

**TEEN  
WORLD**  
*Confidential*

# Contents

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

## COMMUNICATION:

*how to pretend to be a sex-pert  
without freaking your kids out* ..... 6

- Using the Barrier Method when Talking to Kids about Sex ..... 7
- It's Not Funny—Or is it? Using Humor to Tackle the Talk. .... 13
- Birds and Bees Aren't the Only Ones Who Do It:  
History of Sex Ed in the United States ..... 16
- Stats and Facts: How Many Teens Are Having Sex? ..... 18
- Be Available to Talk to Kids about Sex: Just Don't Be Weird ..... 20
- Navigating Emerging Sexuality ..... 23
- Talking to your Infant about Sexuality ..... 25
- Body Image and the Preschool Child:  
Tips for Creating a Positive Home Environment ..... 29

## IDENTITY:

*boys, girls, and everyone in between* ..... 34

- LGBTQ...Defined ..... 35

## DEFINING SELF:

*how to help your child answer  
“who am I?” without the slightest  
bit of manipulation (wink)* ..... 42

- R-E-S-P-E-C-T ..... 43
- Helping Your Child Identify Their Goals ..... 45

- Purpose: What is Yours?.....47
- Perspective: It's All in Your Head ..... 51
- Values: What's Your Perspective? ..... 54
- It is Okay to D-E-C-I-D-E..... 57
- Five Words of Wisdom for Adolescents:
  - Stolen from the Walls of the Gym..... 63
- What's Next? Coping With a Teen's Disappointment ..... 66
- Challenges vs. Disasters:
  - Ten Ways to Help Your Child Prepare for the College Years..... 68

**PERSONAL SAFETY:**

***you can't hold their hand forever* ..... 74**

- Healthy Relationships: Start the Conversation..... 75
- Let's Talk: Consent and Sexual Assault..... 80
- 100 Percent of the Time: Campus Sexual Assault ..... 83
- Sexual Harassment: It's All Business ..... 88
- Avoiding Unsafe Situations ..... 90
- Let's Talk: Sexually Assaulted Males ..... 94
- Sex Trafficking:
  - Talking to your Child about Internet and Community Safety ..... 98
- Bullying: Let's Change the Channel ..... 104
- If Fun is the Goal, is Drinking the Objective?: Making Wise Decisions..... 108
- Good Vibrations: Talking to Kids about
  - Drinking, Hydration, and Music Fests ..... 110

**MEDICALLY SPEAKING:**

***outsourcing medical knowledge*..... 114**

- There's an App for That! Managing your Teen's Health and Wellness..... 115
- Establishing Trust Between Healthcare Providers and Young People..... 116
- Helping Your Adolescent Navigate Their Health World ..... 119
- Hey Doc, Talk to Me About Sex ..... 122
- A Young Woman's Perspective on Talking to her Doc about Sex ..... 124

- You “Herd” it Here: Immunizations for College Students ..... 126
- Hey! It’s Not My Fault, It’s My Hormones!..... 135
- Puberty...A Time for Perfecting the Eyeball Roll..... 138
- Let’s Talk: Cervical Health..... 142
- A Journey with Marcy: Cervical Cancer ..... 147
- 11 Ways to Avoid Colds and Flu..... 153
- Campaign to Change Direction: Mental Health and Adolescence..... 159

**CONTRACEPTION:**

***how to prevent early grandparenthood*..... 164**

- Condoms: What’s Your Pleasure?..... 165
- Contraception: Ladies’ Choice ..... 169
- Arm-ing Our Young Women with Protection..... 172
- May: Mother’s Day and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month:  
Celebrating Moms, Celebrating Choices ..... 176
- World Vasectomy Day ..... 180
- Book Review: *The Birth of the Pill* by Jonathan Eig ..... 182
- “Mom, We’re Pregnant.” Moving Forward When Your World is Rocked..... 186
- Planning for Parenthood..... 189

**SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs):**

***hazardous conditions ahead*..... 194**

- VD-STD-STI...What Does it All Mean? ..... 195
- Understanding the Basics of Sexually Transmitted Infections..... 197
- Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)..... 199
- Chlamydia ..... 201
- Gonorrhea ..... 204
- No Need to go Crazy: Understanding Syphilis..... 207
- Herpes..... 211
- Reduce the Risk: HPV ..... 213
- HPV Vaccine: Know the Facts, Make the Choice ..... 217
- World AIDS Day ..... 224

- The Best Defense Against HIV for Women and Girls: Education ..... 227
- What Will You Tell Your Child Today:  
Twelve Talking Tips about HIV/AIDS ..... 231

**PARENT SUPPORT:**

***parenthood isn't sainthood*** ..... 236

- We All Need a Little Help ..... 237
- Dedicated Dads..... 239
- Car Accidents and Healthy Relationships:  
Ten Realizations that Evolve from Being Un-Dead..... 247
- Legacy: What Ann Taught Me..... 251
- National Women's Health Week: Dimensions of Wellness ..... 256
- Support Other Women: Talk Behind Their Backs ..... 261
- International Kissing Day..... 264
- Be Real, Be You, Be Awesome this Holiday Season ..... 265
- The Gift of Time ..... 270
- Parents and Children: Learning Together ..... 272

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

***because you can't know everything*** ..... 275

**DISCLAIMER**

***healthcare providers are your personal experts*** ..... 277

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

***i know some awesome people*** ..... 279

## Introduction



**A**s parents you do your best to give your children guidance and advice (“If I catch you drinking you are grounded!!!”) to help them become the amazing humans you know they are capable of becoming. (After all, they are *your* kids...)

My youngest daughter studied abroad in Australia. What a great experience, right? For spring break, she asked my husband and I if we’d mind if she joined an adventure trip with some of her friends. “Sure!” I said.... “just no scuba diving, bungee-jumping, or skydiving.” (Did I mention this was an *adventure* tour?). She agreed. Kind of. I think what she said was, “Oh, Mom. You don’t need to worry about me!” About two weeks later she sent me this photo. If you look carefully you’ll see that the writing on her hands reads, “SORRY MOM.”

Parents want the best for their children. We want them to grow up to be healthy, productive members of society, and happy in their future romantic relationships. You also want them alive. Fortunately, Molly survived her jump....and she plans to do more. (Are you *kidding* me??!!) As your children evolve and become their own persons, you learn very quickly that sometimes you gotta let 'em go in order for them to figure out their place in this world.

As your children get older, not only do they become more adventurous, but they become more and more aware of their emerging sexuality. In fact, sexuality becomes an integral part of their teen years, thanks to those abundant hormones. It is your responsibility as parents to help your kids navigate these important years of change and to answer their questions honestly and without judgment.

The more information you have access to and the more open you are when talking with your kids, the easier these conversations will become. Some young people are more willing to talk about this stuff with people other than their parents/caregivers, and that is okay. It's not you—it's them. Well, okay, maybe it is you, too. Once you find a comfortable balance with these conversations, they become easier. Have your child take the lead...you will get a pretty good idea where they are coming from.

If you look closely at the photo again, you will notice that my daughter, Molly, is jumping in tandem with an "expert" jumper. (Seriously?? Is he *really* an expert? Where are his "expert" papers? I need *proof*!!) Parents, teachers, and caregivers are that "expert" who attaches to your precious children to help them make their "jump" into adulthood. You can help push them out the proverbial door with the information and tools they need to make a (relatively) soft (and sometimes bumpy) landing.

*Teen World Confidential* offers parents and other caring adults tips and tools to inspire medically accurate, honest conversation between you and your mini-me. Information is presented in fast-paced five minute reads that fit into your busy schedule. Killing time waiting in the car for your kids to finish practice? Pick up *Teen World Confidential*, open a random page, and gain fresh insight about current issues affecting teens, ‘tweens, and families. Explore conversation starters—and roadblocks—that can open the door to honest communication that will continue through the teen years.

