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Hooking-up at Xavier

By Chris Place

While many of my friends and I haven't made the decision to hook-up, we reflect often on how difficult it is to date. As much as other generations tell us to "just take the person out on a date and get to know them," *we can't do it*. We don't ask someone on a date — we don't even express our feelings for someone — unless certain criteria have been fulfilled:

(1) We must *know* that we like this person, and that reasonably beyond doubt, they reciprocate attraction; (2) we have studied the other, sought almost all information, short of compatibility tests, to affirm that we would make a life-long partnership; and (3) though our generation is praised for our gender equality consciousness, in a heterosexual relationship, whether it be sharing feelings or asking on a date, the man must make the first move towards developing a relationship.

As an example, I have a friend who liked this woman for more than a year but never said anything to anybody. It wasn't until just recently that he finally worked up the guts to express his feelings. As it turns out, she also cultivated feelings for him, and now their relationship is bounding.

Our generation *cannot* "casually" date or just 'get to know' someone(s). Instead of sampling relationships, we seek *THE* relationship.

I think this tendency is based on an instinctual assumption that our generation has about relationships. I don't know why we have it, but we do. I think that because of this assumption, our "dating" or, more accurately labeled, "relationship" culture is so high-strung. We think that once we engage in a relationship, we are committed to this person and our lives

becomes about her or him. Sadly, I know too many stories of individuals who seriously consider suicide when a relationship is ending. But an equally distressing part of these stories is the other person who, out of a misguided sense of selflessness, feels obligated to reject his or her own desire to end the relationship and, instead, remains in the relationship to provide the suicidal partner a reason to live.

If you wonder why a "hook-up" culture exists, I think this scenario or lesser, but similar scenarios could be the reason. I'm not going to lie. After being in a draining relationship myself, the hook-up culture was extremely inviting. Even without a bad "relationship" experience, peers still choose the hook-up culture. They know the expectations which our generation has put to "dating," but they haven't found *that* someone worth the work. It's easier to hook-up.

Follow your heart.

I'll leave parents and professionals to patronize my generation, but even we recognize from the confusion and drama that the hook-up culture has its limitations.

So what do we do?

Now, I provide no universal guarantee, but I have found, through discussion and experience, a viable solution for me: I need to be introspective, honest, and selfish. As I call it, I need to "follow my heart." I've found that looking inside myself, finding what is really most valuable *to me*, and pursuing it, "my heart," is the best thing I can do for myself and those around me.

In a way, the hook-up culture is a medium for self-serving desires to come out. As individuals, my generation seeks affection and pleasure without



the hassle and confines of a relationship. However, I know I cannot engage in the hook-up culture because, honestly examining myself and my human instincts, I know I cannot separate sex from its highly emotional and relational elements. Being sincerely conscious of my desires and nature, I avoid putting myself and others through unnecessary pain. If I continue to seek my heart, I won't start or maintain a commitment that I really don't want. Hence, I won't be fake, and I'll grant the other persons a two-fold gift: they won't expend fruitless energy, and they, in turn, are able to be honest with themselves.

I'm not going to claim to have all the answers. I just think it would be best if my peers would follow their hearts. Being conscious of generational assumptions and human instincts is important. But, if we honestly evaluate what is important to us and guide our lives by those values, we will elevate the quality of living for the world. ■

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