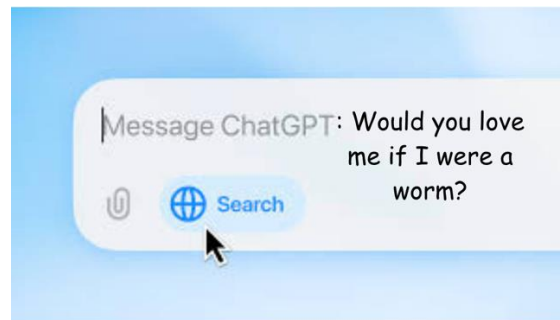


Bunion Dating Advice

Omg, Cupid, is that you? Happy Valentines or belated Valentines! You know, any day is Valentines if you're with your loved ones! What a shame you have to spend most days at school with people you don't like (hopefully you also have people you *do* like at school). If you have a lot of opps at school, combat that optimism with LOVE. But how do you get that love or get some fake sense of it? Well, the answer is: DATING. Yeah, go on a date or something. But dating in the modern age is hard. Why ask someone out when you can ask ChatGPT for comfort? That's why I went around and asked teachers for dating advice.



Around a week ago, I went around asking a few teachers for advice retaining to a few situations:

- Hallway Crush
- Neverending Talking Phase
- How to get out the Friendzone
- Going Steady but the Spark is Dimming
- General Advice

Hallway Crush

For those who don't know, a hallway crush is someone you see in the hallway and think is cute but have never really talked to. So, how do you take that first step and turn that fantasy into a more disappointing reality?

According to Mrs. Paxton, "[There's a] very fine line between creepy and confidence." Yeah, the idea of scoping out your new love in a hallway is a bit psychotic. However, the general consensus between teachers is to find a common thing that you can bring up to catch the other person's attention. It's like creating a "forced situation," according to Paxton.

Having difficulty gaining information about your hallway crush? Mr. Wallace's advice is to "use your info system (aka your friends or anyone you know) and learn about what this person is into. Then read up on that area of interest and position yourself somewhere in a position where they can overhear you." Hopefully, they take the bait and BAM you're pretending and willing to be someone you're not just for the sake of keeping this person. Prepare to keep up with that.

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Still having trouble catching their attention? Learn from nature and employ the art of “peacocking”. Mr. Buning suggests getting a fancy suit from Nordstrom rack and step out of your comfort zone. You’ll be as cool as any version of Spiderman, even the Tobey MacGuire version.



But DON'T be awkward or creepy. As per Mrs. Garth, starting a conversation with, “Come here often?” when you see them every day in the hallway is weird. Instead try to be normal.



But what if you want to actively start a conversation instead of hoping they’ll catch onto something you said? Then try “joining AVTF so that you have the chance to interview your hallway crush,” according to Mrs. Beem. Through the power of AVTF, you’ll finally learn their name and maybe even get to impress them with your interviewing skills.

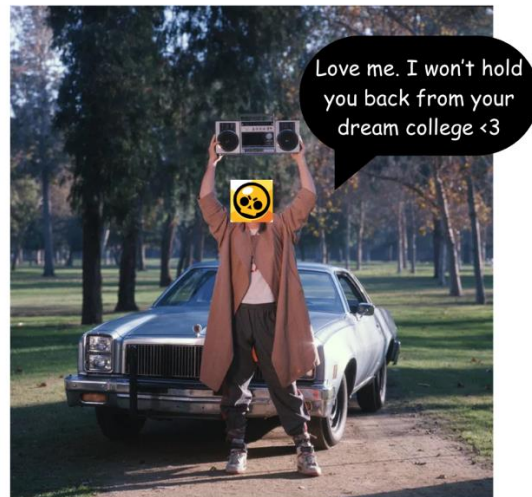
Want none of that and too afraid to do something? Then just “live your life with this person as your hallway crush and nothing more,” which is what Dr. Berkemeier suggests. You’re only in high school. Hopefully, the dating pool gets better in the future.

Neverending Talking Phase

Now, that you’ve got that person’s attention, you’re chatting during school. However, there’s nothing beyond that. There are no fun run ins or lingering glances at the vending machines during the weekend. At most, it’s a few text messages. You’re barely even friends. Yikes.

