



Handout VI-1: Student Objectives & Agenda

Lesson VI: Introduction to Dating



Student Objectives:

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

1. Understand own sensory sensitivities in order to identify and list them.
 2. Appropriately share how having hyper- or hyposensitivities has been helpful or hard to deal with in a relationship (with family, friends, or partners).
 3. Develop a sensory coping plan.
 4. Identify the purpose of dating and whether they are ready to date.
 5. Understand the steps in appearing confident and building confidence on the inside.
 6. Demonstrate an awareness of the concept of getting prepared for dating.
 7. Understand the link between dating and friendship.
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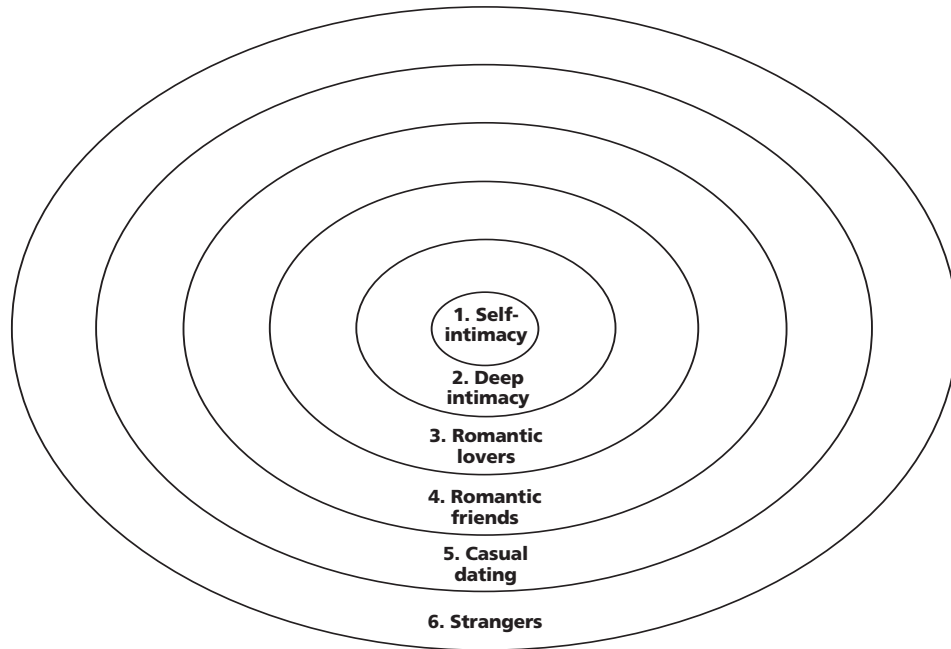
Agenda (a 10-minute break will be included):

- ___ Outline of definition of dating
- ___ Discussion of how we experience sensory information and why this is important in relationships
- ___ Sharing information about our sensory experiences
- ___ Listen to someone else's perspective of sensory issues
- ___ Discuss last assignment
- ___ Outline of hyper-/hyposensitivities and coping plans
- ___ Overview of physical appearance related to dating
- ___ Overview of independence related to dating
- ___ Overview of social skills related to dating
- ___ Overview of confidence related to dating
- ___ Outline of this lesson's assignment
- ___ Read mid-term report
- ___ File handouts in binder

Available break activities today are:



Handout VI-2: Types of Romantic Relationships



Circle 6 = Strangers. You begin to share information on a superficial level, revealing no personal or private information. If you are attracted to each other, you might flirt. If you both respond positively, you may advance to the next circle.

Circle 5 = Casual dating. You still don't know each other well enough to share personal information. You share feelings and thoughts but only positive ones about non-controversial topics. (Because at this stage people can be put off by someone who shares more intimate details or focuses on negative things.) You're there to have fun and you keep it light (not serious). If you both appreciate and reciprocate each other's interest, you may progress to the next circle.

Circle 4 = Romantic friends. As you move into this circle, you begin to trust one another more. You feel secure enough to tease and be more spontaneous. It's okay to discuss negative topics (such as a difficult day at work), as long as you spend more time talking about positive issues and leave the date on an upbeat, emotionally supportive note (i.e., talking about something positive). You feel more affectionate toward one another; you hold hands, put your arms around each other, and kiss.

