

Facts & feelings

Talking about:

Skills

Utah State University Department of Family & Human Development and Cooperative Extension Service

Why Skills?

As a parent, you probably know pretty well what your adolescents need to do, but will they do it? Maybe you've talked together about your values and the meaning of sex, and they understand the importance of waiting. Hopefully, they want to make the right choices. How can you help them? What else do they need?

Unfortunately, it's pretty common for teens to just go along when they feel pressured by their friends. Especially in the early teens,

kids don't want to appear different. They need skills to be able to stand up for themselves, to resist unwanted pressures, and to refuse to be involved in things that they don't want to do. Negative peer pressure is a major reason teens do things that they know they shouldn't.

A skill is the ability to do something well.

The teen years can be lots of fun, but there are also real pressures for teens to

face. Your teen is probably exposed to a lot of messages that suggest early sexual activity. TV, movies, and rock music give direct messages (some are just plain crude) about sex--DO IT. IT'S FUN. IT FEELS GOOD. It's no wonder that teens feel so much pressure to have sex, and it's no wonder that so many of them do.

So, this newsletter is about skills, the skills needed to stand by values and decisions when the pressure is on. These are called refusal skills.

Assertiveness Skills

Being assertive is the skill of being able to say what you really think or feel without being rude to others. Assertiveness is important because it shows respect for yourself and for others. Being passive is the opposite of being assertive. Many teenagers are passive because they don't want to appear different.

Some advantages of being assertive, are:

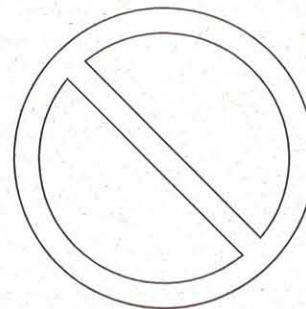
1. greater control over your life
2. increased sense of personal honesty
3. greater self respect
4. more respect from others
5. less chance of being taken advantage of
6. better chance of doing what you want

The Skill of Saying No

Let's face it, it's hard for many of us adults to say "no." Sometimes we feel like we just can't say "no," even when we should. For example, what about when your boss makes an unreasonable request? What happens when a neighbor asks for something, but you have conflicting obligations? Even when we should say "no," it's not always easy.

It's not easy for teenagers, either. It can be harder for them to say "no" because fitting in and being

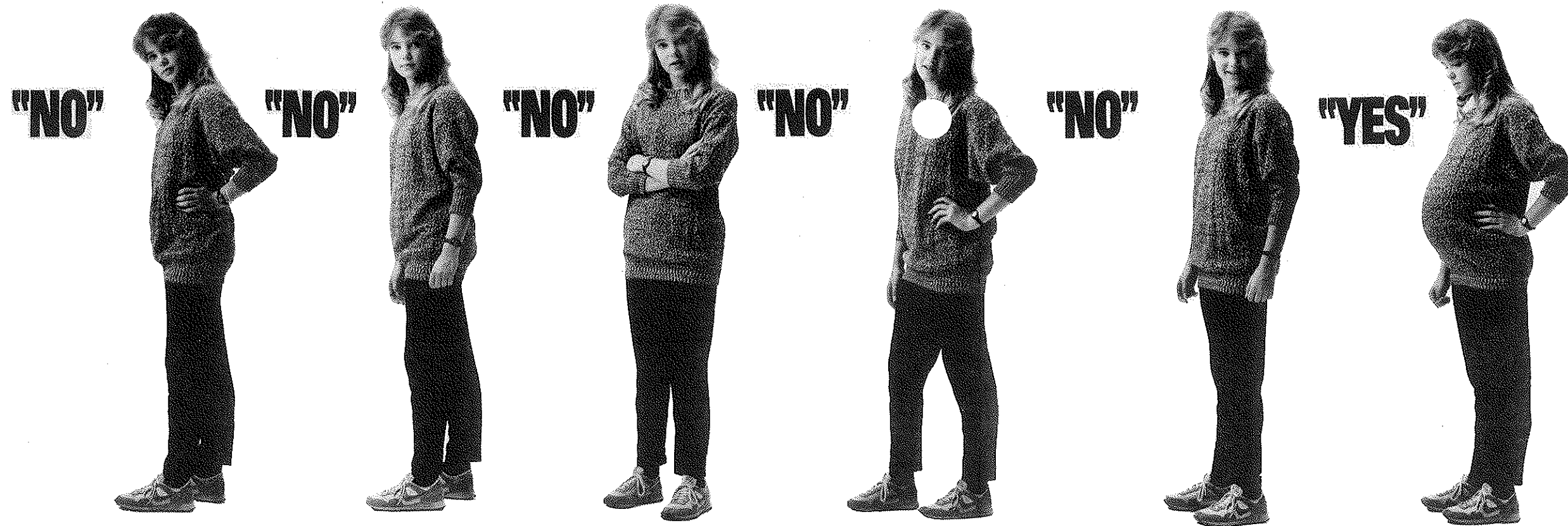
accepted are especially important to them.



Of course the point we have been trying to make all along is that saying "no" to sex is the best choice for teenagers. They can't afford to risk being passive. How do you help your teen(s) develop the skill of saying "no" to having sex?

Assertiveness skills help you stand up for yourself without being rude to others.





**IT
ONLY
TAKES
ONCE.**
THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

No, No, and No Again

Saying "no" to sex isn't something that teens only need to do once. Especially with regard to having sex, "no" might need to be repeated over and over.

