

Date night

FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Topic: Growing up in your family

When your spouse understands your childhood, it can help them better know you and why you think and act in ways that you do. Sharing can create intimacy and foster understanding and empathy.



Prepare for the date:

Before the date, think about your experiences growing up in your family. If you think your spouse would enjoy the story, or learn something about you by hearing it, then go for it. But if they'd just be upset or uncomfortable, consider if you should share it.

- Find the old albums and mementoes. Print pictures from your phone.

Setting for the date:

Go to a favorite family-friendly destination – a playground, boardwalk, park. Bring your photo albums and other mementos.

The date:

- Listen to each other's stories. With genuine, open curiosity; no judgment. Take cues from your spouse if they want you to ask deeper questions.
- Show your support. Don't bash your spouse's family for what they did.
- Resist your urge to compare your spouse's family to your own.

How to be supportive:

- Do not insist on them going to therapy to work things out (even if you think it) – at least not during this date.
- Validate, show empathy. "Wo, that sounds tough." "How do you feel about this?" "None of this is your fault." "I will support you in any way that I can." "I will be here for you no matter what."
- Allow them to be vulnerable. "Thank you for sharing this with me."
- After the conversations, you might educate yourself more about how to be supportive to a spouse who had that in their childhood.

What not to say:

"It couldn't have been that bad."
 "We never have to have anything to do with them if you don't want."
 "If you continue dwelling on it, you'll never move on."
 "You're a survivor, so stop being a victim."
 "Why didn't you tell me this sooner?"

What you might talk about:

What was your relationship with your parents and family members as you were growing up?

What do you want to bring from your family into ours? What do you not want to bring?

Who in your family are you most similar to? In what ways?

What are some important lessons you learned from your parents? How did you learn those?

What was it like to be in your family growing up? What three words do you think best describe your family?

When are times you've felt close as a family?

What's something you really enjoyed doing together as a family that you would like to bring into our family? What did you enjoy about it?

Share key stories of your family legacy. When did your family come to your hometown? What hardships did they endure?

Are there topics about your family that you wish your spouse would not bring up? Discuss the parameters of that (ex: if they feel that it is important to bring it up, how might they do that).

Growing up in your family

What you might talk about:

What was your relationship with your mother as you were growing up? What is your relationship now?
What brought that change?

What was your relationship with your father as you were growing up? What is your relationship now?
What brought that change?

- With your siblings, grandparents, aunts/uncles.

What do you want to bring from your family into ours? What legacy do you want our family to take from your family? What are some family traditions that you want to include in our family? What is something that happened in your family that you hope not to bring into our family?

Who in your family are you most similar to? In what ways?

What aspects of your mother do you see in yourself? Are you happy about that? What do you want to do differently?

What aspects of your father do you see in yourself? Are you happy about that? What do you want to do differently?

What are the most important things your parents have taught you? What have you learned from each of your parents: Life lessons. Marriage. Parenting. Money. Social contribution.

What was it like to be in your family growing up? What three words do you think best describe your family?

When are times you've felt close as a family? Where were you? What were you doing? What made that time memorable?

Share key stories of your family legacy. When did your family come to your hometown? What hardships did they endure? Who are the ancestors?

What sacrifices have others made for you or your family? How have those sacrifices or investments affected your life?

What's something you really enjoyed doing together as a family that you would like to bring into our family? What did you enjoy about it?

What are the ways each member of your family influenced/s others in your family? In what ways do others in your family look to you for insight and influence?

Are there topics about your family that you wish your spouse would not bring up? Discuss the parameters of that (ex: if they feel that it is important to bring it up, how might they do that). What role do you want your spouse to play when you start to talk negatively about your family? (do you want support, want them to help you put things in perspective, etc.)

Describe boundaries you have set with your family members and how/if you want your spouse to do the same.