

Therapist Comments on Summer Fling Risks as New Data Emerges

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Renee Segal, a licensed marriage and family therapist and owner of Evolve Therapy in Plymouth, Minnesota, is offering clinical commentary on the emotional risks of summer flings as the summer dating season begins and new survey data points to a widening gap between what men and women want from seasonal romance.

Recent figures give that commentary a backdrop. In a 2025 survey of 8,000 Gen Z and millennial Americans conducted by the dating app Hily, 75 percent of young men said they hoped for a summer fling, compared with 37 percent of young women. The same survey found that 56 percent of young women reported feeling heartbroken after a summer relationship ended. A separate 2026 analysis by HelloMillions reported that more than 40 percent of Americans say they have had a summer fling at some point. The figures center on younger adults and dating-app users, though the seasonal pattern they describe is one clinicians say predates the apps themselves.

Segal, who practices Emotionally Focused Therapy, says the numbers reflect a pattern she sees in clinical work, namely that short-term romances often carry more emotional weight than the people in them expect. Emotionally Focused Therapy is built on the premise that human emotions are tied to underlying needs for connection and security, and from that perspective, the pull of a summer fling is rarely only about attraction.

"Sometimes we idealize brief relationships because they end before everyday disappointments have a chance to emerge. The bond is built on possibility rather than lived reality," said Renee Segal, MA, LMFT, owner of Evolve Therapy.

According to Segal, the expectation gap captured in the survey data is part of what makes summer flings emotionally risky. When two people enter the same relationship with different hopes, one expecting something casual and the other quietly hoping it lasts, the ending can feel disproportionate to the relationship's length. She notes that the compressed timeline of a summer romance, often set against travel

and time away from routine, can intensify a bond quickly and leave one person far more invested than the other.

At the same time, Segal cautions against treating every summer fling as a mistake. She points to the share of seasonal relationships that develop into something lasting ? in the Hily survey, 42 percent of young women and 48 percent of young men said their summer dating turned into a long-term relationship ? and argues that even the flings that end can carry useful information about a person's emotional life.

"Sometimes a summer fling isn't just about attraction. It's about feeling seen, desired, and alive in a way we've been missing, and it may be a wake-up call to what has been missing in a person's life," Segal said.

Segal suggests that anyone caught up in a summer romance pause to consider what they are seeking from it, how they expect to feel when it ends, and whether the longing it stirs is one they have carried for some time. She adds that the same emotional patterns, a wish to feel valued, a fear of disappointment, and a longing for closeness, tend to surface in longer relationships as well, which is why she frames the end of a fling as an opportunity for self-understanding rather than a verdict on a person's choices. That reframing, she says, can turn a painful ending into a prompt for the kind of change a person may have been postponing.

Evolve Therapy, also known as Evolve Counseling, is a Minnesota counseling practice that provides Emotionally Focused Therapy for individuals, couples, and families. Based in Plymouth, the practice offers in-person and online sessions across services that include couples counseling, individual counseling, premarital counseling, and support related to affairs and betrayal. For more information, visit the Evolve Therapy website.

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Evolve Therapy

Evolve Therapy is a couples counseling practice in Plymouth, MN, serving the Twin Cities in person and online. Specializing in Emotionally Focused Therapy, Evolve offers couples counseling, affair recovery, premarital counseling and individual therapy.

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