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[Family](#), [Parents](#)



While many, including teenagers, parents, teachers and counselors, can have long-lasting arguments on whether high-school students should have love relationships, it will not change the fact that the students will keep on dating and breaking up. Another inevitable truth can be found in statistics: only about 2 percent of high-school sweethearts marry after graduation (Manning). Nonetheless, although the early relationships between two most likely immature people will probably result in heartbreak, they can also have a very good impact on adolescents by preparing them for adult life and helping them figure out what they want and do not want in a relationship and partner. Comparing the benefits and negative effects of early dating, the experience of the pseudo-adult relationships helps teenagers establish a better perception of how love relationships work, the role of each partner in their mutual self-development and progress as a couple, and, most of all, the preferences and ultimate no-no's in their own and partner's behavior.

The first benefit of starting to date early in life is the ability to depart from childhood and take on the first serious responsibilities and commitments toward a person outside the family circle. While it is natural to keep promises and find a middle ground with the relatives with whom a person has grown and is supposed to love unconditionally, the same actions taken in regard to someone not so close to you can be quite challenging. The relationships are usually built according to the patterns established in the families of both partners, and such patterns can vary greatly. The main quest of any relationship is to be able to step out of your comfort zone, which is your established perception of love relationships, and to reach an agreement, settle boundaries and become committed to the partner; and while it comes

naturally in the family built by the adults, it might become pressuring to compromise with an outsider at such age. The first concern expressed by the adults about the early relationships is that the teenagers are too young and inexperienced to be able to fully commit to someone, and “ the minds of adolescents are not fully developed and therefore are not capable of knowing what is or isn't beneficial in terms of romanticism at the time” (Manning). It is true that many teenagers get involved in romantic relationships simply to look mature, fit in or have someone close to them, while dating seriously and responsibly is a rarer case. However, it would be idealistic and irrational to expect young people with little experience in life, let alone love, to act as adults. Many young people who have their first experience of being with someone take the relationships seriously. Although most high-school relationships will fall apart, with partners experiencing heartaches and sadness without fully understanding the underlying causes of the break-up at that point in time, more important is an invaluable experience and knowledge the teenagers will gain for their future love life and serious adult relationships, when they are mature enough to not only be able to analyze their current relationship, but also flash back to the teenage problems, reflect on the reasons of the failures and learn from the insights. The second concern that parents have about their children's teenage love life is the possibly unequal and thus damaging distribution of their sons/daughter's time between different activities, including studying and spending time with the family. Indeed, teenagers can lack of control over the time management, and due to hormonal imbalance in young bodies and lack of experience and responsibility, seeing somebody can lead to extreme

desire to dedicate the whole day to the beloved one. While parents want their kids to succeed in life, which means getting good grades in school and preparing to go to college or at least have a plan for the future, the adolescents do not always understand the importance of the choices they make. Sometimes having relationships in high school can lead to one of the partners or both dropping out of school with further consequences. Caring parents will explain to their children the hazards of dating during high school and will probably insist on their kid focusing on the grades. However, the teenagers do not usually possess cold and clear minds, and the judgments they make are based on their current emotional state. The rebellious nature of many teenagers adds to the disobedience and may cause the adolescents to fall out with the parents and the rest of the family. Having little to no experience of building healthy and nurturing relationships, the students will most probably follow the path of trial and error. At the same time, forbidding, condemning or disparaging love life at a young age may cause the effect opposite to the expected one, with the teenagers striving to try the forbidden fruit. The rational key for parents to solve this problem is to provide their children with guidance about the nature of relationships, true and false expectations, essential elements of healthy relationships, including mutual attraction, enjoyment and respect, etc. According to the psychologist Carl Pickhardt:

It can be helpful if parents can provide some guidelines for evaluating the "goodness" of a relationship. To what degree is it constructed and conducted so that it works well and not badly for the young people involved? What should they expect in a relationship, and what should they not want?

(Pickhardt)

It is equally important to educate the children about the sexual part of serious involvement, emphasizing the necessity to have the mutual agreement of both partners to have sex. Sexual advice given by a trusted person in a timely manner is just as crucial in lessening the number and severity of the teenage mistakes as giving a solid explanation of how good relationships work. In some cases parents tend to withdraw from such personal conversations that could drastically minimize the adverse effects of empirical ways of developing serious and trusting relationships.

