



Relationships and Dating

As we grow older, personal relationships may take on new meaning and importance as individuals move away from careers to part-time work and retirement. Unfortunately, stressful situations could develop as families grow, separate and evolve because of death or changes in relationships and circumstances. Dating, in particular, can be a source of confusion and potential friction for families. How do you tell your family you are seeing someone? How do you ask a parent about the nature of his or her relationship? This chapter can help you define and develop relationships that are important to you and deal with potential pitfalls along the way.

State of Affairs: Research



Most parents and adult children **draw a line** when it comes to romantic relationship conversations.

Only 28%

of adult children surveyed would be comfortable talking with a parent about sex if the parent became single. Approximately 39% would be comfortable talking about dating.



One-third (33%) of parents surveyed would be comfortable talking with their adult children about potential marriage/co-habitation.



Given three topics – sex life, need to move and financial situation – the majority of adult children (65%) and parents (56%) surveyed said sex life would be the most difficult to discuss.

Source:

Home Instead, Inc., franchisor of the Home Instead Senior Care® network, completed 600 telephone interviews with seniors age 65 and older and 600 interviews with adult children of parents age 65 and older in the U.S.

For the full executive summaries, go to **4070Talk.com**.

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ACT



ACT (*Assess, Consider, Talk*) to help determine how your future will look. a
Completing the following exercises could help prepare you for the kind of future you desire.

Assess

How important will relationships be to you as you grow older? What kind of support network do you envision in your senior years?

Describe your innermost circle of family and friends. Who would you want around you to provide social support as you age? Name these people and the role you expect them to play in your life.

Identify who you would go to for help with tasks that you could no longer accomplish? What role would you expect them to play in your life?

Are romantic relationships important to you as you grow older? Why or why not?

If you were/are single as an older adult, would you consider dating? Are you dating now? Why or why not?

Consider

Consider what your life would be like if you were suddenly single. Where would you turn and to whom?

Imagine that you are suddenly single. (Or maybe you already are in that situation.) How important is companionship? Who do you turn to for social support? If you are in need of support, think about people and organizations that might be able to help. (See the **Learn More** section at the end of this chapter.)

What are your interests? Consider how you would build new relationships. Write down people that you could reach out to or organizations that might help cultivate new relationships.

Talk

Communication is the key to bridging any personal gap with others. Reaching out to others can help you articulate your needs.

After assessing and considering, write down how you will stay socially connected and maintain strong relationships. Then talk with a family member or friend about how you'll make that happen.

Refer to the following conversation tips and suggestions for help communicating your wishes.

Conversation Tips

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"So, Dad, it seems you've been seeing quite a bit of Edith. What do you like about her?"

"You know, son, since I'm friends now with Fran, I'd like to include her in our holiday gathering. How do we make this comfortable for everyone?"

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"Mom, I know you used to love bridge before your eyesight got bad. Even though you can't play anymore, why don't you join the ladies for lunch?"

"I've been so lonely since Dad died. John down the street has invited me to go away with him for the weekend to a bed and breakfast. I'd like to go. You know I'll always love your dad, but we all need companionship."

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Assess

If you live alone:

It's especially important to build a social as well as a task-based network. Have a plan in place that identifies individuals who could help you. Or tap into public or private services you could call on for assistance.

Talk

To make sure religious preferences are carried out:

Confer with a trusted spiritual advisor on how you could deal with issues of religious differences such as combining households of different faiths.

Consider

If you are part of a blended family:

You may need the help of a counselor or financial planner to work through sensitive relationship issues surrounding blended families. These issues could surround money or inheritance.

Learn More

The following tools and resources can help families developing an action plan:

Relationship Help
helpguide.org

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension,
"Building Positive Relationships"
fcs.tamu.edu

Administration on Aging, Communicating
with Older Adults
aoa.gov

AARP, *Never Too Old to Find New Friends*
aarp.org