

The Boyfriend Girlfriend Trap



By Joseph Tan
Good Monday Consulting

The Boyfriend-Girlfriend Trap

Love is in the air. Even kindergarten kids boast of having that special boyfriend and girlfriend. A whole industry of romance, love songs and novels feed on the very basic human need to love and to be loved. *So, why label the boyfriend-girlfriend phenomena as a trap?*

Here are two main characteristics of a trap:

- The bait offers short-term pleasure with a long-term hook.
- The set-up appeals to the easy way of obtaining a legitimate objective.

The word “teenager” was first used in 1941 as featured in a Readers’ Digest article. How in the world did we get along pre-1941 without teenagers? Simple – children graduate to become young adults – youth with skills, vision and a sense of personal accountability. Today, the eyes of teenagers are filled with the awe of romance rather than responsibility, cuteness rather than character! *Without the foundation of purpose in life, the next generation is going to be guided primarily by passion.* Passion is a powerful energy which requisites the *prior* development of moral strength – otherwise, romance will lead to regret. The recent cases of boyfriend-girlfriend related suicides is a sombre reflection of this reality.

Get rid of the dating mentality

Dating is an exercise in divorce – think about it. The heart gets broken numerous times before you actually find the right partner and by the time the wedding comes, each person’s heart has been terribly fractured many times before and the couple walks into their married life not with wholeness of hearts but with unnecessary emotional baggage of the past. *It is no wonder today that the age of divorce is getting younger.*

The age of 12-18 is the prime time for a young person to seek out his strength and calling in life. Generations before, this is the period for apprenticeship and discipleship. “Teenagers” with plenty of time and distractions on their hands did not exist. The youth of generations ago has a date with his destiny (and not with a girl called Destiny next door!). Instead of dating relationships, this is the age where young people ought to get involved in a coaching relationship with adults who can guide them in life skills and right attitude. Other youth comes along as supportive friends. Who knows, when you are part of a coaching community, some may end up marrying each other but it happens as the by-product of a common vision for life rather than life itself. As a parent, your main task is to guide the social interactions of your child so that he is to be found within a community of young people that has a vision to serve. Do not let Facebook be the social influencer of your child’s life! What we need more today is not social media but social mentoring.

Get involved in the growth process

The father’s role is key. To the daughter, you are a picture of her future husband. To the son, you are a model of how he should treat his wife. Many girls have unwittingly ran into the arms of another man because she has not received the due affirmation from the man in the house. Many boys have carelessly ventured into moral promiscuity because the father has not set the standards high enough at home.

It is interesting to note that the “teenage years” is also the period where the parent’s career is most demanding. Without parents tying heart-strings during this growth phase, it is no wonder the boyfriend-girlfriend option becomes attractive. What we don’t see is that this premature emotional attachment limits one’s growth options. When the youth focuses on developing his character (with value guidance from the father), he then becomes ready for the lifelong commitment of marriage later on. The fun gratification offered by the dating game hardly prepares a person for a life of commitment and trust. In fact, it breeds envy, gossip and mistrust – hardly what you would be looking for in a future marriage.

The call is clear: Avoid the boyfriend-girlfriend game and get involved in developing the man or woman in your child. Then they will be ready for the commitment of marriage – which is not a game at all – failure is not an option. Think about it.

For more parent training information: <http://www.goodmonday.com/parenting.html>