Circle 3 = Romantic lovers. At this point you're having sex. You are now sharing an extremely personal physical experience that you don't share with anyone else. That increases your emotional intimacy; you enjoy giving and receiving love and emotional support.

Circle 2 = Deep intimacy. It takes a long time to reach this stage. You have experienced each other closely for so long that you trust each other deeply. You're best friends and exclusive, intimate partners. Your relationship has been tested, and you have seen each other at your worst and survived. This is as close as you can get with another human being.

Circle 1 = Self-intimacy. This innermost circle consists of you and only you. It's healthy to keep some thoughts, ideas, and feelings totally to yourself. On the other hand, staying too much in this circle can prevent others from getting close to you.

A healthy relationship gradually moves up the circles; it is not healthy to jump from circle 5 to circle 3 on a first date. You're skipping too many boundaries all at the same time.

Stages adapted from Wachs (2002, pp. 89-91).

From C. Davies & M. A. Dubie, *Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health*. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC Publishing. ©2012. www.aapcpublishing.net



Handout VI-3: What Is Dating?

- **Getting to know someone and letting them get to know you so that you can decide whether you're interested in spending more time together.**
- **It is not:**
 - Looking for a "one-night stand" (a sexual encounter lasting only one time)
 - Looking for a person that you will spend the rest of your life with
 - A way to show that you are not a loner
 - Looking for someone to please your parents or other people in your life



Handout VI-4: Auditory (Sound) Sensitivities

Make a plan for yourself related to any auditory hyper- or hyposensitivities you have, so you will be prepared as you start to develop friendships or go on a date.

Examples	
Hypersensitive (Uncomfortable)	Hyposensitive (Crave)*
May find noise uncomfortable, distracting or even painful. This could be a certain volume or just some specific types of noises.	May not react to a sudden or loud noise and/or may be oblivious to the fact that very loud noises can be stressful and sometimes painful to most people (note: you should rule out hearing loss as the cause of any of these symptoms).
May be distracted by noises that most people don't usually hear such as buzzing of lights or ticking clocks.	May be unaware of a noise that most people would respond to such as the buzzer that signals the end of a class.
Distressed or distracted by aspects of speech (such as someone who talks loudly or someone who has a voice of a certain tone or pitch).	May be unaware of or seek aspects of speech such as volume and tone of voice (in self and others). Or may just not respond when people talk.
*You should rule out hearing loss as the cause of any of these symptoms.	

Think about your personal auditory support plan. Common strategies include:

- If auditory factors are causing you to avoid or ignore opportunities that you would otherwise like to participate in, decide whether you would like to try to change this. Some people can learn to tolerate noises over time by gradually experiencing more and more of what was originally bothering them and/or by working with someone on sensory integration (e.g., an occupational therapist).
- Explain to people that you find it difficult to process long verbal explanations and ask them to only tell you what you need to know at the time (chunks of information).
- Work on being able to tolerate certain aspects of speech by listening to recordings (e.g., TV) of different voices while using calming techniques like slow breathing. If you are very distressed by the voice of someone you can't avoid (like a teacher), consider explaining the situation to the person by saying something like, "I just wanted to let you know that I sometimes find the tone of people's voices distracting. Would it be okay if I take a short break when this happens so that I can refocus?"
- The above suggestions are all communication skills that you can work on improving. Look up the resources given in this lesson and the next for more ideas on how to work on communication skills. Ask your instructor for some specific communication resources (there are some in an earlier chapter of this book).

- Help others understand your sensory issues by giving them some information and examples of your reactions/needs. Ask them about any activities they have planned before going out with them. For example, explain you need to avoid activities involving loud noises such as firework displays, carnivals, or restaurants with tile floors. Be specific about your needs. Then plan the activity so that both people will enjoy it (you may each have to compromise and be prepared to spend some time in an activity that may have noise levels that differ from your preference).
- Ask your friend or date if he/she has any hyper- or hyposensitivities that you need to be aware of in order to help make your time together enjoyable. For example, try meeting in a place that is quiet compared to meeting for an activity that involves a lot of loud noise such as a concert.
- Bring headphones, wear ear plugs, or noise-reduction headphones to block out some noise.
- If you tend not to notice loud noises, observe the reactions of others, and if you think noise may be a problem for them, say something like, "Does the noise bother you? I should let you know that I sometimes don't react to loud noises in the same way as most people, so let me know if I can do anything to help."
- If you are finding a noise distracting, explain to the other person, by saying something like, "I sometimes get distracted by noises such as buzzing; can we move somewhere quieter, please."
- Observe others around you to try and find out if you have missed a signal like a buzzer. If you aren't sure, ask someone (explain that you sometimes don't hear some sounds).



