

5 Tips for Real Talks with Teens

Tip 1: Build mutual respect

- Ask permission: *“Can I share something with you?”*
- Show empathy: *“It’s hard to say no when your friends are saying yes, and I know you are committed to not drinking.”*



Tip 2: Reverse your communication techniques so you are talking *with* your teen not *at* your teen.

Talking at:	Talking with:
“Don’t text and drive.”	“What would it take for you not to text while you are driving?”
“Don’t have sex.”	“Having sex is a big decision. I care about you and hope that you will wait.”
“This should not be making you feel sad or stressed out. It is no big deal.”	“It is hard to deal with everything you have going on right now. What do you need in order to feel less stressed?”
“Why are you fighting with Lisa?”	“Tell me what you think happened with Lisa.”
“We need to talk.”	“I would like to talk with you without any distractions. When would be a good time today?”

Tip 3: Foster self-worth and self-esteem

- Teens whose strengths are recognized will be motivated to develop those strengths. *“You are a caring friend and want to work things out with Jessie.”* Teens who are always told something is wrong with them will wilt, and are more likely to use substances, report depression and anxiety, and have sex at an early age.
- Empower them to take care of and value themselves: *“Some people give up when it gets hard, but you are able to use tough times to grow stronger.”*

Tip 4: Listen

- Your role is to facilitate conversations not lead them.
- Use statements: *“Tell me about your day”* versus *“How was your day?”*
- Summarize what you heard and use open-ended questions to draw out their motivations: *“That sounds like a messy situation. What would your reasons be for waiting to have sex?”*

Tip 5: Slow the impulsiveness!

- Ask about the behavior then LISTEN: *“Tell me what you think about sex.”*
- Ask about their reasons, LISTEN to the reasons, THEN respond: *“What are your biggest reasons for waiting?”* OR *“What are your reasons to use protection every time you have sex?”*
- End with a key question: *“What do you need to do in order to make this happen?”*

Tips in Practice

Can we talk for a few minutes? Wait for your teen to respond. *It can be really hard not to look at and respond to texts while driving. You care about being safe and keeping your friends safe when they are riding with you.* Wait for your teen to respond. *Tell me what you think you could do to keep from texting and driving.* Listen and then offer some solutions of your own. *Those are good ideas. What do you think about putting your phone in the glove box or putting it on ‘Do Not Disturb’ when you get in the car?* End with, *What could you commit to doing?*

For more tips on talking with teens, pick up a copy of *Teen Speak* at PossibilitiesForChange.com/TeenSpeak.