

God, Life, and Everything "Rules for Prom"

It's that time of year.

It's that time when we unaccountably spend hundreds of dollars on dresses, tuxes, limos, and dinners.

It's that time of year when we fret over corsages and boutonnieres and how to tie a bow tie.

Yes, it's Prom Time.

And for all of those who will attend one, I have advice. Heed it, and you will do well. Neglect it, and woe be unto you!

Seriously, there are some rules every prom attendee should pay attention to because they apply not only to this one social event but to life in general.

Some rules, I imagine every single parent will be laying down for their kids at prom time. You know... No booze. No drugs. No sex. No staying out beyond X o'clock. Never feel pressured into doing something you feel is wrong. And answer your cell phone if the parent calls!

But there are other rules of behavior which will determine how you get along with your date, whether they are your boyfriend/girlfriend or just a friend. There aren't a lot of rules, but they will make a difference.

1. Be on time. Whether you're picking up, being picked up or meeting somewhere, it's rude to make a date wait. Why start off the evening making them anxious or even angry?

2. You have to pose for the pictures without complaint, and you have to smile for them.

One of the strange rituals of prom is the pre-prom picture-taking party. You would think it would be second nature for kids to smile for pictures. They certainly take enough selfies to feel comfortable. But I know teens who hide from every camera or scowl if forced. They're like cornered animals baring their teeth.

For this day, however, the rule is to smile pleasantly. Assume it's important to your date and overcome your revulsion.

3. Stick with your date. The entire evening. Whether you are dating your date or just friends, they are your date for the night. Don't even think about running over to a group of friends and hanging out with them while your date stands awkwardly by his or herself wishing they were invisible.

4. Talk to your date. Again, you would think this would not be an issue, and for most teens it isn't. In fact, sometimes getting them to stop talking is the problem. But formal events have a way of changing the dynamic and making conversation flow like molasses. Talk.

And when your date talks, listen actively, which means make eye contact. Let them know that you hear and understand what they're saying. Ask questions that assures them you're interested in what they're saying.

5. Ask them to dance at least once. Even if you hate dancing. This is not an option. You have brought this other person to a dance, so dance. It won't kill you, and it will help your date know that they are important to you (regardless the nature of your relationship). There's nothing like coming to a dance with someone who pointedly refuses to ask you to join them in at least one little dance.

6. If your date asks you to dance, dance. At least once, even if you hate dancing. Again, this is not an option. After that, you have fulfilled your basic obligation as a prom date. However, if your date loves to dance, and you refuse to do it, don't be surprised if they find someone who will dance.

7. If you ask your date to dance, and they refuse (because they hate dancing), respect their decision. I know, this seems like a double standard where you have to dance, but they don't. Sometimes that's how life is. You have to assume a certain burden.

And yet, that burden might turn out to be a good thing. Maybe you hate dancing but step out of your comfort zone because your date loves it. You might discover that you have a better time on the dance floor than you could have imagined. Maybe you want to dance, and your date won't. So you spend time sitting at a table talking. You might discover that you have a lot more to talk about than you thought possible.

These rules have one basic principle in common: be attentive to and respectful of your date. They are an important person tonight. And if being attentive means stretching yourself a little - so much the better. If each of you takes this approach, Prom will be an awesome evening you'll look back with fond memories for the rest of your life.