

But what about religious/cultural tradition?

Traditions and values for sexual health decision-making and relationships can be both empowering and/or confusing at the same time.

Consider these points as you think about how your sexual identity and faith/cultural identity overlap:

- ✓ American Muslims are racially and ethnically diverse, and diverse with respect to religious practice.
- ✓ Having questions about your body and sex is natural and nothing to be ashamed of. There is a long history in Islam of asking questions openly and without shame.
- ✓ Decisions about sexual health such as getting pelvic exams, abstinence, birth control, and addressing sexual violence can change over your lifetime.
- ✓ Your relationship with your body, your sexual behaviors, who you love, and what you share with others is up to you.
- ✓ Generally, single actions, sexual orientation, or identities don't determine if one is Muslim or not. It is more about your relationship with God/your faith than anything else.
- ✓ Islam is a faith tradition that values mercy, compassion, and love. Consider how these values may apply to your relationship with yourself, your family, and your partners.

How to help a friend

Often in Muslim communities, talking about relationships, marital conflicts, and sex can be hard because of shame and stigma. Tell your friend you care about them and that you're worried.

- ✓ Respond with compassion and not with judgment.
- ✓ Remember not to make assumptions about someone's sexual orientation, gender identity, or their experiences.
- ✓ If they are feeling so sad that they plan to hurt themselves and/or wish they could die—they can get help. Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255.

National hotlines provide anonymous support 24/7 via phone or online chat:

LoveisRespect.org
1-866-331-9474 | text loveis to 22522

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-4673 | www.rainn.org

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-8255

The Trevor Project
Queer Suicide Helpline | 866-488-7386

Other useful info found at:

Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity
muslimalliance.org

HEART Women and Girls
heartwomenandgirls.org/
ask-a-question



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Beyond Halal and Haram:
Muslims, sex, and relationships

Healthy and respectful relationships

Does the person you are seeing/thinking about seeing/married to respect:

- ✓ What you feel comfortable doing sexually (if anything at all)?
- ✓ Your views on religion or religious/cultural beliefs?
- ✓ Your space to hang out with friends and family?
- ✓ Your gender identity and sexual orientation?
- ✓ Your choices of what to wear?

If you answered YES—it sounds like they care about you.

Does the person(s) you are seeing/married to?

- ✗ Shame you or make you feel stupid?
- ✗ Pressure you to do something you're not ready to do?
- ✗ Control where you go, or make you feel afraid?
- ✗ Grab your arm, yell at you, or push you?
- ✗ Refuse to use your pronouns or preferred name?
- ✗ Have unreasonable requests for how their family should be treated?

Nobody deserves to be treated this way. If these things ever happen in your relationship, talk to someone about it. For more info, go to www.loveisrespect.org.

What about social media?

Social media apps like Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook are fun ways to talk with friends. Sometimes these can also be used in inappropriate ways, like if someone is saying bad things about you or posting photos of you that you don't want to share.

For info and tips on what to say if you're experiencing this, visit: www.thatsnotcool.com.

What about sex and consent?

We get a lot of messages about sex—from our parents, our friends, our significant others, religion, the media, etc. It can be confusing to decide if, when, and how to engage in sexual activity. Remember that this is your decision—**you get to decide what is right for you.**

Can you talk to the person(s) you are seeing/married to about:

- ✓ What you want to do sexually (if anything at all)? And what you don't want to do?
- ✓ What does and doesn't feel good?
- ✓ Getting tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and preventing STIs by using condoms?
- ✓ Contraception like condoms, birth control pills, IUDs, etc.?

You are not alone

Dating, relationships, and sex can be hard. There are people who can listen and help. Is there a trusted adult in your life that you can talk to?

This can look different for everyone. Consider:

- ✓ An aunt, uncle, older sibling, or cousin
- ✓ A teacher, mentor, counselor at your school or on your campus
- ✓ A Muslim chaplain on your campus/youth coordinator at a mosque

Sometimes it can help to talk to someone anonymously who is not part of your community. There are confidential hotlines on the back of this card that can help.