

Parents & Kids, Talking About Sex ©

Tackling Tough Topics - RAISING A RESPONSIBLE TEEN

Adapted from -- *"But I'm Almost 13!" An Action Plan for Raising a Responsible Adolescent*
by Kenneth Ginsburg, M.D. with Martha Jablow

Preparing Yourself

1. Remember your own adolescence – how you felt, what you thought, feared and hoped
2. Recall your relationship with your parents
 - what you liked, what they did well, what you appreciate now
 - what you disliked, why you disliked or resented those aspects
 - what was their parenting style? authoritarian, inconsistent, distant – examples
 - did they jump in with criticism/advice before or finished your thoughts?
3. What kind of parent are you? Do you want to repeat the style and words of your parents?

Avoid the Pitfalls

1. Don't try to be your child's friend. It lessens the authority you need to parent.
2. Be consistent, always listening and open for opportunities for discussion.
3. Never let your child think they made a mistake by going to you to express anything.
4. If they want to talk to you, even if busy, try not to postpone the conversation.

Make Child Aware of Consequences Ahead of Time (Using Role Play)

1. Look for teachable moments – real or fictional – not issues affecting your child directly. Suggest different paths that the person could take to prevent a potentially dangerous situation. Let your child practice thinking of alternatives.
2. Never tell your child you are doing role-play as if will appear phony. Observe something on TV and ask, "How do you think Rachel could have handled that situation?"
"What would happen if she did something else?"
"What do you think will happen if Rachel decides to do X?"
"What else could she do?"
"What would happen if she did Y instead?"
3. Avoid in-your-face role-plays – "This will happen to you if you...." Scare tactics raise anxiety and prevent thinking through things step-by-step.
4. Use short universal phrases. Let teen do the talking. Just encourage "uum," "yeah," "I see," and "I hear you."
5. Avoid teen language.
6. Stay quiet to allow your child to think. Do not react. Don't jump in with suggestions. Let them fill in the blanks and see how small changes can alter an outcome.

Use Other People as Reinforcements

1. Make your home a welcome place for your child's friends.
2. Choose your child's friends – don't dictate, do not forbid, foster good contacts by making them easier, encourage activities or groups with good values, use the power of the dollar.
3. Get to know the parents of your child's friends. Agree to help each other's child in need, with low to midlevel risky behavior, first confront the child and warn that if it happens again you will have to tell parent. If life threatening, tell parent.