Another big yes for early dating experience is the ability to take time in the establishment of personal boundaries in love relationships. While under the parents' roof, the teenagers have to face the obligation to follow the rules. If they start seeing someone while living with parents, the teenagers are more likely to follow the family's basic rules, and this will automatically set some boundaries on private love relationships, as well. This will allow the partners to slowly dive in the first experience and get healthy affirmation and advice from the close ones. Thus, when such children move out and/or go to live in college, they will certainly remember the first experience and its outcomes, and their future relationships will be less hurtful. The Counseling Center of the University of Illinois recommends, "The way you handle inevitable "boundary issues" can greatly influence the quality of your life together and the quality of your student experience" ("Counseling Center: Committed Relationships and School"). To the contrary, if a person who did not have relationships in high school leaves parents and/or gets into the college or university, the spontaneous freedom and self-dependence without the

necessary experience may lead to even worse consequences that can damage the self-esteem and physical health of the student, including depression and STDs, as a result of lack of education and experience, and absence of close friends and family to support and affirm the actions of the freshman.

A good evidence of the advantages of high-school relationships can be derived from my personal experience of dating during the 11th grade. I was involved in an emotionally abusive relationship with a girl named Karina, who was one year younger than me and just as inexperienced. During our year and a half of dating, Karina unwillingly helped me to not only establish my psychological boundaries and preferences regarding my future partner and relationships, but also understand the importance of balance in love and my life as an individual. Although Karina had plenty of beautiful and convenient traits like being a very good cook and musician, her personality somehow tended to emotionally abuse me. While constantly threatening me with break-ups, she turned out to be a possessive person who needed me to always stay with her despite my own desire to go out and randomize my activities. During this stage of my adolescent life I realized the necessity to closely bind with those people who respect you and your desires and feelings and neither idealize you, nor spread their ego over the boundaries of your personality. Despite feeling sad and pressured, I felt strong affection, possibly love, to the girl, and tried to be as flexible as possible, but eventually my actions turned out to be in vain, because the more I gave, the more she wanted of me. Meanwhile, my family seemed to turn a blind eye to my struggles with comprehending the essence of abusive relationship, how

to handle them and what the right thing is to expect from a partner. Instead of receiving the support and parental advice in a timely manner, I had to deal with angry and controlling parents, who wanted to have me and Karina separated despite my will. My mother used to show anger and disappointment in my failing grades, and it seemed that my success was the only important thing for her. I became rebellious, spent little time at home, did not show up for dinner and showed a wide variety of bad attitude. I did not want to be controlled; I wanted to be accepted, understood and free. While not judging my family retrospectively from where I am right now in life, I believe that given they had demonstrated more understanding and support back then, given they had tried to have more of friendly talks than patronizing speeches, and given they had tried to spend quality time with me and Karina, they could have prevented me from taking it that long to break up with an abusive person. The result would be the same, but it would be achieved much sooner. I see the explanation for my parents' behavior in them trying to forcefully maintain authoritative position in my life, and that I tried to escape to feel like an adult. It was only later that they admitted that forcing me to leave the girl made me do the opposite, thus demonstrating my " maturity". Eventually, in about eighteen months my mind became clear enough to realize that my family relations, especially with a disappointed mother, were never as damaged as then; my school grades had never been so low too, and a partial reason was me spending all my free time with the supposedly beloved one. After I ended my high-school love affair due to my inability to accept Karina's ways of living and loving, I felt an incredible relief and rise of my vital forces, as if I had awakened from a nightmare. Soon, my

grades and my relationships with mother and family improved, and I felt really sorry for behaving bad with mother and family, and I was thankful for them trying to reason me in to breaking up with an abusive girl, though I wished they had been more subtle and empathic during my hard times. Although it may seem that my experience was not worth it, and I could have spent more quality time with my family and studying to get into college, I took a lot of wisdom and treasured experience from dating Karina. I can ascertain myself that I will never fall into that pattern again, and if such bad experience ever takes place again, I have a profound knowledge of how to get out of it undamaged.

All in all, it is a choice of each adolescent to have and refrain from having relationships while in high school and the choice will often depend on various factors, including personal principles, family rules and level of self-esteem, but the first experience of dating someone will happen to most people anyway. Taking time in establishing personal understanding of the essence of love relations early in life will help get priceless experience that will help a person build a solid ground for future serious romantic relationships. Not only will teenagers have to accept the partner's desires, emotions, feelings, preferences, independence and boundaries, but they will also have a chance to sketch their own before going to college, where they will have to face the necessity to take decisions without parental guidance and accept responsibilities for such. Romantic relationships are another type of bond between two people, and if parents encourage kids to make friends and thus grasp the nature and meaning of the friendship in life for the sake of their kid's future emotional and physical safety, the same approach should be

applied to romantic feelings and what they can lead to. Acceptance of the fact that teenagers do develop romantic affection in middle and high school is much healthier than the denial of the fact that teenagers should be having love relationships, and instead of inventing ways to protect adolescents from negative effects of having early love affairs, it is much more effective to teach them the science of healthy non-abusive and nurturing involvements with other people when they are ready to start one.

Works Cited

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