“Dad, You Never Talked to Me About Sex”

The Role a Father Plays in a Daughter’s Sex Education

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OBJECTIVE
Your Experience of Sex Education
TOP 10 MOST OUTRAGEOUS SEX MYTHS
Background Literature

• Mothers Figures
  = The Primary In-Home Sexual Educators of Children
  • Mother Figures > Father Figures
  • Female Adolescents
    • Fathers
Perceived Barriers to Talking About Sex

- Perception
- Not knowing
- Embarrassment or discomfort
- Language and cultural barriers
- Lack of father–daughter relationship
- Daddy’s little girl
- Gender difference
Teen Sexual Activity

Adolescence is a time of rapid change.

% of adolescents who have had sex by each age

www.guttmacher.org
Role-play
Steps for Talking

1. Bring up the subject
2. Find out what your child thinks
3. Give clear Messages
4. Let your child know why you care
5. Keep the door open
Scenario 1

Your 13-year old son or daughter wants to go to a party at a friend’s house. You don’t know this friend very well. You are worried because you think some of your child’s friends may be having sex. One girl in your child’s class is pregnant.
Scenario 2

- Your 14-year old son or daughter is watching a “soap opera” on TV. On the show, there is a couple in bed with no clothes on. You decide this would be a good time to talk to your son or daughter about sex.
Father Figures’ Influence

- More protective and restrictive
- Understand male sex drive
- Teach sons to respect women
- Heightened need to protect
How Fathers Could Have Contributed to Their Daughters’ Sexual Socialization

- Understanding men: 38
- Suggesting to deal with pressure having sex: 24
- Sharing fathers’ own experiences about dating and sex while teenagers: 22
- Communicating fathers’ values and expectations: 19
- Providing information on specific sexual risk topics: 16
- Open and comfortable talking with daughters: 14
Helpful Guide to Talking to Daughter
Role Play Guidelines

1. **Bring up the subject.**

This means starting the conversation, and letting your child know you want to talk about sex or a related subject. Many times it is easiest to use “teachable moments”: those times when the subject of sex comes up on television, in the news, or when a friend or family member has a pregnancy, for example.

2. **Find out what your child thinks.**

It is important early in the conversation to ask your child questions and to listen to their point of view. Show respect for their feelings, even though you may tell them you disagree.

3. **Give clear messages.**

This is a key part of the conversation. Give a clear and direct message, e.g.:

- “I think you are too young right now to have sex. I want you to wait.”
- “If you do have sex, I want you to use condoms and birth control every time.”

Encourage parents to giving both messages (about waiting and about using condoms and birth control), and reassure them that these messages are compatible, and not conflicting. Talking about birth control or condoms does not encourage young people to have sex.

4. **Let your child know WHY you care.**

Explaining your concern about consequences is important. And parents’ messages are more powerful when children understand that parents love them and want the best for them.

5. **“Keep the door open” for more talking.**

Let your child know that you want to talk more in the future. And teens need to know that you will be there for them, no matter what.
Talking with Your Kids Role-Play

Scenario 1

Your 13-year old son or daughter wants to go to a party at a friend’s house. You don’t know this friend very well. You are worried because you think some of your child’s friends may be having sex. One girl in your child’s class is pregnant. Practice with another parent who pretends to be your child. As you talk with your “child”, try to cover the 5 Steps.

Scenario 2

Your 14-year old son or daughter is watching a “soap opera” on TV. On the show, there is a couple in bed with no clothes on. You decide this would be a good time to talk to your son or daughter about sex. Practice with another parent who pretends to be your child. As you talk with your “child”, try to cover the 5 Steps.
**Abstract**

Father figures tend to have less sexual communication with their daughters. This lack of communication by father figures is believed to influence the daughters’ sexual behaviors which may lead to early intercourse and unwanted pregnancy. Conversely, positive and open communication of sexuality between father figures and their daughters is correlated with delayed sexual activity, fewer sexual partners, and avoid unwanted sexual advances. It is important for father figures to take an active role as a sex educator for their daughters.

**Objectives**

- To employ specific approaches to assist father figures in how to engage with their daughters’ sexuality and share emotional responsibility, regarding their daughter’s sexual choices.
- To learn guidelines for father figures to prevent daughter’s early and potentially unwanted sexual activities.

**Background Literature**

- Mothers are commonly recognized as the primary in-home sexual educators of children.
- Adolescents generally report greater amounts of sexual risk communication with mothers than fathers.
- Female adolescents receive more sexual communication from mothers than fathers.
- Female adolescents regularly have low levels of sexual communication with fathers.
- Fathers are more likely than mothers to leave communication about sex to the other parent, but better suited to address certain topics.
- Fathers are less likely than mothers to advise delaying sex until marriage.
- Fathers place greater emphasis on life goals, expectations and discipline than mothers do.
- Fathers tend to be more protective of daughters than mothers are.
- Fathers are better suited than mothers to discuss some topics with their sons (e.g., puberty) and daughters (e.g., “how boys think.”)

**Perceived Benefits of Talking About Sex**

- **Father’s Influence of Child’s Gender**
  - Fathers tend to be more protective and restrictive with daughters than with sons.
  - They are often more permissive with sons—in some cases even encouraging sex.

- **Parents’ lack of communication about sex**
  - Fathers understand male sex drive and do not want their daughters taken advantage of.
  - Some teach sons to respect women.
  - Some feel a heightened need to protect daughters because the consequences of sex (e.g., pregnancy, emotional impact) may be greater for them than for sons.

- **Others note that the consequences of sex may also be severe for sons** (risk of AIDS, obligation to pay child support if pregnancy occurs).

**Perceived Threat of Sex-Related Issues**

- Sexual messages in the media and other sources
- Increasing teenage sexual behavior, peer pressure to have sex
- HIV and AIDS
- New technologies (e.g., text messaging, the Internet)

**Factors Facilitating Talking About Sex**

- Having a good relationship and open communication with children
- Creating opportunities to talk about sex
- Talking to children about sex when they are young
- Using books
- Talking about what is happening in children’s sex education classes
- Using religious teachings and the church community as supports

**Helpful Guide to Talking to Your Daughter**

- Give her a male perspective. Talk to your partner beforehand to see what issues (if any) she has discussed with your daughter. She has likely covered the basics when it comes to talking about menstruation and other changes that comes with puberty, but she can’t give her a male point of view.
- Let her know that boys are just as scared and confused about puberty and sex as girls are, and that it’s okay to come to you with any questions or fears she might have.
- Fluid a healthy sex-education. Along with talking about the basics of sex, it’s important to let her know that she is completely in charge of her body and that no one has the right to pressure her into doing something she doesn’t want to do.
- Tell her that a boy who really loves her would never make her do something that makes her feel uncomfortable or scared, and that she should treat her and her body with love and respect.
- Lastly, remind her that she is beautiful and that she should never feel compelled to change her body or her appearance to please anyone else. Remember, your daughter is susceptible to pressures from friends, boys, and the media, but at the end of the day, you are her number-one male role model and support system.

**References**


**Topics of Discussion For Sex**

- **Strategies for promoting positive development**
  - Emphasizing life goals
  - Establishing rules and expectations
  - Enforcing discipline
  - Monitoring friends and activities
  - Setting an example by exhibiting good behavior and a loving relationship with spouse
  - Developing a strong relationship with children

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