

# How Do You Tell People Who are Interested in You That You aren't Interested in Being in a Relationship?



Telling someone you are not interested in dating them is uncomfortable and can be a painful experience. In order to answer the question of how to tell someone you are not interested in dating them, it is important to point out that it really depends on the situation. However, there are a few principles that can be applied to a variety of circumstances.

1. **Be Kind and Honest-** It is important to remember that you can be nice and kind in addition to being honest. Being kind means being honest and treating someone the way you see them. If you see them as a friend, treat them as a friend, but do not treat them as a romantic interest or potential boyfriend/girlfriend. Although it is unpleasant for a moment, being honest and telling

someone you are not interested in is the kindest thing to do.

**2. Be consistent-** Similar to the last point, make sure to be consistent in your words and your actions. There's a principle of communication called a double bind, which means you are expressing something different with your words than you are expressing with your actions. A double bind is an unhelpful communication pattern, so you want to avoid it. If you don't want to date someone you can say, "Thank you so much but I'm not interested in dating." Then make sure your actions support this statement. This may mean not texting or calling someone you just turned down, or it could mean something else.

If you are long-term friends with the person or if you just met them, your follow-up actions will probably look a little different. However, the principle is the same. Make sure your words and actions match. If you want to go back to being long-term friends, express that. If you just met and do not want to build a friendship or relationship with the person, then show them you'd like space. People generally will respect that and know how to act in response when your verbal and nonverbal communication matches.

**3. Keep communicating the same message as long as you need to.** Occasionally there may be individuals who you turn down, who will not get the message. Even if you are very good about communicating that message verbally and nonverbally, they may not respect this, or they may be unsure about how to give you the appropriate space to move on socially or romantically. If you have communicated to a person you are not interested in, and they keep texting, calling, or showing up and it makes you feel uncomfortable, you could clearly say to them "Don't be offended if I am slow to reply or respond. I

want to make sure I am not sending the wrong message.”  
Once you have explained your reason for not responding,  
you don’t need to feel guilty for not responding to any  
texts or not answering any phone calls.

Managing relationships, especially with others whom you do not  
want a romantic relationship, can be tricky. The key is  
compassion and kindness balanced with straight forward  
communication and clear expectations.

**By Luara Woodland, Intern, and Dr. Dave Schramm**