



Ten Tips for Chatting to Tweens and Teens

1. **Cover the basics well.** Before we can talk about complex teenage issues we need to make sure our teens understands the basics of sex. Have positive, healthy conversations about the mechanics, purposes and consequences of sex. Educating our children about sex is an ongoing task and the primary responsibility for this lies with us as parents.
2. **Deal with your stuff.** Our fears and hurts will hamper our ability to talk openly and lovingly about sex. Get the help and support you need to deal with any insecurities, trauma or fears you have around sex. These can be easily passed on to our children if we do not process them in a healthy way.
3. **Our voice matters.** Even if it feels awkward, it is so worth it. These are not easy conversations. Some we wish we never had to have. But if we are not a safe, accurate, trusted source of information, our children will get their answers elsewhere.
4. **Make time to connect.** It is not just about information, it is about being on a journey with our children: loving, guiding, modeling and teaching. They need to feel seen and heard, respected and trusted. Children who feel rooted and connected in their homes are much less likely to be drawn into unhealthy behavior by peer and social media influence.
5. **Secure but not judgmental.** Let's raise our children to know they don't have to compromise on their beliefs and values to be compassionate. There is a lot of pressure on our teens to align with certain popular or trending worldviews. Teach them to stand their ground but to do so with love and respect for those who think differently.
6. **Vision not fear.** Sex is beautiful and worth waiting for. It is also complex, powerful and something you are meant to figure out with someone you love and trust over the duration of your lifetime. Talk about sex in the big picture and paint it as a healthy and beautiful part of humanity.
7. **Intentionality and repetition.** Make time, initiate conversations and look for opportunities. These are on-going evolving conversations. Use what you see and hear in the media to create teachable moments.
8. **Listen and discuss** don't lecture. Be a safe space to process what they see, hear and experience. Remind them that your role is to keep them safe and help them make good choices through guidance and boundaries.
9. **Create your legacy.** Our kids will make mistakes and ultimately make up their own minds but let's do our best to position them to know who they are, think critically, live by their values and make good choices which set them up for a healthy sexual future.
10. **Love them unconditionally.** Love them for the imperfect, emotional, ever-changing amazing humans they are right now. And make sure they know that nothing will ever change that. But envision them, call them up, empower them!

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