

Let's Talk Party Host Guide

Thank you for hosting a Let's Talk Party! This guide was created to help you prepare for your event in seven easy steps.

Let's Talk Parties are designed to promote conversations about sexual health between trusted adults and the young people in their lives. Through these parties, we aim to provide parents and trusted adults with the opportunity to do just that. The goal is simple:

- To encourage adults and youth to have open, honest and accurate discussions about love, sex and healthy relationships.
- To help adults feel more comfortable starting conversations about sexual health.
- To share resources for adults such as NotRightNowSC.org where they can find tips and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).



Just so you know, the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy who prepared these materials:

- Does not assume that all young people are having sex and want to make sure young people know that the safest, healthiest option to avoid both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is abstinence.
- Believes it is important to educate young people about condoms and other contraceptives so they know how to protect themselves if they do become sexually active.
- Stresses the importance of factual, medically accurate information being shared with young people.

7 Steps for Hosting a Let's Talk Party

1. Decide on a party date, time, and location that will work best for you and your guests.
2. Compile your guest list and invite your potential guests. Remember: guests should include people who are parents to children of all ages, but may also include people who consider themselves to be a "trusted adult" to a young person. Aunts, uncles, "godparents," and other influential people are welcome.
3. Send out a reminder a couple of days before your party.
4. Before the party, review the conversation starters (open questions and scenarios) included this guide and the potential responses and additional thoughts. Become familiar with the host script.
5. Cut the conversation starters into separate slips of paper and place them in an envelope to draw from during the party.
6. Let's party! Have fun! Reference the open questions and scenarios to spark discussion and allow conversation to flow naturally.
7. At the end of the hour, thank your guests for attending and have them complete a quick digital evaluation (surveymonkey.com/r/Letstalkparty) before leaving.

Contact Us

Have questions? Contact us at 803-771-7700 or communications@teenpregnancysc.org.

For additional resources, visit TeenPregnancySC.org and NotRightNowSC.org.



Open Questions

Use these conversation starters to begin group discussions with party attendees:

1. Have you talked to a young person in your life about love, sex and relationships? If so, how was your experience?

Many parents and trusted adults find conversations with young people on the topics of love, sex and relationships awkward and uncomfortable. Young people feel the same way, but overwhelmingly say that they value the opinions of the adults they trust. Research shows that teens who have talked to their parents about sex are more likely to delay having sex and are more likely to use protection when they do become sexually active. One way to start these conversations is by using teachable moments (a TV show, song, or event that happened at school). Bringing up challenging topics in a casual way makes the conversation less awkward for both of you. Remember, "the talk" is most effective when it is an ongoing series of conversations.

2. Did a trusted adult have a conversation with you about sex? How did you feel about that conversation or lack thereof?

Regardless of our backgrounds, we've all experienced being a teen. We've gone through puberty, felt curious, embarrassed, and pressured. As a teenager, did you have adults in your life you felt comfortable talking to? If not, do you remember needing or wanting that? Even if it's uncomfortable, the young people in our lives need us to have those challenging conversations. Think back to what it felt like to be that age – and make yourself available to the young people in your life.



3. What do you believe young people should be taught in school related to love, sex and relationships? At home? At a faith institution?

South Carolina has a Comprehensive Health Education Act (CHEA) that was passed in 1988 and requires a minimum of 750 minutes of reproductive health and teen pregnancy prevention education between 9th and 12th grade. The law requires that students learn about disease prevention and pregnancy prevention, including information on condoms and contraception. All of this information must be taught in the context of future family planning.

While the CHEA exists to ensure all students in South Carolina get basic sexual health information, parents should be the primary sex educators of their children. Teens clearly state that they value their parents' opinions on these topics, but are often uncomfortable initiating these conversations. Churches and other faith institutions can also play a critical role in helping young people make decisions about sex and relationships. If churches value abstinence until marriage, equipping young people with the skills on how to abstain is important. Faith institutions also have the opportunity to give parents and youth leaders skills they need to effectively have conversations with young people.

4. Some adults believe young people should only be taught NOT to have sex (abstinence). Others believe young people should also learn about condoms and birth control. Do you think teaching about both is confusing? Why or why not?

Research shows that young people who learn about both abstinence AND condoms and contraception wait longer to have sex and are more likely to use protection when they do have sex. Young people are surrounded by messages about sex from TV, music, social media, and their peers. When they receive medically accurate, age-appropriate information, they are better equipped to make informed, healthy decisions.

5. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 6 in 10 teens say their primary reason for not using contraception is fear that their parents will find out. How does that make you feel as a parent or trusted adult? Do you believe that same fear keeps teens from having sex? Explain.

While teens are afraid of the reaction they would get if their parents found out they had birth control, 68% of parents say they would hope their teen would talk to them if they were having sex so they could discuss birth control. (21% of parents would want their teen to talk to them so they could convince them to stop having sex. Only 4% would be angry and express disappointment.) The challenge is that young people don't know how their parents would react unless their parents have been having consistent conversations about love, sex, and relationships leading up to that point. If you want your child to have open, honest conversations with you about sex, you have to create a relationship that allows for those conversations.

