



OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

Michal Silverstein, MS

Daughters and Dating

Dear OU parenting,

I have a 24 year old daughter who wants to get married and I'm not sure how to help her. The dating scene is very daunting to me.

E.H.

Dear E.H.,

This is something that a lot of mothers are struggling with today. For the past few years, beginning with Covid and continuing through the war, dating has become even more challenging. During Covid it was almost impossible to meet in person and during the war a majority of young men were in the army and still are. In addition, when a young man becomes available, he may not be in the state of mind to date. All this reinforces the sentiments of Chazal - finding your soul mate is as difficult as the splitting of the sea.

Although technology has advanced drastically with so many ways to connect and communicate, there are other real challenges presenting themselves. One challenge being the fact that the religious dating scene is layered and fractured into many subsets and categories. What was once a clear identifying description between religious and non-religious, is now very nuanced. There are levels

of orthodoxy, and hashkafa, and lifestyle that didn't exist before. On the one hand, it's good to know yourself and what you're looking for, and on the other hand it's important to be flexible and open minded.

Despite the challenges, how can a parent help their child navigate this complicated journey?

Firstly, ask your child if she would like your help. Clear communication is so important in order to coordinate your expectations. What role does she want you to play in her dating process? Many single girls today don't even know how to get started meeting someone especially if they're shy.

Your daughter may express that although she is interested in getting married she doesn't need your active help in finding "the one". She is very outgoing and wants to meet someone organically. In that case, you can offer your support. You can be available to discuss her relationship or be a listener through the process.

When you can guide her through the ups and downs of a relationship and can reflect back to her, you can provide your daughter with stability and perspective. It's equally important to not get overinvolved and to project confidence in her decision making. If you see something disturbing in the relation, a red flag, it's important to address it and bring it to her attention.

As a parent, you have more relationship experience and are more objective, whereas your daughter can get swept up in a relationship which can compromise her judgement.

Since relationships are emotionally charged make sure you approach concerns in a delicate fashion so your daughter is more receptive. If you come across as attacking or judgmental, your child will probably become defensive. It's a delicate balance between being assertive while being present and understanding.

If your daughter however, expresses her desire for you to actively get involved with the dating process, it requires additional time and energy. It means becoming familiar with a system within the shidduch world. It means becoming active, seeking out appropriate whatsapp groups and websites/ online initiatives. It means posting your daughter's bio and profile, becoming her advocate and following up with potential matches. It means networking, similar to business networking only with dating. The way to do this is to connect with mothers slightly older and with

more life experience than you have. Ask them to connect you to others and broaden your social network to people from likeminded communities with similar goals. At any point, if your daughter feels stuck, overwhelmed or confused, I recommend reaching out to a professional, experienced dating coach.

And finally, remember to incorporate prayer and make time for tefilla. Just like anything else in the life of a Jewish person, we believe and have faith that if we put in the effort, Hashem will help us reach our goal. Be'H.

Be'hatzlacha ■

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to parenting@ouisrael.org (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.

בס"ד

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