Over the last three years, students have shared with me, anonymously, concerns and questions they have about sex. These quotes will introduce topics discussed in this book. Questions such as, “Why aren’t parents more open with their kids about sex?” and “How do you tell your parents you are not a virgin?” These are very real concerns young people have. They want to talk to you. In fact, in an informal poll, I found that parents, not peers, were the primary influencers for teens when making sexual health decisions. *The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy*<sup>1</sup> found this to be true as well.

Sexual health is not only about penises and vaginas, birth control, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It encompasses so much more. Decision-making, healthy relationships, values, responsibility, and respecting others are the necessary foundations your child requires as they navigate their blossoming sexuality.

My experience as a birth control educator, maternity nurse, middle and high school health teacher, elementary school nurse, and certified health education specialist (CHES) affords me the academic background necessary to educate and inform parents and other adults about such an important topic. However, my most important role, that as the mother of three grown daughters, has

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1 <https://thenationalcampaign.org/resource/survey-says-october-2016>

given me the personal experience that allows me to be empathetic and genuine when talking to parents about sex. I get it. There are no easy answers. Only you know your child and the best approach to take with them. However *Teen World Confidential* offers information that allows parents to be informed, enlightened, and oh, yes, cool. Well, sorta.

*TeenWorldConfidential.com*, an online resource for parents about adolescent sexual health, was birthed from my idea that perhaps it's the parents who need sex ed resources. After all, parents are their child's first sex educators, and educators must be knowledgeable.

Grab a cup of coffee or a glass of wine and dig in to the sometimes humorous and always informative collection of the most popular blog posts featured on the *Teen World Confidential* website.

"How do you tell your parents you are not a virgin?" Female, 11th grade

"How do you tell your parents you are not a virgin?" Female, 11th grade

"Why is there so much stigma about it?" Female, 12th grade

"Is it weird to be scared of having sex?" Male, 11th grade

"I feel like adults talk so much about the dangers of sex that some people are scared of it." Female, 12th grade

"Why is it bad?" Male, 12th grade

# *COMMUNICATION:*

**how to pretend to be a sex-pert  
without freaking your kids out**

## Using the Barrier Method when Talking to Kids about Sex

**Research has** repeatedly proven that when parents talk honestly and openly about sex with their children, they are more likely to wait before engaging in sex for the first time and more likely to use protection. In other words, adolescents are actually listening to their parents.

A recent study by Laura Widman and colleagues (Parent-Adolescent Sexual Communication and Adolescent Safer Sex Behavior: A Meta-Analysis) notes that conversations between teens and mothers encourages safer sex practices, even more than conversations between fathers and their children.<sup>2</sup> It is noted in Widman's study that daughters tend to have more frequent sexuality-based conversations with parents—usually their mother—than sons do. Because of these conversations, daughters are more likely to use protection.

Sue, a mother of three states:

*“I never had a real sit-down, scheduled talk. It was more casual when things popped up. None of my kids really dated in high school so there was never the talk that occurred out of necessity. My parents never had that talk with me and I'm ashamed to say I followed suit. My husband would never speak about it because in his mind premarital sex was wrong and they just shouldn't do it. I took opportunities when conversation went that route to instill bits of wisdom. My main concern with them was that they would always be open with me and ask questions.”*

A study by Ellen Wilson and colleagues called “Parents’ Perspectives

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2 Widman L, Choukas-Bradley S, Noar SM, Nesi J, Garrett K. Parent-Adolescent Sexual Communication and Adolescent Safer Sex Behavior A Meta-Analysis. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2016;170(1):52-61. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.2731

on Talking to Preteenage Children About Sex” noted that fathers are more comfortable answering questions “directly and honestly” about sexuality when approached by their children.<sup>3</sup> Dads report feeling more comfortable talking to their kids about sex. However, they are not typically the parent who purposefully initiates such conversations with the children. It is time to draw fathers into the discussion and encourage men and boys to talk openly and honestly with each other.

