

A WORD FROM THE PROFESSIONAL

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It is interesting to note that most of the submissions in this issue appear to come from boys. Boys generally share the same sentiment. They are baffled by the other gender for seeming too complicated, moody, and unreasonable. Yet some of them can't help but find themselves attracted to the other gender. Girls have different opinions about the other gender. Some think boys are confusing, while others think boys are straightforward. They may seek romantic relationship or prefer pure friendship with the other gender.

Both boys and girls may think that life for the other gender is easier. Boys are tired of all the traditional male responsibilities, while girls wished they had some of those responsibilities.

I will talk a bit about these viewpoints to students and to parents separately.

To Students:

The other gender may appear to be strange creatures coming from another world, often getting us confused and frustrated. Have you ever had the experience of travelling to another part of the world? Were you confused and frustrated at times when you were there, because you didn't understand the way people act, talk or think? Actually, EVERY relationship is a cross-cultural experience. Every person you meet has his/her own unique culture – a way of acting, talking or thinking which may be quite different from yours. Perhaps you can approach the other gender with an attitude of respectful curiosity, while being aware of your own “cultural bias.” Despite all the confusion and frustration in another country, you may still enjoy the adventure exactly because of that otherworldly feeling, and you are probably excited about the opportunity to learn and to explore. There is also a lot for us to learn from the other gender.

Both boys and girls may have conflicted feelings about gender roles, and sometimes they wish to be the other gender. Girls demand to be treated as equals, with male responsibilities and power; however, they may still wish to be pampered like princesses, and can spend a fortune on makeup and outfits. Boys feel burdened by the traditional duties and expectations, but proud to be the protectors of the girls they cherish. We are all complicated human beings, with the need to be respected and loved. Girls want to be respected at work or school, but long to be loved by their sweethearts; boys may be tired of giving, but are willing to give for the sake of love.

Students have different views about high school relationships. Some are currently in a romantic relationship, some are eager to get into one, while others do not want to waste any time, money or energy on it.

If you are in a romantic relationship, maybe it would be a good idea to examine your current relationship. Is it a healthy and respectful relationship? Do you respect the differences between you two, or do you always want to change him/her? Do you feel like you get the respect you deserve, or do you always want to change yourself to please him/her? Can you talk about your differences, or do you usually fight or flee when a conflict arises? Is it a short-term or a long-term relationship? Do you and your partner have a mutual understanding regarding the expectations? Can you still thrive if a break-up occurs?

If you are not in a relationship, you may explore the following: Are you eager to be in a relationship? What are you looking for in a relationship? Are you looking for the experience, seeking

the excitement, longing for the intimacy, yielding to the peer pressure, or preparing for a marriage? Do you know what it takes to achieve a satisfying relationship? Are you prepared for it?

Remember, we are all complicated human beings. Don't always judge others to be strange, because you may seem strange to others as well. In any relationship, try to respect and understand the differences between you two. Don't attempt to change the other person to suit you or force yourself to change for the other person. It is possible to establish a long-term successful relationship with the other gender, but it will require the capacity to love despite the possible differences, the willingness to understand them, and the maturity to respect both yourself and others.

To Parents:

Are you worried about your teen's possible relationship with the other gender, or are you enthusiastic about your teen's young love? Depending on your cultural background and personal experiences, you may have different views toward teen relationships. Whether your teen is in a romantic relationship or a normal friendship, it is important for him/her to learn how to treat the other gender with respect. As a primary role model, pay attention to how you treat your partner and your teenager.

Are you respectful towards your partner? Perhaps you have a trusting relationship and have high regard for him/her. Perhaps you have been deeply hurt in your relationship, and regularly moan and groan about it. Your attitude and behavior towards the other gender influence your teen. You will need to set a good example. If you have difficulties maintaining a healthy relationship with your partner, don't be afraid of seeking help.

Are you respectful towards your teenager? While parents often complain that their teens don't show respect, the teens will mirror the same complaint that their parents do not listen to them or respect their choices. Do you still remember when your children were in their "terrible twos"? Rebellious teens and terrible twos have a lot in common – they simply want to be themselves but struggle with how to go about it. While two-year-olds strive for their physical independence, teens assert their psychological and social independence. Although you may want to protect them, you will need to allow them to venture into increased autonomy.

The teenagers today live in a different world from ours decades ago, and teen relationships are also different. Women have become more independent and teens do not necessarily have a long-term view or even think about marriage when they are going out. Parents can try the following: (1) Be respectful of your teen's relationship choices, and reserve judgment until you have solid information that your teen is in danger. (2) Encourage an open dialogue with your teen about the other gender. Try to maintain your calmness during the conversation. If your teen refuses to open up, wait for another natural opportunity instead of forcing the issue. (3) Establish reasonable family rules with your teens about socializing. (4) Listen empathically to your teens, and try to understand their world and their struggles. It will help you establish a trusting relationship with them, so when they need help, they will turn to you, and when they fall down, they will get back up, because they know you are always there to support them.

Conclusion:

Regarding the other gender, it is a learning process for everyone, young or old. Every relationship is a cross-cultural experience. Try to respect and understand the differences between you two. Perhaps in the process of getting to know the other gender, you will get to know more about yourself.

Resources

Teens Health from Nemours

<http://kidshealth.org/teen/>

Parenting Teenagers: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens

By: Don Dinkmeyer, Sr., Gary D. McKay, Joyce L. McKey & Don Dinkmeyer, Jr.

Getting to Calm: Cool-Headed Strategies for Parenting Tweens + Teens

By: Laura S. Kastner & Jennifer Wyatt

Will Our Love Last?

By: Sam R. Hamburg



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