Handout VI-5: Tactile (Touch) Sensitivities

Make a plan for yourself related to any tactile hyper- or hyposensitivities you have, so you will be prepared as you start to develop friendships or go on a date.

Examples	
Hypersensitive (Uncomfortable)	Hyposensitive (Crave)
Don't like to be touched (this could be specific to certain parts of body or touch in general, like holding hands). May experience touch as painful. This may be interpreted as rejection by friends or partners.	Seeks out tight hugging, holding, touching, or does this to others.
May find certain types of touch aversive (for example, may be okay being kissed unless kissed by someone with a beard).	May seek specific tactile things about people like touching the head of a person with spiked hair.
May be distressed by clothing of certain fabrics or styles (like ones with tags).	May seek out clothing that provides specific touch experiences like very tight shirts.
May find textures of certain foods aversive (for example, soft foods like mashed potatoes).	May seek foods of certain or all textures (not to avoid some but to enjoy them).
May find textures of hygiene products aversive (for example, shaving foam or deodorant).	May enjoy touching products of certain textures.
May find certain climates or temperatures aversive.	May seek out extreme hot or cold climates or temperatures.
May overreact to sexual stimulation or find it aversive; can be linked to premature ejaculation.	May underreact to sexual stimulation, which can lead to difficulties having orgasms or requirement for sexual stimulation to be more extreme.

Think about your personal tactile support plan. Common strategies include:

- Talk to people you know well and explain that you are not being rude but are sensitive to touch. Share your personal needs.
- Practice the basic elements of human touch that you will need for most social interactions (e.g., shaking hands) with someone you trust (e.g., parent, therapist) on a regular basis until you are better able to tolerate the feeling.
- If you are unable to tolerate a specific type of human touch (such as kissing), decide whether you want to work on increasing your tolerance. If you are in a romantic relationship, talk to the other person about your needs. Most people can learn to be more tolerant of something if they gradually experience it on a regular basis. Some researchers (such as Ramey & Ramey, 2008) found that the issue with human touch is often not a problem with being touched but a problem with *how* you are touched. Therefore, communication can be the key to working out a solution.

- If you crave more severe touching than most people, talk to friends and partners about this. If they are unable or unwilling to provide enough touch, find other ways by which you can meet this need, such as wearing a weighted vest for short periods of time during the day.
- If you seek specific things to touch (such as people's hair), avoid touching strangers or acquaintances (such behavior will be interpreted as odd or even threatening). With friends or partners discuss the issues and agree on a strategy that works for both of you. Include alternate ways to meet your need, such as squeezing a spiked fidget ball.
- Buy a variety of clothes in the textures you can tolerate. Make sure to check your appearance in terms of appropriate dress (e.g., clothes that are tight can show too much skin, which may be inappropriate for a work setting).
- Look at restaurant menus online to plan what you will be able to tolerate when going out to eat or go to an activity that does not involve food and bring your own snack. Share favorite restaurants and food choices with a friend/partner but be willing to compromise and try somewhere he/she enjoys.
- Experiment with different foods and hygiene products. Be prepared to try new things. This is the only way that you will improve your level of tolerance.
- Explore which product(s) work best for you so that you are able to maintain good hygiene. (This will avoid others being put off by poor hygiene.)
- If you like to feel the texture of certain products, develop socially acceptable ways of doing it (if you are not sure what is socially acceptable, ask a trusted person like a parent or therapist). For example, you can squeeze a fidget ball rather than squeezing out all of someone's toothpaste tube.
- Wear clothes in layers to prepare for varying temperatures. If you like a temperature that is very warm or very cold, ask the other person if he/she is too hot or too cold and be prepared to compromise some of the time.
- If you have touch issues around sexual stimulation, avoid any sexual stimulation that causes injury or soreness. Be aware that if you tend to underreact to sexual stimulation, you will need to be gentler with a partner. Talk to your partner about ways you can both enjoy sexual stimulation and work on becoming more tolerant (you may find that talking to a therapist about this would be helpful).



