

DEALING WITH DATING

How do we live as Holy Families when it comes to dating?

How do we start a conversation with our children about dating? Perhaps the topic has come up as a result of your teenager’s increased talking and texting with someone of the opposite sex. Ideally, parents would have had frequent and ongoing dialogues about topics such as dating, curfews, and sexuality long before an interest arises in a teen’s life, but that’s not always what happens in reality. So whether you are ahead of the game or just catching up, it’s better to start the conversation late than to never have it.

As parents, it is vital that we are on the same page when it comes to the rules and boundaries of our children dating. Most teenagers don’t even know what dating should look like; they have no personal experience with it. All they know is what they see on television, on social media, and in movies — and those are usually not the best examples of what we want for our young people. Adolescents need, and want, our attention and guidance in this arena of life, even if they insist otherwise. Some questions we might ask each other as we prepare to have a discussion might be: At what age might it be appropriate to allow our teen to date? Are we more comfortable with a group date in which a bunch of kids go somewhere together rather than a one-on-one outing? What are the rules for having guests in our house? Does a parent need to be home? What time do we expect our child to come home, and what happens if he or she doesn’t follow the boundaries of the curfew?

It is very important to be clear about your expectations of your teenager as you give them increased freedom. By discussing these topics before they happen, they will have an idea of what you have in mind for them. We want to promote smart, healthy, respectful relationships, and as the author of Proverbs wrote, “Whoever walks with the wise become wiser, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20 ESV).

Most teenagers don’t even know what dating should look like.

When it comes to dating, one thing that is incredibly important is your teenager’s self-image. If your child has a deep grounding in their faith, then hopefully they also have a healthy respect for themselves and others. Pay attention to this, because if a teenager fails to value herself, she might choose

to date someone who also will not value her. If a teen doesn’t have a clear identity — knowing who they are and whose they are — he might become involved with someone whose influence has a negative effect on him. It is important to help young people discern their own values so they can assess the values of those they want to be friends with.



Topical conversation starters to help parents stay on the same page with each other and their families.

Things to Pray and Talk About:

- a) *How would you define a good relationship? How do people treat one another in a healthy relationship?*
- b) *What are the qualities you look for in a friend or someone you might want to date?*
- c) *What are your family values when it comes to appropriate signs of affection in relationships for teens?*
- d) *How does your faith inform your decisions on whom to date and what to do (or not do) on dates?*

Asking for God’s Blessing:

God of love, you have created us male and female so that we might have companionship and support. Guide us as a family in all of our relationships, that they would be respectful, healthy, balanced, and peaceful. Let us be ever mindful of your love for us and the value you place upon each of us in body, mind, and spirit. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.