

# Advice to teenagers: Ask first, kiss later

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Dallas: Author travels with tips for dating respectfully, responsibly

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**By KRISTINE HUGHES / The Dallas Morning News**

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The title and tone of Mike Domitrz's presentation to sophomores from three Dallas private schools Thursday morning belied the serious subject.

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NAN COULTER/Special Contributor

**Mike Domitrz spoke with students  
Brittany McIntyre, 16, (left) and  
Courtney Chanon, 16, at the May I Kiss  
You? seminar at The Shelton School in  
North Dallas on Thursday.**

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Named for his book *May I Kiss You?*, the talk at the Shelton School in North Dallas began with students giggling over the notion of spoiling a date by asking such a question. But the discussion was really about showing respect for others' bodies and personal boundaries.

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Mr. Domitrz, based in Milwaukee, travels the country telling adolescents, teens and young adults what he understood only after his sister was brutally raped: When you're in an intimate moment, how do you know what the other person wants?

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"The old way you made your move was until the other person stopped you," Mr. Domitrz said before taking the stage to address 300 students from Shelton, Greenhill and Parish Episcopal schools.

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But some people, he said, aren't strong enough to cut off the contact. Peer pressure, hormones, alcohol or drugs can also weaken resistance.

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Mr. Domitrz, 38, told students that the responsibility for stopping intimate contact should never rest on the recipient.

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"Since it's your action, you should be responsible," he said, adding that asking for the intimacy may feel awkward, but it is more romantic because it shows the other person respect.

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Mr. Domitrz also highlighted a difficult topic: oral sex. He said many young people substitute it for intercourse, but that can be disrespectful and dangerous to both individuals.

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He said they may want to say no to sex but don't want to lose the relationship, so they agree to oral sex, wrongly believing it's not really sex or it's safer than intercourse.

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His messages seemed to reach the students.

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Shelton student Wendy Cohen, 15, said she knows now that she would like to be asked permission for a kiss and would do the asking herself.

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"It just shows a lot more respect and opens up a new way of communication," she said. Otherwise, "it's like kind of giving them permission to do whatever they want."

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Matt Schroeder, 16, also a Shelton student, said he learned if you give respect, you get it in return.

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"If you're with the right person, they would find asking them to be very respectful, and they would feel a lot more love than if you just went for it," he said. "I think I'm going to use his technique now."

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Shelton student Scott Howe, 16, said Mr. Domitrz's presentation was funny and entertaining and focused on what students should do instead of what they should not do.

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"He was able to really talk about an uncomfortable subject matter and make it easy and comfortable to talk about," he said.

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Parents on a speakers committee that brought in Mr. Domitrz said they hoped he'd help students communicate.

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"This is a time when they are starting to drive, so their social world really increases," said Laura Stockdale, who has two children attending Parish Episcopal School.

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She and others said the lesson reinforces – rather than contradicts – the abstinence-based sex education the students receive in school.

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"The message is meant to help them make better decisions," she said.

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After the assembly and a group discussion, Mr. Domitrz was to speak to student leaders and faculty members from the three schools and then offer a seminar geared for parents

and siblings as young as seventh grade in the evening.

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Clinical psychologist Thomas Van Hoose of UT Southwestern Medical Center said talking to children about sex is among the most difficult things parents do. So healthy dating seminars such as Mr. Domitrz's can offer good information and reinforce positive messages the parents have been teaching at home.

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Dr. Van Hoose said the area of the brain that plans or controls impulses is the last to develop, "so addressing these subjects with the younger teens is very appropriate."

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