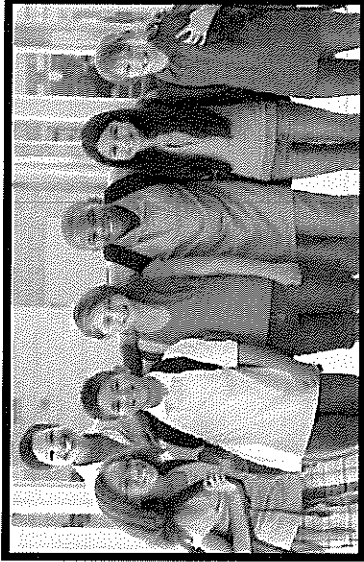


Talking to Your Middle Schooler About Relationships & Sexuality



Parenting a middle schooler brings both opportunities and challenges.

Opportunities because parents can have discussions with their children about their lives as children become more independent and enter adolescence.

Challenges because sometimes we are forced to have discussions about things that might be hard to talk about.

Parents can help their pre-teens and teens make healthy choices about their lives. When the door is open to talk, they will talk back! Although, middle schoolers are moving into the realm of peer influence, parents can maintain in their relationship and influence through open communication.

Some things to consider are:

- **Don't wait for them to ask.** Talk to your children and teens about friendship, dating, and sex *before* they start to ask questions. Share your values and expectations clearly with them.
- **Make it a discussion.** Listen to them and try to understand their point of view. Let them know you are open to talking things over, even if you see things differently.
- **If they ask a question you can't answer, don't just make something up!** Find the medically accurate information that can answer the question. "I will check on that" is a fair response sometimes to difficult questions.
- **Reassure them!** Let your child know that it is ok to have questions, or to be confused about their feelings and changing bodies.
 - ▼ Curiosity is normal: help them find answers to their questions and to their confusion about their physical development
 - ▼ Thinking about sexuality and relationships will happen: Let them know you will support them as these thoughts and feelings emerge.
 - ▼ It can be overwhelming: Moving into adolescence is a normal part of growing up. It can be an exciting time, and confusing at the same time.
 - ▼ Questioning attraction is normal: let your middle schooler know that there is time to figure this out!
 - ▼ Show them that you care: Let them know that even if they think you might be angry about something they did, you love them, and will support them.
 - ▼ Discuss personal boundaries: Remind them that no one should touch their bodies without their permission.
- **Remember:**
Help can be found with the School District Nurse and School Social Worker at your child's school for both you and your middle schooler!