"No," Meaning "Not Yet"

First, it's important to convey that saying "no" to having sex is a matter of timing. Having sex isn't always wrong or bad. Someday they will be ready for sex, but good relationships take time and they involve much more than sex. Most young people aren't ready for sex even if they think they are. When young people have sexual relations, someone gets hurt. Many people believe in waiting until marriage to have sex.

So, in this respect, saying "no" to having sex is different from saying "no" to stealing or to using drugs. Doing these things is never right, but that's not the case with having sex. You hope your children will appreciate their sexuality when the time is right. But for now, they should be saying "no," and meaning "not yet."

Did you know . . . the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that teens not have sex. The reasons go beyond disease and pregnancy. They include health, emotional, and relationship problems. It pays to wait.

Conveying "No" More Clearly

Some people think that, when it comes to sex, an unconvincing or weakly spoken "no" really means "yes." How it's said is important.

1. Face the person. Your body language is important.
2. Look him or her in the eyes. Looking at the person adds conviction to your message, and it's more assertive. You really mean it.

3. Use a calm but serious voice. A calm voice communicates that you are in control.
4. Begin with a positive. Others react more favorably to you when you are positive. "I really like you...."
5. Say "no." State how you really feel. "I really like you, but no, I don't feel right about this."
6. Suggest alternatives. Making a suggestion gives both of you a way out, without losing face. "I really like you, but I don't want to get involved with sex. Lets go . . ."
7. Repeat "no" if necessary. The most important skill here is to hold to your value. Don't be worn down. When it's really important to you, you can't let someone else make your decision.



"I said no, and I mean it."

Skills for Parents

There is another set of skills that can help you make decisions with your teenagers. Inevitably, differences will arise over some issues. Should they be allowed to go or not? How late can they stay out on school nights? And so on.

1. Address the teenagers' needs first. What do they want to do, and why? Ask them to be clear about what's involved.
2. Address your needs next. What are the issues to you? Do you have concerns about safety or conflicts with other important values (like school)?
3. Brainstorm for solutions. Consider as many ideas as possible. Is it possible to meet your needs and your teen's needs too? If not, what's a reasonable compromise?
4. Agree on solution that seems best for everyone. Remember that family members have different views.
5. Decide together on a reward for keeping the rule, and a consequence if the rule isn't kept.

When conflicts arise, we don't have to take sides and argue with each

other. Instead we can put our energy into searching for solutions that respect everyone's needs and opinions.

Some of these family decisions will be easier if you have some basic rules. What are your family's non-negotiable rules? These rules are the "givens" and are not easily changed. Non-negotiable rules usually deal with issues that relate to physical and emotional safety or family values. These rules will be most effective when kept to a minimum that deal with deeply held family values. Teens will be more likely to agree with non-negotiable rules if parents explain the reasons for them.

It's Your Turn

1. Tell your teens you know that they will have sexual feelings. Talk about why it is important that they say "NO" to having sexual intercourse. They don't have to apologize. It's best to say no for now.

2. Talk with your teens about what kinds of sexual behaviors are acceptable to you, under what conditions. Are kissing and/or embracing acceptable signs of affection for someone they care about?

3. Practice assertiveness skills with your teens. You say the "lines" that someone might use to try to get them to have sex. Help them prepare an assertive response.

Ask Your Teen

Have you ever said "no" to anyone? How did you feel?

Are there certain times when it has been easy to say "no"? When has it been hard?

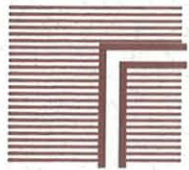
What if a friend told you they didn't want to be sexually involved? Would you respect him or her? Would you get mad at him or her?

How can you let someone know you really like him or her, but that you don't want to get sexually involved?



Looking at SKILLS

Teens are being told today to “just say no” to things that are harmful, but sometimes they aren’t given the skills to really be able to do that. Saying “no” is difficult sometimes, for teens and also adults. Some people are naturally more assertive than others, but assertiveness is a skill that can be learned. You and your teen can practice it together. This newsletter, along with the Facts and Feelings video “Talking About Skills,” can help.



Facts & feelings

Department of Family and Human Development
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Facts & feelings

Talking about:

Meanings

Utah State University Department of Family & Human Development and Cooperative Extension Service

Meanings are in People



We tend to believe that others see things the same way we do. But do we really see things the same way? Consider the meaning of marriage. Some consider marriage to be a state of bliss (such people are usually single or newly wed). Some people see marriage as a trap (such people have usually been hurt in intimate relationships). Others consider marriage to be somewhere in between: important and satisfying, but also sometimes difficult and frustrating, and always a lot of work.

"There are as many definitions of love, as there are brains to think them."

Leo Tolstoy
Russian Novelist

The meaning we give to marriage (or to anything) depends on our age, our experiences and our temperament. And no two people have had quite the same experiences.

Think about the different meanings pregnancy can have. For a high school couple who are unsure about their relationship with each other, news that she is pregnant would probably be very distressing. For a couple who has been trying to have children, news of the wife's pregnancy may be cause for rejoicing. For the couple who already have children they are struggling to support, news of the mother's pregnancy may bring a mixed reaction. The meaning of any event depends upon its timing, our situation and on our personality.