Handout VI-6: Visual Sensitivities

Make a plan for yourself related to any tactile hyper- or hyposensitivities you have, so you will be prepared as you start to develop friendships or go on a date.

Examples	
Hypersensitive (Uncomfortable)	Hyposensitive (Crave)
May find aversive bright or fluorescent lights, sunny day, or when the snow reflects the light.	May seek out bright lights and sunshine by enjoying looking at them.
May find it difficult to tolerate things that have a specific look (for example, a certain color, shape or type of movement) or reflect light like glitter balls.	May seek out things that have a specific look, move a certain way, or reflect light, and enjoy looking at these things, such as object that spins. May be distracted by these things and lose focus on people around you.
May be distressed by things that other people don't see, such as the glare when light bounces off white paper when they are reading (causing reading problems).	May see things that other people don't see and seek out these things to look at such as rainbow colors reflecting off a CD.
Easily overwhelmed when there is a lot of visual information (such as if they visit a doctor's office that has lots of posters all over the walls).	May be overly interested in visual details when there is a lot of visual information around them to the extent that it distracts them from other things.

Think about your personal visual support plan. Common strategies include:

- To help bright lights become more tolerable, wear eyeglasses with colored lenses. These may be just regular glasses or Irlen lenses (these have colored lenses, but you get tested by the company first and they decide which type is best for you); see Irlen Institute (www.irlen.com). You should know that there is controversy among scientific researchers about whether these lenses are helpful. Some organizations, including the Committee on Children With Disabilities, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, claim that controversial methods of reading treatment, such as Irlen lenses, are without scientific validation (see Research Autism at www.researchautism.net). If you choose this strategy, make sure to initially explain to key people around you (such as professors or friends) why you wearing the glasses indoors.
- When reading, experiment with colored paper rather than white (you can try changing the background to different colors on the computer or using colored transparent sheets over your books). Once you have found the color that works best for you, carry it with you so you are prepared. (Irlen Institute [www.irlen.com] sells inexpensive colored overlays.)

- If you have to sit in an area with light that is aversive (like during a date), explain to friend/date that you have sensory sensitivities and may need to step away to take short breaks (e.g., 2 minutes) or may close your eyes during the activity. Alternatively, pull down the shades or use a lamp instead of overhead light.
- Try to avoid situations where you are likely to be overwhelmed or too interested/distracted by lots of visual details (e.g., by arranging furniture so that you don't see it or by looking only directly in front of you). If you are overwhelmed in a situation where you need to focus (talking to friend at apartment or dorm), explain the problem and ask if you can sit in a certain place (such as with your back to a visual display) to avoid the problem or if you can meet somewhere else. Try to avoid looking at a lot of visual things at once (e.g., look at a blank wall rather than one with lots of posters). Pick an option where you will be able to work on tolerating some visual information (such as a small grocery store rather than a large one). Tell instructors and teachers that you may need information to be presented with fewer items on each page.
- If you seek visual stimulation, avoid looking directly at the sun – this will damage your eyes. If you are not able to tolerate dark sunglasses, try a slightly lighter shade of lens.
- Avoid a lot of exposure to places where you are likely to see things that you find difficult to look at (such as a glitter ball). At the same time, slowly build up your tolerance (e.g., by looking at pictures of these things for a few minutes) so that it is not as aversive.
- If you are visually interested and distracted by something, explain to your friend/partner that you find a certain thing interesting to look at and that this doesn't mean that you aren't enjoying his/her company. You may need to avoid places with a lot of these things in order to focus on people. If so, you can fulfill this sensory need in other ways, such as looking at colored patterns on a computer when you are alone.



Handout VI-7: Smell and Olfactory (Linked With Taste) Sensitivities

Make a plan for yourself related to any tactile hyper- or hyposensitivities you have, so you will be prepared as you start to develop friendships or go on a date.

