

Marriage Preparation, Courtship, and Parental Consent

Everyone Has a Role

Sweden Bahá'í Summer School

July 2026

Presenter

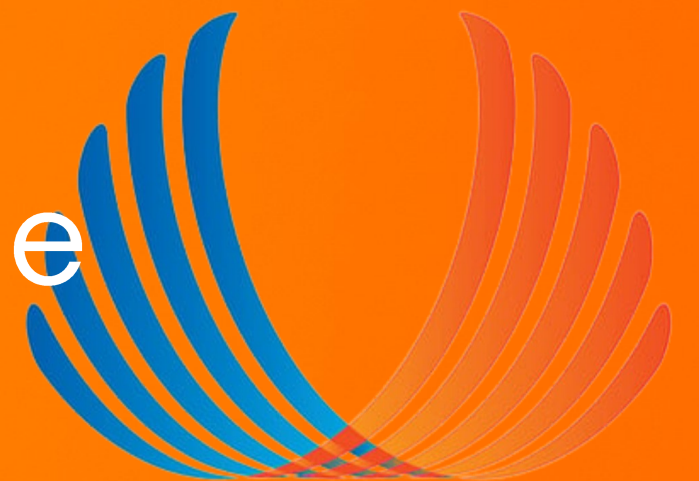
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Marriage Transformation®



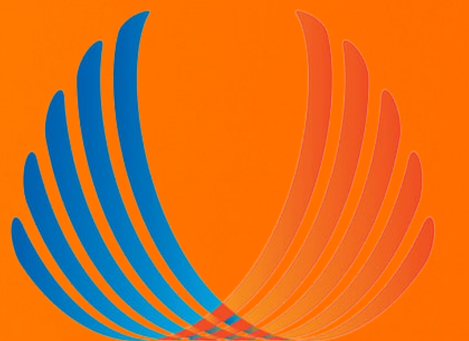
Yesterday's Topic: Why Marriage and Family?

- Marriage is created by God and creates Family
- Families are the building block of society
- Sweden is experiencing an increase in marriages and spirituality
- There are many benefits of marriage
- We need new conversations about marriage



Today's Topics

- Purposes of marriage preparation, courtship, and parental consent to marry
- Key tasks/responsibilities of individuals, couples, parents, Spiritual Assemblies, and community members
- Marriage as a “fortress for well-being and salvation”
- Afternoon Workshop: Creating unity with friendship, laughter, and social vitality



Learning Together



“Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.”

(Universal House of Justice, January 17, 2003)

“Endeavors are pursued in a **humble posture of learning....**”

(Universal House of Justice, December 27, 2005)

**What Is Needed
Before Marriage
to Have Strong
Marriages and
Families?**

Marriage Preparation

Purposes:

- Become familiar with the spiritual principles that contribute to healthy marriages
- Build knowledge and skills about healthy science-based marriage practices
- Prevent serious marriage conflict and divorce



Individuals & Couples: Youth

“... This generation of youth will form families that secure the foundations of flourishing communities. Through their growing love for Bahá’u’lláh and their personal commitment to the standard to which He summons them will their children imbibe the love of God ... and always seek the shelter of His divine law.”

(Universal House of Justice, *Framework for Action*, #35)



Couple Responsibilities

Use	good judgment
Build	a friendship
Explore	character and background
Have	open and truthful communication
Consult	about marriage
Maintain	chastity



Individuals & Couples: Character

“You are right to consider the matter very carefully because a Bahá’í should enter into married state with the full intention of establishing a union that will **not only be life-long but will be an eternal companionship in all the worlds of God.**

“A married couple can be a tremendous strength and support to each other, but building a strong, united marriage requires persistence, effort, and the overcoming of many difficulties together. Thus ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advises a young couple to **get to know each other’s characters thoroughly before taking this very important step. They must think not only of the effect on each other but of the effects of their characters on the children who will be the fruit of the marriage.**”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Investigation of Character, Courtship Practices, and Selection of a Marriage Partner”, #11]

Individuals & Couples: Chastity

- "...[B]ecome well aware of the **Bahá'í Teachings on chastity** and, with these in mind, should scrupulously avoid any actions which would arouse passions which might well tempt them to violate these Teachings."
- **"In deciding which acts are permissible in the light of these considerations, the youth should use their own judgment, giving due consideration to the advice of their parents, taking account of the prevailing customs of the society in which they live, and prayerfully following the guidance of their conscience."**
- **"It is the sacred duty of parents to instill in their children the exalted Bahá'í standard of moral conduct**, and the importance of adherence to this standard cannot be over-emphasized as a basis for true happiness and for successful marriage."