It's obvious to us that sex doesn't mean the same things to all people either. Does your teen understand the that some view sex as a way of proving that they are attractive, Or that to some, sex is merely a source of fun or pleasure? Are they aware that ideas like believing sex is a

biological necessity, or a sign of power or control over someone else lead to treating people disrespectfully? People with these views are more likely to use

Meanings are Caught

Meanings about sex are "caught" by children who listen to what is praised, criticized or laughed at. Children may be getting mixed messages because parents don't always communicate consistently. Often, because children are good observers but poor interpreters, they may misunderstand the messages being given. It is important for parents to be consistent and clear in the messages they send about the meaning of sex, especially with teens. Parents need to be sure that what sex means to them is being understood in spite of messages that come from other sources.

sex, and other people, for selfish reasons. Sex involves values, and when sex is used without respect, it may hurt others as well as ourselves.

To some people, sex has a deeper significance and is to be reserved for marriage. Within marriage it expresses love, respect and a commitment to building and strengthening the relationship. These people are willing to postpone sex because they know that it will be right for both people when it is within a committed marital relationship.

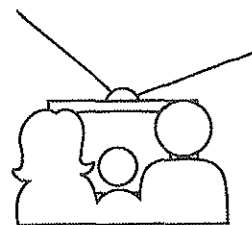


Sexuality in the Media

You may be surprised to know that in a large national survey, most American adults did not approve of premarital sex for people younger than 18. The media give quite a different message. Of the sexual encounters that take place in TV soap operas, 94% occur between people who are not married to one another. In fact, on TV, extramarital sex is portrayed six times more often than sex between spouses. Consider also that close to 20,000 sexual references occur during prime time television every year! What message does that convey about the meaning of sexuality in our society?

Alphabet Soup: G, PG, R and X

Of the feature movies released in a typical year in the U.S., two out of three are rated R. Given that a movie must contain some combination of graphic violence, nudity, sexuality, or vulgarity in order to qualify for an R rating, what message are we giving youth about the meaning of life, relationships and sexuality? Are we comfortable with that message? Do we want our children exposed to casual sex, frank sex, strange sex and even violent sex? It is not enough to understand the facts of life. We must go beyond the facts to feelings, values and the meaning of relationships.



Left Brain, Right Brain

Research shows that different mental processes take place in different areas of the brain. The left half of the brain does more of the critical thinking, analyzing and judging that takes place in learning facts and information. The left half helps us learn things like math, reading, and spelling. The right part of the brain is the part where emotions and attitudes are mostly processed. The right part of the brain is also most affected by movement, color and music.

Understanding a little about how the brain works helps us understand how media messages can be so influential. Often, when we watch TV, we are doing so to be entertained (right brain), not to be informed (left brain). TV programming is mostly designed for that purpose, so, we don't often critically think about the messages that are coming through the media. Children's attitudes and values can be influenced as they passively watch and absorb messages that are frequently repeated. Do these media messages agree with your family's values?

- Sex appeal counts more than personality.
- Work is more important than family life.
- A real man has sex with different women.
- A real woman can seduce a man if she wants to.
- Casual sex results in pleasure and intense love.
- It is easy to stay in love, it doesn't take effort.
- Sex makes everything else right.
- No one waits until marriage to have sex.

Become an Active TV Viewer

Begin to watch for sexual issues that your teen sees on TV. They are not there by accident.

Body Image. Are people fat or skinny, hairy-chested, large-busted, well-groomed or sloppy? What sexuality messages are the media sending about how people ought to look to be attractive or worthwhile?

Sexuality in Relationships. Is sex shown as part of caring and committed relationships, or as recreation, manipulation or power?

Sexual Consequences. Are the damaging consequences of irresponsible sexual activity portrayed? Pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease or emotional hurt are rarely connected to sexual activity depicted on TV or in movies.

Sexual Arousal. Is sex used to get and keep attention in programming and in advertising? What are the situations, statements or devices used to "hook" the viewer?

Marriage and Family. How do family members treat each other? Are decisions made fairly? Is there respect and appreciation or disrespect and hostility?

Sex Roles. Who cooks the meals and cares for the children? Which roles are made to seem more important? How are men's/boys' and women's/girls' roles portrayed? How do men show emotions? How do women?

You can watch TV, which is constantly moving forward, without any effort or critical thinking. Its messages may be registered in your mind without you even being aware of it. To pick out messages and discuss them, you have to *think* about what you are *watching*.



Sexuality is More than Just Sex

Whether or not parents recognize it, they started teaching about sexuality the first time they held their new baby. The way parents hold the baby—love, soothe and caress him or her, the sound of their voices, and the feel of their skin—all begin to teach the child love and trust, an important part of sexuality.

Sexuality is also part of how you feel about yourself, how you feel about your looks, and how you judge other people. A big part of it is what we think it means to be a man or a woman. Some of our ideas about

men's and women's roles may be based on stereotyped ideas about how men and women are supposed to act. These sex role stereotypes include things like men shouldn't show their feelings or that women shouldn't be assertive. These stereotypes lack *respect* for women and also for men. They can lead people to think that there is a double standard of sexual behavior -- one for men, and another for women. If teens accept the double standard, it can create pressure that may push them into premature sexual encounters.

It's Your Turn

Watch TV with your teen. Talk about how sex is portrayed. Use open-ended questions like:

- “Why do you think that woman in the tire commercial stands next to the tire in a mini-skirt?” (Using arousal to sell)
- “What do you think of that man getting a hotel room with that woman he isn't married to?” (Sex outside marriage)
- “How many regular teens/people/families do you think really act like that?” (Fantasy vs. reality)

Ask Your Teen

- Do you think sex appeal counts more than personality in the media?
- Do you think it makes a guy more of a man to have sex with different women? Why?
- How do you think people feel in real life when they realize they have been manipulated into having sex?
- Do you think having sex before marriage usually leads to having a strong, long-lasting relationship?
- How realistic is it when the media shows unmarried people having sex with no problems or concerns?

