



GETTIN' YOUR PDA ON

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SOMETIMES IT'S NICE TO SHOW A LITTLE AFFECTION IN PUBLIC, BUT TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING CAN BE, WELL, TOO MUCH.

On a Thursday night at Abe and Jake's, the loud music pumps through my body as I sip my vodka cranberry. The usual crowd of girls in stilettos and polo-clad guys packs the room, dancing and chatting. But as I turn around and walk away from the bar, something catches my eye and I no longer feel like I'm at a club. It looks more like a scene straight out of the bedroom.

A girl in a short black dress slinks toward a guy sitting by himself on a bench and climbs onto his lap, straddling him. They start ferociously making out. As they grind on each other, her dress rides up, showing off her thong and butt cheeks to the entire club. Neither one seem to notice or care.

I don't mind a little PDA, but dry sex on a bench goes a little far.

PDA, or "public display of affection," doesn't always resemble dry sex. Handholding, an arm around your significant other, a quick peck, a hug — these manifestations of affection all count as PDA if done where others can see. But some types of PDA are more sexual than others. When getting affectionate, how much is too much?

* THEN AND NOW *

Blatant PDA wasn't always so commonplace. In the early 20th century the only public displays of affection were related to prostitution, says Jeffrey Moran, associate professor of history. Until the sexual revolution in the late 1960s, displays of affection remained in the privacy of the bedroom.

In the 1960s, couples may have enjoyed some tonguing on Wescoe Beach — but it was more as a political statement in protest of a century of sexual repression than everyday behavior.

Since then PDA has slowly become more mainstream, particularly gaining acceptability in the 1980s. "You no longer had chaperones going around the high school dance separating couples with rulers," Moran says.

Today a bit of PDA — and sometimes more than just a bit — is generally tolerated.

Allison Decker, Olathe sophomore, says that even though she only holds hands in public, she saw couples groping each other and full-on making out in the halls of her high school. But horny highschoolers aren't the only ones getting their PDA on.

* BUMP AND GRIND *

The sex-charged atmospheres of nightclubs make PDA feel sexy and forbidden — especially after downing a few drinks.

Places such as clubs or bars are swarming with singles and will break down people's inhibitions.



Public display of gag-me-with-a-spoon: Showing affection, both physical and verbal, around others can go so far that it makes everyone outside the "couple bubble" uncomfortable, and it can even damage friendships.

"People will care less if there's a couple mackin' all over each other at certain social venues," says Grant Wood, licensed clinical marriage therapist at the Resonate Relationship Clinic in Overland Park.

When a couple of beers and a few shots of tequila get people feeling frisky, clubgoers can generally expect to witness some PDA. "Bars are all about PDA. People go to bars in a college town in order to get ready to have sex or hopefully find someone to have sex with," says Koren Binns, Overland Park senior.

People go out not only to meet others, but also to shake their money-makers.

Dancing itself can be a form of PDA. With couples groping each other to the beat and guys running their hands up girls' skirts, the dance floor is definitely a PDA hot spot, says Ali Blakeborough, Andover junior.

When considering PDA you should always take your cue from the environment — not all places are so open to PDA, says Caroline Tiger, author

of *How to Behave: Dating and Sex*. "Obviously if you're at a fancy restaurant with white tablecloths and stuffy waiters, you're not going to throw your boyfriend down on the table," she says.

PDA on campus is a definite no-no. Crystal Pedram, Lawrence junior, hates seeing couples performing their own anatomy lesson in the balcony of Budig 120. She wants to pay attention to the lecture, not get distracted by their hanky panky.

Sitting on your boyfriend's lap while riding the bus is also not OK. Snuggling up with your significant other in the back of the bus might be fun for you, but it can annoy your fellow passengers. "It's not a couch," says Anne Robertson, Andover junior.

* GET A ROOM *

Excessive PDA can definitely make strangers feel awkward, but it could also affect your relationships with friends.

PDA can alienate your friends not just because they find it gross, but also because it upsets them. Lonely people who long for closeness may feel hurt when their friends flaunt their relationship through extreme PDA, says Grant Wood, a marriage therapist.

Watching your friends' intimate PDA creates the same awkward feeling of witnessing a couple's heated argument, says Paul Anderson, licensed counseling psychologist at Anderson and Anderson in Overland Park.

"It's always weird when you turn around and your friends are making out with each other on the stripper pole at The Hawk," says Megan Gillies, Kansas City, Mo., sophomore.

When your friend's tongue is in a girl's mouth it makes everyone else feel awkward, says Javon Shackelford, Salina freshman. But you can't ask them to stop because that adds another layer of uncomfortableness, he says.