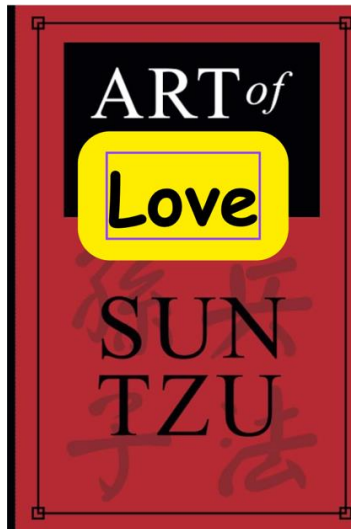
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When asked about this situation, teachers responded with a range of advice. Mr. Wallace recommends “going to their house and holding up a boombox while publicly declaring your love. If you wanna go this route, you’ll have to find out where this person lives which is something you’ll have to figure out on your own time.” But, if it’s not creepy, then it’s super cute.



Perhaps a slightly less hostile route would be to start talking to someone else and seeing if they get jealous, which Mrs. Garth acknowledges is probably not the right thing to do. Mrs. Paxton is on the same page and agrees that talking to someone else and explaining that you’re not exclusive could lead to something. In fact, be clear with your words. Straight up ask this person whether they want to be actual friends. Mrs. Beem advises to ask about mixed signals and clearing things up.

Another piece of advice Mrs. Beem had was to make the effort by suggesting, “Hey, should we hang out some time?” Actively try to move those rare text messages and occasional school conversations into yours and their free time. As you build this friendship, you’ll be able to eventually take the risk. Mr. Buning suggests to just ask them out at this point saying, “[You] gotta take the risk,” reasoning that the sooner you realize the risk, the more prepared you are. Something that Buning references is Sun Tzu’s Art of War which encouraged me to ask my peers if they had read the Art of War and if they were single. The results were that everyone who didn’t read the Art of War was single. Not willing to quickly move on to asking them out? Dr. Berkemeier suggests studying at each other’s houses or getting a coffee and doing homework together.



How to get out the Friendzone

If peacocking, reading the Art of War, or stalking managed to get you at the friendship stage, congrats! Now, time to get outta that friendzone! While some teachers like Mrs. Paxton say that the friendzone is forever, but there's still a silver lining. Mrs. Paxton recommends patience and waiting until they're in a vulnerable time of deep insecurity and pouncing.

On the other hand, Mrs. Garth suggests letting things advance naturally which is what happened between her and her husband. If it's really meant to be, then it will naturally happen. But what about the rest of us who aren't so lucky? Mr. Wallace says to just jump the gun and say that you're already dating this person. Either they're okay with it or they're just confused. If they're confused, Wallace recommends saying that they were the one sending signals.



Now, if you don't want to Stockholm syndrome someone into dating you, then pull back and just say you don't want to be in the friendzone which is what Mr. Robinson recommends. In fact, directly addressing the situation and acknowledging the friendship is

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what Dr. Berkemeier advises. If you guys were good friends, you'd still be friends. However, Mrs. Beem wants you to know that you could potentially lose a really good friend if things don't go well.

Too scared for any of that? Well, Mr. Buning has an idea: set up a bunch of group hangouts to gauge compatibility and break away from that group function when you're ready to make the next move.



Going Steady but the Spark is Dimming

Inevitably, this happens to most relationships: that spark dims. What should you do? Mr. Robinson says to acknowledge that the phase is going away. According to Dr. Berkemeier, that's just what relationship is. She urges to focus on the relationship itself and not just the sparkles. All long-lasting relationships have experienced a moment where the spark dies a bit; it's imminent—something that Mrs. Paxton noted. If you want to try rekindling that spark, then think of a fun activity the two of you can do together which is what Buning suggests.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Beem takes into account that some couples might be going off to college soon. If that's the case, then have a conversation and decide if the relationship is for funsies, something more, or if it's something that can be maintained in college.