Dealing with TV'S Messages

Television is a powerful teaching medium. Advertisers can influence people's values and attitudes about products. How do advertisers get us to think cigarette smoking makes us young and attractive when it shortens life expectancy and causes premature wrinkling? If TV can overcome facts like these, it can affect attitudes and values regarding sexuality. Do you recognize messages about sexuality like the ones listed above? Do you want your children to accept or reject them?



**DON'T LET A HOT DATE
TURN INTO A DUE DATE.**

Just a reminder that one night with your girlfriend could last a lifetime.

THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

Looking at MEANINGS



The facts do not speak for themselves when it comes to human relationships. With so many differing messages about the meaning of sexuality, it can be hard for teens to decide what the facts ought to mean to them. It's important for parents to be aware of the messages their teens are getting and talk about them together. This newsletter, and the Facts and Feelings video "Talking about Meanings," can help.



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Facts & feelings

Talking about:

Choices

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Teens Making Choices

Teens Need Judgement

“What are the advantages of having sex now? What are the advantages of waiting?”

Teens are faced with many choices. Often, they make these choices without the benefit of all the experience you have gained as an adult. But experienced or not, they have to take the consequences of the decisions they make - consequences which may last a lifetime.

The potential consequences of the decision to be sexually active or not are especially serious. How can you help them choose?

Sometimes parents try to make the decisions for their teens. As much as you might like to, that doesn't usually work. Because of the emo-

tional and mental changes teens are going through as part of adolescence, they want - and need - to make their own decisions. Young people who have not made decisions about who

Teens Need Facts

If teens believe myths like, “you can't get pregnant if you just do it once,” they are less able to make good choices.

they are and where they want to go in life are the most susceptible to peer pressure. They are more likely to rely on others to make their decisions and define their values for them. On the other hand, those teens who have made decisions about school or personal goals are more capable of making decisions about sex that will result in their own happiness and growth.

It is more effective for parents to help teens learn to be good decision-makers. Parents can do this in several ways:

- giving facts and information,
- sharing a different perspective or point of view,
- helping teens identify what's good and bad in the choices they have made.

Teens Need Perspective

Teenagers may think some choices are *small*. “I'll copy somebody's homework before class. Let's go to the mall.” They may think others are *big*. “What brand of athletic shoes should I get?” Make sure they've thought about the ones that are *really big* like, “Should I have sex now?”

Helping Teens Make Decisions



Children learn how to make decisions best in families that give them a chance to make them. Parents who explain the reasons for their own decisions also help children learn these skills.

Young children cannot make decisions alone; they don't yet have

the experience to avoid hazards, to act in their own best interest, or to decide within a value system. Parents can, however, let children make “choices within limits.” As children become teenagers, the limits can be enlarged, giving them more freedom to choose and learn more responsibility.

Helping Teens Make Decisions (continued)

Think about decisions you faced as a teen. Think about decisions your teen will soon be facing. Talk about the decisions now so they won't be taken by surprise.

It is important for parents to be supportive of their children's efforts to make decisions. Doing so will increase their confidence in their ability to make good decisions. Your support

will also make it more likely that teens will tell you what they are thinking. Ridiculing or rejecting your teens' choices often increases their determination to stick to them. It also cuts off communication.

At times, children make choices that parents know beforehand won't work out. If these decisions go against important family values, parents must set clear limits. Involving your teen in establishing the rules and agreeing on consequences if the rules are broken

will be the most effective approach. When it's possible, however, letting teens experience for themselves the consequences of their decisions will be a better teacher than parental advice or authority.

Teens can learn responsible decision-making by seeing how their parents make decisions. Teens also feel better about following rules when they understand why they were made.

Steps in Decision-Making



Here are some of the steps to teaching responsible decision-making.

1. Take their decisions seriously. Remember that, to

your teens, their problems are real. Saying "I can understand why this is a difficult choice for you," shows respect and leaves teens more inclined to talk with you about their concerns, including sexuality.

2. Gather information. Make sure you understand the issues. Help your teen look at all the facts.

3. Help identify alternatives. Brainstorm together to think of all the possible solutions. Don't criticize or eliminate any of your teen's ideas at his stage.

4. Predict the consequences. Look at the likely outcomes of each alternative by listing the pros and cons. For

example, teens may think the pro side of sexual activity includes status with friends, feeling grown-up, keeping a boy or girlfriend, or fitting in with the crowd. Even though you may not agree, it is important to acknowledge things your teen considers advantages of an alternative. In discussing the cons, try to suggest rather than preach.

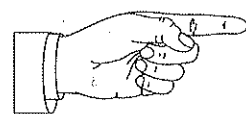
5. Discuss feelings and values. After examining the pros and cons of the possible alternatives, encourage your teen to look at the alternatives in terms of your family's values and their feelings. Avoid criticism. It will create resistance to you and your values. Share your feelings, your values and your reasons for your point of view. What experiences have you had or heard about that have made you feel the way you do?

