Speak About It: Tips for Parents

REMEMBER: YES MEANS YES!

Speak About It teaches affirmative consent as the standard for healthy sexual activity. A growing number of colleges and state legislatures are adopting affirmative consent as part of their sexual misconduct policies, so it is likely the standard your child will be held to when they go off to school.

According to this model, consent is an affirmative, conscious, and voluntary decision to engage in sexual activity. Each person must be aware, free of coercion, communicating clearly and unambiguously, and sincere in their desires. Giving and getting consent is an ongoing process, and it can be revoked at any time. The more intoxicated a person is, the less they’re able to give effective consent. Affirmative consent is also known as the “yes means yes” model of consent because it requires both participants to actively say “yes” to what is happening through their words, actions, or both. This means that consent cannot be assumed just because a person is silent or has not clearly said “no.” Practicing affirmative consent requires us to have open conversations with our partners about our needs, desires, and boundaries.

KEY FACTS & FIGURES:

- Your kids want to hear from you. 87% of teens aged 12-19 say that postponing sexual activity and avoiding the possible negative outcomes of sex, such as unplanned pregnancy, would be easier if they could have more open, honest conversations about sex with their parents.
- These conversations matter. Parents are the most influential resource for 12-19 year olds when it comes to their decisions about sex, more than their friends, the media, educators, and religious leaders.
- Young people need help and support in making choices that are right for them. Among adolescents aged 12-19, 67% of sexually experienced girls and 53% of sexually experienced boys wish they had waited longer to have sexual intercourse.
- Dating abuse is an unfortunate reality among high schoolers. 1 in 3 adolescents is a victim of physical sexual, emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.
- High school students are also at risk of sexual assault, even in dating relationships. Among female high school survivors of sexual assault, nearly 75% were in a relationship with their perpetrator.

KEEP IN MIND...

- It’s never too late to start having these conversations.
- It’s not about one big “talk”, it’s about many smaller talks over time.
- It’s your responsibility as a parent to open up the lines of communication about sexuality. Don’t wait for your kids to come to you, because they may never do so.
- It’s not about controlling your child’s behavior, it’s about helping them develop solid decision making skills.
- It’s okay to not know everything.

Source: Gawker Media

Source: Google Image Search
Skills and Strategies for Encouraging Healthy Sexuality

SKILL #1: OPEN THE CHANNELS
• Show your child what it sounds like when a person speaks openly and honestly about sexuality. Your kids are learning from you even when you’re not actively teaching.
• Staying calm and confident during sensitive conversations even if they (or you!) get flustered will help them build the skills they need to successfully communicate their values, desires, and boundaries around sexuality with their peers and partners.

SKILL #2: EASE IN
• Talking about sex in a low-stakes context—such as discussing a song, movie, TV show, or book—paves the way for more difficult or personal conversations later.
• Keep your questions open-ended.
• Sometimes, playing the out-of-touch adult can be a useful exercise. Let your kids teach you things, and then ask thoughtful follow-up questions that challenge their assumptions.

SKILL #3: GO FOR THE RIDE
• Even if it’s “just” a crush or relationship that seems trivial to you, early romantic and sexual experiences feel like a huge deal to people going through them.
• Taking your child’s feelings seriously shows that you respect them and care about what they’re going through, and opens up lines of communication.
• Acknowledge that relationships can be hard, and help them understand that rejection is part of life.
• Keep an eye out for signs of unhealthy or abusive relationships (see sidebar for examples).

SKILL #4: SHARE YOUR HOPES
• Regardless of our personal values or beliefs about sexuality, we all want our kids to be healthy and safe. Let them know that! Don’t let it go unsaid.
• The benefits of making good choices can be a more powerful incentive than possible negative outcomes.
• Instead of focusing on what not to do, tell your kids what you want for them (i.e. to feel respected, to have positive experiences).

UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WARNING SIGNS
• Constant put-downs
• Extreme jealousy or insecurity
• Explosive temper
• Isolation from family or friends
• Withdrawal from activities a person used to enjoy
• Constant texting or other forms of “checking in” to see what a partner is doing
• Keeping tabs on a partner’s texts, email, or social media and/or using those accounts without permission
• Repeated pressure to engage in sexual activity
• Making false accusations
• Telling a partner what to do, wear, or who to spend time with

List adapted from loveisresrespect.org and Break the Cycle.

Connect with Us
Have more questions? Want to learn more about our programs? We’d love to hear from you!

Website: www.speakaboutitonline.com
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