

# FEELING UNLOVED?

Girls Dealing with  
Feelings



Dorothy Kavanaugh

## About this Book

### Is Love More Trouble Than You Thought?

Whether you're too afraid to approach your crush or you've been recently dumped by your boyfriend, what do you do when you feel unloved? *Feeling Unloved? Girls Dealing With Feelings* discusses the ups and downs of romance and provides research-based information on the best ways to deal with crushes, dating, relationships, and breakups. Take a quiz to figure out if what you have is the real thing or if it's not right for you.

# FEELING UNLOVED?

Girls  
Dealing  
With  
Feelings

Dorothy  
Kavanaugh

 **JASMINE**  
HEALTH  
Wellness • Diet • Cooking

# CONTENTS

Cover

About this Book

Title Page

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## *Chapter 1: What Is Love?*

You and Your Emotions

Science Says... Science of Attraction

Symbols of Love

Science Says...

## *Chapter 2: Flattened by a Crush*

Talk to Someone

Science Says...

How to Let Someone Know You're Interested

Flirting

## *Chapter 3: Getting to Know You*

Getting to Know You

Internet Safety Tips

## *Chapter 4: So... Um... Do You Want to Go Out?*

Asking Him Out

Some Inexpensive Dates

Who Pays?

## Turning Down Someone You Don't Want to Date

### *Chapter 5: Good Together*

Is This Love? Some Questions to Consider

How Committed Are You?

Communication Blockers

### *Chapter 6: A Balancing Act*

The Survey Says...

Avoiding and Handling Conflicts with Parents

### *Chapter 7: Feeling Pressures, Making Choices*

Tips for a Healthy Relationship

The Survey Says...

Common Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship

### *Chapter 8: Breaking Up and Starting Over*

How Long Does It Last?

When You Want to Break Up

Some of the Symptoms of Clinical Depression

Helping a Friend

Coping with Feelings of Loss

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Find Out More

Internet Addresses

Hotlines

Index

Note To Our Readers

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **What Is Love?**

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*My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite.*

—William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

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**What is love?** That question has been discussed over many centuries. In his play *Romeo and Juliet*, seventeenth-century English writer William Shakespeare attempts to describe love’s emotional depth. In the lines above, Juliet explains the intensity of her feelings for Romeo. Stories of love and longing have been told throughout history by playwrights, as well as by songwriters, authors, and filmmakers. Tales of love and loss touch a nerve in everyone because love is something all people identify with.

**Love can be many things.** It can refer to the bond you feel with your parents. It can be the connection you have with your best friend. And with romantic love, it can be the feelings you have for someone special in your life—one that involves both emotional feelings and the pull of physical attraction. Although these are different kinds of love, all involve many of the same elements. They include trust, loyalty, support, and encouragement. However, one of the most important ingredients in love is the intense feeling of caring for another person.

**Having close relationships is important.** They give you the chance to understand what is important to you. And they give you experience in sharing and trusting others. Learning about love means learning about yourself.

Understanding yourself and your feelings is a big part of growing up. And right now in your life, there is plenty to try to figure out. It’s likely you’re dealing with physical changes occurring in your body due to puberty. This is the stage of life when your body is developing from that of a child to an adult.

**Growing up.** As you go through puberty, you may feel uncomfortable with your body as certain parts are growing and changing shape. These physical changes are the result of sometimes drastic changes in your body’s hormone levels. Hormones are special chemical substances that carry messages regulating the activity of cells. In girls, the most important hormones are estrogen and progesterone.

As the amounts of hormones in your body change, you can feel emotional upheavals and experience extreme mood swings. As a result, the way you relate to others can be bumpy at times. Feelings of longing and romantic attraction to others become stronger during puberty, too. These feelings can be physical, affecting sexual behavior and desire, and emotional, involving a longing for closeness and for a feeling of being connected to someone else.

