

Parenting

5 Proven Tips to Prep Your High School Graduate for the Post-High School Sexual Culture

You are celebrating. YES! Your child is about to graduate high school. Woo hoo! Now he or she is ready to go on to post-high school life . . . but are you sure?

I've been there multiple times—a dad is excited for his child's next journey in life. The question is, "Is your child ready? What about sexually?"

When many parents think of the sexual culture on college campuses, on military installations, or with any young adults living on their own, parents can suddenly feel a rush of panic. "Oh no!" Suddenly, that journey approaching your child feels scary. You won't be physically there with them anymore. You might not get to talk with them every day—maybe not even every week.

How do you prepare them?

Start by being honest about what they are likely to see, giving good and bad examples. Instead of lecturing, focus on the opportunities they are going to have for making exciting decisions (some easier than others).

While this can be a serious conversation, you can make it engaging. Ask what dating advice they have received or have even "heard" through the grapevine? Share some of the crazy advice you received. This is an enlightening way to discuss how friends can share well-intentioned, but very misguided, suggestions such as:

- How to impress your date.
- How to play the dating game.

Impressing Your Date:

- Don't try to impress your dating partner. Trying to impress other people leads to misleading behavior from you. Be the same person whom we know and love.
- By acting differently, you are not being your authentic self.

Playing the Dating Game:

- In a game, you have two competitors going against each other. Both competitors are trying to win at the other competitor's cost. A great competitor does everything to play directly against the opponent's weakness. Turning a date into a game is a bad decision.

Engaging Your High School Graduate

Try this as a family: Write down more ways friends can be bad influences on your student's dating life. Then work as a family to decide how your child can best decide how to block out those negative influences.

I share this and many more ideas in my book [“Can I Kiss You?”](#) – A thought-provoking look at relationships, intimacy, and sexual assault.

Five Tips:

Here are five tips you can give your graduating student so they can add these decision-making tools to their arsenal and use them, even when you as a parent are no longer physically there!

1. Choose whom you want and whom you don't want to hang out with. You never owe anyone your time.
2. Choose whom you want to be sexually intimate with and/or don't want to be sexually intimate with.
3. Know that no one has the right to violate your boundaries—ever. You always deserve a choice!
4. Know that an incapacitated person (through drugs, alcohol, or other means) deserves to be treated with dignity and respect—just as all human beings do. Remember, you also deserve to be treated with dignity and respect (regardless of what choices you make along your journey).
5. I will always be here for you. Always. While I know it can be normal not to want to disappoint one's parents and/or to feel like parents might be judging you, know our love for you overrules everything—always!

What else could you add to this list? Share in the “comments” section below. Let's help each other's children be better prepared for this next journey.

And ... congrats on your upcoming high school graduate! Exciting times are ahead.

For more advice on how to talk to your teens about dating, [visit here](#).

Mike Domitrz is on a mission to create a culture of consent and respect through The DATE SAFE Project. As one of the leading voices for helping children, young adults, parents, educational institutions, and the U.S. Military discuss dating, sexual decision-making, consent, and sexual assault, Mike speaks to tens of thousands of people yearly around the world, providing positive how-to skill sets and helpful insights for romantic relationships, sexual intimacy, and being safer.

