

[Protecting Young Girls](#)

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Protecting Young Girls

In places like India and Sri Lanka, girls are treated a little differently than girls in the West. Even as a child, the only males a small girl is encouraged to interact with are her father, grandfather or maternal or paternal uncles. Except for these male relatives or another female, she is discouraged from sitting with anyone else. So, as this girl grows up she automatically keeps a modest distance between herself and the men she comes in contact with in her daily life. She is not strongly discouraged from playing with boys outside the family, but since most of the school there are either girls' school or boys' schools, she does not come into too much contact with other boys. After age ten or so the girl goes out mostly accompanied by one of the parents, or a close relative.

Men in the family usually keep a greater and greater distance from a girl as she grows older. It is not because she is not treated with love or not touched or approached in any way. It is just that men feel they should start treating her like an adult and not always like a child. This is one of the reasons for having a celebration when a girl attains puberty. It is understood among the men and boys that this girl should be treated with more reverence and respect from then on.

Fathers, brothers and uncles will still give the girl a hug now and then, especially if it is an occasion that is a celebration for the girl. But the most common way a male relative will touch a female is to place his hand on her head as a blessing or as an affectionate gesture.

There are no hard and fast rules that require the males and females of a certain group to touch or not to touch. A girl blossoming into womanhood is considered to be the most delicate flower of all. The more people handle a flower the more wilted it gets. That is the meaning behind the no-touching theory. Boys are taught right from infancy that all females, other than their mother, are either a sister, an aunt or grandmother, and they are encouraged to protect them and take care of them. So although no one is actually embracing the girl all the time, she is loved and

protected by several invisible hands. She grows up happy and confident in the knowledge that she has all these brothers, uncles and grandfathers protecting her and her virtue.

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