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, "Investigation of Character, Courtship Practices, and Selection of a Marriage Partner", #15)



Individuals & Couples: Openness

“When two believers begin to investigate each other’s character with the possibility of marriage in mind, they must establish between them a level of **openness and close communication**. ... As this sensitive interaction unfolds, generally, it is **not the business of others to interfere**. It is understandable that family or friends may feel a desire to contribute to a particular outcome, but they must not overstep the bounds of the explicit guidance provided in the teachings.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Investigation of Character, Courtship Practices, and Selection of a Marriage Partner”, #20)



Individuals & Couples: Soul Mates

“There is no teaching in the Bahá’í Faith that ‘soul mates’ exist. What is meant is that **marriage should lead to a profound friendship of spirit**, ... a deep spiritual bond which will be everlasting, and not merely physical bonds of human relationship.”

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 206)

“The [Bahá’í Faith] **dismisses the popular idea that there exists only one special person who is preordained for us.** Rather, a closeness such as you and your wife achieved can only be realized through a shared life of love and service...”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, October 6, 1999)



Couple Actions

May consult about such topics as:

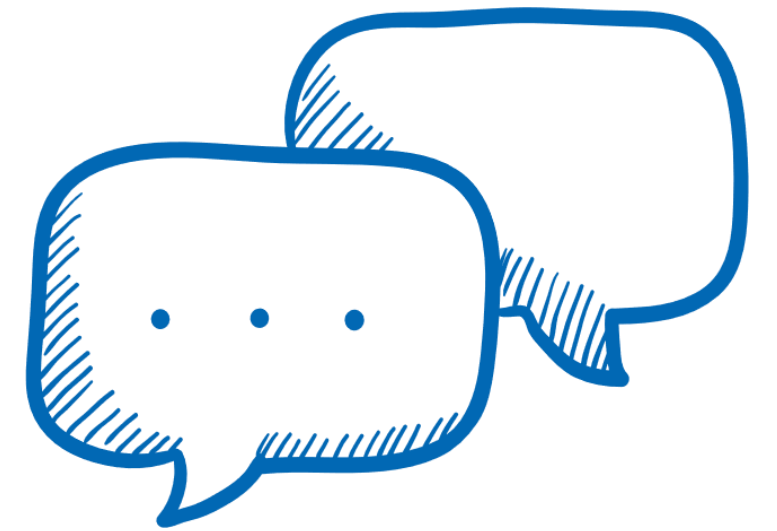
- involvement in community service
- ways to express love
- spiritual practices
- equality and partnership
- marriage expectations
- how to handle difficulties
- managing a home and finances
- intimacy and sex
- raising and educating children
- cultural identities and practices
- relationship with parents & extended family

When they are ready:

- Make an informed, independent decision to marry one another
- Ask for parental consent to marry



Activity



What are some ways that a couple can learn about each other's character, virtues, family, and background?

Vilka är några sätt som ett par kan lära känna varandras karaktär, dygder, familj och bakgrund?

Parent Responsibilities

- Foster mutual respect and consideration with children
- Raise children with the Bahá'í standard of moral conduct
- Foster children's powers of discrimination and judgment to steer the course of their own lives in a positive way
- Show wisdom, discretion, and non-interference in a child's partner choice
- Discuss principles without referring to individuals
- Respect and understand the purpose of the law of giving parental consent for a child to marry
- Carry out parental consent in the way they choose
- Seek assistance and guidance from Bahá'í institutions about consent if there are questions or challenges



Parents: Relationship with Children

“There should be a **spirit of mutual respect and consideration between parents and children**, in which the children turn to their parents for advice and direction, and the parents train and nurture their offspring. The fruit of this relationship is that the children grow into adulthood with their powers of discrimination and judgment refined, so that they can steer the course of their lives in a manner most conducive to their welfare.