6. Decide. Based on the pros and cons, the possible consequences and your family's values, choose the best alternative. Often, this will involve compromising,

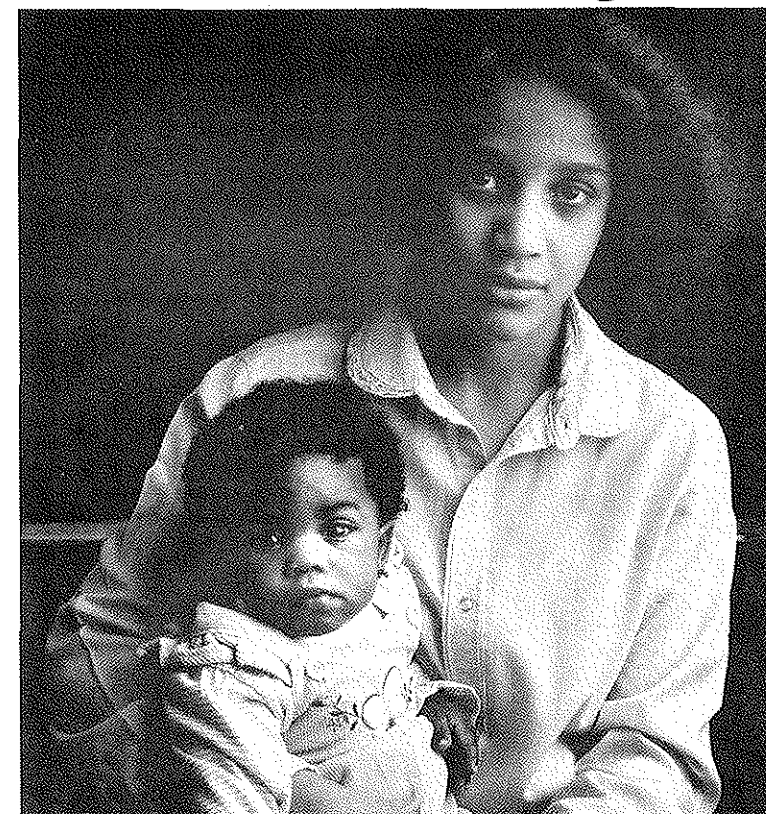
Some Good Reasons Not to Have Premarital Sex

There are many teens who are delaying sexual involvement. Some of their reasons include:

1. Premarital sex is against their values or religion.
2. Their friends are not having sex.
3. They want to avoid pregnancy.
4. They do not want to get sexually-transmitted diseases.
5. They don't feel ready for sex.
6. They want to wait for someone special; they want sex to be a part of a loving relationship.
7. They don't want to be in trouble with parents.



The one on the left will finish high school before the one on the right.



Adolescent pregnancy isn't just a problem in America, it's a crisis. To learn more about a social issue that concerns all of us, write: Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

The Children's Defense Fund.

Who's at Risk?

Researchers have found that teenagers who were most likely to have sexual intercourse were those who came from unhappy homes where discipline was either permissive or very strict. Those least likely to be sexually involved came from homes with more open communication, moderate strictness, more religious practice, family closeness and later dating.



It's Your Turn

Ask Your Teen

What types of decisions are hard for you to make?

What have you decided about getting sexually involved before marriage?

Have you decided how you're going to avoid getting sexually involved?

If you're alone with someone you like of the opposite sex, and you want to do more than kiss, how are you going to handle it?

More Good Reasons to Wait

8. They don't want their dating relationships to become sex-centered, possessive or complicated.

9. They have self-respect. They don't feel they have to have sex to impress others.

10. They have education and career goals that could be at risk if they have sex.

11. They want to enjoy fun dating relationships without "getting heavy."

12. They believe sex means that two people have made a permanent commitment to each other. To use sex any other way would be dishonest.

Teens will face challenges in following the commitment to postpone

sexual intercourse. How can you help them? Agree on family rules that could help teens avoid difficult situations. Talk about how sexuality adds to a healthy married relationship and the importance of reserving sexuality for marriage. Discuss the possible consequences of early sexual involvement with your teen. Talk about how your teen can deal with strong sexual urges. Give guidelines for showing affection to someone of the opposite sex.

Looking at CHOICES



Young people today seem to be faced with more choices and fewer guidelines about what's right and wrong. Parents won't always be there, and society's expectations are pretty flexible. The responsibility falls on teens to make their own choices. How can parents prepare their teens to make the choices that will help them reach their potential? Talking together about choices and how to go about making them, can help teens be ready to make the important choices that will affect their future. This newsletter, and the Facts and Feelings video "Talking about Choices," will help.



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Talking about:

Values

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WHO'S TEACHING VALUES?

As adolescents form their values, they may gather information from parents, school, church, community and peers. Teens look to different sources for identity and values depending on what the issues are. They tend to look to peers on clothes, hair styles, and dating. They may look to other adults on school or career. *But teens look most to parents for basic values.*

So, what's important to you as a parent? What are your beliefs? What values do you hope your child adopts? The values an adolescent develops and accepts will have lifelong consequences.

It is important for parents to talk about their values with their teens, and how values relate to real life. For several reasons, it is especially important for parents to communicate values regarding sexuality to teens.

Teens need to:

- adopt personal values to guide their behavior,
- learn your values about sex rather than someone else's,
- understand the importance of postponing sexual involvement, and
- decide to avoid sexual involvement before being faced with peer pressure and difficult situations.

RESPECT IS BASIC

It is true that families may differ somewhat regarding the values about sexuality they believe are important. *Respect* applies to everyone, though. You probably agree with these statements:

- It's wrong for anyone to try to force someone else to be involved in sexual activity.
- It's wrong to let yourself be used for sex.
- It's wrong to think that some behavior is OK for boys that's not OK for girls.
- It's wrong to blame someone else for your own behavior.
- It's wrong to use love as a justification to have sex.