Examples	
Hypersensitive (Uncomfortable)	Hyposensitive (Crave)
Smells of foods may be aversive or very strong even if they are not noticeable to other people.	May not notice food smells or could seek out the smell of certain foods.
Experiences tastes as being much stronger than to most people to the extent that certain tastes are aversive.	Unable to taste things that most people taste. Therefore, seeks out strong flavors and extremes such as very spicy foods.
Can smell (and may find some aversive) the products people use (e.g., the soap they used that morning) when the person passes, even if those scents are so mild that others cannot not detect them.	Either doesn't notice scents (or may not react to something that would be aversive to most people such as a skunk) or seeks out certain scents.
May have severe aversive reactions to things that have strong smells (like paint) or even milder smells.	

Think about your personal olfactory support plan. Common strategies include:

- If you are going out to dinner, try to pick a restaurant that you are likely to tolerate. If possible, visit the restaurant prior to your date. If it is a new restaurant, be honest with your date when you first enter if the smell is intolerable to you.
- If you are unable to tolerate eating in restaurants, work on your tolerance level, because otherwise this will limit many areas of your life, such as work and social events. Try exposing yourself to new smells and tastes by gradually increasing the length of exposure on a regular basis (i.e., at least twice a week) until your tolerance improves. Don't make dinner dates until you are positive about the type of food you will be able to eat.
- If someone else has picked the restaurant, look up the menu ahead of time to decide what menu items would be best for you to eat. Many restaurants post their menus on their websites; also, the website www.allmenus.com includes menus from restaurants in many cities.
- If you like strong tastes and are cooking for other people, spice your own food after you have served theirs. Carry spicy ingredients like hot sauce to add to your food and explain to friends that you like your food really spicy.
- If you seek out certain smells, other people may perceive this behavior as unusual. Explain that you like the smell of certain things. Avoid intensely sniffing things when other people are around.

- Take your own lunch to a social gathering or suggest a potluck for social events so that you can bring something that you like to eat.
- If you enjoy an activity where there are likely to be lots of people wearing perfumes (e.g., opera), think about attending this activity alone without a lot of interaction with other people.
- Politely explain to friends that you are sensitive to perfume or scented lotions and ask if they would mind avoiding using any when you spend time together.
- For some people, smells are so intolerable that they can only find relief when wearing a filtration mask. This is not recommended, except in extreme circumstances, as it is likely to be socially ostracizing.



Handout VI-8: Proprioceptive (Body Positioning) and Vestibular (Balance) Sensitivities

Make a plan for yourself related to any tactile hyper- or hyposensitivities you have, so you will be prepared as you start to develop friendships or go on a date.

Examples	
Hypersensitive (Uncomfortable)	Hyposensitive (Crave)
Attempts to avoid walking into things or people, but is uncoordinated and may still do it. May be distressed in crowds as slightest brush into them may be aversive.	May move or jump around (or run into things or people) a lot to create input to muscles and joints. In crowds may walk into others.
May apply insufficient pressure to people (can lead to difficulties with sexual or non-sexual touch).	May apply (or seek) intense pressure to (from) people (can lead to difficulties with sexual or non-sexual touch).
May fall over a lot; heights or things that require balance like walking on uneven surfaces may be aversive	Seeks out things that would cause most people to lose balance (e.g., enjoys spinning in circles without getting dizzy).
Gets motion sick very easily.	Rarely or never gets motion sick.

Think about your personal proprioceptive and vestibular support plan. Common strategies include:

- If deep pressure helps you to relax or feel better, find socially appropriate ways to regularly schedule this into your routine (e.g., getting a massage). Learn about the appropriate distance to be with people (depends on your relationship and social setting). You can read about this by searching the Internet for “body language” and/or by asking your instructor for resources. Role-play different scenarios (e.g., meeting friend for first time) with a trusted person like a parent or therapist to practice this skill.
- Experiment with having an object in your hand that you can squish and roll (e.g., stress-ball or fidget) to see if this is helpful to you.
- Do physical exercises that involve deep pressure such as:
 - running
 - weight lifting
- Be conscious of where your body is in space and think of strategies to support you as you move (e.g., holding a railing when walking down stairs).
- Take your time when doing things that are difficult and do them slowly.
- Tell other people about activities that you can do that don’t involve vestibular movements or things likely to cause you motion sickness.

