

Talking with your kids about healthy relationships

Your kids need you to remain deeply connected to and invested in them. Keep lines of communication open because this conversation can't happen in one sitting.

Things to remember before you begin

Assess your values. How do you expect couples to behave, to handle disagreements and make decisions? It's important for you to model respect, honor and integrity. Your kids' relationships are important to them. As kids, they are laying the groundwork for the relationships they'll have in the future. Become familiar with their world and what they enjoy. Showing genuine interest sets the stage for honest and consistent communication. Finally, beware of how you talk about violence. Parents tend to either be vague, causing confusion, or to be overprotective, preventing their kids from truly learning. Neither approach is helpful. Seize opportunities to talk around the dinner table, hanging out or during your commute to and from activities.

Use the following questions to begin conversations, to seek clarity and to deepen connections.

Preschool

- Who loves you? What do they do that shows that?
- Who are your friends? Do you like playing with them?
- Is there someone you don't like playing with? Why?
- Has anyone ever made you sad? What did they do?
- Has anyone ever made you mad? What did they do?

Early Elementary (kindergarten-grade 3)

- What do you think respect is?
- What do you do that shows you respect yourself?
- What do you do that shows you respect others?
- How do you decide to be friends with someone?
- What makes a friendship good?
- How do you feel when someone hurts your feelings or gets too aggressive in a game or competition?
- How can you tell if someone is getting angry?
- How can you tell if you are getting angry or upset?
- What is something OK to do when you are angry?

Late Elementary (grades 3-5)

- Have you ever had a friend who gets jealous?
- What are ways to get to know someone?
- How can you show you enjoy someone's company?
- What do or don't you like about how others treat you?
- What does it mean to "like someone"?
- Does anyone you know have a boy/girlfriend?
- When are you old enough to have a boy/girlfriend?
- How should a boy/girlfriend act?
- How do you calm yourself when you are angry?
- What is something that someone can do to show you they are listening to what you have to say?



Middle School (grades 6-8)

- How do you want your friends to treat you?
- What does it mean to you to show someone respect? To show yourself respect?
- What is dating?
- When are you old enough to start dating?
- Do you know anyone who is dating?
- What is a boundary? What kind of boundaries do you have?
- Can you think of a couple that has a good relationship? What makes it good?
- Can you think of a couple that has an unhealthy relationship? What makes it unhealthy?
- Do you think there is a good way to argue? Do you think there is an unfair way to argue?

High School (grades 9-12)

- What are your friend's dating relationships like?
- What is the difference between "talking" and dating?
- How long do your friends' relationships seem to last?
- Do they make any commitment to each other?
- Are there any "unwritten rules" about dating?
- What is a boundary? What kind of boundaries do you have?
- Do you want to date someone? Why? What kind of person would you choose to date?
- What do people expect from a dating relationship?
- When does sending or asking someone for a picture become inappropriate? What pictures would be inappropriate?
- What would you do if you weren't being treated well?
- What are some things that might make a relationship unhealthy?
- Do you think jealousy is a sign of love?
- How would you feel if a boy/girlfriend asked you to stop being friends with someone?
- Why would someone stay in an unhealthy relationship?
- Who would you most likely talk about your relationships with?

To learn more about healthy relationships, or if you need help, call our 24/7 helpline at (317) 745-1496.



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