

Let's Talk

Parents and Teens Talk About Sexuality: In Their Own Words

As part of Let's Talk Month 2012, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and *Family Circle* magazine, with support from the Center for Latino Adolescent and Family Health (CLAFH) at NYU, conducted a national survey to explore parent-adolescent communication about sex and relationships. We surveyed 1,046 teenagers aged 15–18 and one of their parents, for a total of 2,092 people.

We asked parents to tell us what messages about sex they most wanted to send to their teens, and we asked teens to tell us the main message they had received about sex from their parent. Here's what they had to say:

"To make a healthy choice about who she wishes to date and have a physical relationship with for the right reasons."

- 50-year-old mother

"Your life is in front of you and sex should be low on the list."

- 56-year-old father

"Only do what feels comfortable to you. Always practice safe sex. No means no."

- 52-year-old mother

"You have to own it, so be prepared to."

- 44-year-old father

"Wait until you are mature enough to handle sex, relationship, and all of its consequences."

- 50-year-old mother

"Not to do it."

- her 16-year-old daughter

"He never wants me to ever, ever have sex with anyone!!"

- his 16-year-old daughter

"Never let anyone pressure me to do anything I don't want to do. Having a relationship with someone requires a lot of maturity. Don't have sex unless I am sure it is right for me. Always have safe sex."

- her 17-year-old daughter

"Only have sex if you're prepared for the consequences of parenthood."

- his 17-year-old son

"The main message I've received from my mother is to not have sex with my wife until we're married. She hasn't said anything about a husband."

- her 17-year-old son

“Sex is special between a man and a woman and needs to wait until older and married.”

- 51-year-old-dad

“I talk to my daughters letting them know that I really cannot take care of any babies. Then I asked them can they take care of a baby without my help and they say "NO". I also told them without a college education they may have to work 2 jobs because kids are expensive and they look at me and said ‘they will get their education.’”

- 54-year-old mom

“Be safe, Be smart...Keep lines of communication open. If you have questions, ask me.”

- 39-year-old mom

“I want to relay the message that his sexual health is HIS responsibility, not just a girls. That alcohol and drugs interfere with the ability to make smart choices when sex is involved. Also that girls are not objects to be cast aside, but cherished.”

- 44-year-old mom

“I can't remember, I just remember him asking me (a year or so after my mom told me about sex) if I knew where babies came from.”

- his 15-year-old daughter

“If you get pregnancy she will not take of babies”

- her 15-year-old daughter

“Come and talk to her no matter how embarrassed I may be. Be safe.”

- her 16-year-old daughter

“Use protection.”

- her 15-year-old son