- Wear shoes with a wide base rather than narrow heels to keep your balance.
- Work on physical exercises that can improve your balance such as:
 - yoga
 - using a balance ball or board
 - simple, everyday balance tasks such as the ones listed under “How to Do Exercises to Improve Balance” at www.ehow.com (Leong, n.d.) may be found at http://www.ehow.com/how_4469850_do-exercises-improve-balance.html
- Explain to friends and partners that you enjoy things like roller-coasters. If spinning or certain movements help you to relax or feel better, find socially appropriate ways to regularly schedule these into your routine (for example, jumping on a trampoline).



Handout VI-9: Physical Appearance

Evaluation of yourself: Work through the following checklist as it applies to you. Also ask the opinion of someone else (as often it helps to have an external perspective) such as a friend/sibling/parent or therapist. Remember you want an opinion from people whose opinion you trust to help you.

Cleanliness

- Are you showering or bathing regularly (at least every other day and after you exercise)?
- Are your hands and fingernails clean?
- Are your teeth clean and well maintained (cleaning at least twice a day, flossing at least once a day)?
- Do you do things to prevent unpleasant body odor, such as using deodorant at least once a day and avoiding eating food that can cause bad breath (like onions) before you are going on a date?

Clothes

- Are your clothes clean? Do you wash your underwear after each wearing? Do you wash shirts that will be next to your skin after three wearings or immediately if they are stained?
- Are your clothes free from rips or worn areas?
- Do your shoes match (e.g., same laces), clean, or polished? Are they too worn out?
- Are you dressing appropriately for your age? Look at what people much older and younger than you are wearing. Are you more like them or people the same age as you?
- Do you dress appropriately for the situation? For example, would you wear sandals in cold weather or a t-shirt to a formal job interview?
- Is your style of dress flattering for your body shape (e.g., if you have a large stomach, it can look even larger if you tuck your shirt into tight pants)? If you are unsure about this, there are many websites where you can find help, such as Trinny and Susannah (www.trinnyand-susannah.com).

Hair

- Is it clean and brushed or combed?
- Do you regularly visit the hairstylist?
- Is it flattering to your face and style? You can find many websites that will tell you about this, such as Hairstyle (www.hairstyle.com).
- If you color your hair, do you recolor regularly to hide unflattering roots?

Face

- If you are a male with facial hair, is it well groomed? Do you trim it or have it shaped regularly?
- If you are female, do you have any dark facial hair that needs to be removed? You can purchase facial hair remover creams in any drugstore.
NOTE: These are toxic chemicals, so make sure to follow the directions and, if needed, ask a trusted person to help you.
- Do you wear makeup? If so, is it flattering (not too much or too noticeable)? Or would you like to wear makeup? If so, you could get a lesson at the makeup counter of any large department store or look at web articles such as "How to Apply Make-Up in 10 Easy Steps" at www.ehow.com at http://www.ehow.com/how_11271_apply-makeup-10.html.
- Do you have any skin conditions that affect your appearance such as acne? If so, are you visiting a dermatologist for treatment?

Physique and Health

- Are you healthy? Do you visit a physician regularly? "Regular" means at least once a year for an annual physical and more often if you have any medical conditions.
- Do you exercise regularly (most people need to exercise 3-5 days a week)? You can read more about this on the Internet such as the article "How Often Should You Exercise" (www.goodhealth.com at http://www.goodhealth.com/articles/2008/09/05/how_often_should_you_exercise). (Seton Healthcare Network, 2008).
- Do you eat a healthy, balanced diet such as shown by the United States Department of Agriculture food pyramid (www.mypyramid.gov)?



Handout VI-10: How Independent Am I?

Write in each column what applies to you and then write in your next step.

Activity	What I Am Currently Doing	What I Would Like to Be Doing	The Next Step in Making This Happen
Getting up at the appropriate time to start my day			
Carrying out my morning & evening routines (e.g., teeth, shower, dressing)			
Picking out clothes that are appropriate and go together			
Making my own meals that are balanced			
Keeping my environment (room, apartment, etc.) clean			
Earning enough money to support myself (or if I am a full-time student, having a plan for how I will support myself after school)			

Activity	What I Am Currently Doing	What I Would Like to Be Doing	The Next Step in Making This Happen
Transporting myself (e.g., driving or using public transport)			
Paying my bills on time and budgeting			
Balancing time between work/study and leisure			
Making and remembering my own appointments such as doctor's visits			
Balancing my time between solitary activities and those involving other people			
Making sure I get enough sleep and exercise regularly			