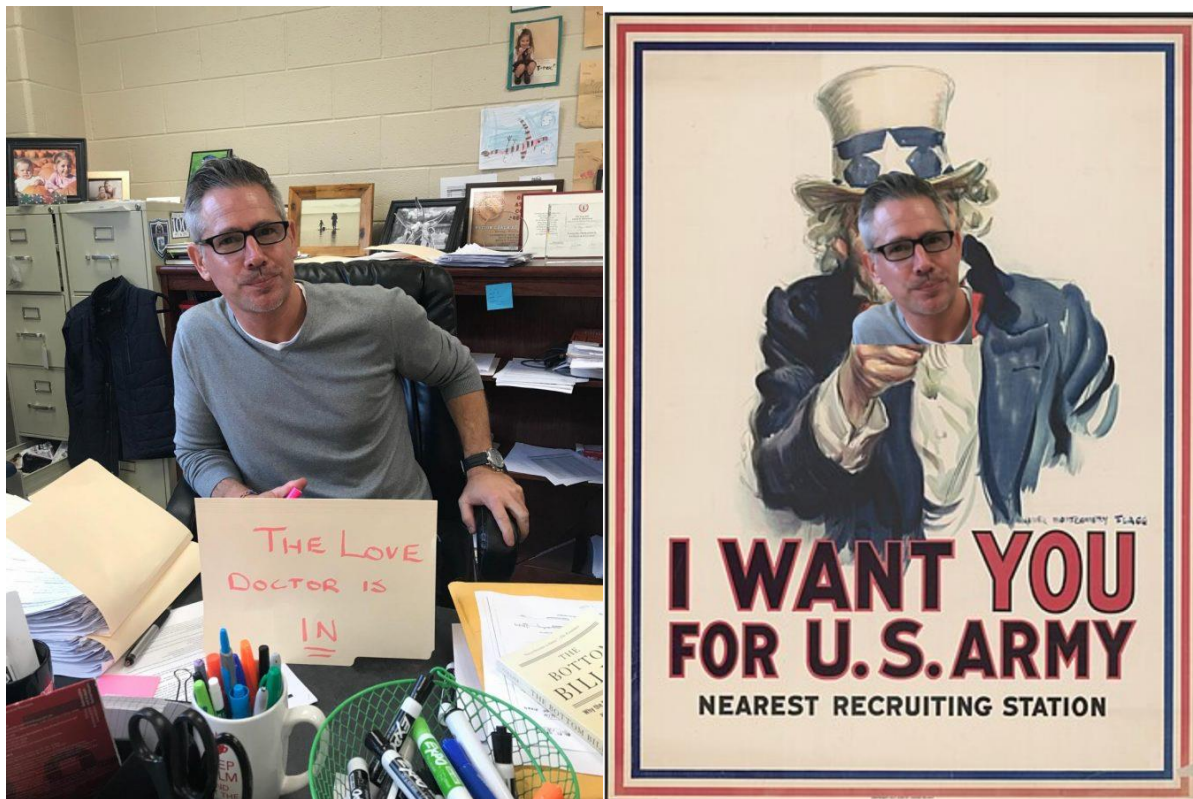


Bunion Dating Advice

For those who just don't feel like being in a relationship anymore, Mrs. Garth's tips include:

- Asking if there's boredom in the relationship
- Realizing there's nothing wrong with things that are dimming
- Reassessing if you're not putting in the effort
- Knowing you can still have respect for the other person even if things are off

Don't want any of that gushy talking stuff? Then Wallace has the perfect plan for you. Mr. Wallace wants you to do something that takes you far, far away from the situation. Enlist in the military, go to college in a different part of the country, live your best life on a different continent for a while! According to Mr. Wallace nothing erases the real problem but distance. In fact, long-distance actually worked out for Mr. Wallace and his wife, so there's plenty of merit to that!



General Advice

As this column comes to a heartbreaking end. Here's everything that these teachers told me that stood out but didn't really fit in anywhere. Mr. Wallace and Mr. Buning advocate for bring back "do you like me?" notes, arguing that they're better than kids constantly being on their phones. They also emphasized the dangers of oversaturating a relationship. Mr. Buning stresses the importance of maintain space and autonomy because oversaturation brings in self-doubt since you're too reliant on someone else. On a similar note, Mr. Wallace says that the less time you spend with some, the more you like them.

At the same time, Dr. Berkemeier emphasizes to make sure that you're taken care of and whoever you're with is also taken care of. She also mentioned enjoying the moments and staying friends even if you guys do break up. Mrs. Garth also highlights to find someone who make you laugh and prioritizes you (something that my friends should realize).