

Parenting 911!

Resources:

- Drugs, Alcohol, Sex
- The Reproductive Vocabulary
- Teen Pregnancy 101
- There are bugs in my bed!

There is one common theme that just never ceases to amaze me amongst teens: Young people honestly believe that sex is just a physical act. "Well, of course they do!" What in our society today is telling them anything different? I have spoken to many young girls who actually think they are obligated to have sex if money was spent, boys consistently share that the high-five in the locker room only goes to the guys that "got some" that weekend. Teens often proudly and publicly announce their sexual endeavors to gain what they call "respect". So, how can a parent communicate the message of pure sexual freedom- abstinence, in a way that teens will choose to listen and make wise choices for their future?

1. Realize that what you say does matter. Parents are more influential in a teen's life than his or her friends are. Talk to your kids about your values and expectations about sex. Repeat the message as often as possible. Let them know that you believe in them; their actions will often rise to meet your expectations.
2. Model positive relationships and healthy habits. It's one thing to talk about it but another to demonstrate it. Your son or daughter will respect your opinions and advice the most if you are a good role model.
3. Begin the conversations early. It will be a lot easier to discuss the topic if the topic is considered somewhat normal in your home. For example, use proper names for body parts and answering basic questions such as "Where do babies come from?" with a simple and honest response.
4. Listen more than you talk. Make a habit of listening to your child and inquiring about the "little things" like school, friends, and activities. This will prompt your teen to be more likely to come to you with questions and concerns about sex and other tough issues.
5. Provide resources . Society is providing resources for your child regularly. Do you approve of these resources? Place adolescent-friendly books that agree with your standards on this topic in their room, beside their bed, in the stockings at Christmas. Let them know that you are willing to answers any questions that they might have.
6. Show up. Do you know what is being taught about sex in your teen's school? Check out the curriculum being used in the school. Schools have to meet a state requirement in accordance to this topic. Ask if you can review the materials and don't hesitate to ask questions. Don't forget, you are still the authority in your teen's life, especially concerning values, and this includes your values and beliefs about sexuality.
7. Sex is good and hormones are real. Curiosity about sex will not go away if it is never discussed. In fact, avoiding the subject can make sex seem even more mysterious and exciting. Be sure to balance discussions by talking about the positive aspects of sex within marriage as well as the responsibilities that come with it.
8. Point out the positive. There is a direct link between low self-esteem and high-risk behaviors such as drug use, early sexual involvement, and other self-destructive behaviors. Compliment your teen when they are doing what is right, and help them set positive goals for the future. Build their self-esteem based on their good character traits, their unique talents, and their positive accomplishments.
9. Give your teen good reasons for making positive, healthy choices. Adolescents tend to make decisions based on their feelings. Often, they believe they know everything and can be hurt by nothing. Their attitude is, "I need it now!" If we want adolescents to make good decisions about their futures, we must give them practical reasons they can relate to for making choices that will lead to health and happiness.
10. Know the facts and share them in a positive way. Attempting to influence your teen's behavior by focusing on guilt and fear may have the opposite effect — rebellion. Instead, know the facts about such things as puberty, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and share them with your child in a non-threatening way. Parents who set high standards are offering freedom. Education in this area will provide the only true protection that exists and thus will eliminate the chance of life-altering consequences.

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