



Published on *Go Ask Alice!* (<https://goaskalice.columbia.edu>)

[Home](#) > [Fear of rejection?](#)

---

## Fear of rejection? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I am an undergrad who knows many people at my school. Interestingly enough while I am a very outgoing person and a very self-confident person, I am very shy when it comes to initiating a relationship. I know that I simply am afraid of the big "R" (rejection). I know that this is normal, but I feel that my fear is possibly causing me to miss out on a chance of having a good relationship.

I have been asked out a few times this year, but the guys did not interest me at all (one was divorced with two kids, the others I found nice but dull). All my friends are male, and I talk to them about my problems, but it hasn't helped at all. How can I gain self-confidence in the area of romance (I don't have a problem once I am in a relationship), and why is it that all my friends are males? Am I seen always as the sister or mother type? (Don't get me wrong, I am not interested romantically in any of my friends.)

Sincerely,  
Fearful of Rejection

## **Answer**

Dear Fearful of Rejection,

Dating can be a nerve-wracking process and it's great that you're trying to understand why you have these dating-related insecurities. No matter the type of relationship, romantic or otherwise, there's always the possibility that you'll fall for someone and risk being rejected, or that others will fall for you and you'll need to figure out how to turn them down. Some self-reflection and steps toward improving your self-esteem may be the key to landing yourself a wonderful, mutually satisfying relationship.

The first step toward understanding is awareness — and you seem to be well on your way! Whether you're single or dating, your experiences may provide opportunities to learn about yourself, other people, and your preferences. You mentioned that your generally positive view of yourself turns negative when faced with dating and the possibility of rejection and you also seem to recognize that you're most comfortable in a stable relationship and you prefer to hang out with people you already know pretty well. It's also worth pointing out that you seem to feel self-

assured and outgoing when you're hanging out with your friends. Is it possible that the prospect of initiating a date causes you to focus more on your perceived shortcomings and reasons why desirable partners might decide to reject you? If so, it may be worth exploring how you've come to these ways of thinking. Since you feel confident and outgoing when the pressure's not on for dating, what's different about dating situations that zaps these strengths?

Once you've had an opportunity to reflect on where you are emotionally, it may be a good time to remind yourself what you have to offer. You may start by making a list of your strengths and positive qualities. What are some of your proudest accomplishments? Where do your passions lie? What makes you, *you*? You could even ask some of your friends to share some of the qualities they most value from your friendship.

Just as dating can be considered a process, building self-esteem is also often a process. It's not uncommon for people to feel self-assured in one situation and self-doubt in the next. This process of building self-esteem involves precisely the sort of critical thinking and inward reflection you're already doing. If this is something that you continue to struggle with, you may try talking with a mental health professional about other strategies to reduce your fear of rejection.

To your point about the interactions you have with your male friends, maybe you're looking to them to provide comfort during your singleness. Maybe they do see you as a sister or mother figure, but it's really hard to say. It could also be that they just dig you for you! In any case, it's good to have supportive friendships. Since you have a great social support network, it could be easier for you to find some date-able partners through those connections.

Your ability to identify your situation and willingness to work towards a resolution is already a great start. Here's to building the confidence to take a chance on love!

Alice!

Category:

[Relationships](#) [2]

[Finding a Partner](#) [3]

[Relating & Communicating](#) [4]

## Related questions

[Need help to start dating](#) [5]

[Finding a partner](#) [6]

[Looking for the right person](#) [7]

## Resources

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\) \(Morningside\)](#) [8]

[Mental Health Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [9]

Published date:

Jan 01, 1994

Last reviewed on:

Apr 14, 2017

## Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
  - Content Use
  - Media Inquiries
  - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
  - Licensing Q&As
  - Get Alice! on Your Website
  - Full Site Syndication
  - Link to Go Ask Alice!

**Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.**

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

---

**Source URL:** <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/fear-rejection-0>

### Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/fear-rejection-0>
- [2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/relationships>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/finding-partner>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/relating-communicating>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/need-help-start-dating-0>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/finding-partner-0>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/looking-right-person>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>