



Sample Roadmap to a Healthy Romantic and/or Sexual Relationship

This is a sample of an outline I asked a parent to create about how they hoped their adult child's dating/sexual experiences would unfold.

It is only ONE example. And just because the parent was hoping for this pathway, doesn't mean that their adult child agreed with everything. Their child was a legal adult and could decide for themselves how they wanted their relationships and sexuality to be. However, this document was a way for the parents to express that they do want their adult child to be able to have relationships and sexual experiences, they just wanted them to be safer and healthier.

I had the parent write out their hopes in this outline form. Then I reviewed it with their adult child to see if they had any disagreements or changes they wanted to make. Then I created the final version that they all agreed felt like an ideal and that the parents would celebrate and be supportive of, but I had them also acknowledge that it may or may not unfold exactly like this

My hopes for you to meet someone and for it to grow into a romantic and/or sexual relationship:

1. You meet someone that catches your attention. (online or in person)
 - a. You realize you want to get to know this person more and might be interested in dating this person. It's someone who:
 - i. you find attractive/cute
 - ii. you are curious about
 - iii. who treated you kindly
 - iv. who made you laugh
 - v. who made you feel good about yourself
 - vi. makes you have the "butterflies"

2. You get to know this person a little better by talking to them informally and observing how they interact – with you and/or with others. (in a group or individually; phone, online or in person)
 - a. You ask them questions

- i. Interests (favorite shows, activities, etc.)
 - ii. Job
 - iii. Hobbies
 - iv. Do you know anyone in common?
 - v. Where do they live and how did you end up living there? (in general, not their address)
- b. They should be interested in you, too. Asking you questions.
- c. Ideally 3+ hours of conversation over the period of a week or two.
- d. You discover this person seems to share some of your interests and your values (kind, responsible, works to make a good life for themselves, etc.)
- e. You continue to find them attractive, interesting.

3. After several hours of getting to know someone, you find out if this person is available for dating (ideally discretely, by asking a friend, checking FB, etc.. or by asking directly)

- a. So tell me about your relationships? Are you seeing someone right now?
- b. Do you date more than one person at a time?

4. You decide you are interested in meeting in person, just you two. (or the other person asks to meet up just with you)

- a. You tell a parent or trusted advocate about this person and they concur this sounds like a good person to get to know better.
- b. You plan to go on a “friend date”. Either you ask them, or they ask you, to get together for something like coffee or lunch in a public setting.
- c. You plan for transportation, budget, and safety issues with a parent or trusted advocate before the friend date.

5. You go on the friend date.

- a. During the date they show an interest in you and you are interested in them.
- b. They seem to enjoy talking to you and you enjoy talking to them.
- c. There seems to be a “spark” between you.
- d. You have a good time together.
- e. You feel good about yourself in their company.
- f. They are kind, and considerate, and polite.

6. You tell a parent or trusted advocate about your experience, and with their input and feedback you decide if you want to pursue this relationship, or not.

7. If yes, you decide if you are interested in going on a “romantic” date.

- a. Either you ask them, or they ask you to go on a date to a movie, bowling, or a meal. (other ideas?)
- b. You plan for transportation, budget, and safety issues with a parent or trusted advocate before the date.
- c. While on the date:
 - i. you ask consent, and you give them a hug when you see them.
 - ii. you ask them if they are enjoying themselves. Wait to see what they say.
 - iii. you ask yourself in your head if you are having fun and enjoying yourself. If so, you can choose to share this with them.
 - iv. You laugh a lot.
 - v. You feel good about yourself when you're together.
 - vi. You are interested in getting to know them better and they are interested in getting to know you better.
 - vii. You ask consent, and you give them a hug and a kiss on the cheek when you say goodbye.

8. Over the next couple weeks you go on more dates and get to know each other better through conversation – online, on the phone, or spending time together.

- a. you have fun together.
- b. you have many things to talk about.
- c. you realize you have a lot in common.
- d. they treat you with care and respect.
- e. you like to do things with them.
- f. there is a good balance of them inviting you to do things and you inviting them.
- g. after a few dates you decide if you want to kiss them. If yes, you ask consent.

9. You decide to introduce your friend to your parents or a trusted advocate.

- a. You could invite everyone to go to coffee or a meal together. (other ideas?)
- b. Your new romantic interest might even introduce you to their family.
- c. You ask your parent or trusted advocate what they think of your new romantic interest and take their opinion into consideration about whether or not to continue in the relationship.
 - i. Why?

10. While you're dating, but after you've introduced them to your parent or trusted advocate, you might decide to hang out at each other's house.

- a. You might choose to make out, with consent.
- b. You talk about your relationship with this person, and you decide you are ready to negotiate how you want to define your relationship.
 - i. Do you both want to continue to see each other and be in a romantic relationship?
 - ii. What are your long-term relationship goals?
 - iii. Do you only want to date each other, or do you want to date other people, too?

- c. You start to feel you love this person and/or you decide you want to have a sexual relationship with them.
 - i. Do you both hope to be in a sexual relationship with each other?
 - ii. Do you want to only have sex with each other, or do you want to be able to have sex with other people, too?
 - iii. You talk about possible outcomes of sex – sti's and unintended pregnancy and discuss your views and boundaries.
 - iv. You are both feeling ready to engage in sexual activity together and you have a talk about sexual history, STI status, birth control options, and fears.
 - v. You both get tested for STI status (if you haven't already; every 6 months when sexually active) and you share your results with each other.
- d. You check in with a parent or trusted advocate and with their help you figure out the best location for a sexual encounter.
- e. You plan your sexual encounter with your romantic or sexual partner. (date, location, who is going to bring condoms, etc.?)

- 11. You and your partner are in the situation where you planned to have sex.
 - a. You check that they are comfortable and still want to have sex, and you ask yourself the same thing in your head.
 - b. You and your partner negotiate and manage your safer sex practices.
 - c. If yes for both of you, you have sex together, regularly asking each other if this still feels good and you want to continue.
- 12. The relationship continues to grow.
 - a. When you are confused or something doesn't feel right, you talk to a parent or trusted advocate to problem solve.
 - b. If at any point you are starting to wonder if you should break up, you talk to a parent or trusted advocate for support and advice.
 - c. You and your partner both feel safe, respected, and loved.
 - d. You and your partner both feel good about yourselves when you're around each other.
 - e. You two have a good balance of time together and time apart.
 - f. You both still have friends and activities that you do with other people.
 - g. As your relationship grows you discuss whether you want to live together. If so, you talk to a parent or trusted advocate for help planning.
 - h. As your relationship grows you discuss whether you want to get married. If so, you talk to a parent or trusted advocate for help planning.
 - i. As your relationship grows you discuss whether you want to have kids together. If so, you talk to your parent or trusted advocate for help planning.