

# Too Young to Love

**Question:** Dear Sir, my ten-year-old son is starting to have girlfriends and that scares me. My husband and I are wondering what to do. How can we direct this energy in a positive way? We know he is too young to have serious relationships and we do not want to come across like dictators. Help us please.

**Answer:** Dear parents: Do not fret. Your son's ability or desire to love girls is normal. However, it is your responsibility to keep this early infatuation in its proper context. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Remember, you are the parents. You have the authority and the leverage as adults to provide control over this matter.
2. Do not nag your son. Remember what you oppose the most becomes most attractive. However, your son is a minor (emotionally and physically) and you need to find time to share with him principles of how he would be allowed to have "girl friends."
3. Do not tell him he cannot have a "girl friend." Many parents, in the fear that their children are starting too early or moving too fast in a relationship would tell them: "You are too young to have a relationship. You will have no girlfriends until you are 18." While this might be your wish as parents, it is not the best approach. If your son tells you he likes a particular girl, validate his feelings by congratulating him. In your mind you can say: "Thank God it is not another boy he loves." You can channel the conversation into the best way forward. You can say "Wow! That's so nice. However, let us talk about the best ways you can have a girlfriend at this time in your life." Note carefully that you can tell your son that at his age it is the time to focus on growing and learning and he will be a better friend as he gets older and more mature.
4. While you will not "prevent" your son from talking to his "girlfriend," your attitude and behavior as parents can help keep this "love affair" in the right context. Do not allow him to go on dates. If he wants to "go out" with her, invite several other friends his age and go with them (and other adults) on this fun outing. This should not be done very often. If he wants to bring her to the home for lunch, you will tell him that he has to invite at least three or more friends (including boys and girls). Then you and other family members spend the time having fun with them. This can neutralize the love "affair".
5. Do not allow your son to spend long hours on the phone talking to his friend. You can help keep the relationship in context by only allowing him to speak for 30 minutes on the phone just two or more times a week. You will provide the environment where he will want to learn and focus on his school work. Make sure you know where the cordless phone is before you go to bed at nights. Also, do not have the television or computer in his bedroom.
6. Take control of the smart phones. Do not give a phone to your young son without providing guidelines and setting limitations for its use. Note that smart phones have the ability to do what computers can do. You can browse websites or use online messengers such as Skype, MSN, FaceTime, FaceBook etc. Perhaps it is not best to allow your son to have a phone in his possession for 24 hours a day until he reaches a more mature age. That

should be an adult privilege only. Limit the time he will have the phone during the day. Make times when it is important or convenient for communication between parent and child.

When children engage in adult behavior, it distorts healthy growth emotionally and physically. Minors sometimes feel they know it all or understand what it takes to have serious relationships. The truth is their mind and body are not yet developed to handle the stress and pressure from serious love relationships.

Dear parents, provide a warm, loving environment for your son. Spend time with him. Provide lots of positive reinforcements and words of encouragement.

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