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Friends to partners possible? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am a college student who has a big crush on a friend of mine. While we are pretty close, I am not interested in ruining a good relationship if he isn't interested. The thing is that I have begun recently picturing myself married to this guy in thirty years and seeing him across the breakfast table talking about our kids. I've never felt this way about a guy before. It has usually been more superficial. I keep meaning to tell him but I get really shy because of my fear of destroying our friendship. I think about him often. What should I do?

Sincerely,

Looking for a little advice from a third party

Answer

Dear Looking for a little advice from a third party,

It's not hard to see how mixing friendship with romance could get messy, but the fact that you've already put so much thought into this shows how much your friendship means to you. Before you start planning too far into the future, it may be wise to find out if the feelings are mutual. You might wait it out and see how things naturally develop, but you could also be more direct and have a conversation with him about how you feel. Since the two of you are already so close, it puts you in a great position. Solid friendships can often weather a conversation about these types of feelings, even if it is difficult or awkward for a bit.

Rather than jumping impulsively into the heart-to-heart with your friend, it could be helpful to think about exactly what you want out of the conversation and how he might react. You might also consider talking with a good friend, family member, a counselor, or health promotion specialist to help you think through your decision. They could help you weigh the pros and cons of approaching your friend or even practice what you'd like to say before you take the plunge. You could talk over questions with them, such as: Do you want to tell him you'd like to date? Or, do you want him to know that you really like him and want to see where things could go? What exactly do you want him to know about your feelings? What are you hoping for out of the conversation? What are some different possibilities of how he might respond? You may not have much control over how he reacts, but it can be helpful to rehearse the potential scenarios so you have an idea of how you might respond and feel after the conversation.

It can also be helpful to consider how you might feel if your friend doesn't share your feelings. If maintaining this friendship is your top priority, make sure you let him know that you don't

want to lose him as a friend. This way if the feelings aren't mutual, you've made it easier for him to tell you that he wants to stay friends and you'll have (hopefully) preserved the friendship. Of course, after a conversation like this, it may be a little while before the friendship gets back to the way it was. But, with a little time, you could go back to being pals.

If, all things considered, you strongly feel that you can't talk to him about, you could consider just waiting to see how things develop (i.e. seeing if your friend makes a move first). Alternatively, you could also keep yourself open to the possibility of being attracted to someone else. Although you only have eyes for your friend right now, you may meet another person who makes you feel the same way.

In the end, if you do decide to talk to him about it, choose a time and place for the conversation that will be comfortable for both of you, and also gives you a bit of privacy. Then, when it's time to meet, try your best to be honest about your feelings and thoughts. After all, nothing ventured, nothing gained, right?

Best of luck to you,

Alice!

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