*Melissa*, a mother of three grown children reflects on her experience as her children’s educator:

*“I know that we bought a book and read it with each child. I’m sure I did the majority with all three children because I was around. It was as simple as that. I was home at the appropriate time, during the teachable moments. In subsequent years, I have had much more detailed conversations with my daughters, but would have been mortified to talk to my son. (I’m sure he would have been, too). I asked my husband recently if he had ever had an in-depth conversation with our son about sex and he said no. Obviously, our son figured it out; he and his wife are now expecting.”*

*Jennifer* writes:

*“I really don’t remember any ONE sex talk with my daughter. It was a combination of small conversations, mostly in the car. That seemed to always be a great time for conversations she deemed uncomfortable. The numerous small conversations worked well for me because she always absorbed “parental information” and guidance best in small chunks.”*

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3 <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/psrh/full/4205610.pdf>  
(2010) Parents’ Perspectives on Talking to Preteenage Children About Sex

She goes on to say...

*“I do remember exactly, however, our conversation (in 3rd grade) about how ‘babies are born.’ ‘Mom, I don’t want know how the babies come out (we had already talked about that), but I want to know how they get in there! Don’t tell me a stork; that’s ridiculous!”*

## *Conversational Barriers*

According to Wilson’s study, **moms and dads** may feel uncomfortable talking to their kids about sex for several reasons. In fact, about a quarter of adolescents have not talked to their parents at all about this impactful topic.

**Parents may feel they do not have enough information to provide adequate education for their child or will be asked a question to which they do not know the answer.** No worries. There are many resources to help parents educate themselves.

**Parents may feel their child is not ready to learn about such topics because they have not shown interest in romantic relationships.**

Discussions should be instigated early and often, not just when dating becomes an issue. It is best to help your child be prepared for the mental/emotional, social, as well as physical factors that go into having a healthy relationship. It is difficult to teach that in one afternoon.

**Parents may feel they are intruding on a private aspect of their child’s life.**

There is a difference between being nosy and being interested. Recognizing that your child has romantic interests is not intrusive. In fact, I am willing to bet it is going on right in front of your nose, therefore inviting conversation. I used to send my youngest daughter down to the basement to “distract” my oldest daughter and her boyfriend from any unwanted activity that might be going on. Yes, that is intrusive. I offer no apologies.

**Parents may not want to know their child is romantically involved with someone.**

Sometimes we do not want to know if our child is sexually active. It is just one more thing we have to deal with as busy parents. I get it. However, I recommend engaging in safer sex conversation now, rather than risking a pregnancy or STI conversation later. You are probably losing sleep worrying about it anyway. Just talk it out and get it in the open.

**Parents often struggle with not knowing how to start the conversation or not knowing what to say.**

What do you say to get the conversation going? How do you say it without feeling ... awkward? Possibly the best solution is to accept the fact that it may indeed *be* awkward. It is what it is. Take a deep breath and just start the conversation.

As illustrated by Melissa, Jennifer, and Sue, using age-appropriate books to instigate conversation, finding a comfortable space to talk, and being open and available to conversation are techniques that parents find helpful when talking to their children about sex. Using media and current events to instigate conversation can be helpful. If your children are younger, start talking now. It will help make conversation less awkward when they are older.

You are not expected to know everything there is to know about sex. Besides, as you have discovered, your child does not think you know anything anyway, so the knowledge you do have will impress and surprise them. However, there are many books and online resources that can provide parents with up-to-date, medically-accurate information. Here are a few to get you started:

**Online Resources:**

*Planned Parenthood*

*ANSWER*

*Kids in The House*

*Office of Adolescent Health*

*WomanCare Global*

*TeenWorldConfidential*

**Books:**

- 30 Days of Sex Talks: Empowering Your Child with Knowledge of Sexual Intimacy (Volumes 1, 2, and 3) by Educate and Empower Kids
- It's Not the Stork!: A Book About Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families and Friends (The Family Library) by Robie Harris
- Being a Teen: Everything Teen Girls & Boys Should Know About Relationships, Sex, Love, Health, Identity & More by Jane Fonda
- Prepping Parents for Puberty Talks: A Compilation of Over 500 Questions Children Ask with Child-Friendly Answers by Lori Reichel, PhD