People grow physically and emotionally at different rates. One girl may begin the changes of puberty at age eight, while another might be thirteen years old. And boys typically begin puberty even later. As a result, you may find you have suddenly grown several inches and now tower over many of the boys you know. Some of them may be interested in having a romantic relationship, while others won't be interested at all.

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*“Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.”*

—Zora Neale Hurston

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**Falling in love.** Right now, you may be thinking about what love means to you and what you would want in a romantic relationship. Or maybe you are interested in someone else but haven't shared your feelings with that person. Or perhaps you are in a serious relationship. All of these situations are giving you the opportunity to grow emotionally and develop the knowledge and skills to maintain healthy relationships.

**An emotional rollercoaster ride.** In the course of learning about the very complicated world of romantic love, you will most likely experience a wide range of feelings. You may feel the longing for a special connection, the joys of first love, the anger of conflict, and the sorrow of breaking up. At times it may feel like your emotions are one big rollercoaster ride. If you are feeling overwhelmed by your changing moods, you may find it helpful to share your feelings with trusted friends. After all, they are probably going through the same thing, too. You may also find that your parents have some helpful insights.

As you share time with another person, you can have the opportunity to gain an understanding of yourself and your values. Remember, the ways you choose to deal with others in relationships—for example, how you treat them and expect them to treat you—will establish the person you will be as an adult.

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## You and Your Emotions

A part of everyone's personality, emotions are a powerful driving force in life. They are hard to define and understand. But what is known is that emotions—which include anger, fear, love, joy, jealousy, and hate—are a normal part of the human system. They are responses to situations and events that trigger bodily changes, motivating you to take some kind of action.

Some studies show that the brain relies more on emotions than on intellect in learning and in making decisions. Being able to identify and understand the emotions in yourself and in others can help you in your relationships with family, friends, and others throughout your life.



*Puberty refers to the time when a young person's body is developing and changing as she becomes an adult. In girls, puberty usually starts between ages eight and thirteen.*



## Science Says... Science of Attraction

*In his studies of what happens when people fall in love, psychologist Arthur Arun found that attraction between two people increases with the simple act of staring into each other's eyes. Researchers set up situations in which complete strangers were asked to reveal personal details about themselves to each other for an hour and a half. Then they were told to stare into each other's eyes for four minutes. Afterward, these complete strangers admitted*

*to having strong feelings of attraction for one another. Two actually eventually married.*

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## Symbols of Love

**Cupid, the Roman god of love:** Represented as a winged boy carrying a bow and arrow, Cupid makes people fall in love by shooting an arrow through the heart.

**Heart:** A heart symbol is often used to replace the word love.

**Rose:** Red roses symbolize love and passion.



## Science Says...

*When a person has strong feelings toward someone else, studies show, the brain releases increased amounts of certain brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters. One of these neurotransmitters is dopamine, which causes a person to feel good.*

*Exposure to exciting, new things can trigger the release of dopamine, too. So if your first date includes some risky rides at an amusement park, it's likely you'll want to have a second date with that person. That's because the release of dopamine resulting from the excitement of a wild rollercoaster ride can stimulate feelings of attraction between the two of you.*

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Flattened by a Crush**

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*Yesterday, Mia saw Luke in the hallway. When he said hello, her stomach did a flip-flop. For the rest of the day, she felt a warm glow inside. This morning, Luke was standing by Mia's locker when she walked up. And again, her stomach flipped over. She felt herself blushing and her palms got sweaty.*

**Having a crush can be exciting, but it can also be intense and weigh heavily on your emotions—that's why it's called a crush.** Crushes are an important part of developing relationships. When you have a crush on someone, you are discovering just what it is that you like in a person. At the same time, you are learning how to deal with the strong emotions brought on by a crush. If your crush feels the same way about you, you can feel great and on top of the world. But if he doesn't feel the same way, you may feel ignored, sad, and rejected.

It is possible to have a crush on someone you don't know at all but feel strongly attracted to. You can also develop a crush on someone you've known since grade school.

