialize," it is likely that he/she was trying to find a tactful way of telling you he/she wasn't interested in going out with you again.
- If the person keeps calling or emailing you, but you don't want to go out with him/her again, be tactful but honest. Don't say you will call or see him/her "soon." Initially, you can keep saying how busy you are as most people will get the message that this means you aren't interested. If the caller persists, say something like "Thanks for going out with me last week, but I don't think this is going to work out, so I'd rather not arrange another time to meet. Please stop calling me."



Handout VII-10: Beginning to Develop a Romantic Relationship

Once you have had a couple of dates (there is no exact number, but for most people this would mean between 2 and 5 – they wouldn't have to do all the things below at once) with someone, you can begin to get to know each other by gradually:

- Broadening the places you go on your dates
- Introducing the person to your friends and then your family members
- Possibly becoming more physically intimate by kissing, hugging, making out, or having sex. If you are thinking about having sex, make sure:
 - You are at a stage in your relationship when you are already emotionally intimate, you should:
 - ▶ Know each other's family details
 - ▶ Have talked about sexually transmitted infections and have developed your protection plan
 - ▶ Discuss a contraception choice
 - ▶ Know that your date shares your feelings about the right time to have sex or religious beliefs regarding this
 - ▶ **If you do not feel ready to talk about these topics, you are not ready to have sex**
- Gradually sharing more information with each other such as:
 - By about the fourth date, share information that might affect your future together like previous marriages, convictions, diagnoses, kids, or bankruptcies. Make sure you clarify what this means for you.
 - Things that you really like or hate. Discuss this gradually (e.g., talk about it for a short time initially) so that you test your date's reactions to these topics, such as politics, religion, sports, or strong beliefs on a certain topic.
 - Telling the person how much you like him/her – this should be done gradually, as telling someone you love them implies a level of commitment that neither of you may be ready for. Instead, you can show the person how much you are enjoying his/her company by your actions (e.g., nonverbal communication and how often you contact him/her). Ideally, you should be dating someone exclusively for several months before you tell them you love them. At this stage, think about the rules we discussed (in the lesson on contraception) that you need to set for yourself in terms of when you want to be sexually intimate with someone.



Handout VII-11: Assignment

Name: _____ Due Date _____

Go to the Dating section of www.about.com and click on the Dating Tips (Albo, n.d.) page (<http://dating.about.com/od/datingissues/u/DatingTips.htm>). Click on one of the first four topics at the start of the page; that is, one of the following topics:

1. The Rules of Dating
2. The Language of Dating
3. Methods of Communication
4. Dating Advice

Then write the answers to the following questions:

1. What was the topic you were reading about?

2. What are three facts about this topic?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. Would you advise a friend who was interested in dating to read about his topic? (explain why)

Bring this completed sheet with you to discuss in class next lesson.