Children appreciate when parents are engaged and invested in their future. They respond positively to the connection they feel with their parent, especially when talking about sexuality honestly and without judgment. Mothers and fathers have a responsibility to get the conversation rolling. No, you do not have all the answers. Yes,

Kim T. Cook, RN CHES

it may be awkward. But honestly, this is a moment to connect with your child on a different level. Not only will they appreciate your effort, but it will inspire them to think twice when making decisions about having sex. Finally, it will give them a memory to chuckle about when they become parents and have to face this issue as well.



## *It's Not Funny—Or is it? Using Humor to Tackle the Talk*

Talking to kids about sex. Yikes.

Any parent who has initiated “the talk” with their child has experienced qualms about what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. It would be awesome to channel a sex-pert during these talks and merely let the words flow succinctly, accurately, and in a manner that eliminates the inevitable eyeball roll of your all-knowing child.

When discussing sexuality with young people, a serious approach is often encouraged as a means to demand respect for the topic. I totally get that. Sexual health is a serious issue that encompasses discussions about decision-making, goal-setting, personal values, healthy relationships—oh, and condoms and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well. The information young people learn from their parents, community, schools, religious community, and the media will influence the choices they make now and in the future.

**You ask, “Adolescent sexuality is not funny!  
Why humor?”**

Infusing humor into a conversation can increase the comfort level to help engage our kids in meaningful dialogue. A certain levity encourages kids to open up and feel safe asking questions.

Humor evens the conversational playing field. With humor, there is a middle ground in which mutual respect and a commonality can be reached. This can enable two-way, honest conversation. On the flipside, lecturing about the sins of sex automatically turns on the mute button in our child’s mind. Remember, they are inundated

with s-e-x on a daily basis. Between their own hormones egging them on, media encouraging promiscuous behavior, and peer influences, they grapple with confusing messages. Do not squelch their concerns with an unbalanced lecture.

Infusing humor into the discussion reflects the idea that sex is actually...fun. I know, you are thinking-I don't want my kids to think this is FUN!! Let me throw it back to you—why not?? They will spend many more years having sex than not having sex. Hopefully. Certainly you wish for them to have a fulfilling, satisfying, close relationship with their life partner, right? Sharing a few romantic laughs allows for an intimacy that can only strengthen relationship bonds.

**There are a few things to consider when talking to kids about sex with a humorous approach.**

1. Be yourself. If you tend to have a zero sense of humor, yet still try to crack a few jokes, your kids will think you have lost your mind. Stay sane.
2. If it is not funny to the child, it is not funny.
3. Not every topic about sexuality should be taken lightly. Dating mishaps? Funny. Dating violence? Not funny.
4. If a child comes to you with a serious question, do not minimize their feelings with a joke and an off-hand comment. Look them in the eye, listen to what they are saying, confirm what they are communicating, then answer the question or merely listen respectfully.
5. Each child is unique, with diverse thoughts about sexuality. The conversational style needs to be custom-tailored to the child.
6. Again—keep in mind there is a time and a place for humor.

Talking to your child about sex may seem daunting initially. It would be convenient to have a one-size-fits-all approach to talk

with kids about serious topics such as sex. However, we need to appreciate each child as an individual and approach them in a manner that is comfortable for them. Know your child and adapt to their particular personality. You may have one kid who is all over it and asks detailed questions and another kid who covers their ears in horror.

Fortunately, “the talk” is a misnomer. It is actually a series of talks over the course of their childhood, which allows for many opportunities to share a few laughs about sex. As parents, we have to do the work to enable effective communication throughout the years, but we do not have to do it alone. Use the resources and expertise of parents who have traveled to the dark side and come out of it only slightly scathed.

It is a hell of a lot of work birthing, nursing, nurturing, loving, teaching, and launching our kids, not to mention the money we invest! We want them to grow up healthy, happy, and well-adjusted. After all, we do want them to return the favor when we enter the adult-diaper years. So, lighten up! Sex is a normal part of life. It’s okay to take a humorous approach to help open lines of communication. Their sex life depends on you. (Wink.)



