

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the Sex Talk?

The Sex Talk: A Muslims Guide to Healthy Sex and Relationships serves as an introduction to talking about sex, reproductive health, and sexual violence in Muslim communities. Part textbook, part workbook, and part guided reflection, this book is a resource to navigate often awkward conversations on sex and relationships. Going beyond whtie-centric and abstinence-only approaches to sex ed, this book invites readers to engage the emotional, physical, and spiritual. The advice offered inside goes beyond first-time sex and covers topics relevant whether you're having sex or not. Grounded in Islamic and feminist scholarship, this book helps readers explore their faith, values, and bodies.

Ultimately, we wrote the book that we wished we had when we were young adults with questions about our bodies, faith, and sex.

What this book is	What this book is not
Information presented in a nonjudgmental way encourages critical thinking.	A sex manual or a how-to
A resource of foundational knowledge	An encyclopedia with comprehensive information
An opportunity for reflection	A religious treatise
Committed to gender-neutral and inclusive language.	A book presuming heteronormative relationships.
A resource that is medically accurate	A substitute for a healthcare professional
Appropriate for a slightly more mature audience.	A replacement for first-time sex education

## Who is it for?

**Tl;dr: everyone! But especially Muslims of all backgrounds**

Written by Muslims for Muslims, this book fills the need for trauma informed, faith inspired, and culturally sensitive sex education. While this book was written with college-aged Muslims in mind, this book is useful to Muslim and non-Muslims of all ages. As Fatima Saied of Muslim Women's Organization said, "as a forty-something mother of five, I ended up learning about my own body and sexual health in reading this book." We purposefully tried to center Muslim experiences, voices, and scholarship that is underrepresented in mainstream Muslim spaces. If you're a Muslim who often doesn't feel seen in Muslim spaces, this book is for you!

## Who wrote the book? And what are their qualifications?

The book has been written, edited, and given feedback by experts in the fields of gender-based violence, mental health, public health, Islamic law, and more. The book has been extensively reviewed by numerous health care professionals, Muslim women scholars, and the intended audience of this book. The authors have also drawn upon decades of scholarship led by Muslim women academics and scholars trained in various Islamic sciences. While this book has been years in the making, it is just the first edition. We are open and excited for your feedback for future versions!

Not only do the authors have professional and academic expertise, but also lived experience. We hope to center the expertise and lived experience of directly impacted folks and those often excluded from the narrative.

## Who is HEART?

Founded in 2010, [HEART](#) is a national public-health nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sexual health, uprooting gendered violence, and advancing reproductive justice by establishing choice and access for the most impacted Muslims. We strive to create a world where all Muslims are safe and exercise self-determination over their reproductive lives in the communities where they live, work, and pray.

With staff and trainers in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic Region, Midwest, South, and West Coast, HEART strives to support multi-marginalized Muslims. Our main programming arms include health education, advocacy (systems advocacy and individual advocacy), research, and training.

## How does the book approach decisionmaking around sex?

The book also offers a framework for sexual health decision-making inspired by the Arabic word **ridha**, which means “fullness of choice,” or consent. The RIDHA framework is an acronym that grounds healthy sexual relationships in the core Islamic values of **rahma** (compassion), **ilm** (knowledge), **adalah** (equity), **hurma** (safety), and **aqd** (commitment). We believe that centering the concept of *ridha*—fullness of choice—is the best way to honor a Muslim’s right to fully consent and be in control of their sexual health decision-making. Read more about it in chapters 1 and 5 of the book!

## How is this book different than the other books on sex?

Unlike other popular sex education books, this book includes culturally-competent and faith-inspired sex education. And unlike other Muslim sex education books, this book is queer inclusive, intersectional, and trauma-informed. This book hopes to meet **all** Muslims where they're at to make informed, aligned, and empowered decisions.

There are a number of controversial topics you cover in the book. For example, you speak of alternative relationships such as secret marriages and polygamy, that can result in harm and exploitation. Are you promoting these forms of relationships?

We are not recommending whether a Muslim should or should not enter these types of relationships. Rather, because we aim to be inclusive of different kinds of intimate relationships that our readers might be exposed to, we address these alternative forms of marriage.

We urge Muslims to focus not so much on the Islamic permissibility of these types of marriages: but rather on whether and how such marriages can follow the RIDHA Framework for healthy intimacy. This framework is an Islam-based tool for healthy relationships.

## How do I use this book?

In whatever ways are best for you and your needs!

This book was written to be used in multiple ways: individually, in community, in conversation, in curriculum, and more! We hope this book is a book you'll use again, and again, and again. And each time, your experience might change! With reflection sections, try-it-out activities, and did-you-knows, this book has something new to explore with each read!

Want to get more involved with the book? [Sign up to get updates about the book, including our soon-to-be-launched book clubs!](#)

Want to bring us to your city, organization, or campus? [Visit this site](#) to bring HEART to you! Email [info@heartwomenandgirls.org](mailto:info@heartwomenandgirls.org) with additional questions.

## Is this book appropriate for kids?

This book was written with young adult Muslims in mind, but Muslims of all ages can benefit from this book. There are parts that could be helpful for younger audiences to explore, but that is a decision made between their caregivers and them. Sex ed covers a variety of topics, from communication, to anatomy, to sexual health. Check out our episode with Angelica Lindsey-Ali (popularly known as the Village Auntie) and Irene Khan on sex education and our one-pager to learn more about sex education with children and sex education across the lifespan. Parts of the book may be more age-appropriate than others!

You say this is a book for Muslims, yet you talk about issues in which many Muslims may argue are not permissible. Are you condoning sex before marriage? Same sex relationships? Abortion?

This book does not make claims on what is haram and what is halal; instead, we hope to give readers the tools to make their own empowered, informed, and values-aligned decisions. We acknowledge that there is a wide range of religious practices, interpretations, and experiences. As you read, you may find some of the opinions presented here appealing, and others distasteful. Our approach is to support people to find the answers to the questions they are grappling with themselves. What we are promoting is for Muslims to have the agency to make informed, safe, equitable decisions about their bodies and relationships. We recognize the human dignity of every person and that everyone deserves the same access to information about their bodies that will keep them safe and in control. Please remember that we are not insisting that you follow any particular fiqh [Islamic ruling] opinion. Muslims always have the right to select whatever fiqh interpretation feels right to them. In this book, we seek only to provide you with tools to help you make your own decisions about how to live your life as a Muslim, including in your intimate relationships.