* TERMS OF ENDEARMENT *

Physical PDA isn't the only way to gross out your friends. Verbal PDA can get just as obnoxious. But for couples, using romantic nicknames such as "babe" and "hun" shows fondness for your partner.

Allison Decker, Olathe sophomore, likes to call her boyfriend "love," and he calls her "sweets." Using lovey language makes their relationship feel more intimate, she says.

It's no coincidence that we call each other nicknames related to food. Wood says that says that using pet names like "sweetie," "honey" and "pumpkin" evoke images of goodness or sweetness. "They're just one of the little ways we subconsciously try to show each other how we feel," Wood says.

Not everyone finds pet names so sweet though. Calling your man "snookums" in front of his buddies might evoke the gag reflex. Matthew Crooks, Stillwell senior, doesn't like using pet names. "They have a name for a reason. Just use it," he says.

When it comes to expressing your feelings for someone in public, it's all about finding balance. Your fellow partiers might appreciate it if you limit the verbal PDA and keep the physical stuff PG-13. Or just get a room already. **Jp**



Giving your sugar a little honey: Public displays of affection can be a manifestation of a healthy, affectionate relationship. The trick is to find the right balance.

WHAT YOUR PDA SAYS ABOUT YOU

As you swivel around on a bar stool to make out with your boyfriend at Brothers, you could unknowingly be giving away clues about your relationship. See which of the three couples below fit you and your honey.

THE NEEDY COUPLE

Couples in constant lip lock who can't keep their paws off of each other might actually be having issues in their relationship, says Grant Wood, licensed clinical marriage therapist at the Resonate Relationship Clinic in Overland Park. Excessive PDA could reflect insecurities in a relationship that needs touch to keep it alive.

Body language cues can give away a needy couple. When couples don't walk in step with each other it could represent inequality in the relationship, says Patti Wood, body language expert in Atlanta. If one person pulls ahead of the other it shows that they see themselves as more important while one person getting dragged behind the other reveals an unhealthy dependency on the other person.

Another cue that shows inequality is when a guy rests his arm around a girl's back. He doesn't hold her hand; he just puts his arm around her. Guys sometimes do this to show ownership. "It's more about possession than affection," Patti Wood says.

If a girl grips her man tightly, practically impaling her fingers on his side, it shows that she wants control. "It could mean she's afraid he's not going to be faithful to her," Patti Wood says.

THE HEALTHY COUPLE

A healthy amount of PDA implies strength in a relationship. Couples who feel comfortable with each other understand what the other considers acceptable PDA.

Healthy couples give away their affection for each other by unconsciously doing the "V position," Patti Wood says. They face each other slightly with their inside feet facing their significant other to form a "V." Couples usually do this while chatting with other people.

Couples in healthy relationships also simply touch each other — but not excessively. Actions such as a hand on her back or around her waist while she rests her hand on his hip reveal a

couple's ease with each other.

You can also spot healthy relationships by looking for mirroring. Couples who match each other's movements, such as leaning towards each other while talking, are showing affection for each other.

THE HANDS-OFF COUPLE

"Normal" PDA also just depends on the couple. "Some people live their lives out loud and others just don't," says Paul Anderson, licensed counseling psychologist at Anderson and Anderson in Overland Park. When it gets to the point that the couple is completely polarized, when they're doing things such as sitting on completely opposite ends of the couch, that's when there might be a problem.

Koren Binns, Overland Park senior, says she and her boyfriend just aren't touchy-feely people. They won't even hold hands while shopping. When they're out, they're out to get something done. "There's always time for affection when you get home," she says.



PRE-PDA: WHEN TO PROCEED, WHEN TO BACK OFF

If you're on a first date or have just met someone, how do you know if they're into you? Check out their body language to decide whether to back off or move forward.

GOOD CLUES:

The most telling portion of the body is from the waist down, says Patti Wood, body language expert at Communication Dynamics in Atlanta. If your crush's feet point your way, even when standing across the room, he or she may be into you. "Where the feet point the heart follows," Wood says.

Also check to see if the person looks relaxed. If you're sitting at a table and your crush is resting his hands on the table toward you, he's symbolically reaching out to you.

BAD CLUES:

Any tension in the body is a bad sign. Crossed arms or hands could mean "back off." Also, if the person's head is pointed down and away it shows that he or she doesn't want to be talking to you, even if the person sounds friendly.

When first meeting someone, you should probably keep the PDA to a minimum — handholding at the most, says Caroline Tiger, author of *How to Behave: Dating and Sex*.

If your date gets grabby, give him or her obvious hints that the PDA is not ok. If he goes in for the French kiss, give him the cheek; if she puts her hand in a place you don't want, remove it. "It's a good tactic for weeding people out," Tiger says.