

8 TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR TEEN

NATIONAL TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION MONTH MAY 2017

Teens consistently say that parents—not peers, not partners, not popular culture—most influence their decisions about relationships and sex. That's right...believe it or not, your teens want to hear from YOU. And that can be a lot of pressure...but it doesn't have to be.

The following eight tips are meant to guide you through a thoughtful, rational, and (hopefully) slightly less awkward conversation with the teens in your life about that most awkward topic: sex.

- 1.** Talk with your child about sex early and often (in age-appropriate ways) and be specific about your family's values and expectations about sex and dating.
- 2.** Cultivate a culture of openness in your family—be an askable parent and allow your child to share their feelings without fear of reprisal or derision.
- 3.** Don't assume that your child's emotions aren't valid just because they are young. Young people's emotions are very real so respect your child if they tell you that they are in love.
- 4.** Listen as much as—or more than—you talk. Your words are important, but equally important is making sure that your child feels that their voice is being heard and respected.
- 5.** Talk *honestly* with your child about sex, love, and relationships; you don't have to be a biology text book. Just be real.
- 6.** Don't assume that, just because your child is asking you about sex, contraception, or dating, that they are sexually active or have a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- 7.** Telling your child not to have sex is not enough. Explain why you believe that delaying sex until they are older is the right choice.
- 8.** Don't give up. Even if your child stonewalls you or appears uninterested in (or horrified by) these conversations, it's your job as their parent to keep talking. Trust us—it makes a difference.

Why have the talk now? National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month—and the 16th annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy—takes place this May. During the National Month, teens nationwide will be asked to visit StayTeen.org to participate in the National Day Quiz and to play our fun new game *Level Up: An Epic Swiping Adventure*. Both resources challenge teens to think carefully about what they might do “in the moment.”

So invite your teen to take the National Day Quiz (available at StayTeen.org) and play *Level Up* and consider doing so yourself. Then download our discussion guides for parents and teens and use this tip sheet to start a conversation about sex, love, relationships, contraception, and making good decisions.