## *Birds and Bees Aren't the Only Ones Who Do It. History of Sex Ed in the United States*

I was fortunate to enjoy a visit with my daughter in the quirky, vibrant, exuberant, and lovely cities of Berkeley and San Francisco recently. While in Berkeley, I decided to pop into the Doe Library on the campus of UC Berkeley and peruse the detailed exhibit entitled “Birds Do It, Bees Do It.” It is a fascinating collection of sexuality education materials dating back as far as the early 1900s. These artifacts include books, posters, magazines, ads, condoms, and even entertaining video.

There were two displays that most fascinated me. One was an issue of *TIME* magazine from 1971, the other an issue of *LIFE* magazine from 1969. Both covers show young people with looks of confusion, sadness, and maybe even a little fear on their faces. Each cover, despite the obvious difference in the ages of the young people, reflect a sense of innocence.

The cover of *LIFE* states, “The Debate Splits the Nation’s Schools.” Seriously??? 45 years have passed since these magazines were published and we are still debating the issue of what to teach young people about sex ed in our schools?

Interestingly, conversation surrounding the education of our youth about sexual health actually started in 1940—when the U.S. Public Health Service pressed schools to teach sexuality education—stating it was an “urgent need.”<sup>4</sup> That was 75 years ago. And where are we now? The U.S. has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in

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4 <http://connection.ebscohost.com/education/sex-education-schools/history-sex-education> (2016) History of Sex Education

the western world with 77% being unplanned.<sup>5</sup> Half of the new STI diagnoses are found in young adults aged 15-24. Need I say more?<sup>6</sup>

So what needs to change? Education. Conversation. Removing stigma. Understanding. Acceptance.

As adults, it is our responsibility to discuss the realities about sex with our young people. And by realities, I mean all of it. The risks: emotional, physical, and social. But also, the beautiful aspect of sex: emotional, physical, and social. If you share the good stuff with young people, logic tells us they will likely respect our opinions and advice when we discuss the risks of unprotected sex and the importance of sexual decision-making skills.

I would love to see faces that represent our youth reflect confidence, contentment, and hopefulness rather than the doleful appearance of the youth seen on the covers of *LIFE* and *TIME* magazine all those year ago, wouldn't you?



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5 <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/trends.html> (2016) Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing  
6 <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/sexualbehaviors/> (2016) Sexual Risk Behaviors: HIV, STD, & Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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- It's Not Funny—Or is it? Using Humor to Tackle the Talk. .... 13
- Birds and Bees Aren't the Only Ones Who Do It:  
History of Sex Ed in the United States ..... 16
- Stats and Facts: How Many Teens Are Having Sex? ..... 18
- Be Available to Talk to Kids about Sex: Just Don't Be Weird ..... 20
- Navigating Emerging Sexuality ..... 23
- Talking to your Infant about Sexuality ..... 25
- Body Image and the Preschool Child:  
Tips for Creating a Positive Home Environment ..... 29

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*boys, girls, and everyone in between* ..... 34

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- Helping Your Child Identify Their Goals ..... 45

## Stats and Facts: How Many Teens are Having Sex?

Why is it so important we talk to our kids about sexual health? After all, you *did* tell them to wait until they were married, right? Or in love? Or at *least* in college....? And we know if you told them to wait, they most certainly will! (Shall I remind you of my little skydiving story?)

The fact is, kids are deciding to engage in sexual activity before they are married. Or in college. Or even in love. Don't believe it?

According to The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS)\*\* 2015, 41.2% of students have had sex, compared to 46.8% just two years ago.<sup>7</sup>

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\*\* *The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS)* is a survey given to students across the country that asks about different aspects of their healthy (or lack-of) behaviors. The study breaks down results according to gender and race/ethnicity as well, however I used the results for ALL kids. This information is used to look at trends and to figure out if our educational efforts in the community and schools is working. Using that information, we can then figure out the changes needed to improve how we address these health-behavior issues.