“Within the framework of this mutual respect, the parents are called upon to show **wisdom and discretion** when their offspring are developing friendships which might ultimately lead to marriage. They should **consider carefully the circumstances under which advice should be given, and conditions under which their intervention would be construed as interference.**

“For their part, the offspring should recognize that their parents are **deeply interested in their welfare**, and that the views of the parents warrant respect and careful consideration.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, *Consent of Parents*, p. 27; out of print)



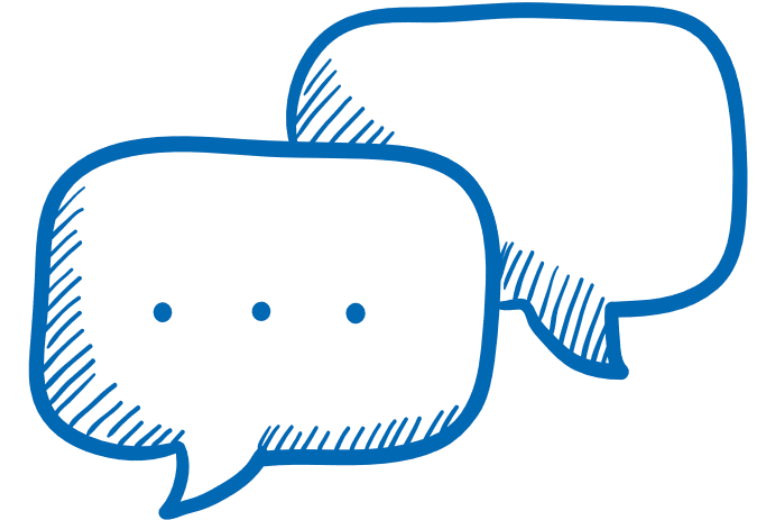
Parents: Advice vs. Interference

“Although a Bahá’í may, if he chooses, **seek his parents’ advice** on the choice of a partner, and although Bahá’í **parents may give such advice** if asked, it is clear from the Teachings that **parents do not have the right to interfere** in their children’s actual choice of a prospective partner until approached for their consent to marry. Therefore, when discussing the issue of courtship with your sons, it would be best to discuss it on the level of **principle** without reference to individuals.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Investigation of Character, Courtship Practices, and Selection of a Marriage Partner”, #17)



Activity



When could it be wise for a parent to give advice?

När kan det vara klokt för en förälder att ge råd?

What words and actions could be “interference”?

Vilka ord och handlingar kan ses som “att lägga sig i”?

Parental Consent to Marry: Some Purposes

- Children show gratitude and respect toward parents
- Can foster closeness in the family
- Parents can provide a different and perhaps more detached perspective
- Can bring unity in the family that strengthens society



Parental Consent to Marry: Some Elements

- Allow the couple to decide about marrying one another before discussing consent
- Up to the parents how they carry out parental consent
- Each living parent must choose whether to give consent or not (without pressure from anyone)
- Consider their child's happiness, but they are not responsible for the outcome of the marriage



Individuals and Parents: Consent

“... [M]arriage is dependent upon the consent of both parties. Desiring to establish love, unity and harmony amidst Our servants, We have conditioned it, once the couple’s wish is known, upon the permission of their parents, lest enmity and rancor should arise amongst them.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, #K65)



Parents: Purpose of Consent

“Bahá’u’lláh has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for a Bahá’í marriage. This applies whether the parents are Bahá’ís or non-Bahá’ís, divorced for years or not. **This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator.**”

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, “To Set the World in Order”, #54)



