



Talking With Your Teen about Sex

Sex is a tough issue for parents to discuss with teens. Yet, teens wish parents would be more open and talk about sexual activity. As a parent, you are your teen's first and most powerful teacher, by what you say and what you do. When given an opportunity to talk to your adolescent about sex, you might open the discussion by saying "I'm glad we listened to the words of that CD" or "I'm glad you saw that movie because I've been wanting to talk to you about sex and I didn't know how to bring it up."

HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE TOPIC OF SEX

Here are some guidelines:

- Be open that you are uncomfortable talking about sex. They, too, are probably just as embarrassed.
- Reassure your adolescent that your wanting to talk about sex doesn't mean that you think they are sexually active.
- Keep it a discussion, not a lecture.
- Let them know that you will answer their questions or make arrangements for them to talk to another adult if they choose that option.
- Tell him or her that it is important to make good decisions and choices based on several factors.

Talking about sex is not just a review of body parts and their functions. It is very important to discuss family values and religious beliefs. Let your teen know that talking about sex is not the same as giving permission. Help your teen understand that oral sex and sexual intercourse can spread sexually transmitted infections. Both have emotional impacts. Bring up the risks and health concerns such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Discuss building romantic relationships, developing self-respect, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol. Talk about how they relate to and influence your teen's decisions about sexual activity.

Call the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting ([MOAPPP](#)) at 1-800-657-3697 for additional resources. Or ask the sexuality educator at your teen's school or local mental health office. You could also visit your public or church library for books and videos.

Source: *Positive Parenting of Teens*, University of Minnesota Extension Service

For more information on parenting call INFO-U at 612-624-2200 and request a catalog of available topics.

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