Handout VI-11: How to Prepare for the Social Aspects of Dating

- Make a plan to do something at least 3 times a week. It could be a social activity or a trip to the grocery store, but it must include face-to-face interaction (rather than a computer interaction). Be sure to talk to at least 3 new people on each outing. The goal is to have a simple conversation with someone (e.g., about the weather or sports). Try going to new places and trying new things. Write here what you are going to do this week:

- Volunteer your time to do something for someone either via an organization or just by helping a friend with a task, such as moving his belongings into a new house or apartment.
- Practice social skills with your parents, your teacher, your neighbor, or other people around you, especially the skills of:
 - Making someone know that you feel good about them without embarrassing them. This includes using eye contact, vocal warmth, and sometimes giving compliments.
 - Making small talk. Many people do not attempt small talk because they see it as pointless since everyone in the conversation talks about the same things (e.g., the weather). However, remember that the **ONLY** point of small talk is to socially interact and connect with other people, not to solve problems or make major announcements.
 - Being a good listener.
 - Any skills that you have struggled with in the past.
- Make a list of your interests, strengths, and challenges and get feedback from someone who knows you really well like a trusted family member or therapist on their views of your interests, strengths, and challenges.
- Practice and work on anything that you would like to change about yourself (e.g., being more assertive).
- Make new friends or work on improving existing friendships. Complete the next exercise *Am I Ready for Adult Friendship?*

Show this handout to a trusted person who you think may be able to support you with some of the above information.



Handout VI-12: Am I Ready for Adult Friendship?

Check the things that apply to you. Be honest; this is just for your own assessment of where you are in your life.

Being Available

- I am willing to put myself out for my friend (such as canceling something I had planned for tonight if my friend calls and needs to talk about an upsetting situation).
- I have the time and energy to invest in being and having a friend (such as at least a couple of hours a week).

What I Expect of a Friend

- I am able to separate who I am and what I want from who my friend is.
- I accept that my friend is not like me.

Independence

- I am able to stand on my own and take care of myself.

Tolerance

- I am as tolerant of my friend as I would like him/her to be of me.
- I apply the same set of standards to myself that I do to my friend.

Seeing Other Perspectives and Empathy

- There is something I like about my friend other than the fact that he/she likes me.
- I am able to be a bit unselfish and less self-centered.
- I am able to look at a conflict from someone else's point of view.

Honesty

- I am willing to be my true self.
- I am willing to say what I feel even if this is not what my friend is expecting (such as if I disagree with what is happening).

Openness

- I am willing to be vulnerable and intimate and share my feelings.

If you checked most or all of the items, you are great friendship material. If not, you probably need to work on some of these things before you think about dating.

Adapted from Browne, 2006, p. 36



Handout VI-13: Nonverbal Signs of Confidence

- A firm handshake
- Standing up straight
- A clear smile
- Making appropriate eye contact (not too intense and not too infrequent)
- Leaning slightly forward
- Not showing significant signs of anxiety (e.g., sweating or breathing too quickly). Strategies targeting anxiety can help with this, such as slowing down your breathing. If you have significant difficulties in this area, a therapist can help you devise more strategies.