Scenarios

- 1. A young person you care about tells you that a couple at school got caught having oral sex in the bathroom and wants to know if they are still virgins since it was “just oral sex.” What is your response?**

Many young people engage in oral sex because they believe they are still “technically” considered to be virgins. Virginity is a tough word to define – particularly because it is often used in relationship to a particular set of morals and beliefs. When your child asks a question like this, you certainly can share your family’s values on the topic, but you especially want the teen to understand that oral sex is a risky behavior because it is one way that sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are spread. Oral sex cannot cause a pregnancy but it can result in contracting an STI.

- 2. You find a condom in your young person’s book bag. What is your response?**

Things to consider: Don’t automatically assume that the young person is having sex. Talk through why he or she has a condom. Are they having sex or thinking about having sex? If you feel it is not appropriate for the young person to be having sex, you can share that you’re concerned about whether he/she is ready, old enough, or in a healthy relationship, and what your own family values are around sex. Make sure that the young person leaves the conversation knowing that you are available to talk any time and that if he/she is struggling with decisions like this one, to come to you first.



- 3. The young person you care about asks you when he/she will be ready to have sex. What is your response?**

Things to consider: Again, don’t assume that the young person is planning to have sex. In a sex-saturated culture, it is normal for young people to wonder if they are normal if they aren’t having sex at a certain age. Sharing your family beliefs and values about when it is best to have sex—perhaps after college, once the person is in a meaningful, committed relationship, or after marriage—means a great deal. Rather than focusing on phrases like “just say no,” help the young person to understand why it is important to wait or why, if he or she chooses to have sex, it is important to use contraception to protect against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Also, consider helping your young person come up with a response to help him/her practice what to say to a potential partner when they are faced with this difficult decision.

- 4. The young person you care about asks where his/her friend can go to get birth control. What is your response?**

If you don’t already know the answer to this question, let the teen know that and then find out and follow up. You can even look for places together online. There is a local Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) clinic in every community in South Carolina where young people can get birth control. The number to schedule an appointment is 1-800-868-0404. Young people can usually get birth control at any of the places adults can get birth control as well – gynecologists and family practice physicians. Also, just in case this “friend” is actually the young person asking the question, it’s great to remind them that you are always available to talk to them about things like getting on birth control if that’s something they are interested in themselves.

- 5. While your child is outside, you see a text pop up on her phone that asks for a photo of “tops” with the “cherry” emoji. You’ve heard this means someone is asking for a photo of her breasts. What do you do?**

Studies show that 21% of teen girls and 18% of teen boys have sent/posted nude or semi-nude images of themselves. Explain to your children, early and often, that once an image or message is sent, it cannot be taken back and will likely spread beyond the intended recipient. Tell the young person that if they receive a sexually suggestive photo on their phone, they should tell a trusted adult immediately, delete it from their phone, and not forward it. Failing to do so could land them in trouble with the law. Teach kids to follow the “WWGT” (“What would grandma think?”) rule. If grandma shouldn’t see it, they shouldn’t send it.*

*In South Carolina, any nude, semi-nude, or sexually suggestive image of anyone under the age of 18 is considered child pornography. An individual who sends that picture can be charged with distribution of child pornography; someone who receives it can be charged with possession of child pornography. If the teen’s phone is in the parent’s name, the parent can be charged as well.

Let's Talk Party

Host Script

Read this script to your group to get started.

Let's Talk Parties first began during *Let's Talk Month*, a public awareness campaign held each October to promote communication around sexual health issues between parents or trusted adults and young people. The goal of the campaign is simple: encourage adults and children to have open, honest, and accurate discussions about love, sex, and healthy relationships.

The South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy would like to continue the *Let's Talk Month* theme throughout the year by bringing adults in South Carolina communities together to encourage and support each other in initiating these conversations with sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, students, athletes, patients, youth group members, and mentees. If we talk through these sensitive topics together—including what makes us nervous, afraid, or uncomfortable—hopefully we can help each other be better prepared to engage in these really important conversations with our young people.

During our time together, we'll take turns pulling a slip of paper from a set of 10. Whoever pulls a piece of paper will read it aloud and then we'll just start discussion. Some slips of paper contain a question designed to start conversation, and some contain a scenario to allow us to think through how we might respond to a certain situation. There are no right or wrong answers. There won't be a test. This is just a chance for us to learn from one another. So...let's talk!

Let's Talk Party

Conversation Starters

Cut the conversation starters below into separate slips of paper. Distribute the conversation starters to participants to read aloud.

Have you talked to a young person in your life about love, sex and relationships? If so, how was your experience?

Your young person tells you that a couple at school got caught having oral sex in the bathroom. He/she wants to know if they are still virgins since it was "just oral sex". What is your response?

Did a trusted adult have a conversation with you about sex? How did you feel about that conversation or lack thereof?

You find a condom in your young person's book bag. What is your response?

What do you believe young people should be taught in school related to love, sex and relationships? At home? At a faith institution?

The young person you care about asks you when he/she will be ready to have sex. What is your response?

Some adults believe young people should only be taught NOT to have sex (abstinence). Others believe young people should also learn about condoms and birth control. Do you think teaching about both is confusing? Why or why not?

The young person you care about asks where his/her friend can go to get birth control. What is your response?

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 6 in 10 teens say their primary reason for not using contraception is fear that their parents will find out. How does that make you feel as a parent or trusted adult? Do you believe that fear keeps teens from having sex?

While your child is outside, you see a text pop up on her phone that asks for a photo of "tops" with the "cherry" emoji. You've heard this means someone is asking for a photo of her breasts. What do you do?