Honor In The “Friend Zone”

By Nate Steven’s

Let’s have some fun with a frightening phrase that instantly renders us speechless: The Friend Zone! Ugghh! Your heart just skipped a beat, didn’t it?

Realizing some of you think this topic is about as much fun as a root canal or a tax audit, we’ll keep this lighthearted so we’re super-sensitive on such a delicate subject.

Few words cause more heartbreak for a single person than, “Let’s just be friends.” Even though someone said it with all the well-intentioned sentiments of not hurting your feelings, it still hurt. Awesome friends are a valued treasure, but it still stinks to be banished to the Friend Zone.

For the sake of finding the humor in these trite phrases, let’s review each variation of this *Exile to the Friend Zone.*

* Charity dating/friendship – Finding out someone has been “charity dating” me feels like a mercy killing. Respect me more as a human—be honest up front. Don’t lead me on. How hard is it to say, “I’m not interested”?
* “I view you as my brother/sister” – I already have enough siblings, thank you. Matter of fact, I don’t like them very much and don’t talk with them very often. So if you want to be treated like my brother or sister, use this line on me.
* “We’re just friends” – this feels as if friendship with me requires a lower level of human appreciation. Hey, we don’t consider it “just the *Mona Lisa*,” do we? Since I am a valuable creation of God, please don’t patronize me by offering what sounds like a bayou swamp when I’m shooting for the stars.
* “Just one of the guys/girls” – This seems like I’m just one of the many “common people” who anxiously wait at the steps of your throne begging for some time with Your Royal Highness. C’mon, seriously? I’ve never wanted to kiss “one of the girls” (or guys, for that matter).
* “We’re just hanging out, not dating” – Watch what you let hang out, you might get sunburned or cited for indecent exposure! If we are enjoying what is naturally and normally considered dating activities, then please call it what it is. If it walks like a duck, smells like a duck, quacks like a duck … if you’re not comfortable with the term “dating,” then stop dating.
* “We’re just chillin’” – This sounds like we’re penguins on an ice flow! Get real—buy a dictionary or a thesaurus and learn some new words. How hard is it to arrange the following words into a sentence: “Your friendship means the world to me; however, I’m not interested in becoming romantically involved with you.” It’s like pulling a Band-Aid off—fast and immediate hurts far less than centimeter by centimeter.

So what leads up to an exile to the dreaded Friend Zone?

Something must have happened that led one person to believe a deeper relationship level was even possible. For example, a guy usually doesn’t approach a woman he barely knows, make himself completely vulnerable, and ask about the possibility of a romantic involvement. If this random offer happens to you, “Run, Forrest, run!”

Usually, there is an ongoing friendship where two people start spending more time together, getting to know each other on a deeper level than mere acquaintances. If you are having multiple dinners together, going to movies together, spending time together just doing a whole lot of nothing—just being around each other enjoying compatible activities—it’s natural to assume a mutual attraction and interest exists. At the very least, a mutual desire to spend time together. This is called “d-a-t-i-n-g.”

Using the “just friends” or “just hangin’ out/chillin’” phrases reveals more than a desire for mere friendship. It is a warning from someone who perceives her “guy friend” has a desire for a deeper relationship than what she is willing to offer. Not wanting to hurt his feelings, she falls back on the overused “Let’s just be friends.” And that, my friends, is an emotional cop-out.

If you’ve been the “lucky” recipient of one of these awkward responses, it’s very natural to get angry and treat the person who said it like the plague. However, in consideration of the friendship (if you wish to maintain it), you might want to rethink your response and react honorably.

There is inherent risk in daring to love someone else or developing feelings that extend beyond mere friendship. That’s what makes loving so incredible. When it is mutual, it is spellbinding! When it isn’t mutual, well, that’s when you recover from your high wire free-fall as awkwardly and respectfully as you can.

Here’s the deal: If you spend significant time with someone, enjoy his or her company, and look forward to more time together, ask yourself “Why?” and identify your true motives.

If you *are* romantically attracted to this person, then define the relationship and determine if your interest is mutually shared.

If you *are not* romantically attracted to this person, then the relationship is probably just a convenience for you. You enjoy the company but aren’t interested in a deeper commitment. If this is the case, do both of you a favor and stop spending time together. You are holding each other back from finding other people with whom you may share a romantic attraction.

Before any relationship is clearly and mutually defined, hold yourself in reserve. Don’t high dive in a shallow pool. But if you ultimately find yourself banished to the Friend Zone, hold your head high and act honorably. Safeguard what was shared with the other person while you were “hangin’ out.” Maintain your reputation by not bad-mouthing him or her. You tried and it didn’t work out. Be grateful you found out before you invested too much emotionally in the relationship.

Whether you are the banisher or the banishee, act honorably. Be honest. Respect each other. Release each other to a more fulfilled life. Move on. There are better things ahead.

http://www.singlematters.com/honor-friend-zone/