

Truth or Fiction?

Parents often feel awkward talking with their children about sex. Before talking, know the truth.

Parents Say: My child isn't even thinking about having sex.

- Truth: 40% of South Carolina high school students have had sex. Among 12th graders, 57% have had sex.¹

Parents Say: I would know if my child were having sex.

- Truth: 16% of teens have had sex by age 15, compared with one-third of those aged 16, nearly half (48%) of those aged 17, 61% of 18-year-olds and 71% of 19-year-olds.²

Parents Say: We talk about sex all the time!

- Truth: Nearly nine out of 10 teens say that it would be much easier for them to postpone sex and avoid pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.³

Parents Say: I would know if my child was sending nude photos (sexting).

- Truth: Nearly 40% of all teenagers have posted or sent sexually suggestive messages.⁴

Parents Say: I don't need to worry — all of my children are boys.

- Truth: Among South Carolina high school students, almost twice as many teen boys have had sexual intercourse with four or more people during their lives than teen girls (13% compared to 5%).¹

Parents Say: Talking about both abstinence and birth control gives a mixed message.

- Truth: Effective programs that teach both abstinence and contraception have been shown through careful evaluation to delay sex among teens.⁵



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About Not Right Now: Put Pregnancy on Pause

An initiative of Fact Forward, the Not Right Now campaign urges teens to think about the consequences BEFORE they have sex, make a plan for sexual health, and speak up for themselves. By giving adolescents frank information about preventing pregnancy and giving parents the tools to talk to their teens about sex, Not Right Now is demystifying teen sexuality. We are empowering young people to take control of their sexual health today, so that they can have a brighter, better future tomorrow.

What we do at Fact Forward:

We promote easy access to reproductive healthcare, from counseling to contraceptives. We train and educate people who work with young adults. We partner with a variety of organizations - public, private, school, and community-based - to promote policies and initiatives that improve reproductive health outcomes throughout the state.

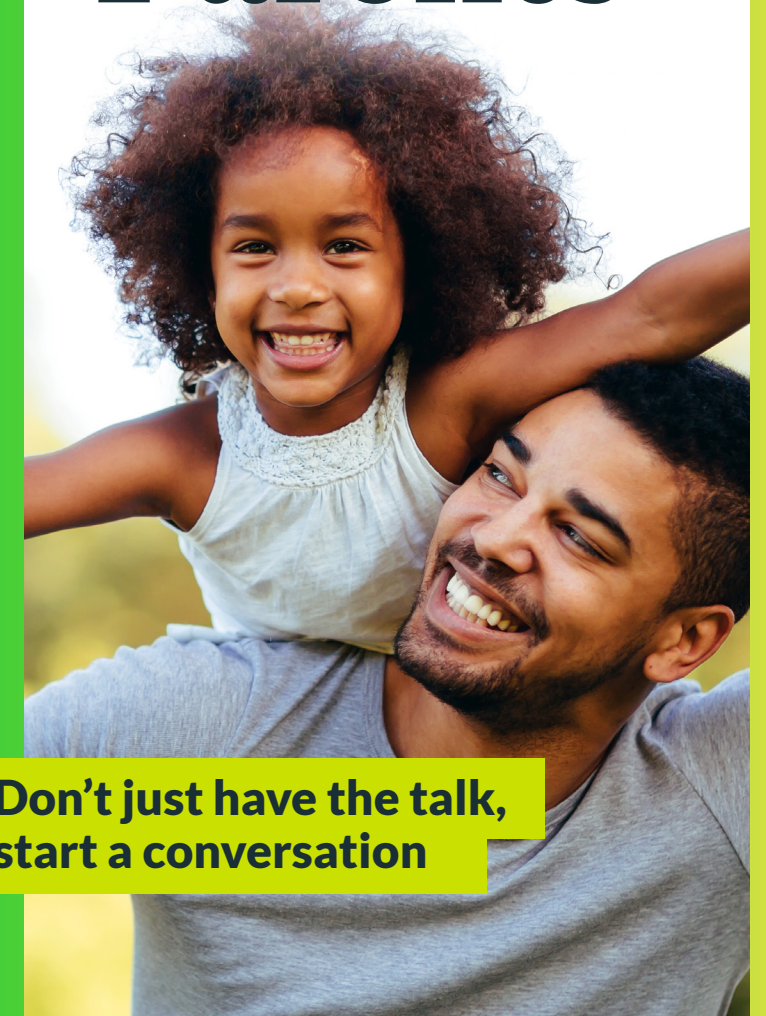
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References | Updated October 2019:

