DATING BOUNDARIES

THEME: ONE ON ONE; TWO BY TWO; WHAT TO DO?

OPENERS:

1. For teens the important questions are: What is a date? Who dates? When do you begin dating? What happens on a date? How do you behave with someone with whom you are dating? Should you date?

2. Dating is the process or series of actions and activities undertaken as a person meets and builds relationships with people of the other sex, develops social skills and prepares for marriage." - Christian Life Style for Youth

3. Adolescents who date too early shortchange themselves emotionally. Because their social lives revolve around the dizzying ups and downs of romance, they tend to miss out on the easy give-and-take of the same sex friendships that take root in the early teen years. These friendships do far more than dating to teach young teens the empathy that a dult love demands. - Rona Maynard, Chatelaine, Nov. 93

4. For many people, dating is one of the most rewarding experiences of their lives. But, for some, dates end in disaster. They are sexually assaulted by their date. - Sexual Assault Services of Crow Wing County

5. In his book, I Kissed Dating Goodbye, Joshua Harris lists the defects of dating as:
   - Dating leads to intimacy but not necessarily to commitment.
   - Dating tends to skip the friendship stage of a relationship.
   - Dating often mistakes a physical relationship for love.
   - Dating often isolates a couple from other vital relationships.
   - Dating, in many cases, distracts youth from their primary responsibility of preparing for the future.
   - Dating can cause discontent with God’s gift of singleness.
   - Dating creates an artificial environment for evaluating another person’s character.

6. Cloud and Townsend disagree with Harris and in their book. Boundaries in Dating, give the following benefits of dating:
   - Dating gives people the opportunity to learn about themselves, others, and relationships in a safe context.
   - Dating provides a context to work through issues.
   - Dating helps build relationship skills.
   - Dating can heal and repair.
   - Dating is relational and has value in and of itself.
   - Dating lets someone learn what he or she likes in the opposite sex.
   - Dating gives a context to learn sexual self-control and other delay of gratification.

7. "When dateless, your grades improve, bonds with friends grow tight and your inner self evolves to dramatic new plateaus. Yeah, well, that’s all very special. Yet when it seems that every other Betty is sportin’ a Baldwin for a food-and-flick combo come Friday night, you get to thinking that it’s just unfair." - Teen Magazine, 2001

8. "When you go on a date are you going with an expectation of getting to know who God has ere this person to be, or is your mindset, how far should I go with him or her." - Rick Gillespie - Mobley Front Range Christian Church

DISCUSSION PROBES:

1. At 12, Sarah can pass for 16. When she stops for a doughnut after school, older boys keep flocking to her table. Now one of them has asked her for a date. His parents are away, and he plans to show some videos on their VCR. She knows she’s too young to spend an evening with a boy in an empty house, but she still wants to say yes. After all, her best friend has been dating for months. What si she do? Discuss.
2. Sandra is a 16-year-old foreign exchange student. She has been staying with your family for six months and is expected to stay six more months. In that time she has made many friends at school Sandra, Dave, and the "guys" (Paul, Scott, Leo, Mary and Rafael) often go out together to school events, movies, parties, and other social events. On occasion Dave or one of the "guys" will bring a date to one of those events. Sometimes Dave and his girlfriend, Catlyn, will go on a date by themselves. Today at school Leo asked Sandra out on a date for "just the two of us." Sandra said that she would check with her host parents. Sandra’s host parents said that they like Leo that "he seems like a nice boy and that if you like him, and want to go out on a solo date, you may." Sandra likes Leo. However, Sandra has not thought much about dating while here. Back home her father would arrange dates and her grandmother chaperoned her only two dates. This is a common but fading tradition. Sandra asks her host family the following questions. How would you answer these questions?

\225 What is the difference between a friend and a boyfriend?
\225 What is an appropriate display of affection in public? What are the boundaries of acceptable behavior in public and in private?
\225 Would the parents and teens of the host family give different responses?

3. In a Cosmopolitan article addressed to women, Myreah Moore writes that women should date guys. She gives five rules for dating just like a guy. These rules might be helpful for consider dating boundaries. What do you think of these guidelines?

\225 Men Know Dating Is a Numbers Game. Its obvious to men that the more you date, the more fun you have and the better your chances are of finding someone you like. Most women are searching not just for Mr. Right but for Mr. Perfect. They would have a better chance of ending up with a stud instead of a dud if they were less picky and went out with a variety of men goal should be to date at least 100 men before picking one for life. (Remember, she said date, not sleep with!)

\225 Men Don’t Worry About Potential. Most men will date any woman who says yes, but many women will only date a man who has potential for the long haul. Women then get into trouble because once they have found a guy with potential they think they have to develop him. If only he’d ditch the preppy, layered look, stop hanging around with those loser buddies, or whatever it is about him that she wishes were different. Ask yourself, why would you want someone you have to fix? Have you ever heard a man say, "She’s nice but I’m going to try to help her come out of her shell?" Men don’t try to change the women they’re dating because they’re too busy conducting their own lives. If a guy wants to be with a woman, he’ll be with her. If she’s high maintenance, he’ll dump her or accept her for who she is. Women shouldn’t try to be relationship mechanics. It’s like knowingly buying a bad car. Why waste your money trying to fix a lemon?

