

NO MORE SILENCE IT'S TIME TO TALK

How to Start A Conversation: Talking About Dating and Healthy Relationships Step-by-Step

- 1) Ask your child if they know the difference between a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship.
- 2) Explain that in a healthy relationship they should never feel pressured, unsafe or harmed in anyway. The harm doesn't have to be physical. It could be verbal, emotional or in other ways.
- 3) Explain to your child that it's unhealthy and could be abusive, if a dating partner ever makes them feel pressured to do things they don't want to do, controls who they spend time with or how they act.
- 4) Make it clear that your child can talk to you if they ever feel like something in their relationship is unhealthy or abusive and that you are there to help.

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www.its timetotalkday.org

Presented by:

MARY KAY®

www.ItsTimeToTalkDay.org



In partnership with:



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WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

You can look for some early warning signs of abuse (see “Is This Abuse” below) that can help identify if your child is in an abusive relationship before it’s too late. Some of these signs include:

Your child’s partner:

- Is extremely jealous or possessive.
- Emails or texts your child excessively.
- Abuses other people or animals.

You notice that your child:

- Is depressed or anxious.
- Stops participating in extracurricular activities or other interests.
- Stops spending time with other friends and family.
- Begins to dress differently.
- Has unexplained marks or bruises.

IS THIS ABUSE?

Dating violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner. Because relationships exist on a spectrum, it can be hard to tell when a behavior crosses the line from healthy to unhealthy or even abusive.

WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE

While there are many warning signs of abuse, here are ten of the most common:

Your partner:

1. Constantly puts you down.
2. Is extremely jealous or insecure.
3. Has an explosive temper.
4. Isolates you from family or friends.
5. Makes false accusations.
6. Has mood swings.
7. Hurts you physically in any way.
8. Is possessive of you.
9. Tells you what to do.
10. Checks your cell phone or email without your permission.

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TIPS TO GET STARTED

Here are ways you can prepare to talk to your child about healthy and unhealthy relationships:

- Provide your child with examples of healthy relationships, pointing out unhealthy behavior. Use examples from your own life, television, movies or music.
- Ask questions and encourage open discussion. Make sure you listen to your son or daughter, giving them a chance to speak. Avoid analyzing, interrupting, lecturing or accusing.
- Keep it low key. Don't push it if your child is not ready to talk. Try again another time.
- Be supportive and nonjudgmental so they know they can come to you for help if their relationship becomes unhealthy in the future.
- Admit to not knowing the answer to a particular question. This response builds trust.
- Reinforce that dating should be fun! Stress that violence is never acceptable.
- Discuss options your child has if they witness dating violence or experience it themselves.
- Remind your son or daughter that they have the right to say "no" to anything they are not comfortable with or ready for and must respect the rights of others.
- If your child is in a relationship that feels uncomfortable, awkward or frightening, assure them that they can come to you. And remember – any decisions they make about the relationship should be their own.

WHAT TO SAY:

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- 1) Ask your child if they know the difference between a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship.
- 2) Explain that in a healthy relationship they should never feel pressured, unsafe or harmed in anyway. The harm doesn't have to be physical. It could be verbal, emotional or in other ways.
- 3) Explain to your child that it's unhealthy and could be abusive, if a dating partner ever makes them feel pressured to do things they don't want to do, controls who they spend time with or how they act.
- 4) Make it clear that your child can talk to you if they ever feel like something in their relationship is unhealthy or abusive and that you are there to help.

Every situation is different, but here is what a parent could say:

"What do you think a healthy relationship looks like? What do you think an unhealthy relationship looks like?"

"In a healthy relationship you should never feel pressured, unsafe or harmed in anyway."

"Did you know that it's unhealthy and could be abusive if your partner is pressuring you to do things you don't want to do or controlling what you do or who you spend time with?"

"If you ever feel like this is happening in your relationship, you can talk to me."

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CONVERSATION STARTERS: QUESTIONS TO ASK

What do you think a healthy relationship looks like?

Who do you think has a healthy relationship?

Who do you think has an unhealthy relationship?

What do you think are the differences between those relationships?

Do you think fighting is healthy? What does that look like?

When you were fighting in the past, how could you have fought fairly?

What does it mean to stand up for yourself?

Do you think you're being pushy if you stand up for yourself?

What should you do if someone you're dating threatens you?

What if someone you're dating tells you to keep secret something about your relationship that you think is wrong?

Who do you see that has a great relationship? Why?

TIPS FOR HAVING HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- 1) Assess your own "relationship values" before you talk to your kids. Reflect on your own relationship values - how do you expect your partner to act?
- 2) Provide another perspective. Find out your child's opinions about dating so you can give them clear examples of what's appropriate behavior in a relationship.
- 3) Explain why it's ok to set boundaries. Let your child know that all relationships go through ups and downs, but abuse is never acceptable
- 4) Teach assertiveness instead of aggressiveness. Explain the difference between making feeling known and expressing desire clearly versus overstepping boundaries
- 5) Show how to control anger. What are your child's personal warning signs for anger?
- 6) Solve problems. Teach basic problem solving techniques to your child: identify an issue, figure out different way to resolve it, consider each choice and its consequences and talk about why they've chosen their choice.
- 7) Learn to negotiate. Compromise is positive and necessary in a relationship, whereas violence, threats and insults are detrimental and do not belong in respectful negotiation.
- 8) Help them recognize the warning signs. Being frustrated is no excuse for inappropriate relationship behavior - teach them how to recognize these feelings and deal with them.
- 9) Share. Secrecy can lead to isolation from friends and family, and may be a sign of manipulation or coercion.
- 10) Be a role model. How you respect yourself, your partner and other people is how your child will learn.

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HELP YOUR CHILD

Knowing that your son or daughter is in an unhealthy relationship can be both frustrating and frightening. But as a parent, you are critical in helping your child develop healthy relationships and can provide life-saving support if they are in an abusive relationship. Remember, dating violence occurs in both same-sex and opposite-sex couples and either gender can be abusive.

WHEN YOUR CHILD'S RELATIONSHIP IS UNHEALTHY: WHAT CAN I DO?

- Tell your child you're concerned for their safety. Point out that what is happening is not "normal." Everyone deserves a safe and healthy relationship. Offer to connect your son or daughter with a professional, like a counselor or attorney, who they can talk confidentially.
- Be supportive and understanding. Stress that you're on their side. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Let your son or daughter know that it's not their fault and no one "deserves" to be abused. Make it clear that you don't blame them and you respect their choices.
- Believe them and take them seriously. Your child may be reluctant to share their experiences in fear of no one believing what they say. As you validate their feelings and show your support, they can become more comfortable and trust you with more information. Be careful not to minimize your child's situation due to age, inexperience or length of their relationship.
- Help develop a safety plan. One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship is when the victim decides to leave. Be especially supportive during this time and try to connect your child to support groups or professionals that can help keep them safe.
- Remember that ultimately your child must be the one who decides to leave the relationship. There are many complex reasons why victims stay in unhealthy relationships. Your support can make a critical difference in helping your son or daughter find their own way to end their unhealthy relationship.

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