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Theme: **Talking to Your Adolescents about STDs, HIV, & Sex**

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When working with apprehensive parents, what are some suggestions to engage them in talking with their adolescents about STDs, HIV, or sex?

(Audio 0:47-6:21)

It is important for parents to start talking to adolescents about sex early and continue to raise the issue often. Adolescents are hearing messages about sex through media and from friends, but it is vital that they receive accurate information. This exposure and development in general leads to evolving perspectives and questions about sex, so it is important to revisit the issue. Additionally, aim to provide age-appropriate information (see attachment).

Parents should initiate the conversation and create an environment that is open and welcoming to discussions of sex. Really listen to what the adolescent is saying and engage in the conversation. If an adolescent feels they are being heard, the environment is much more conducive to productive conversations about sex. Providers should stress confidentiality in their environments.

Relax. It's okay if you don't know the answer to a question. Tell them you don't know, but will find the correct answer and get back to them. Just be sure to follow through. If they use terminology that you don't know, feel free to ask them what it means.

What are some of the developmental differences between different ages and sexes?

(Audio 6:59-19:02)

See attachment below or visit our [website](#).

How often should you revisit sex and sexual health issues with adolescents?

(Audio 19:03-19:47)

As a provider you should revisit these issues every time they come to see you. Try to know something very specific about them and their situation so they know that you listened and are engaged.

What are some effective ways of asking your adolescents about sex?

(Audio 19:50-21:40)

Especially when speaking with younger adolescents, it can be effective to encourage them to ask you questions. Sometimes they are not comfortable with hearing about issues such as HIV or the details of sex. Allowing them to ask you questions gives them control as to how far they delve into a topic. In this situation, it is helpful to address only the specific question. If the adolescent needs more information, he/she will ask follow-up questions. Once you progress to the middle and late stage of adolescence, they seek and are more receptive to concrete answers and hopefully know the answers to a lot of these questions. Nonetheless, it is also acceptable to ask adolescents about their opinions of sex.

Is it effective to have both parents and providers present when talking about sex?

(Audio 22:35-23:31)

Often this opportunity is not available, but when feasible it is important to speak with the adolescent alone prior to including the parent. This allows for the provider to establish an open environment where the adolescent feels that he/she can speak freely.

How would you approach a group or classroom of the middle stage adolescents about sex?

(Audio 25:22-26:36)

At this stage, letting them bring up topics of interest can be very effective. Perhaps have students write questions down and put them in a box, so that the questions are anonymous, and then you are able to address all questions in a comfortable setting.

How do you deal with parents who are hesitant to discuss sex with their adolescents?

(Audio 28:01-31:29)

Parents sometimes feel hesitant, because they feel like they don't know enough of the facts or they never had someone talk to sex with them, thus they feel uncomfortable talking about sex with their kids. In these situations it is important to be honest with your adolescent. Tell them that you feel uncomfortable discussing sex or that you don't know all the answers, but will find out what they need to know.

Peer education for parents can be very effective in educating and making them feel more comfortable discussing sex with their teens.

Additionally, many parents rely on schools to provide sex education to their kids, however only 69% of schools have a policy on sex education. And only 65% of those schools discuss contraception and prevention, so parents play a very important role in what messages teens are receiving.

What are some effective tools that will get messages about sex across to adolescents?

(Audio 31:35-32:35)

Teenagers are very audio- and visual-oriented. If you can play a song or show them something to help them understand the concept it is the best way to engage them. A great tool for teens is the “When You Have Sex with Someone, You Are Having Sex with Everyone They Have Had Sex With” diagram (available on our [website](#)). Using this tool along with tying it into their lives to make it “real” for them can be incredibly effective.

What are some resources that are helpful with these issues?

- “*She’s Too Young*” – Lifetime Movie
- Planned Parenthood resource centers
- [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)
- Parent Probe Magazine (order form on our [website](#))
- Parent Child Connectedness – www.etr.org/recapp/

	Early Girls: 11 – 13 Boys: 12 – 14	Middle Girls: 13 – 16 Boys: 14 – 17	Late Girls: 16 – 19 Boys: 17 – 19
General (Period of high moodiness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood swings • Great highs & great depressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood swings • Great highs & great depressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood swings • Great highs & great depressions
Physical Development (Sexual maturation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty: onset of physical & sexual development • Confusion • Sense of loss of control • Fear & anxiety • Experimentation with body begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the “classical” teenagers • Body changes • Intense sexual feelings develop • This is the stage of “puppy love” • Dating begins & becomes primary • Average age (16 or younger) by which 50% of adolescents have had first sexual experience • Risk of high pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical changes leveling off & ending • Less confusion regarding body & changes • Greater sense of self-control • Better, more realistic sense of self; looks, body image, how one compares to others • Sexual behavior more prominent
Cognitive Development (How adolescents think)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time of concrete thinking • World is “here & now,” the present • The “future” is now, not tomorrow, not next week • Unable to plan or think into the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract thinking begins • Connections between “today” & “tomorrow” begin • Intellectual curiosity develops • Period of experimentation • Period of idealistic thinking • Period of being a “know-it-all” • Feelings of omnipotence & no fear of death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult thinking has developed • Future goals more clearly & realistically defined • Ability to think abstractly has developed

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Psycho-Social Development: Identity (personality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Am I normal?” • “What am I turning into?” • “I’m not ready for this.” • Beginning to look outside of the family for self-definition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends, rather than parents, define who you are, what you do, and what’s “cool” • Egocentric – “I satisfy me!” • Identify changes from day-to-day, from friend-to-friend, and from group-to-group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arriving at concept of self as an adult • Need to accept the self that has emerged • Reflecting back to earlier years to gain better picture of present self • Decreased importance of peer group; individual is now primary self-identified and less other-identified
Psycho-Social Development: Integrity (Values)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own values not defined; values are still those of parents, but beginning to be questioned • Right and wrong still seen as black and white issues; grays do not exist • Internal control not developed • Clear limits and boundaries are necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the time for developing and testing own values. To do this, kids must reject parental values; as a result, this is a time of great conflict with parents and other adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refining and clarifying of values – large swings and inconsistencies less common • Internal controls which are based upon moral principals and conscience are now more fully developed

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Intimacy (Sexual Relationships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same sex play begins • Intimacy is defined through “best friends” and peer group membership • Friends begin changing because of variations in rate of development • Cliques develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pairing begins • Sexual activity begins • Friends and peer group are the core of life • “Love object” is the most important thing in the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pairing more realistic and less changeable • Mating begins • Relationships more stable and increasingly based upon “real” people and real qualities • Peer group membership is important but one-to-one relationships are more important • Movement from “I” to mutuality and real sharing • Satisfaction of other(s) can be as important as satisfaction of self
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends begin coming more important than family • Complaints about lack of privacy begin and increasing “alone” time (time away from parents) and time with friends begin • Fluctuation between clinging to adults and rebelling against them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classic rebellion against and conflict with family • Separation continues in earnest • Period where most parents feel that they “can’t win” and that they “can’t do anything right” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from parents becomes complete (psychologically, if not physically) • Beginning of self-sufficiency and care