Tips for Dating Exclusively

Seek out advice and accountability: It's assumed that when you were going on dates with the person you are now exclusive with that you sought out guidance from friends, spiritual mentors and others who are wiser than you. These people helped you figure out how to pursue the person you are interested in in a respectful, selfless, gracious and thoughtful way. This same type of guidance shouldn't stop now that you are exclusive. If this is not something you did while going on dates you should start now. Continue seeking out direction, insight and wisdom from those around you. Allow others to assist you in looking like Jesus while you date exclusively.

Involve people in your relationship: Starting an exclusive relationship is fun and exciting. You might find yourself wanting to protect your time with them. You might feel tempted to only spend time with them exclusively. Now that you are exclusive, be creative in finding new ways to include people in your time together. Go on double dates, hang out with each other’s roommates and friends. Go to large functions together where you can meet and talk to people together. Involving others in your dates has many benefits: you can observe and see how your dating partner engages with different people, you can learn how to help and befriend others together, you keep yourselves from moving too quickly in your relationship, etc. If you end up marrying the person you date then the way you handled dating will greatly affect the marriage. For example, while dating, if you only spent your time together and didn’t involve others or you didn’t spend much time with your own friends, you won’t have close friends going into your marriage.

Set boundaries from the start: Don’t make the mistake of setting clear boundaries in your relationship once things get challenging. Talk about what physical and emotional boundaries you want to set once you have decided to date each other exclusively. It’s good to think through not only when you will begin to implement new physical boundaries in your relationship, but also things like, when to meet each other’s family, how often you should see each other each week, how late you should stay out on dates or when and where you will be alone. Not only should you talk about these at the start of the relationship, but you should be thinking now about these boundaries for yourself first. Having boundaries set in advance will set clear expectations and help in communication throughout the relationship. For direction on what boundaries to consider and when to implement them, talk to a mentor and use the boundaries worksheet in the “resource” section on the anyfocus.org website.

Have consistent check-ins: This is ultimately about developing good communication habits. Hopefully you have already discussed some emotional and physical boundaries within the relationship. You may have made a plan for when to start or talk about new boundaries, but it’s possible that those boundaries need to change at some point. Don’t be afraid to adjust your boundaries for example, if engaged, it can often be much more difficult to maintain physical boundaries and you might need to be more careful than earlier. If you find out that you actually have an additional semester in school then that might affect some of your boundaries and timeline.
Or just because you plan to kiss at six months doesn’t mean that is necessarily the best thing to do when you reach six months. Commit to checking in on how the relationship is going with some frequency. It certainly shouldn’t be every date that you have together and it also shouldn’t be only when an issue arises. Commit and plan to check in at the beginning of every 1-2 months. Use that time to affirm and encourage each other and to make sure everything is still on track with your plans and boundaries.

**Plan out your dates:** When people are going on dates in order to find a boyfriend or girlfriend you hear of such creative date ideas. It is fun to think of new ideas that will make the date comfortable and lighthearted. Why does this often stop once they begin to exclusively date? As you get to know your dating partner more you should be able to find more creative things to try, so why do we often settle for going over to each other’s house and watching tv? Plan out your dates. That means planning ahead. Keep an ongoing list of places you want to go, like museums, restaurants, parks, shows, events, concerts, etc. You’ll only get to date this person once so make it fun and creative! This will also help you create fond memories of things you did together instead of times you crossed your boundaries because you watched Netflix when your roommates weren’t home.