What makes these things wrong? All these behaviors show a lack of *respect*, either for others or for ourselves. Respect means that our rights are just as important as someone else's, and that their rights are just as important as ours.

Respect also means treating others with equality - giving them the same rights we want. It includes being responsible for our own behavior and having self-control. Abstaining from sex before marriage shows respect for ourselves and others.



RESPECT TEACHES RESPECT

Parents need to treat a teen with respect if they expect him or her to learn self-respect and respect for others. A teen who feels loved and valued will be more careful about decisions. A teen who feels worthless may feel that his or her decisions don't matter.

Parents can do many things to build a child's self-respect. Expressing love is a powerful way to build self-respect. So is listening and trying to understand. Spending

time with him or her in activities also builds self-respect. Teens need self-respect in order to be able to say "No" when they are pressured to have sex or get involved in other harmful behaviors.

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they are capable of being."

Goethe, Playwright
1749-1832

In other words, believe in your teens -- have confidence in them. Expect that they will do what is right. Expect that they will do such things as be in

the band or choir, on a school team

The best thing to spend on children is your time.

Anonymous

or on the honor roll, or involved with good friends and activities. Be realistic in your expectations, but encourage and show faith in your teen. Teens are at a stage of life when they may doubt themselves. If parents doubt them too, they are likely to live up to this self-fulfilling prophecy.



PRINCIPLES ABOUT VALUE FORMATION

Parents will have greater success helping their adolescents develop values if they consider the following:

1. Values cannot be forced on anyone. They are accepted and adopted gradually. In fact, trying to force our opinions on others usually results in rejection.

2. We tend to model ourselves after those who we admire and feel close to. If teens feel threatened or belittled by someone, they are unlikely to want to be like that person.

3. Values are formed best when we have some clear standards to compare our ideas against. Making expectations clear, while having tolerance for those with differing views, provides a good climate for value formation.

GUIDELINES FOR FOSTERING VALUES

Based on these principles, the following guidelines may be helpful:

• **Maintain a close relationship.** Minimize criticism. Instead, find opportunities to give encouragement for behavior you like and approve of.

• **State what you believe.** Explain what you think and why. As much as possible, try to be calm and matter-of-fact in discussions about values, but make your position clear. If you value waiting to have sex until marriage, make sure your child understands that and why you feel as you do.

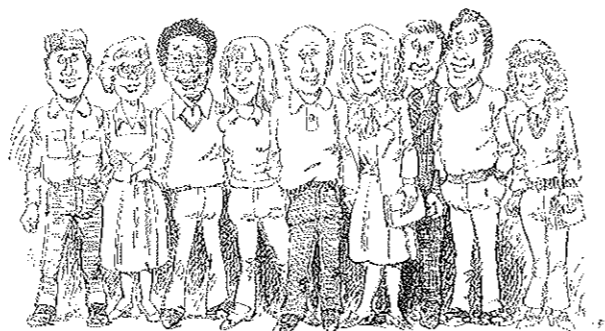
• **Be an example.** More than what you say, teens will watch what you do.

• **Be respectful.** This can be very difficult, but it sends an important message about how you feel about your teen. Make sure the message of love behind your

concern gets through. Your respect helps teens respect you and your values.

• **Don't give up.** Teens need someone to believe in them when they have lost faith in themselves. Realize you and your child may have differing opinions on some things. Still, you can continue to be close and have a positive influence on each other.

• **Teach decision-making.** Help youth think for themselves. Discuss the "whys" behind the values. Talk about "what if" situations. Help them learn that what happens to them is a result of the choices they make.



TALK ABOUT IT AND LIVE IT

There are two ways to teach teens respect for themselves and for others. One is to talk about it. For example, you could talk about situations where figures in public life have or have not shown respect for their office, their associates, their fans, their beliefs or themselves.

The other way to teach respect is to be an example. Show respect for your teen. Use language like "I respect your opinion," or "I'll respect your decision even though I don't agree with it." Show respect for other family members. Show respect for yourself. As parents, none of us is perfect. It is important to be as consistent as possible, though, by living the values we say are important to us. We can't escape the fact that values are *caught* more than they are *taught*.

IT'S YOUR TURN

Family Rules

To help define the most important values in your family, have each person get a separate sheet of paper and write down what he or she thinks are the most important family rules. These might be spoken or unspoken rules. Wait until everyone is done and then compare your lists. Make a master list of all the different rules. Mark how many people chose a particular rule. Discuss the following questions:

Why are the rules on the list? What are the values behind them?

Are there any rules that were listed that really aren't that important, but someone had thought they were?

Are there rules on the list you don't have a good reason for keeping?

Have family members vote for the rules they think should be on the list. Choose the ones with the most

votes. Write this new list of your family's rules and post it somewhere in your house for a few days. Look at it again in a few days and see if you want to make any changes.

ASK YOUR TEEN

Discuss the following questions with your teen. Talk about the underlying values.

Why is it wrong for a person to pressure someone else to be involved in sexual activity? (respect for others)

Why is it wrong to let yourself be pressured into having sex? (respect for self, waiting for marriage)

Is sexual involvement OK for boys but not OK for girls? (equality)

What's the matter with a guy saying "She should have stopped me?"

AN EXTRA SEVEN POUNDS COULD KEEP YOU OFF THE FOOTBALL TEAM.



Become a father before you're ready and you may always wonder what else you could have been.
THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

Dear Advice Columnist

Here is a way to talk about values without getting into a big lecture.

