

Expert Dating Advice: When It's Best to Keep It in the Friend Zone



 By Ashley DelBello

We could go on and on about different scenarios where it's best to keep it "just friends" with that particular someone within your social circle – whether it be a coworker, someone in your close group of friends or a person that one of your friends has previously dated. Most of the time we know it's probably not a good idea, but it's only natural to wonder about taking it a step further when you think there may be a stronger connection. So what about those situations where we are curious if there could be something more? Cupid spoke with the relationship experts on how best to navigate.

"The friend zone is a tricky space. We all want to make that Hail Mary pass, but we don't always prepare for it not working out," said author of "You Are WHY You Eat" and licensed clinical psychologist Ramani Durvasula, Ph.D. "That doesn't mean that it won't work since many great relationships start as friendships, but you need to be prepared."

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With coworkers. The first step is to make sure they've made some sort of indication that they might also want to take the relationship to the next level and then to think about how it could impact your job and reputation at work in the future. "It's very important that you discuss beforehand what happens if it doesn't work out. Can you go back to just being friends?"

Will it become awkward? How will you acknowledge each other at work,” said relationship expert and celebrity life coach Melanie Mar.

“Tread lightly in the workplace and think about the ramifications,” adds Durvasula. “If it’s all that then one of you may need to consider jumping ship from the company.”

For those of you that do decide it’s worth the risk, Mar advises that you need to distinctly separate your professional and social lives. “For example, if you’re dating someone from work, when you go out together on a personal level, work must never be discussed and you need to date as you would any other person – discussing family values, upbringing, future planning, those types of things, but steer away from any shop talk.”

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With your friends. We’ve been warned several times that friends and sex don’t mix, but we hardly ever listen. “We all like to think we are so evolved, but don’t think you can have that one night stand and go back to hanging out and hearing about each other’s new flames. Sex changes the chemistry of a friendship. Are you willing to toss it for that night if you have no intention of taking it further,” asked Durvasula. It could be potentially damaging to your friendship and you will both need to decide if it’s worth the sacrifice so take the time to really think about how it will affect the relationship down the road.

And if you do want to pursue it romantically? “You probably already know a lot about each other since you’re in the same friend group, but my advice would be to not discuss your mutual friends as you run the risk of keeping it buddy-buddy when you need to take it to a romantic level. Change your behavior patterns around each other and keep the focus on courting and romancing – even more so than meeting someone in

a bar or online because you're making a distinct shift from a platonic relationship into a new romantic relationship," said Mar.

A friend's ex. Just don't do it – that situation is rarely ever a good idea and just ends up being more drama than it's worth. "Karma's a bitch. Before you take up with your girlfriend's ex-boyfriend or ex-husband, think about the implications. She may say she is not hurt, but is it worth it? Men come and go, but honor and girlfriends are forever," said Durvasula.

Going from friends to something more is possible – you just need to think it through and be mindful of what could happen if it doesn't work out before you make the transition.

Tell us: When do you think it's best to keep it in the friend zone? Have there been situations that have totally gone wrong? On the flip side, any tips from those who have made the successful transition from friends to lovers?