

Future Romantic Relationships and Marriage

For Moms

When your daughter starts going through puberty, she will have stronger emotions and she will probably start thinking about romantic relationships differently. Her body and her hormones are changing and developing quickly during this phase. She will experience sexual thoughts and desires for the first time, but she will also start to think more maturely about future romantic relationships and marriage. She is too young to marry, but she probably needs guidance sorting through these thoughts and feelings.

In your tradition, it might be common for girls to go through FGC at this age as a preparation for marriage or to preserve virginity until marriage. But this is not the

FGC is sometimes traditionally practiced to maintain chastity and to promote marriageability. However, this often suppresses female sexual feelings and can cause sex to be painful. Additionally, chastity can be maintained without undergoing FGC, especially if you help your daughter during her teenage years.

only way to preserve virginity or to have a healthy romantic relationship. If this is something you or your culture values, it is important to talk to your daughter about this.

Help your daughter understand that there is so much more to a healthy romantic relationship than sex. Things like love, commitment, trustworthiness, grace, and patience make up a marriage, and sex is a further expression of the love already shared!

Many parents avoid talking to their children about romance or about sex because they are afraid it may encourage their daughters to have inappropriate thoughts and feelings more than they already do or that it will force her to think about these things sooner than she should. What is most important is that you help guide her through these confusing thoughts. This will help develop a healthy pattern of having conversations on this topic and, as she continues to mature, you can continue to talk about romance and mature relationships together in an open and honest way.



In some cultures, girls feeling sexual desires is looked down upon, especially compared to boys. This can make girls feel abnormal or weird for feeling what they feel. This can be a great time to remind your daughter that though a sex drive is different for males and females, it is normal for girls to have a sex drive. Unfortunately, FGC can negatively affect a girls' sex drive and cause complications in romantic relationships. Women have a right to feel enjoyment in sex, which can be a beautiful part of a mature, healthy relationship.

Moms, think about it...

- * Think about ways you can show your daughter how to have healthy, romantic relationships and a strong marriage. You may also consider asking a relative or friend who has a healthy marriage to be a mentor to your daughter.
- * Help your daughter think about the kinds of things she would want in a future husband. Remind her that while it may be exciting to think about, there are other important things to focus on right now, such as school. Helping her find a balance is important.
- * Avoid judging your daughter's feelings or seeming critical even if she talks about superficial traits she wants in a future romantic relationship. Instead, offer supportive comments and ask questions that make her think more critically and maturely – she will get there soon enough!



For Daughters

Have you ever day dreamed about getting married or having a romantic relationship as an adult? Sometimes thinking about your future as an adult can be exciting and fun! You are maturing physically, emotionally, and spiritually and building a foundation for the kind of person you want to be. You might be thinking about how you want to act as a friend, daughter, student, or sister. You also might be thinking about your role someday as a girlfriend, a wife, or a mother.

Your family or your cultural community may hold certain values about sex, marriage, and romantic relationships. In your culture it may be common at this age to go through FGC in preparation for marriage. Sometimes this is done because some families and cultures believe FGC will help girls stay away from sex before they are married. The truth is, sex in a romantic relationship should only happen when there's mutual consent. Women can make the choice to wait to have sex until they are married without going through the harmful practice of FGC. Additionally, FGC can negatively affect a woman's ability to feel sexual pleasure, which can complicate future relationships.

It is important for you understand your cultural views on sex, while also developing your own. Though waiting to have sex until you are married may seem like a meaningless rule, your parents probably have a good reason for it and it might be helpful to ask them why. Waiting to have sex until you are older and more mature is a good decision to avoid the ways sex can complicate relationships.

Someday, romantic relationships will be a big part of your life. While you anticipate this, you can start thinking about what you want in a future romantic relationship or marriage and the character traits you may want in a future partner. You can also start talking about these things with your mom, a trusted adult, or a mentor.



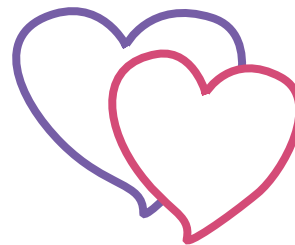


Daughters, think about it...

- * What makes a good wife or husband?
- * What do you want in a marriage? Do you want children?
- * Are there marriages you admire? What do you admire about them?
- * What do you think love is? How are sex and love related?



Heart to Heart



Ask your Daughter

- ◆ You are getting to the age where you might start feeling a physical attraction to your peers. Do you feel that with anyone right now?
- ◆ Do you want to get married and have children?

Ask your Mom

- ◆ Are marriage relationships different in our culture compared to marriage in the U.S.? What is different?
- ◆ What character traits do you think are important in a marriage partner?
- ◆ Does our culture believe that FGC is required for marriage?
- ◆ At what age are you comfortable with me dating?