1. Choose a letter from a newspaper advice columnist that is appropriate for your family.

2. One person reads the question but *not* the answer.

3. Everyone else, including parents, takes a turn giving advice to the letter writer. Give reasons for your advice.

4. Remember to show respect for everyone. Other family members can ask questions and disagree with someone's advice without criticizing, insulting or making fun of them.



Looking at VALUES



Most parents hope their children will think the same things are important in life that they do. Values can't be forced on anyone, but when parents talk about their values and why they think the way they do, they help teens form values that will guide their behavior in positive ways. This newsletter and the Facts and Feelings video #2 "Talking About Values" will help.



 **Facts & feelings**
Department of Family and Human Development
Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-2960



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Facts



 &
feelings

Talking about:

Facts

Utah State University Department of Family & Human Development and Cooperative Extension Service

GETTING THE FACTS

Remember when you first learned about sex? Who told you about it? What did you think? Some of us learned about sex growing up on the farm, others learned about it from parents, but most of us got information about sex from a friend. Some may have learned about sex in a way that made it seem dirty and unnatural. You may have even reacted with shock as a child and said, "I'll never do that!"

Because the information you first received was probably incomplete and perhaps inaccurate, it's fortunate that you were able to learn more later. For adolescents, misinformation may result in getting sexually involved too early. Adolescent sex can result in sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) or premarital pregnancy. Negative early experiences can result in adults later having fears, disappointments and frustrations with the sexual aspect of life.

Most parents want their children to be well-informed about the changes they experience during adolescence and to have a good

Many parents like to believe they have discussed sex with their teens. Unfortunately, most teens surveyed report that they have not talked with their parents about sex.

understanding and a healthy attitude about sex. But many parents have concerns about bringing these subjects up.

Even when parents don't discuss sex with their children, the child detects their attitudes and observes their relationship with each other in daily situations. Teens learn a lot about sex from TV, music, and other sources that you may not agree with. Since teens are learning about sex anyway, why not help them learn in a more conscientious and effective way?

The FACTS AND FEELINGS videos and newsletters are not intended to include "everything you ever wanted or needed to know" about sex. They are tools to help you get started with talking to your teen about sex. If you want additional information, there are

many excellent resources available in libraries or book stores. Besides, you don't have to be an expert on every aspect of sex. It's OK to say you don't know, and then get the information. Talking together may be uncomfortable for both of you at first, but you are the best one to help your young adolescent understand and act responsibly with respect to sexuality.

It's important for parents and young people to communicate about sexual issues so that teens can adopt personal values which can guide their behavior. Some teens begin with what they think is innocent sexual involvement that unfortunately, leads them to having sexual intercourse. For adolescents, sexual intercourse has many negative consequences.

If Not You, Who?

The issue is not whether your child will learn about sex, but what, where, and from whom they will learn. Surveys tell us the majority of teens wish they could talk in more detail to their parents about sex, but over two-thirds report not ever talking about it. Peers, movies, and questionable literature are the main sources of information.



WHERE DID I COME FROM?

It is important to be sure we understand teens' questions before we answer, but we don't need to worry too much about saying the wrong thing or saying too much. It's more likely that your teen won't ask about sex at all, than that he or she will ask too much. You may need to bring up the subject and start talking. You don't need to say everything in one big lecture. In fact, it's better to have shorter talks more often. If you leave something out, there will be more chances to explain it another time.

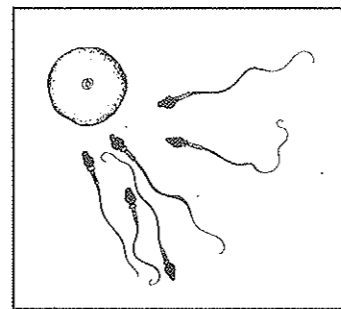
Your teen's newsletter has information on menstruation for girls and sperm production for boys. It also shows the male and female reproductive systems. This parent newsletter suggests how to begin telling your teen about intercourse, conception, and birth. You can use the information and illustrations from both newsletters in talking together with your teen.

Sexual intercourse. Babies begin when a sperm from a man fertilizes an egg from a woman. This happens following sexual intercourse. When the penis is erect, it can be inserted in the vagina where the sperm can be released. The man and woman are very close together and intercourse can be pleasurable to both of them. When two people love and trust each other, sexual intercourse can be a way to express their love. Because of the responsibilities involved, it is best to reserve sex for the commitments of marriage. In doing this, the meaning of sex becomes special and exclusive. It is not the same when sex is used with others outside of marriage. **Most parents want their children to wait.**

Conception. Conception occurs when an egg is fertilized by a sperm through sexual intercourse. Millions of sperm swim through the uterus and up the Fallopian tube, where several hundred have survived to meet the egg. Only one sperm fertilizes the egg. Males ejaculate two types of sperm. The baby is a boy or girl depending on

which type of sperm fertilized the egg. Once fertilized, the egg cell begins dividing into more cells. The tiny ball of cells travels down the Fallopian tube, and attaches to the lining of the uterus where it begins to grow.

The chances of conception are greatest around the 14th day of the menstrual cycle when ovulation occurs. A woman who has sexual intercourse could become pregnant anytime after she begins to ovulate (release eggs).



Birth. The fetus develops for 38 weeks (40 weeks from the missed period) in the woman's uterus. When the baby is ready to be born, muscles in the uterus begin to tighten to push the baby out. These contractions, also called labor pains, get stronger and come more often. The mother can't control these contractions the way we can tighten or relax our arm muscles, they happen by themselves. The contractions get harder and more frequent during labor. These contractions are

pushing the baby's head against the opening of the uterus, called the cervix. When the cervix has opened enough for the baby to pass through, the mother begins to push and the baby passes down through the cervix, through the vagina, and out the vaginal opening. Giving birth is called labor because it is very hard work. It is painful, and comes at the end of a pregnancy which is sometimes tiresome and uncomfortable.

