

Communication Tips

1. I have a concern I'd like to share with you...
2. After seeing that (T.V. show, magazine article, movie), I've been thinking about...
3. What do you think about...
4. How do you feel about...
5. I'm not sure I understand you. Will you try to say it another way?
6. Let me check this out with you... Are you saying that...?
7. What we're talking about makes me feel pretty uncomfortable (embarrassed, angry, concerned), but I'd like to continue anyway.
8. I'd be really interested in hearing what you think about... (or feel about...)
9. Tell me some more about how you feel about...
10. Can you say anything more about...?
11. You know, I haven't given that much thought lately. Give me a few minutes to think about it.
12. There's something important to me that I'd like to share with you.
13. Go on...
14. I don't know the answer to that one. But let's (go to the library, think about it, look it up, talk with someone who might know, find out about it) and talk again tomorrow on our way to the game (set a specific time to get back to it).

15. It would be really helpful to me if you'd share with me how you feel about...
16. I've been thinking about our conversation last night (last week, last month) about...and there's some more I'd like to say.
17. I have a different feeling about that.
18. Thank you...for sharing with me, for talking with me, for listening...for being patient, for giving me time.

19. HINTS THAT CAN HELP YOU TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEX

Learn to listen. All children need to feel that their ideas or concerns about sex are worth listening to.

Look for natural opportunities to talk. You don't have to wait until your child comes to you with suggestions or comments about sex. He or she may be too embarrassed to ask you first. Take advantage of natural openings to talk about sex—something you see in the newspaper, on television, animal behavior, pregnant relatives or friends.

Listen carefully for hidden feelings. Many times children have trouble saying exactly what they mean, especially when it comes to sex. Remember that your child may be afraid to talk about certain things. Let your child know you will not get mad or upset about anything he or she brings up.

Try to avoid judging your child. Making harsh judgments or criticizing children's attitudes about sex will most often cut off communication. Children will open up more quickly with parents who are willing to listen in an understanding manner.

Let your child express his or her feelings. Many young people have values or opinions about sex that are different from their parents. Remember, these may not be firmly held ideas or values, but only part of the sorting out process young people go through. First, listen to what your child has to say. If you agree with what your child says, say so. If you disagree, then clearly state your own viewpoint, and why you feel that way. However, let the child know that you will discuss it again—that he or she can freely express that same opinion again.

Don't cut off communication. Parents sometimes lose the chance to help young people think and talk about sex, because they begin to nag, preach or moralize. This type of communication is usually destructive. The young person needs to know that talking about sex is a two way communication.

Avoid over or under answering. Answer questions directly. Don't assume that a simple question about sex needs an answer far beyond what was asked! If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to find out. On the other hand, if the question deals mostly with values and opinions, you may want to take some extra time to tell your child how you formed your opinions, or where your values about the subject came from. Whatever you do, don't jump to conclusions about what your child is doing based on questions he or she may ask.

Do you need help? If you need support or assistance in talking to or educating your children about sex, reach out to others in your community. Some parents have started self-help groups. There are many resources and concerned professionals available in most communities who can be of assistance.

(Taken from *Changes and Choices: Your Children and Sex* produced by the Emory Grady Teen Services Program.)