**When you like someone you've known a long time.** You may have been hanging out with your friend Travis since first grade. But one day, Travis seems different to you. You find yourself wondering if he's interested in you in the same way you are. You have two choices: you can keep your secret crush to yourself, or you can tell him.

Before telling a friend you want to be something more than "just friends," think first about the possibility of losing his friendship. Your admission could make him uncomfortable if he doesn't feel the same way. And that can be hard for you. Be prepared for rejection. If he backs off, at least you'll know where you stand.

Even if he does feel the same way, if your romantic relationship doesn't work out in the long run, it will be hard to go back to the friendship level. (Although many teens do remain good friends after breakups.) Before you say anything, you have to decide if you really like him enough to take that chance of losing him as a friend. On the other hand, if you don't tell your crush how you feel, you will not have the chance to find out if he has similar feelings for you.

**When you like someone you barely know.** Sometimes you may find yourself interested in someone you really don't know at all. Maybe it is the new boy sitting next to you in English class or the friend of your older brother who has been hanging out a lot at your home lately. Again, you have two choices: keep your feelings to yourself or let your crush know you are interested. It can be hard telling someone you'd like to know them better, especially if you are not sure what your crush is thinking.

One way to find out is to show him you're interested. You don't need to come right out and tell a person you like him. You can pass the word along through body language—

that is, the way you communicate without speaking. For example, as you talk, look directly into his eyes. Pay close attention when he talks, and be sure to smile. Your body language will show him you're interested in getting to know him better.

**Strike up a conversation.** There are lots of things you could talk about: the book you had to read for English class, the lab experiment you both just worked on in science class, or the last school football game. Talk about things that interest you and show curiosity about his interests. Your conversation will help you see the things you have in common.

Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer. You might want to think ahead of time of some good “conversation starters” or “continuers” so you won't feel at a loss if there is a long pause in your conversation. As the conversation flows, you may find you share a lot in common at least as friends. And you'll find that the more practice you have in talking to guys, the easier it will be.

Make it clear you're not just flirting. Flirting refers to showing an interest without any intention of serious commitment. You really do want to learn more about him.

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*“Love is friendship set on fire.”*

—Jeremy Taylor

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**If you decide to tell.** Many teens have a hard time telling another person they are interested in being more than “just friends.” So they may ask a friend to find out if the feeling is mutual.

A better idea is to keep the situation between the two of you. This kind of communication should be kept private. If you want to know if your crush is interested in you, don't bring up the conversation in front of friends in the lunchroom or in class. Since you don't know what the answer is going to be, you don't need to embarrass yourself or your crush if the feelings aren't mutual.

And you don't need to come out with the direct statement, “I like you.” Just extend an invitation to do something together. You could ask him to eat lunch with you that day in the lunchroom or to study together for the upcoming math test. If he's interested in you, he'll take you up on one of those offers.

**If he says no.** It happens. Maybe he's shy. Maybe he is simply not ready to have a romantic relationship—with anyone. Or maybe he's simply not attracted to you. To avoid the latter situation, before you say anything, do your best to read signals he may be giving out. If his body language is telling you that he's interested, let him know you're interested, too.

If you misread his signals and the answer to your invitation is a definite no, try to act relaxed. Give a smile, say “Okay,” and go find something else to do. Meet up with a

good friend for a little sympathy or head for the library to work on that term paper. If you feel like crying, find a private place to let the emotions flow.

Tell yourself that it is okay. When you take chances in relationships, disappointments can happen. It hurts when you have been rejected. But accept it, leave him alone, and try to move on.

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*“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched—they must be felt with the heart.”*

—Helen Keller

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Romantic relationships can bring on a multitude of emotions—fear that he may not like you and sadness if the answer is no. You can feel uncomfortable, scared, and nervous. But maybe your crush is feeling the same way. You’ll never know unless you ask. The possibility of a good outcome—that you’ll hear yes and have the chance to get to know your crush better—can be worth the risks of rejection.