Things You Can Do to Improve Your Internal Confidence

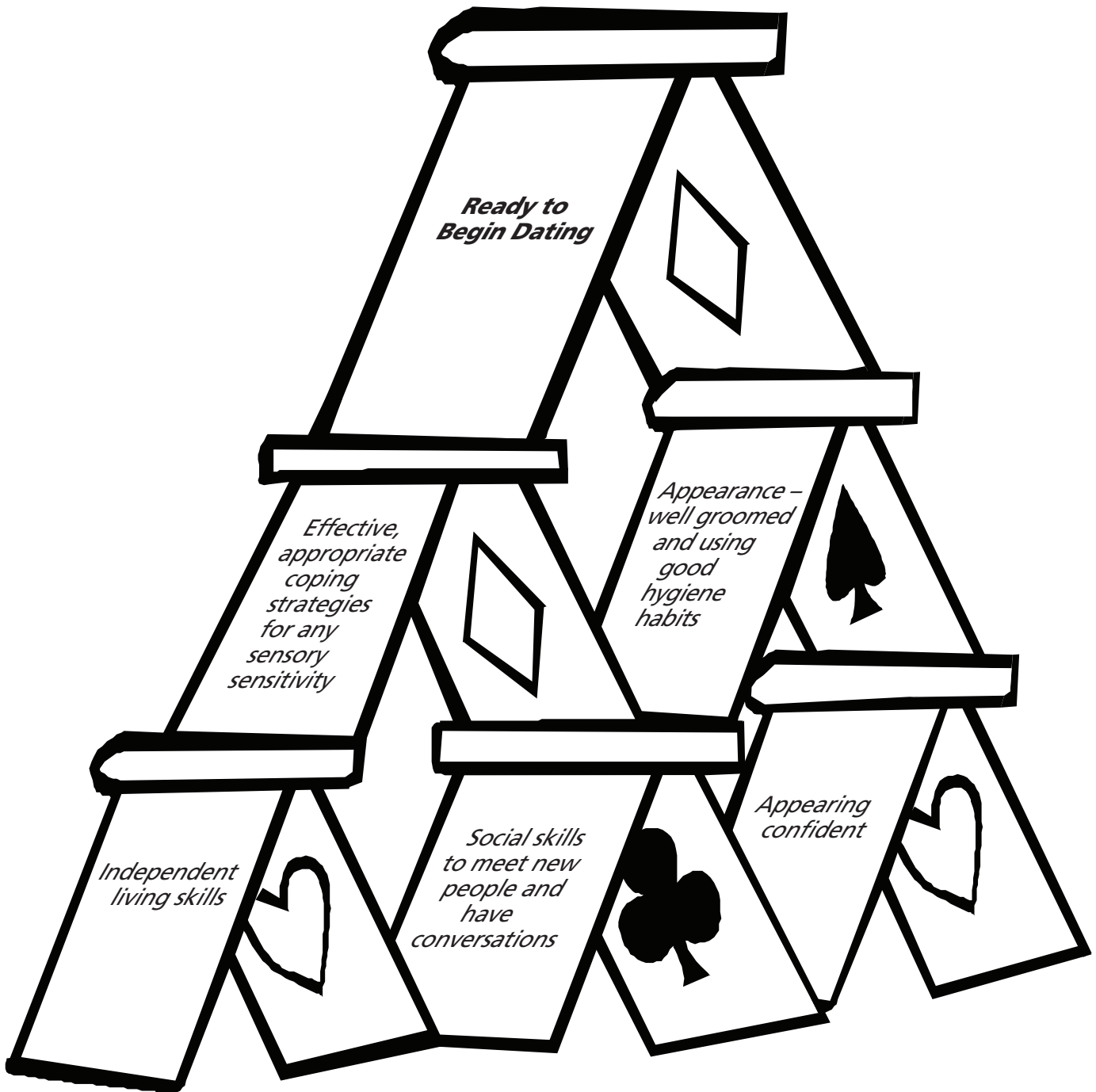
- Do something for someone else (e.g., volunteer at a homeless shelter).
- Make a written list of things you like about yourself.
- Try a challenging activity.

**Don't put off dating until you are 100% confident in yourself;
because most people will never feel this confident.**

Adapted from Browne, 2006, p. 24



Handout VI-14: All Aspects of Preparing to Date Contribute to the Success of the Date





Handout VI-15: Assignment:

Name: _____ Due Date _____

Sometimes other people have a different perspective on our lives than we do. It can help to get some information about others' perspectives when we are making decisions about our lives. This is the purpose of this assignment.

1. Take out the sheet you completed called *Handout VI-10: How Independent Am I? Show it (or just talk to them on the phone about it) to someone you trust who knows you well. This could be a parent, caregiver, friend, colleague, or therapist. After talking to them, make a decision about whether you want to change anything on your form. Then write below some things you are comfortable sharing in class next time.*

a. One thing I am currently doing independently is

b. One thing I would like to be doing independently is

c. The next step in making this happen is

2. Take out the handout called *Handout VI-11: How to Prepare for the Social Aspects of Dating*. Share this with the same trusted person you picked in #1 above. Talk over with them your ideas for things you are going to do. Write below something you are comfortable sharing in class next time.

a. One thing I am going to try in order to prepare for the social aspects of dating is:

b. My plan (i.e., the first step I am going to take) for how I am going to do this is:

File this completed sheet in your binder to bring to the next lesson.