SESSION NOTES FOR
ADULTING 101: ARE WE GETTING DATING WRONG?
16 OCTOBER 2026, 6.00PM - 9.30PM
ASCENT AUDITORIUM, CATAPULT

On 16 October 2026, 101 youths attended "Adulting 101: Are We Getting Dating Wrong?" to explore the challenges young Singaporeans face in navigating dating, forming meaningful relationships, and managing expectations around long-term partnerships.

The session was organised by the National Youth Council (NYC) and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) and involved the following panellists and moderator:

- Ms Goh Hanyan, Senior Parliamentary Secretary (SPS), Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment
- Ms Grace Ann Chua, Co-founder, Steady and Friendzone and INSPIRIT Youth Leader
- Mr Brian Liu, Founder, Be The Good and INSPIRIT Community Leader (Moderator)

Participants engaged in breakout group discussions on mindsets and readiness for dating, navigating relationships, the role of Government in supporting youths, and gaps in existing support. This was followed by a panel dialogue on: (i) what dating and relationships mean to youths today, (ii) the pressures, barriers and realities shaping dating and relationships, and (iii) how youths can be better supported in moving from social connections to meaningful relationships.

Key Insights from Breakout Group Discussions

Theme: Mindsets and Readiness

- Participants said that competing commitments from work, school, family and friends made it difficult to find time for dating. They shared that being ready for a relationship meant being emotionally prepared to support a partner, while also having some financial stability to build a life together.

Theme: Navigating Dating and Relationships

- Participants said that communication and maturity were important for navigating relationships, including a willingness to address disagreements and accept a partner's non-critical flaws. They also shared that relationship skills could be developed through experience, without formal training.
- Participants said that they wanted long-term relationships, but were unsure how to navigate dating and commitment.

Theme: Role of Government

- Participants said that some parents discouraged their children to date during their schooling years due to concerns about their studies, and suggested that the Government could encourage parents to be more open-minded about dating.

- Participants suggested that the Government could create more affordable platforms and spaces for youths from diverse backgrounds to meet and socialise organically, including through subsidised activities.

Theme: Gaps and Ideas

- Participants said that youths could benefit from earlier guidance on managing emotions, communicating expectations and setting boundaries in relationships. They also shared that long working hours limited opportunities to meet new people outside their existing social circles, and suggested more industry-specific or interest-based social mixers to facilitate new connections.

Key Insights from Panel Dialogue

Theme 1: What Dating and Relationships Mean to Youths Today

Participants were polled on whether technology had made dating easier, harder or had made no difference.

- Participants had mixed views, with responses spread across all three options.
- SPS Goh said that technology and social media could make dating more challenging by (i) reinforcing gender stereotypes and relationship expectations, (ii) amplifying negative perceptions of dating, and (iii) diverting attention from face-to-face interactions. She shared that dating applications could also create the perception of unlimited choices, making it easier to continually seek other options rather than invest in getting to know someone.
- Ms Chua said that dating applications had made it easier for singles to meet and filter potential partners based on preferences and compatibility. She shared that online profiles could shape assumptions that might differ from in-person interactions, which remained important in getting to know someone.

SESSION NOTES FOR
ADULTING 101: ARE WE GETTING DATING WRONG?
16 OCTOBER 2026, 6.00PM - 9.30PM
ASCENT AUDITORIUM, CATAPULT

The moderator asked how youths could navigate the changing dating landscape and what could support them in pursuing their relationship and marriage aspirations.

- SPS Goh said that individuals should be comfortable and confident with themselves before entering a relationship. She shared that the SG Youth Plan focused on building youths' confidence in areas such as employment and life skills, while creating more youth spaces and interest-based opportunities for them to meet and form connections through Discover[1].
- Ms Chua said that dating required resilience, as finding a long-term partner could involve rejections, break-ups and setbacks. She shared that youths should remain open to different ways of meeting potential partners.

Theme 2: Understanding the Pressures, Barriers and Realities That Shape Dating and Relationships

The moderator asked how youths could actively seek relationships while allowing connections to develop naturally.

- Ms Chua said that youths could broaden their social circles by attending gatherings, reconnecting with friends and meeting people through mutual connections. She shared that focusing too much on finding a partner could create pressure, and encouraged youths to get to know others organically.

A participant asked how they could address barriers such as parents who discouraged their children from dating during their schooling years.

- SPS Goh said that parents might discourage dating when their children were younger but expect them to settle down as they grew older. She shared that the Government was exploring more ways to create more opportunities for parent-child conversations, including dialogue sessions where parents and youths could exchange perspectives on dating, mental well-being and career aspirations.
- Ms Chua said that parents might discourage dating due to concerns about its impact on studies and the risk of unhealthy relationships. She said that youths could address these concerns by showing how a healthy relationship could positively influence other aspects of their lives, such as studies and friendships. She shared that youths could have open conversations with their parents about their relationships, including when to introduce a

[1] Discover is a one-stop digital platform by NYC that supports youths aged 15 to 35 through key life transitions. Through accessible content, interactive programmes, and resources delivered in collaboration with NYC's trusted partners, Discover helps youths broaden their horizons, explore new worlds, and build the knowledge, skills, and confidence to prepare themselves for the future.

partner.

A participant asked (via Slido) how expectations around dating and marriage could evolve beyond the view that dating should lead to marriage.

- SPS Goh said that dating with the intention of marriage could place pressure on both individuals in a relationship. She shared that while relationships should be taken seriously, they should also be given time to develop without undue pressure.
- Ms Chua said that long-term committed relationships could provide a sense of security and companionship. She said that the desire for a lifelong relationship was natural, as people valued close connections where they could feel loved and supported.

Theme 3: Exploring How Youths Can Be Better Supported in Moving from Social Connections Towards Meaningful Relationships

Participants were presented with a scenario where they had been talking to someone for several weeks but had not discussed whether they were dating exclusively. They were polled on whether they would wait for the other person to raise the topic, ask directly, or seek advice from friends.

- Most participants indicated that they would raise the topic directly, while fewer preferred to wait for the other person or seek advice from friends.
- SPS Goh said that individuals had different approaches to discussing exclusivity, but open communication was important in relationships, particularly when navigating more difficult conversations.

A participant asked (via Slido) how youths, including LGBTQ+ youths, could be better supported in navigating dating and relationships.

- SPS Goh said that the Government supported youths by creating more affordable activities and spaces for them to meet and develop connections. She also said that mentors on Discover could offer perspectives on relationships and other aspects of adulting beyond career advice.
- SPS Goh said that LGBTQ+ youths could face additional challenges in Singapore's generally conservative society. She shared that more conversations were needed to better understand their experiences, and that greater understanding and acceptance could help foster a kinder and more inclusive society.
- Ms Chua said that trusted friends could provide emotional support and advice throughout the dating journey, including when navigating new relationships, rejection and

break-ups. She shared that youths should continue investing in their friendships while dating.

A participant asked (via Slido) about privacy considerations relating to GovTech's pilot dating application, FirstDate.

- SPS Goh said that FirstDate was being piloted among public service officers aged 21 to 45 and used Singpass verification to confirm users' identities and address concerns about the authenticity of dating profiles.

Closing Remarks

The moderator asked the panellists to share one piece of advice for youths on dating and forming meaningful relationships.

- SPS Goh said that youths should remain open-minded when considering potential partners while being clear about their values and non-negotiables. She added that this would allow relationships to develop in ways they might not have anticipated.
- Ms Chua said that choosing a life partner was an important decision and encouraged youths to choose carefully and not give up on finding a suitable partner.

Notes recorded by the NYC Youth Leadership and Engagement team.