

Talking about Healthy Relationships with Peers

Talking about your romantic relationship or marriage with friends or others involves balancing vulnerability with respect for your partner's privacy.

These conversations can help create communities where honesty and support are normal. Such conversations can promote healthy relationships.

- **Start with your own story.** You do not have to be a relationship expert. Discuss an experience you and your partner worked through. Discuss your challenges.
- **Ask genuine, but gentle questions.**
 - What is something you're enjoying about your marriage?
 - Are you able to connect lately? It's been a busy season.
 - What is something that is a little hard about your marriage right now?
- **Compliment the good things.** Every couple could use encouragement or a reminder of what they are doing well. "I love the way you both are with the kids"
- **Share what has helped you.** Discuss what has helped in your marriage. Share resources on healthy relationships.
- **Do not rush to offer advice.** While it's helpful to share your story, if a friend confides to you about an issue in their relationship, they are first and foremost looking for comfort.
- **Evaluate risk and appropriateness.** Listen for cues that suggest that your friend, their spouse or their marriage is at immediate risk. Look for signs of abuse, affairs, addictions, divorce, or serious mental health challenges. If you notice any of these signs, do not try to support your friend alone, your friend needs professional help.
- **Offer emotional support and helpful perspective.** Instead of giving advice, you can help your friend's re-examine the situation. Help a friend understand their role in the problem.





You do not necessarily need to discuss the details of your marriage or that of the other person to have a productive conversation. You may not feel close enough to another man to have that conversation. You can also discuss the topic of marriage and healthy relationships in general:

- Talk about what it means to have a healthy relationship
- Discuss how a movie or soap opera portrays relationships
- Talk about the cultural norms surrounding relationships in South Asian cultures
- Talk about a news story on domestic violence
- Talk about how the relationship with your partner changes over time
- Talk about what it means to be a good spouse