Of those:

- 3.9 had sex before the age of 13.
- Only 8.8% used both a condom and birth control at last sex.
- Only 56.9% used a condom at last sex.
- 13.8% used no protection at last sex.
- 6.7% were forced to have sex by the person they were dating.

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7 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/pdfs/ss6509.pdf>.(2016)Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9–12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015

- 10.6% experienced some kind of dating violence.
- 30.1% were sexually active at the time of the survey.
- 17.7% seriously contemplated suicide.

I'm not showing you these statistics to frighten you, because when you think about it, if less than half of high school students have had sex by graduation, then more than half have not! I am almost 100% certain your child is in the 60% who has not engaged in such activities because, well, you asked him or her not to, right?

Whether or not your child is sexually active *right now* is irrelevant. One day they will be, and we want to arm our children with tools to help them make solid healthy choices.

The good news is that in the last 20 years, high school kids have been choosing to wait to have sex. In 1991, 54.1% of students engaged in sexual activity—in 2015 it was only about 41%. Also, kids are using condoms more frequently as well. Yay.

However, out of 20 million new STI diagnoses, half are found in the 15-24 year old age group. Yikes. I don't know about you, but I want to make sure my kids stay healthy. However, if they do contract an STI, I want to be confident they know how to handle their situation.



## *Be Available to Talk to Kids About Sex: Just Don't Be Weird*

I had the honor and privilege of attending a high school health fair geared towards students. What an awesome idea! By having this event, the messages sent to these young people are: 1) You are important enough for the school to devote an entire day to your health and well-being, and 2) There are numerous resources within the community to support your physical, mental/emotional, social, and academic needs—you are not alone. How awesome is that? Kudos to the teacher for organizing this well-attended event.

Sexual health was addressed with booths manned by community services that support HIV/STI testing (Open Door Clinic), pregnancy testing and services (Fox Valley Pregnancy Services), and teen parenting (Teen Parent Connection). Of course, our booth—Teen World Confidential—is a resource for medically-accurate sexual health information for parents and students. The presence of these organizations communicated to the students that sexual health is an important part of being human, and that the adults in the school care about this aspect of their lives. How cool is that?

While there, I had students answer questions related to sexual health education. One result in particular is worth noting. When asked if they felt comfortable talking about sex with their parents, the overwhelming majority answered “yes!” They stated that having a “good relationship” and “open communication” with their parents opened doors to easy discussion. Some stated that parents began the conversation about sex early in their growth and development, therefore talking to parents now is not such a big deal.

Of course there were those that felt they could not talk about sex with their parents because either it is “weird” or “awkward” to do so, or their parents are just plain “weird.” (I can relate—my own kids say certain topics are **weird** to talk to me about! Apparently, I become “over-interested” in learning about their new boyfriends. (Well, duh! Do you blame me?)...But I digress.)

My point is... parents, guardians, educators, youth supporters... keep up the good work and keep the conversation going. If you are an adult who does not know how to start, or you feel **weird** talking about sexuality, try these starters:

- Ask them what they learned in health class.
- Discuss a current news story. That shouldn't be too hard—I don't think a day goes by that there isn't some sex-related news story being broadcast, often addressing the topic of consent.
- When watching TV or a movie together, chances are there will be some scene that will relate to sex—use that!
- Arrange for a specific time to sit and talk together. Let them know the topic in advance, however!

Kids are curious—they want to know stuff. But not just about condoms and STIs—they want to know about the really juicy stuff, too... Relationships. Love. Friendship. Sexual decision-making. Values. Responsibility. Needless to say, it is not a one-time conversation. Just remember to be honest about your feelings, values, and even your knowledge about sex. It is okay to say, “gosh, I'm not sure!” if they ask you a tricky question.