Not all pregnancies proceed normally. You might want to talk with you teenager about miscarriages, when the baby is expelled early in the pregnancy. Tubal pregnancies occur when the embryo attaches in the Fallopian tube instead of in the uterus, making a full-term pregnancy impossible. About 15% of babies are born by Caesarean section, where the baby is taken out through an incision in the abdomen and uterus. If labor isn't progressing, or if the mother or baby are in trouble, a Caesarean section is performed. This is a major operation, and makes the mother's recovery longer and more difficult.

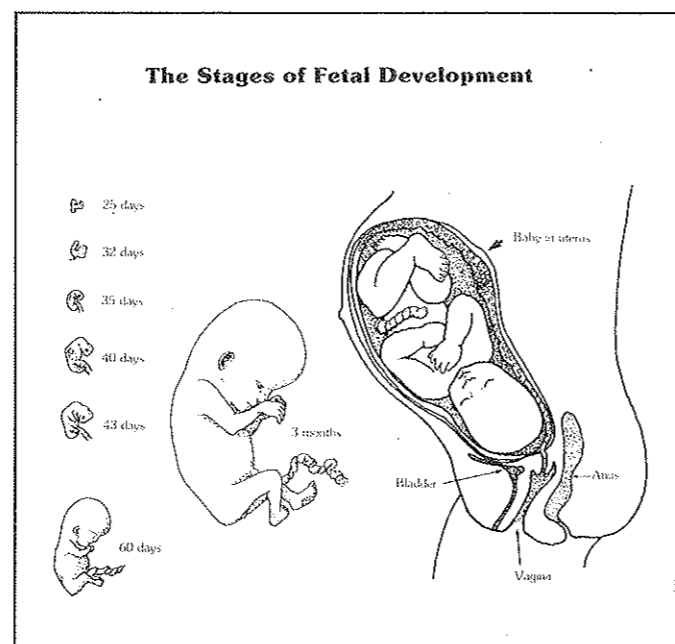


Illustration from *Family Guided Sex Education* by Sally Kees Martin, Nevada Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nevada Reno.

INFORMATION, NOT PERMISSION

Teaching children that sex is bad and dirty in order to discourage sexual activity creates attitudes about sexuality that can cause problems with sexual adjustment when they become adults. This approach is sometimes used because some parents fear that if they convey the message that sex is a positive, pleasurable part of life, their children will rush out to try it.

Evidence suggests, however, that children who are taught about sex at home are not as likely to engage in early or irresponsible sexual activity as their less-informed counterparts. Contrary to what many believe, talking with our children about sex is more likely to discourage, rather than encourage, premarital sexual behavior. This is especially true if the family's values, including the importance of abstinence, are a part of those discussions.

IT'S YOUR TURN

Your Child's Birth

Describe your child's birth to him or her. Find any pictures, certificates, hospital bills or information you wrote down about the event. Talk about how you felt about the birth, and also the increased responsibilities and adjustments of being a parent. Include:

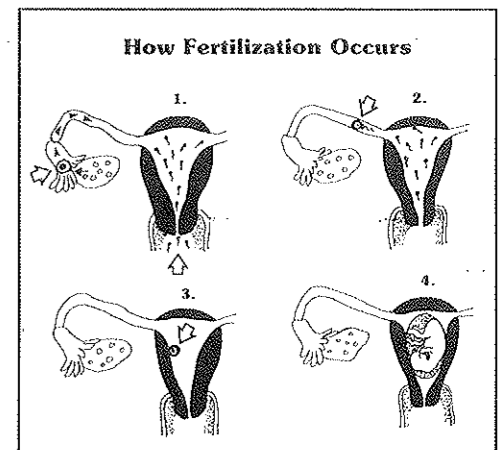
- Who was there? Who helped?
- What was the setting?
- What did you like/ not like about it?
- What would you do differently today?

If your child is a foster or adopted member of your family, share what you do know about his or her birth and have a discussion of birth in general.

Ask Your Teen

- What things did you already know?
- What things were new?
- What kinds of ideas had you heard about reproduction that aren't true?
- How do you feel about the process of reproduction?
- How do you feel about being a mother (father) someday?
- What do you think will be good (hard) about being a parent?
- How will teach your children about sex?
- Out of the information on the facts of reproduction, what things do you think your friends don't understand?

- What are your feelings about saving sex for marriage?
- Have you had a period (wet dream) yet? Do you have any questions?
- Why do you think the facts of reproduction are called the birds and bees or the facts of life?

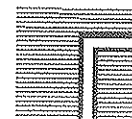


IF YOU'RE EMBARRASSED BY A PIMPLE TRY EXPLAINING THIS.

Being a teenager is tough enough. Why make things more difficult by becoming a mother too?

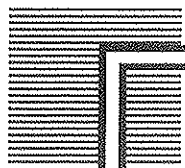
THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

Looking at FACTS



One of the fulfilling things about being a parent is helping your children learn and grow.

You help your children learn about a lot of things that are new to them. The facts of life are some of the most important, amazing, and interesting information you can share with your children. This newsletter, and the Facts & Feelings video #3 "Talking About Facts" will help you take advantage of this opportunity.



Facts & feelings

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