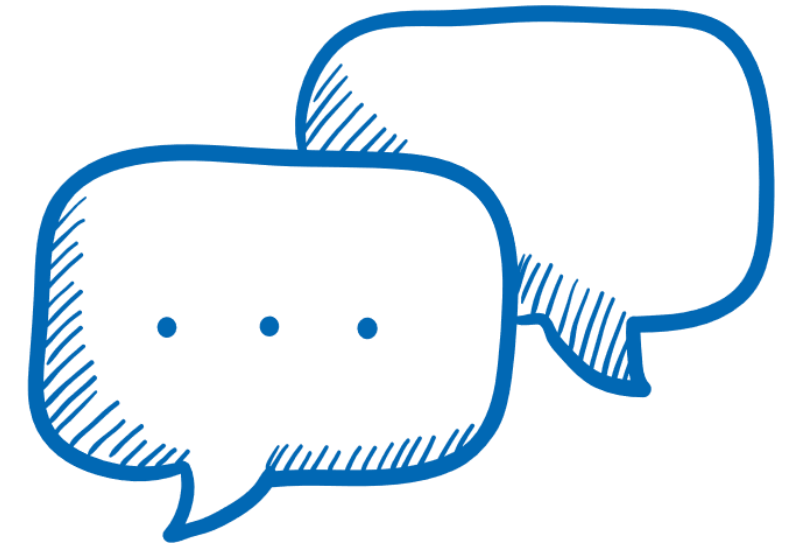
Parents: Personal Choice

“...[T]he manner in which parents decide on the question of consent is left to them and should not be prescribed by others.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Parental Consent for Marriage”, Bahá’í World Centre, #32)



Activity



How could it benefit families if a couple asks for and receives parental consent to marry?

Hur kan det gynna familjer om ett par ber om och får föräldrarnas samtycke till att gifta sig?

Spiritual Assembly Responsibilities (Local Elected Councils)

- Educate the community about Bahá'í engagement, marriage, and divorce laws and administer them
- Ensure civil and Bahá'í laws that apply to weddings are carried out
- Encourage unity in couples and families
- Respond and provide guidance to couples and families in difficulties



Spiritual Assemblies: Focus

“The divinely ordained institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly operates at the first levels of human society and is the basic administrative unit of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order. It is concerned with **individuals and families whom it must constantly encourage to unite in a distinctive Bahá’í society**, vitalized and guarded by the laws, ordinances and principles of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. It protects the Cause of God; it acts as the loving shepherd of the Bahá’í flock.”

(Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, para. 141.13)

“... [T]he provision of guidance on administrative matters such as the **laws of engagement, marriage, and divorce falls under the purview of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies....**”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual, September 24, 2014)



Spiritual Assemblies: Boundaries Between Roles

“... [W]hile parents may seek advice of an Assembly about whether they should consent to the marriage of their children and the Assembly may give such advice, the decision rests with the parents and the Assembly cannot assume that responsibility.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Parental Consent for Marriage”, Bahá’í World Centre, May 2019, #14)



Potential Roles for Friends, Extended Family, and Community



- Offer opportunities for the couple to get to know one another or serve together
- Provide trustworthy counsel and consultation, when requested and without interference
- Don't tease, gossip, overly influence, or make couples feel uncomfortable
- Do warn of proven dangerous or abusive behavior in a partner



Family & Community Relationships



“The relationships of the nuclear family are embedded in **ever-wider circles of relationships**, beginning with the extended family. **Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins** extend care and support that help to fulfil the purpose and responsibilities of the family. The characteristics of such familial relationships also extend to fellow Bahá'ís and other friends, who can assist a family in various ways. In the close social network forged in a vibrant community, **elders offer deepening, wise counsel, and distinctive example.** (Continued...)



Family & Community Relationships

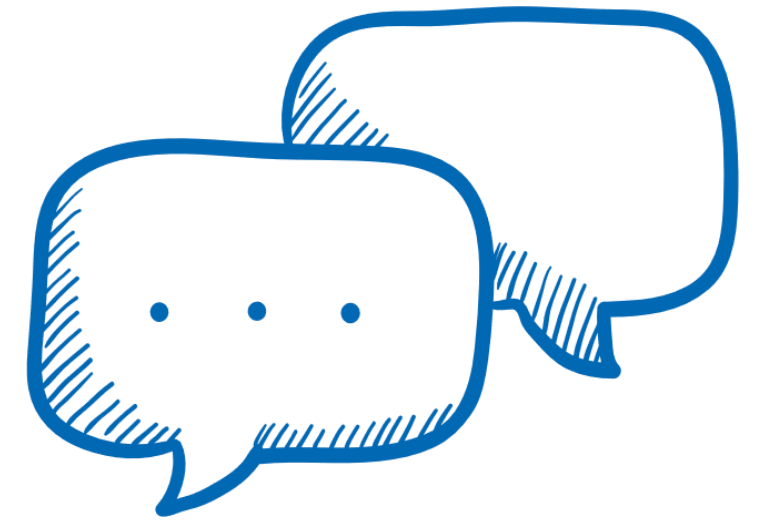
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“Others step in as **spiritual aunts and uncles** to share affection and concern for the progress of young people and provide support that reinforces the labours and lofty aspirations of parents. **Youth act as older brothers and sisters** who, in numerous ways, assist and inspire those younger than themselves. In this way, the **sense of oneness, of love, care, trust, and solidarity that are initially cultivated in the family begin to be woven into the fabric of relationships in the community.**”