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4. Teenage Sexting Statistics. (2016). Information accessed from guardchild.com/teenage-sexting-statistics
5. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2015). It's About Results: What You Need to Know about the Evidence-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program. Washington, DC.
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Tips for Parents



**Don't just have the talk,
start a conversation**



Raising a child is one of the greatest jobs you will ever have – and one of the hardest. We are challenged every day with a wide range of issues that are often hard for children to understand, and for adults to explain.⁶

This guide will offer some tools and tips to help get the process started. It will help you talk easily and openly with your children about love, sex, and relationships. This guide does not have an answer to every question so we hope you look to other sources such as FactForward.org - to build your comfort level for talking with your child about such tough topics.



Why talk with my child about love, sex and relationships?

Parents should be the main sex educators of their children. Even when you think they aren't listening, talking about love, sex, and relationships with your child can:

- Clearly define family values
- Build communication skills and create a bond between parent and child
- Help them feel at ease about who they are and their sexuality
- Help youth cope with their feelings and deal with peer pressure
- Help youth take charge of their lives and have healthy, loving relationships
- Help protect youth from sexual abuse

What should I say?

Ages: 3-5 (Pre-school)

Toddlers need to know:

- Love should make people feel good, safe, and wanted
- Bodies are different sizes, shapes and colors – and that is ok
- Their bodies belong to them
- There is a difference between a “good” touch and a “bad” touch

Ages: 5-7 (Elementary)

Children need to know:

- How to develop, maintain, and end (if necessary) friendships
- Family members' roles and duties
- How to be themselves without feeling the need to act a certain way within their gender
- That people can come from different homes, and no single one is the “right” one

Ages: 8-12 (Pre-teens)

Pre-Teens need to know:

- How to make and maintain friends and relationships
- What can happen if they have sex including teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Basic human anatomy, including reproduction
- About sexual abuse, abusive relationships, and ways to protect themselves
- About family values, community, and peer norms regarding dating
- About puberty and what to expect physically, emotionally, and psychologically as they mature

Ages: 13-17 (Teens)

Teens need to know:

- It's okay to wait to have sex – not everyone is doing it
- They are responsible for their choices, behaviors, and personal values
- About birth control options (if appropriate)
- Details about STIs and HIV and how to prevent them

10 tips for starting the talk

1. Start Early. Use this “window of opportunity” and talk with your children early and often about important issues such as love, sex, and relationships.
2. Start the talk. Don't count on your child to come to you with questions – begin the conversation yourself.
3. Create an open dialogue. It's up to YOU to create the kind of home in which your child can ask questions about love, sex, and relationships.
4. Talk about love, sex, and relationships. It is normal to feel uneasy talking with your child about love, sex, and relationships. Educate yourself so you can provide accurate information.
5. Share your values. When talking with your child about love, sex, and relationships remember to talk about your family's values.
6. Listen as much as you talk. Listening carefully lets your child know they are important. This can lead to valuable discussions about a wide variety of sensitive issues.
7. Be honest. Whatever your child's age, they need honest answers and information. Honesty will build trust for further talks.
8. Be patient. Let your child think at their own pace. Listen daily to what they are saying about people, places, and situations they are in that may be unhealthy or give cause for concern.
9. Use “teachable moments.” Moments in everyday life are a perfect chance to begin talking. Use TV shows and commercials as a way to start a talk about teen pregnancy, peer pressure, or relationships.
10. Talk about it again... and again... and again. Most children only want small bits of information at any one time – especially about heavy topics like love, sex, and relationships. They will not learn everything from a single discussion – give more than just “the talk”!