

# What Your Teens Need to Know About Sex

(by Linda Klepacki from *Focus on the Family*)

## Other recommended reading:

Book: [A Parent's Guide to Understanding Sex and Dating: Beyond the Birds and the Bees](#) by [Mark Oestreicher](#) and Joel Mayward

Article: [Purity](#) by Lauren Winner from Focus on the Family

Article: [Why You Should Be Talking to Teens About Sex](#) by Caroline Miller from Child Mind Institute

Article: [How to Talk to your Kids about Sex: An Age-by-Age Guide](#) by Lindsay Kneteman from Today's Parent

Article: [When and How to Talk to Kids About Sex](#) by Justin J. Lehmler Ph.D. from Psychology Today

Article: [The Ultimate Guide to Talking to Your Kids About Sex](#) from Healthline

Talking to our teens about sexuality is one of the most life-affirming tasks parents face in our sex-saturated society. Throughout their formative years, teens need to hear *from their parents* the truth about sex, rather than just the daily bombardment of media sex scandals.

In *Sexuality, Contraception, and the Media*, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported that American children devote more than 38 hours per week to various forms of media, such as television, videos, video games, music, and the Internet. By the time the average teen graduates from high school he will have squandered 15,000 hours watching television—that's twenty percent more time than the 12,000 hours he will have spent in the classroom. Furthermore, the average American *adolescent will view nearly 14,000 sexual references per year.*

How much time, then, should we devote to countering those unwholesome media messages?

## Parents' influence

Most of us have seen teens roll their eyes and contort their faces; the reactions that makes parents want to either ground the kid for life or just give up. Some of us already know the

dread of struggling to speak the truth about sex to our teens; we've seen that vacant, glazed-over look.

Ignore it.

Push past it and begin talking.

Talking to your teen about sex can be a daunting task, but research shows they do listen to their parents. In fact, research also shows that parents' disapproval is the number-one reason teens abstain from sex before marriage. Our teens are listening; we must deliver the right message.

What messages should parents give their teens? Certainly, accurate information about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unwed pregnancy, boundary setting, sexual intimacy and God's truth in Scripture are all vital subjects. School health or biology classes may cover some of these subjects, and church youth groups may cover others. But don't assume that because your teen heard something once she will remember it. All of us have to hear messages over and over again to retain the information. We hear and process things differently at different stages in our lives. Teens are notorious for appearing to paying attention while letting important information flow right out their ears.

## **Getting started**

The first thing you need to understand is that young people are bombarded with sexual messages daily—much of it inaccurate, deceptive, or plain untrue. Most parents are not sex education experts, though, so it's difficult to keep up with the latest information about sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy. Nonetheless, we need enough accurate information to correct misconceptions our kids may have.

The following are some important facts for you to remember as you seek to inform your children:

## **Definitions**

- The word "sex" means different things to different people. Make sure you clarify your terms with your teen. In today's vernacular sex may mean vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex, or mutual masturbation. All forms of sex can transmit STDs.

## **Quick facts regarding STDs and adolescent pregnancy**

- Approximately 18.9 million new cases of STDs occur each year. S. Berman, W. Cates, H Weinstock. (2004). Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health. Vol 36 (1).
- Forty-eight percent of new STD cases in 2000 were among 15- to 24-year-olds. Berman, Cates, Weinstock. Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- There are currently more than 25 types of STDs; some are curable, others are not. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (2004). U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics; Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information. [www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org)
- In 2000, approximately 822,000 pregnancies occurred among 15- to 19-year-olds. R.A. Maynard, (ed.). (1996). Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing. New York: Robin Hood Foundation. Seven out of ten adolescent mothers drop out of high school.

## **Quick ideas about setting boundaries**

Children and teens need boundaries for their safety. Children should understand the consequences of breaking family rules and boundaries. Consequences should fit the severity of the rule. The following are a few boundaries to discuss with your teen:

- Curfew
- Transporting other teens: who or how many people ride in one car together
- Drinking alcohol or using drugs
- Drinking alcohol or using drugs and driving
- Lying to parents or adults in authority
- Allowing opposite-sex company in bedrooms
- Having friends over while parents are absent
- Age at which dating can begin
- Dating vs. courting: discuss family values and guidelines

## **Quick thoughts about sexual intimacy**

Sexual intimacy is difficult to understand before experiencing its power. Some points to consider include the following:

- Intimacy can progress quickly.
- Intimacy must be controlled by putting up boundaries beforehand such as not being alone with someone, not staying out too late, not dating one-on-one until older.
- The use of alcohol and drugs eliminates most people's ability to say "no."
- Typically, older guys are more likely to pressure younger girls for sexual intimacy.
- Sexual intimacy is the greatest treasure a person can give to another. Does this person measure up to the gift? Has he or she proven himself or herself worthy of such an intimate and wondrous giving of self?

## A few thoughts from God

The Bible states repeatedly that sex outside one-man-one-woman marriage is dangerous and unacceptable. But more than that, the Bible describes marital love as an ecstatic, mind-boggling mystery so profound that it is an image of the love that exists among the Trinity.

Teens often hear of the biblical *forbiddens*, but they rarely hear of the wondrous nature of human love in God's divine plan. Sex is one of God's greatest gifts. Enjoyed in its appropriate setting, sex bonds a married couple together emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Share with your teen this wondrous vision and work to inspire your teens to reach for nothing less than the promise God has reserved for them.

**Genesis 1:27-28** — God created male and female.

**Genesis 2:18-25** — 1) God created man and woman. 2) God created marriages as the way for a man and woman to become one emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually.

**Matthew 15:19** — 1) Entertaining evil thoughts about things such as murder, adultery, fornication, stealing, bearing false witness and blaspheming is as bad as actually carrying out the sin. 2) Fornication means sexual activity between unmarried partners.

**The Song of Solomon** intimately portrays the love between a husband and wife. It also pictures Christ's relationship to the Church: Christ describes Himself as the groom and His Church as the bride. Just as we as Christians are to only worship God, so are husbands and wives to be exclusive in their intimacy.

## Parents' responsibility

Talking to our teens about sexuality can be frightening, and at times may seem fruitless. But don't underestimate your impact: You are the most important influence in your teens' decision making. Parents must fulfill our mandate to impart our family values to our children. We must begin talking to our children about sexuality—and we must do so clearly and often.