

Teens

Is Talking to Your Teen about Pregnancy Prevention on Your “Back to School” To Do List?

Mike Domitrz

<https://www.datesafeproject.org>

Do you talk to your teens about pregnancy prevention? How do you talk with teens about teen pregnancy prevention? When is the best time to have that conversation?

The best time is now.

As I travel around the country working with teenagers, one aspect is consistent: The vast majority of teens want to make the right choice given the opportunity to do so. When society only focuses on slogans such as, “Just say no,” without giving teens the full plethora of options available to them, teens feel like we are assuming they are incapable of making good choices—and so we “lecture” instead of engaging in real conversations.

Teens often feel like they are being controlled versus empowered.

Making a great choice in what can feel like a difficult moment requires two key facets: the “how to” skills and the “why.”

The ‘How-To’ Skills

Does your teen have the precise words to use in the majority of sexual decision-making moments? Telling a teen “Do the right thing” is NOT giving the teen any skills. Here are examples of actual “how-to” skills each teen should be taught:

1. Give a teen the exact words for helping the teen talk to a partner about each other’s boundaries and always honoring those boundaries. Agree never to try to change a partner’s choice not to engage in a particular sexual act (from kissing to all forms of sex). Respect the answer of your partner and know you always deserve to have your answer respected.

Do one of you believe in being abstinent until a certain point in life (for some people, an example can be waiting until marriage)? If so, will you both honor this choice, or will one of you pressure the other who is choosing to abstain until they change their mind? Your boundaries should always be respected.

2. Speaking of boundaries, the absence of a “no” is not a “yes!” Use the standard of consent we use in the [“Can I Kiss You?”](#) book, which is:

Consent is a freely given and mutually wanted enthusiastic agreement between partners of sound mind and legal age.

Talk and listen to each other about each of the following three elements:

1. Are both partners of sound mind? Do you or does a partner feel any pressure to make this choice (from yourself, your friends, culture, and/or a partner)? Ideally, wait to make the choice until no one feels pressure to do so.
2. Do both partners (mutual) enthusiastically want to engage in this sexual intimacy?
3. Are both partners of legal age? Engaging in a sexual act with a person who cannot give consent is illegal. If you care about yourself and/or the other person, you don't want to jeopardize ever engaging in a sexual act that could result in one of you being sexually assaulted and/or one of you being convicted of a sexual crime.

Talk about the fact that both of you have the **right to change your mind** at any moment—including during the middle of any sexual act.

What about pregnancy, disease, and infection? How will you best protect yourself from all three possibilities? While there is no form of sex that is 100 percent safe, you can do a lot to be tremendously safer with the choices you make.

What are the possible consequences of making this decision? Have you talked to each other about what this decision means to each of you and/or your relationship (including friendship)?

The 'Why'

The "why" is your reason for making the choice you are making. Believe in your beliefs! If you are not sure what your standards are, write down what you think they are and ask yourself what would motivate you to alter or honor those standards. Now you are establishing your why.

Engaging in sexual activity can be a wonderful experience, and it can have lifelong consequences. Knowing why you want to make that choice will better empower you to know when you are ready to make those choices.

How do we best honor our children as they head back to school? We give teens the tools to make the best choices in any given sexual situation.

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.