\225 Men Don’t Overanalyze. One of the biggest differences between the sexes is that women tend to analyze and second-guess everything, while most men are happy to take things at face value. Women torture themselves wondering, "He said I looked fine, not gorgeous us. Did he really mean I look fat?" Men never look for a deeper meaning behind anything you say, and they don’t want to discuss their past or future relationships or their relationships with their mothers while on a date.

\225 Men Don’t Rush the Big "Relationship Talk." Many women don’t just want to be in a relationship, they want to talk about it— with anyone who will listen. But constant relationship checkups send men into nervous spasms. Until you have been dating for at least a year, you are not in love. You may be in lust. You may be infatuated. But love takes time.

\225 Men Give You Breathing Room. Most women have a harder time setting boundaries than men do. Women think that being a couple means being joined at the hip. Women get insulted if their boyfriends don’t want to watch "Felicity" with them. A man will tell you exactly what he will or won’t do, and he won’t get upset if you aren’t interested in his hobbies.

4. Do you agree more with Harris or Townsend about the value of dating? Discuss.

5. What imperfections in another human being are not benign, but destructive. These would be "red lights" that would tell you that the relationship is destructive. These include, but are not limited to: He avoids closeness, she acts like she has it all together instead of admitting weakness and imperfection, he thinks only about himself, she is overly angry. What others would you add to this list?
6. Share an encouraging experience that you have had which was the result of someone showing you friendship.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. According to Dr. Miriam Kaufman, who is on the staff of the teen clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, premature dating can be risky not only for pre-teens but for early teens. Two 14-year-olds who go steady may have trouble saying no to sex - they may even believe it’s expected of them. A 13-year-old who parties with her older boyfriend’s crowd may lack the self-confidence to refuse a drink.

2. The following are some danger signals of an abusive dating relationship. Your date may be an abusive person if she:
   - Acts jealous when you talk with others, even friends.
   - Criticizes what you do, what you wear, and your friends.
   - Pressures you to drink.
   - Does not listen to what you want to do.
   - Always needs to know whom you will be with and where you are.
   - Becomes angry or violent easily.
   - Tries to force you into sexual activity.
   - Calls you names, such as "fat, ugly, lazy, or stupid."
   - Degrades your sex with jokes or shows interest in others in order to upset you.
   - Threatens to physically hurt you or someone you care about.
   - Emotionally or physically harms you and feels remorse afterwards.
   - Controls your body in small ways:
     - Holds you too tight
     - Pulls you around by the hand
     - Ignores it when you pull away

3. Bob Bartlett’s (Growing Toward Intimacy) Four Signs of a Healthy Relationship
   - Dating is supposed to be fun. It should not be pressure. Relationships have no set patterns and timetables. In a healthy relationship, there is no point A, B, C, or K to get to. If one person in the relationship is not comfortable doing something, the other respects that.
   - Relationships should not be exclusive. Relationships that are healthy tend to include others and tend to be open to life. I have listened to teens mourn the loss of good friends whom they cut off while they were dating. A person who really loves me does not ask me to give up friends I really care about.
   - The couple is comfortable with silence. Couples who are intimate in healthy ways can sometimes study silently or sit close together for 15 minutes or more and feel very comfortable.
   - In a healthy relationship, both partners are equals. I challenge teens that consistently date people they can control. Are they fearful of the vulnerability that real intimacy requires?

4. A full life will help you to not choose a relationship out of loneliness or lack of fulfillment.

5. No human is perfect and you will never have the "ideal" relationship.

6. Robert Johnson, in his book Balancing Heaven and Earth, tells of a dream he had in which his soul was on trial. He writes, "A prosecutor presented all the sins of commission and omission that I was responsible for throughout my life, and the list was very long indeed. That went on for hours, and it fell on me like a landslide. I was feeling worse and worse to the point where the soles of my feet were hot. After hours of accusations from the prosecution, a group of angels appeared to conduct my defense. All they could say was, 'But he loved.' They began chanting this over and over in a chorus: 'But he loved. But he loved. But he loved.' This continued until dawn, and in the end, the angels won, and I was safe." The Christian New Testament says, "Love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

BRINGING IT HOME:

1. Organize a group event. Invite a group of friends - one of whom you might be especi
ally interested in -- to go bowling or over to your house when your parents are there, with plenty of popcorn and soft drinks.

2. Arrange a debate. Find someone who believes like Joshua Harris that young people should not date, someone who believes that dating is acceptable when handled wisely and someone to represent the MTV view and ask them to speak to your unit.

3. If you are dating, ask some hard questions about that person. With the help of friends, be honest about whether or not you really "like" the person as well as have "chemistry" with him or her. Romantic feelings can be very deceptive. They are not "true love."

4. Become deeply involved in your friendships and value the good things you’re getting out of them. List them in a journal.

5. Don’t even attempt to get serious in a dating relationship until you are connected to a good support system and friends who know you. If you are dating from a vacuum, you are in great danger.