

SUCH GOOD FRIENDS



Sharon and Tim like each other and want to be friends. The problem is, they don't know how.

Everywhere they look they see how to be a "couple"—on television, at the movies, in the songs. But Sharon is already "going out" with someone, and Tim is hoping to, soon.

They just want to be friends.

Being friends with someone of the opposite sex—why is it often so difficult?

Maybe the frustration comes when people expect teenage guys and girls to be boyfriends and girlfriends more than just friends. And being "just friends" isn't easy. If you don't happen to be going out with someone, potential friends of the opposite sex may suspect your motives. And once you do achieve a friendship, one of you may want more—then what?

But there's really nothing magical or mystical about friendships that work between members of opposite sexes. The general principles of friendship are the same.

There are things that make friendships between members of opposite sexes unique, however. Here are 10 tips to help you bring out the best in these special relationships.

How to relate to someone of the opposite sex

BY CINDY PARQLINI

1. Check your motives. Don't play games. Be sure you really do want a friendship, not a dating relationship. Be honest with each other.

2. See each other both one-on-one and in groups. Getting together with lots of friends is a fun, low-key way to nurture your friendship. Use one-on-one times to enjoy a shared hobby or interest.

3. Be willing to risk. In addition to the usual risks of friendship (see 1 Corinthians 13:7), you will also risk "what other people think."

4. Don't be threatened by your friend's other relationships. Don't try to make his or her "special person" jealous, even though that person may resent your friendship. Remember that you have a different, unique relationship with your friend.

5. Don't demand all of your friend's time. Even though you may be great friends, your friend will probably choose a "best friend" from the same sex. Allow your friend the freedom to do things with his or her other friends; that's okay.

6. Discuss tough issues. Having a friend of the opposite sex provides a good opportunity for you both to learn about how each other "thinks." Ask what guys/girls look for in dating partners, etc. Honor each other with frank replies (see Proverbs 24:26).

7. Don't get physical. There is some point between warm hugs and friendly kisses where affections change. Be careful. Your friendship, if you take good care of it, probably can last longer than a romance.

8. Have genuine interest in your friend's life. But be honest—all parts of it may not excite you. Ask how different things are working out. Be sad when your friend is sad and be happy when your friend is happy (see Romans 12:15).

9. Think of your friendship as a brother-sister relationship. You might go to the shopping mall for an afternoon with your brother or sister, but probably not to a Saturday night drive-in movie. Be proud when your friend receives any good recognition or honors; and stick close to him or her during tough times (see Proverbs 18:24).

10. Creatively be a friend. Two of Jesus' friends, Mary and Martha, showed they cared for him in different ways (Luke 10:38-42), but Jesus loved them both (John 11:5). All friends are unique. Take the time to think of your friend's needs and how you can help.

There's no question—being friends with a member of the opposite sex *is* a challenge. It's also an adventure full of rewards. With God's help, you can enjoy this special dimension of friendships in your life. Go ahead; be a friend. ☐