



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Collective Voices for Improving the Care and Reducing the Risk of FGC

# Raising a Girl!



With a Special Focus on Conversations about Female Genital Cutting

A Handbook for Newcomer Mothers and Daughters



Raising a  
Girl

This book belongs to

---

# A Letter for Mom

## Dear Mom,

Your daughter is entering a new phase in her life, one that brings excitement and confusion. She is still a child, yet she is quickly becoming an adult. At this time, her world is rapidly changing. Her friendships are becoming more complex, her responsibilities at home and school are increasing, her body is changing (if it isn't already, it will soon!). She is probably experiencing mood swings and wanting more independence at a time when you may not be ready to let her become more independent. On top of all this she and your entire family are navigating a new culture, a new language, and life in the U.S.!

This time can be challenging for mothers and daughters to go through together. But remember, you went through these same things and because of this, you can be a resource to your daughter. You probably remember feeling the social pressures to fit in, the awkwardness of your changing body, and the excitement of gaining new independence. This may also have been a time when you went through Female Genital Cutting (FGC). In the U.S., FGC is very uncommon and considered illegal because it is harmful to women and girls. However, the tradition of marking a girl's passage into womanhood is unique and something that should continue to be celebrated and honored in a safe and healthy way, without the practice of FGC.

If you come from a culture that traditionally practices FGC, we hope this book can be a helpful guide for talking about the practice, considering alternatives to FGC, and thinking about other relevant topics impacting girls at this age. Talking about these things might feel awkward, but it's important that your daughter hears from you, and that these conversations take place sooner, rather than later. This book can help! Topics are focused on things girls may experience in their pre-teen years such as puberty and a changing body, relationships with friends, romantic relationships, as well as topics related to FGC.

Remember, you might not always know the answers to your daughter's questions, but you have the ability to listen and the wisdom to help her navigate this new phase in her life and this new culture. Most importantly, we hope each page creates an opportunity for you to get to know each other better, helps build a habit for healthy communication, and strengthens your relationship as your daughter continues to mature.

—BRYCS

# A Letter for Daughter

## Dear Daughter,

You are entering a new phase in your life, one that is filled with excitement and challenge. You are leaving childhood and becoming a teenager. As you may already know from experience, puberty will lead you through emotional and physical changes. Your body is changing quickly. Your friendships are becoming more meaningful. You also have new responsibilities at home and school and are gaining and wanting more independence! On top of all this, you and your family are navigating life in the U.S. and how to live in a new culture.

It might feel like your mom doesn't understand or know what you are going through, but remember, she was a teenager once herself. She remembers feeling awkward in her own changing body, the peer pressure of friends, and the desire for more independence. She can be a helpful resource!

Talking about certain topics with your mom like wearing bras, feeling attraction to someone, cultural traditions such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC), having your menstrual cycle, and feeling pressure from your friends can feel embarrassing. But it's important that your mom hears from you and that you hear from her. Talk about these things now, rather than later.

This book is designed to help you and your mother talk about these topics. Most pages in this guide have a section for moms and a section for girls. It also includes different activities you and your mom can do together and spaces for you to write and reflect on questions.

We hope this handbook allows you to open up to your mom. And remember, your mom might not always know the answers to your questions, but you can learn from her wisdom and navigate this new phase of your life and this new culture together. Most importantly, we hope each page creates an opportunity for you to get to know each other better, creates a habit for healthy communication, and strengthens your relationship.

—BRYCS

# Legend

This book is broken into sections for moms, daughters, and activities that can be completed together.

These symbols will let you know which pages are for you!

Mom 

Daughter 

Mom & Daughter 

# Table Of Contents

Raising a Girl.....	i
What is FGC?.....	3
Talking about FGC Together .....	4
A Girl's Changing Body.....	9
Health Implications of FGC .....	18
What to Expect when Visiting the Doctor.....	20
Sex Education in Schools .....	27
Building Healthy Relationships with Peers.....	34
Future Romantic Relationships and Marriage .....	40
Alternative Rites of Passage.....	45
Ways to Engage in Advocacy Against FGC.....	56
Acknowledgments.....	63
Appendix.....	Inside Backcover



## Disclaimer of Illegality of FGC

This book addresses the topic of puberty, healthy development for preteens, and Female Genital Cutting (FGC), also called female circumcision. FGC is illegal in the United States. It is illegal to perform or assist in performing FGC on anyone under age 18. The U.S., and many countries around the world, considers FGC a violation of human rights, gender-based violence, and a form of child abuse. Traveling outside of the U.S. or attempting to travel outside the U.S. for the purposes of having a daughter undergo FGC is also against the law.