Respecting your child's thoughts, opinions, and questions will encourage repeated conversation. If they announce they are thinking of becoming sexually active, this is *not* the time to say very loudly “OH MY GOSH! YOU ARE TOO YOUNG!!!” (But it is okay if you

freak-out a little in your head. I know you can't help it...just don't let on.) Listen to what they have to say—they are talking to you for guidance, advice, information. Do the best you can. Be human. Be honest. Be respectful. Use some humor. It's okay to laugh together! But apparently, being **weird** is out.

According to the small sample of students who answered my question, "Are you comfortable talking to your parent(s) about sex?" 69% think it's really kind of cool to talk about sex with mom and dad.

Just don't be **weird** about it.



## *Navigating Emerging Sexuality*

If you have ever been “forced” to learn something new, such as the basics of social media or blogging, I don’t have to tell you how frustrating it can be. Just when you think you’ve got it figured out, another glitch rears its ugly head and sets you back another hour. With any emerging skill, it is crucial to start from the ground and work your way up, regardless of how much general knowledge a person may have. Understanding the basics of any new competence forms the roots from which your new knowledge will (hopefully) grow. That’s how learning works.

Your brain builds upon information it already knows. For example, there is a reason we teach people how to add and subtract before we dive into algebra—without the concepts of basic math, algebra just isn’t going to happen. And for some of us, algebra just doesn’t happen anyway. (Why *do* they put those little letters in math problems, anyway?)

Think about our adolescents and sexual health. Teaching our children about the basics of reproductive and sexual health provides the essential groundwork from which their knowledge can grow. Knowing proper terms for their va-jay-jays (vaginas) and willies (penises) is a great start. (See what I mean?) I’m not saying never use slang—that’s not realistic. After all, don’t we all want to Save the Tata’s? First, be sure kids know basic and proper terminology, then you can start messing with their heads with the slang. Please use appropriate, non-offending slang. Some words are entirely unacceptable—and you know which words I mean.

Modeling skills related to decision-making, consequences from our choices, respect for others, taking responsibility for actions... you get the idea... helps kids develop into respectable humans.

These skills are all part of a person's sexuality, too. They use this foundation to navigate their decisions about when and with whom to engage in an intimate relationship, how to keep themselves and their partner safe from unintended pregnancy or STIs, and how to honor their partner's sexuality values.

What you do, what you say, what you watch...it all matters. It is important for parents to lay the groundwork about healthy sexuality. No, please don't tell them details about your own sex life. Rather, talk openly about issues you see on the media. When you hear a sex-related term, ask them if they know what it means. If not, you can explain it to them using your personal values—or just give it to them straight! You know your own kid. And if neither of you knows the answer, look it up!

Laying the roots for your kids when it comes to the physical, mental/emotional, and social aspects of sexual health will allow them to build upon that knowledge and navigate their sexual world in a manner that follows their personal value system.

Will they always make the best choice?

Well, let me ask you...did you? It's okay. Even mistakes help build our knowledge base; and that is how we grow and learn as individuals. Offer support and guidance as your young person navigates through adolescence and the incredible physical and personal growth that occurs. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it.



## Talking to your Infant about Sexuality

***The notice arrives from the nurse at your child's elementary school.***

“The Talk” will be held at some point during fifth grade. Your eyes bug out, your heart pounds, sweat beads down your chest (okay, maybe that was a hot flash), and you suddenly have a need for a glass of red. Or white. And friends!

Little thought bubbles begin exploding around your head:

Wait, I want to talk to my child before the school does.

*No way do I want to talk to my child about this!*

My child knows nothing about this; why now?

*Oh my gosh, what does my child already know?!*

My partner and I need to approach our child as a team.

*I am in charge of meals, let my partner deal with this!*

My child isn't old enough for this!

*Is my child old enough for this?*

Your child is about ten years old, and they are going to learn about puberty. Very, very soon. This begs the question, when IS the best time to begin talking to your child about S-E-X?

***First*** we have to understand what the conversations about sex look like. Whether you realize it or not, you have been talking about sexual health with your child for many years already. Have you discussed values important to your family? Have you shared your ideas on love and relationships? Have you asked your child “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Guess what? That's all part of the package! Values, relationships, decision-making, goal-setting all lay the foundation for a