*An infatuation is a brief feeling of intense passion or admiration for someone. A crush is an intense infatuation with someone.*



### **Talk to Someone**

Crushes can be confusing, but when you have a crush on someone, you are learning about yourself and the kind of person you feel attracted to. You may find you have a crush on a boy or another girl. Such feelings are okay and normal. However, if you feel confused or worried about your feelings, you should talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent or other family member, your doctor, or a school counselor.



### Science Says...

*Several neurotransmitters play a role when people first fall in love. Extra amounts of one neurotransmitter, called dopamine, produce a blissful feeling. The increased amount of another brain chemical, norepinephrine, causes excitement, a racing heart, sweaty palms, and flushed skin. Both of these neurotransmitters can produce extreme feelings of happiness, as well as feelings of energy and focused attention. But increased amounts of dopamine and norepinephrine also cause sleeplessness and a loss of appetite.*

*At the same time, researchers say, people in love have lower than normal levels of another neurotransmitter known as serotonin. Decreased amounts of serotonin are associated with anxiety—a feeling of nervousness about future events. Reduced levels of serotonin have also been linked with depression—a feeling of extreme sadness and hopelessness. So in a way, falling in love can make you anxious and depressed and, some would say, feel a little bit crazy.*



### How to Let Someone Know You're Interested

- Say hi when you see him in the hall.
- Ask for his opinions.
- Compliment him on what he's wearing.
- Ask about schoolwork: "What do you think about that last test?"
- Comment on recent school activities: "What did you think about last night's game?"
- Find common interests: music? reading? sports?
- Ask questions about the latest movies or popular TV shows.
- Look him in the eyes while you're talking.
- Make jokes ... and smile.



## ***Flirting***

*According to one study on the BBC Web site, people say they get the idea that someone is attracted to them:*

*55% through body language*

*38% the tone and speed of the voice*

*7% through what is said*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Getting to Know You**

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*Some of Jasmine’s friends were going over to Joe’s house to watch some movies—everyone invited was bringing something to eat, along with a favorite scary movie. Jasmine was looking forward to seeing Michael there. He had told her he didn’t really know Joe very well, but he was going because he wanted to see her.*

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**Sometimes the best way to get to know someone better is to spend time with them when with friends.** With group dates you have the chance to see how that person treats other people. At the same time, you can see how he behaves toward you.

You may have been hanging out with this person all along, but suddenly now find yourself attracted to him. In that case, you’ve already had the opportunity to see that he has a great sense of humor and that he tries to be a good friend to his buddies. If the group sometimes meets at his house, you’ve had the chance to see how he relates with his family—for instance, how he treats his younger brother or talks to his parents. You might decide that he is the kind of person you’d like to spend more time with.

When you get together with someone you like and who likes you, you may prefer seeing him along with the rest of your friends. A group date can be a less intense way to go out. If you invite your crush to attend the party celebrating the end of your field hockey season, you can feel good knowing that he wanted to be your date for the event. But you don’t need to worry about keeping the conversation going all the time because lots of other people will be around.

**What is the right age to start dating?** For many girls, their parents usually set the rules for when it is okay to date. Some young people start as young as twelve or thirteen; others may not start until they are sixteen or seventeen or even older.

Several factors—your age, the age of the person you want to date, or your family’s culture or religious beliefs—can affect whether your parents think you should date. They may also be concerned about what dating means to you: Is it your close friendship with the classmate you consider your “steady,” but see only at school? Or is it someone you actually go out with—to dances, movies, and school events?

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*“To the world, you’re just one person, but to one person you can mean the world.”*

—Anonymous

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**Talk to your parents.** When you really like someone, try to share your feelings with your parents. Even if you may find it difficult, you’ll know that they will appreciate your effort to keep communication open with them. And, if you are feeling confused