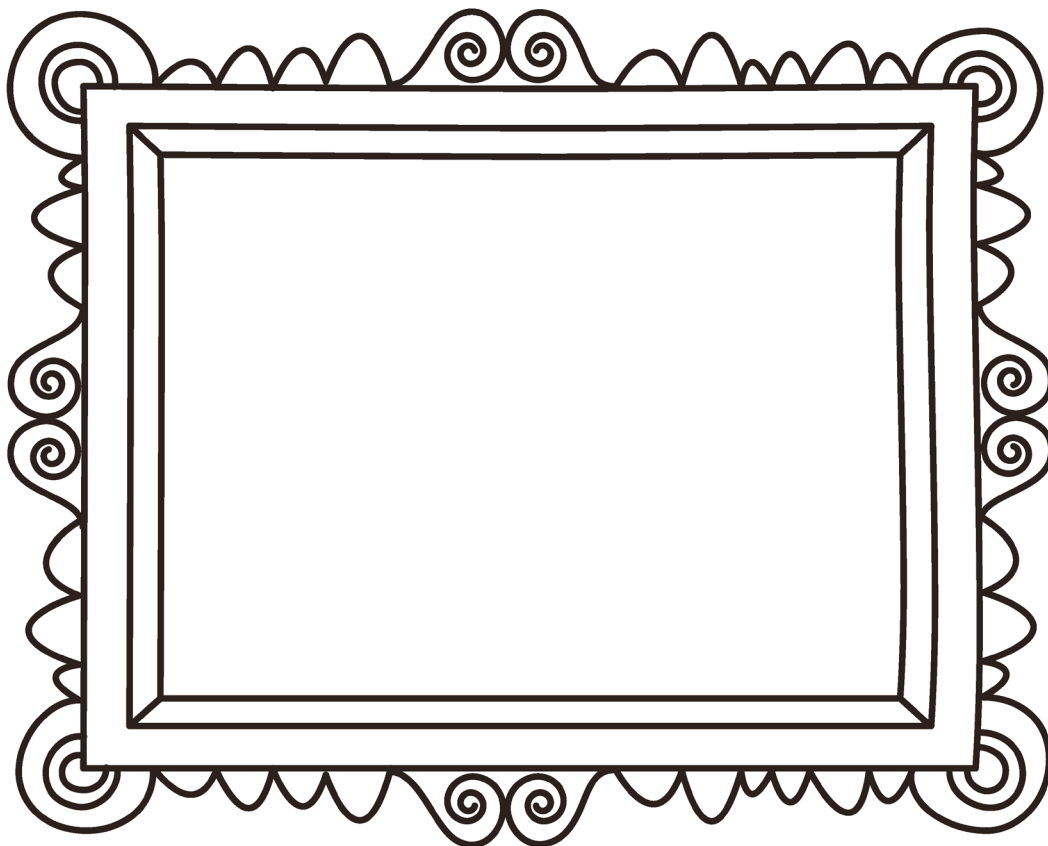
If you have undergone FGC before you arrived in the U.S. you are **not at fault** and have not violated any U.S. laws. Federal law makes the discrimination against anyone who has undergone FGC illegal. Many girls have FGC forced on them with no choice of their own.



# Moms and Daughters

This book is for the two of you to write and draw in. Before you get started, let's remember that this is a place for both of you to express your thoughts and be honest. There are many activities and questions to help start conversations. We encourage you to take your time completing this book so that you can get to know each other!

In the picture frame below, draw or place a picture of the two of you!



# About You and Me

## Moms and Daughters

Each of you, circle five words that describe you. Then, using a different color, circle five words that describe the other.



Why did you choose these words to describe each other?

---

---

---

What is your favorite thing about each other?

---

---

---

