



## Do you know the Real Deal?

*Parents often feel awkward when talking with their children about sex. Before you talk – make sure you know the **real deal**.*

- ▶ **Parents Say:** *My child isn't even thinking about having sex.*

**The Real Deal:** 51.5% of South Carolina high school students have had sex. By graduation, this number increases to almost 66%.<sup>2</sup>

- ▶ **Parents Say:** *I would know if my child were having sex.*

**The Real Deal:** Parents are usually unaware that their young adolescents have had sex. Nearly 50% of the parents of sexually active 8th – 11th graders are unaware their child is having sex.<sup>3</sup>

- ▶ **Parents Say:** *We talk about sex all the time!*

**The Real Deal:** Many parents report having talks about sex, but far fewer young people say they actually happened!<sup>3</sup>

- ▶ **Parents Say:** *My child practices abstinence (is still a virgin).*

**The Real Deal:** 50% of teens (age 15-19) have had oral sex. Be specific about exactly what you want your children to abstain from.<sup>4</sup>

- ▶ **Parents Say:** *I don't need to worry – all of my children are boys.*

**The Real Deal:** Four in ten teen boys agree that getting someone pregnant makes you feel like a man.<sup>5</sup>

- ▶ **Parents Say:** *Talking about both abstinence and birth control gives a mixed message.*

**The Real Deal:** Programs that teach both abstinence (choosing not to have sex) and birth control methods delay when a teen has sex for the first time. Teaching birth control does not lead to teens having sex.<sup>6</sup>

### For more information on talking with your child about sex, love and relationships:

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy – [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)  
Talking with kids – [www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org)  
Advocates for Youth – [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)  
ETR Associates – [www.etr.org](http://www.etr.org)  
Mediawise – [www.mediawise.org](http://www.mediawise.org)

### About the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy:

The Campaign is a private, not-for-profit organization committed to reducing the incidence of teen pregnancy in South Carolina through the provision of education, technical assistance, public awareness, advocacy and research.

### References:

- 1) *Talking With Kids About Tough Issues* (2006). Information accessed from [www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org).
- 2) South Carolina Department of Education. 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results. Data not yet published.
- 3) Albert, B. *Science Says: Parental Influence and Teen Pregnancy*. Number 8, February 2004. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- 4) Flanigan, C., Suellentrop, K., Albert, B., Smith, J., Whitehead, M. *Science Says: Teens and Oral Sex*. Number 17, September 2005. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- 5) Flanigan, C. *Science Says: The Sexual Attitudes and Behavior of Male Teens*. Number 6, October 2003. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- 6) Kirby, D. (2007). *Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

### Acknowledgements:

Funding for this publication was provided by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

### Suggested citation:

Bates, J., Poole, S., and Torres, T. (2006) "Tips for Parents: A Guide for Talking with Your Teen About Sex, Love and Relationships." Columbia, SC: South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Updated January 2008



**To request additional copies of this publication:**  
South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
1331 Elmwood Ave., Suite 140, Columbia, SC 29201  
(803) 771-7700 ~ [www.teenpregnancysc.org](http://www.teenpregnancysc.org)

46573/200801

# tips for parents



*a guide for talking  
with your teen about  
sex, love and relationships*



South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Raising a child is one of the greatest jobs you will ever have — and one of the hardest. We are challenged everyday with a wide range of issues that are often hard for children to understand, and for adults to explain.<sup>1</sup>

This parent guide will offer some tools and tips to help get the process started. It will help you talk easily and openly with your children about sex, love and relationships. This guide does not have an answer to every question so we hope that you look at other sources such as Web sites, books and resources to build your comfort level for talking with your child about such tough topics.



### Why talk with my teen about sex, love and relationships?

Parents should be the main sex educators of their children. Even when you think they aren't listening, talking about sex, love and relationships with your child can:

- Help to clearly define your family's values;
- Help build communication skills and create a bond between parent and child;
- Help them feel at ease about who they are and their sexuality;
- Help them cope with their feelings and deal with peer pressure;
- Help them take charge of their lives and have loving relationships;
- Help protect them from sexual abuse.

## What should I say?

### Ages: 3-5 (Pre-school)

Toddlers need to know:

- Love should make people feel good, safe and wanted;
- Bodies are different sizes, shapes and colors — and that is ok;
- Their bodies belong to them;
- There is a difference between a “good” touch and a “bad” touch.

### Ages: 5-7 (Elementary)

Children should be able to:

- Develop, maintain and end (if necessary) friendships;
- Know family members' roles and duties;
- Be themselves without feeling the need to act a certain way within their gender;
- Know that people can come from different homes, and no single one is the “right” one.

### Ages: 8-12 (Pre-teens)

Pre-Teens need to know:

- How to make and maintain friends and relationships;
- What can happen if they have sex including teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs);
- About sexual abuse, abusive relationships and ways to protect themselves;
- About family values, community and peer norms regarding dating;

### Ages: 13-17 (Teens)

Teens need to know:

- It's okay to wait to have sex — not everyone is doing it;
- That they are responsible for their choices, behaviors and personal values;
- About different types of birth control and what is best for them;
- Details about STDs and HIV.



## Ten tips for starting the talk

- 1 **Start early** ~ Use this “window of opportunity” and talk with your children early and often about tough issues like sex, love and relationships.
- 2 **Start the talk** ~ Don't count on your child feeling comfortable enough to come to you with questions — begin the conversation yourself.
- 3 **Create an open dialogue** ~ It's up to YOU to create the kind of home in which your child can ask questions about sex, love and relationships.
- 4 **Talk about sex, love and relationships** ~ Educate yourself. It is normal to feel uneasy talking with your child about sex, love and relationships. Try to overcome your feelings and bring up these issues early and often.
- 5 **Share your values** ~ When talking with your child about sex, love and relationships remember to talk about your family's values.
- 6 **Listen as much as you talk** ~ Listening carefully lets your child know they are important. This can lead to valuable discussions about a wide variety of sensitive issues.
- 7 **Be honest** ~ Whatever your child's age, they need honest answers and information. Honesty will build trust for further talks.
- 8 **Be patient** ~ Let your child think at their own pace. Listen to what they are saying daily about people, places and situations they are in that may be unhealthy, or give cause for concern.
- 9 **Use “teachable moments”** ~ Moments in everyday life are a perfect chance to begin talking. TV shows and commercials are a great way to start a talk about teen pregnancy, peer pressure or relationships.
- 10 **Talk about it again... and again... and again** ~ Most children only want small bits of information at any one time — especially about heavy topics like sex, love and relationships. They will not learn everything from a single discussion — give more than just “the talk”!

Source: *Talking With Your Kids About Tough Issues*<sup>1</sup>