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Life

Here's dating advice just for teens

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By Shannon Rossi

For many young people, dating is an important part of their teenage years.

High school is not only the place where they earn a traditional education, but a place where teens learn to deal with dating relationships.

Though splitting up with a boyfriend or girlfriend and forming new relationships is a common occurrence, many teens don't know how to deal with the emotional problems that can stem from a breakup or an unhealthy relationship.

Often, teenagers become so excited about the prospect of dating that they don't really stop to consider what they do and don't want in a relationship.

And in some cases, they may not have anyone to go to for dating advice.

The Guidance Center, in collaboration with the Marriage Resource Center of Dearborn, has created a workshop to help teens through the murky waters of dating.

"We are collaborating to offer local teens a workshop called 'How to Avoid Dating a Jerk or Jerkette,'" said Anita Rothert, the parent facilitator for The Guidance Center.

Last year, the program met with a good amount of success when offered to adults. This year, though, The Guidance Center is focused on supporting teenagers ages 12 to 18.

The catchy title of the workshop is meant to draw teens looking for advice offered in an enjoyable and understandable manner, but also to make a person think.

"It's a funny title," said Rothert. "But it makes you think about what you really want in life."

In fact, Rothert's two daughters have attended a past workshop.

"It was a fun workshop for them. And they learned a lot about themselves," she said. "They figured out what they didn't want in a relationship, realizing that their values and standards are important.

Dating a "jerk" or "jerkette" is probably not high on many people's list of life goals, but they may not have the necessary tools to avoid doing just that.

The program will offer advice and tips on how to enrich and strengthen relationships, and on how to find a healthy relationship.

Betsy Partridge, a presenter from the Marriage Resource Center, will lead each of the four sessions of the workshop.

"Betsy makes the workshop fun," Rothert said.

During each two-hour session, teens will learn, through fun activities, games, and "getting to know you" exercises how to recognize bad relationships and strengthen good ones.

"How to Avoid Dating a Jerk or Jerkette" begins with a session from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday, and continues once a week for the next three Mondays, concluding on Dec. 14. The workshop will take place at The Guidance Center in the Aquinas Building, 15601 North Line Road, Southgate.

Teens are encouraged to attend all four of the workshop meetings, as they will learn new tips, advice and strategies during each session.

"Each session dominoes into the next one," said Rothert.

The most important part of these workshops are five tips that help teens understand the relationships they are in or the ones they want to have in the future.

These tips are to know, trust, rely on, commit to, and be in touch with the person they share a relationship with.

"We're gearing the program for teenagers so they can become aware of how to get to know the person they are dating and how to know and trust this person," Rothert said.

Both The Guidance Center and the Marriage Resource Center work to strengthen relationships between two people, whether it is in terms of marriage or dating — or even friendship.

The professionals believe that good healthy relationships are incredibly beneficial to people and promote a happier life.

In order to get as many teenagers as possible to attend these workshops, Rothert has set about on a campaign of contacting schools throughout the area.

"I've e-mailed as many of the school superintendents and high school principals as possible, dropped off flyers at two high schools and at libraries," Rothert said.

"And hopefully word of mouth will help us, too, when people see the bulletins at school."

She hopes the teens who attend the workshops and learn the steps to avoiding dating a "jerk" or "jerkette" will carry the workshop's tips on into adulthood.

"It's always important to have the courage and knowledge to know what you do and don't want in a relationship," Rothert said.

Registration for the "How to Avoid Dating a Jerk or Jerkette Workshop" is required, but the sessions are free of charge.

Teenagers who do not yet have driver's licenses need to be brought to the workshop by a parent who must sign them in and out.

Rothert and the others who organized this workshop hope to continue with it if it is successful.

"We're hoping to get the program into high schools, that the kids will like it so much they'll want to see it in their schools," she said.

For more information or to register for the workshop, contact Rothert at 1-734-785-7705, ext. 7035.

To learn more about The Guidance Center, visit www.guidance-center.org, or the Marriage Resource Center, visit www.downrivermarriage.org/index.html.

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