

Single Friendships: Don't Cheat Yourself

Every single guy reading this can recite with one voice the most hated phrase to hear: "Let's be just friends." When I was dating, I hated hearing it too.

I didn't want to be "just friends." If I had wanted to be "just friends," I wouldn't have asked her out in the first place!

But I realize now that I made some big mistakes with that attitude. Most importantly, I cheated myself out of several good friendships. I want to encourage you single men to cultivate friendships with single women. Such friendships will benefit you in multiple areas of your life.

Women have spiritual insights that men have to work at (and vice-versa). They are instinctively more relational. She can make suggestions for how to tastefully decorate your home.

At the same time, you can be a benefit to your women friends. You can be the guy they talk to when they can't talk to their women friends. You can be the protector. You can work on her car or computer. And just as she can help you understand the depths of the female mind, you can help her navigate the maze of how men think.

Because men and women are so different, these relationships can be full of land mines. In your single friendships, consider these several dos and don'ts of the territory.

Most importantly to this discussion, don't cultivate a friendship with the idea of turning it into more than friends. Women are smart enough to see right through that. A friendship that becomes something more can be the best relationship of your life, but it won't happen if you are trying for it. Do

the friendship thing for the sake of friendship. That way, you'll win—whether it becomes something more or not.

When you agree to be friends, don't try to ratchet it up a notch later. You've made an agreement and should stick to it.

What you do now will affect other friendships, also. If other women hear how you have acted (and they will), there go any friendships with them, too. They will feel you are trying for more. Being a man of your word in all matters improves your reception at work, school, and in other relationships (it goes without saying that this last part is a serious do).

I'm speaking from experience with this one—don't flirt for fun. One of you might get the wrong idea. She might conclude that you weren't honest earlier (and would she be right?).

If she flirts back, you might think that she has changed her mind. If you're wrong, there goes everything you've worked for. What she probably thinks is that flirting with you is safe because you are just friends. (And suggesting non-committal lip is the kiss of death, pun very much intended.)

Do remember that she is not a guy friend and won't be interested in the same things that your buds are. The whole point is to make friends with a woman, not women that you treat like men.

Whether female friends are new to you or you already have several, I hope these suggestions help you. You can learn a lot from women. And you can teach them, too. Just remember—this is a friendship—not a “dating-lite” relationship.

Frank Luke and his wife are associate pastors in Iowa. They hold MDivs from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (Springfield, Missouri).