

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: STARTING THE CONVERSATION

PARENTS: START RELATING BEFORE THEY START DATING

As a parent, you can help shape respectful relationships by having conversations with your teen about healthy dating relationships.

YOU play a critical role in teaching your child the importance of respect, how to make responsible decisions, and how to say “no” to unwanted behaviors in a relationship.

The best time to prepare your son or daughter to develop healthy relationships is *before dating begins*. Do your part to help your child understand what a healthy relationship feels like and looks like.

- Talk to your teen today.
- Visit www.startstrongparents.org to learn more .
- Find out about school-based support groups and youth leadership activities in Austin at www.SafePlace.org/expectrespect and at www.startstrongaustin.org
- E-mail ExpectRespect@SafePlace.org or call the SafePlace 24-hour Hotline, 512.267.7233 if you have concerns about your teen’s relationships.



**YOU SPEAK ADULT. SHE SPEAKS,
WELL, SHE DOESN'T SPEAK.**

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startstrongparents.org

Supporting Your Teen

- Join your teen in watching his or her favorite TV show or listening to the radio. Find out what your teen is learning about relationships from the media and ask questions.
- Take time to talk to your teen about friends and daily activities.
- Ask your teen about his or her feelings about dating and relationships, but avoid forcing the issue.
- Demonstrate and encourage open and honest conversation. Ask, “What’s important to you in a relationship?”
- Share your own experiences, especially the times you made a mistake or learned something.
- Let your teen know that violence is not acceptable; it’s not okay to hurt or control another person or to tolerate abusive behavior in a relationship.
- Show your children by example how to express themselves without violence. Witnessing violence at home is harmful and increases their risk for experiencing or perpetrating abuse in future relationships.
- Help your teen recognize the signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship.
- Role play solutions to problems that come up in relationships—Assertive communication takes practice!
- Help your teen deal with break-ups in healthy ways.

10 Questions to Start the Conversation

- What is “dating” like for you and your friends? Are there different terms you use for dating—like “going out” or “hooking up?”
- If your son or daughter is dating, ask “how’s your relationship going?”
- What do you want or expect from someone you’re dating or going out with?
- What kinds of relationships do you see in the media? How healthy are these relationships?
- What makes a relationship fun and healthy vs. hurtful or abusive?
- How do you want to be treated in a relationship? What behaviors would be unacceptable to you?
- Have you ever seen any kind of abusive behavior between people who were dating or going out?
- Why would someone hurt someone they were dating? What would make it hard to break up with an abusive partner?
- What could you do if you knew someone who was being hurt or threatened? Where would you go for help?
- If you had a friend who was abusive to you or someone else, how could you let that person know how you felt?