(Universal House of Justice, May 19, 2025, Para #12)



Activity



**What are some ways
that non-family
members could help
a couple get to know
each other?**

**Vilka är några sätt på
vilka personer
utanför familjen kan
hjälpa ett par att lära
känna varandra?**

What's Next?



- Continued discussion of marriage preparation (if needed)
- Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation activity
- Afternoon Workshop: Creating Unity with Friendship, Laughter, and Social Vitality

***Thankyou
Tack***



Susanne M. Alexander
Marriage Transformation®

Next three slides are
for discussion in the
next session; other two
are extras

Individuals & Couples: Investigation

“One of the cardinal principles of the Faith, and one of the primary duties given to every individual in this Dispensation, is to **investigate reality independently**. This is an aspect of the quality of justice, ‘the best beloved of all things’, as Bahá’u’lláh says. An application of this principle and of this duty in relation to marriage is for the individual to become fully informed of the character of any prospective partner he or she is contemplating for marriage.... Although the primary **responsibility for so doing naturally rests with the two individuals concerned, their parents have a vital role to play in this respect**, as they must decide whether or not to give their consent for the marriage.

(Continued...)



Individuals, Couples, & Parents: Detachment

“They can provide a **different and perhaps more detached perspective** in determining whether a potential spouse is suitable for their child. Parents give or withhold their consent for marriage for reasons of their own, and in this regard they are responsible to God alone; the expectation is that they will act with justice and with fairness to the parties concerned.

“As is the case with other situations that require the **investigation of facts so as to be able to make informed decisions**, information must be gathered from reliable sources until the individuals responsible for making the decision are satisfied that they have an adequate picture. Even so, all the facts that one would wish to have in hand are not always obtainable, as one cannot go beyond reasonable measures of investigation....
(continued...)



Individuals & Couples: Backbiting

“One of the questions that may arise in connection with the investigation of the character of a potential spouse is whether the sharing of facts and the consultation with others that may be necessary for an informed decision constitute **backbiting**. In this respect, there is a clear **distinction between speaking ill of others and passing on important information out of genuine concern for the good of innocent persons**. It is worth noting that the House of Justice, in answers to previous queries, has clarified that the injunction against backbiting is different in character from disclosing, in an **appropriate remedial context, the abusive actions of others towards oneself and others**. Where such action is justified, as in the case where one may be recovering from the effects of abuse or when the protection of other innocent individuals is concerned, then one should not hesitate to take whatever action, consistent with Bahá'í principles, is needed.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Investigation of Character, Courtship Practices, and Selection of a Marriage Partner”, #19)



Individuals & Couples: Dating

“... [T]here is nothing in the Bahá’í Writings which relates specifically to the so-called **dating practices** prevalent in some parts of the world, where two unmarried people of the opposite sex participate together in a social activity. In general, Bahá’ís who are planning to involve themselves in this form of behavior should become well aware of the **Bahá’í Teachings on chastity** and, with these in mind, should scrupulously avoid any actions which would arouse passions which might well tempt them to violate these Teachings. **In deciding which acts are permissible in the light of these considerations, the youth should use their own judgment, giving due consideration to the advice of their parents, taking account of the prevailing customs of the society in which they live, and prayerfully following the guidance of their conscience.** It is the sacred duty of parents to instill in their children the exalted Bahá’í standard of moral conduct, and the importance of adherence to this standard cannot be over-emphasized as a basis for true happiness and for successful marriage.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Investigation of Character, Courtship Practices, and Selection of a Marriage Partner”, #15)



Individuals & Couples: Character

“Bahá’í marriage is the **commitment** of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the **utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other**, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to **become loving companions and comrades** and at one with each other for time and eternity....”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, #86)