



Wanna Hang Out?

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

Published

August 1st, 2006

I love working with teenagers - even when I don't understand them. One of the most interesting topics to discuss with teens is dating. I don't think we have the same context. I first stumbled upon this when a young girl said she and another fellow were "going out". Because I was interested, I asked, "Where do you go?" and she gave me the strangest look. She said, "We didn't go anywhere. We just see each other, if you know what I mean".

My next question was "Where do you see each other?" and her reply was "On MSN" to which I replied, "Well, you aren't really SEEING each other. You are just typing messages back and forth". By this time, you could tell that she was starting to think I was a little daft so she began to explain the nuances of relationships "adolescent style" and I learned the differences between "going out", "hanging out", "hooking up" and "friendship with privileges".

This research experience caused me think about dating in the 1960s. The protocol was for a fellow to work up nerve enough to ask a girl to go somewhere - likely to a movie that would cost 50 cents each. Frequently, with sweaty palms, after rehearsing his speech, he would blurt out a sentence that might result in rejection or elation, depending upon her answer. Over the next few days, the girl would "prepare" by deciding what to wear (and then re-deciding). She would practice doing her hair and makeup so it would be just right.

Finally, date night and he would drive (or walk) to her house and knock at the door. Time to greet the parents and then off to the movie! If he got "lucky" he might hold her hand on the first date! How sad it is when I have couples come to see me for marital problems. I frequently ask them if they have a regular "date night" and, depending on their age, hear that they have NEVER had a date. They just "hung out".

I'm definitely not saying that we need to go back to archaic practices. At the same time, however, I often wonder if people in relationships would feel a little more special if we promoted the practice of dating. Just something to think about while you're hanging out!