

#TalkingIsPower Month 2018: Champion Guide

Champions (trusted adults) play an important role in helping to ensure that all young people have the power to decide if, when and under what circumstances to become pregnant. According to young people, champions—not pop culture—most influence their decisions about sex, love, and relationships. That’s right, believe it or not, young people want to hear from YOU. That can cause a lot of pressure, but it doesn’t have to be. The following six tips are meant to guide you through a thoughtful, rational, and (hopefully) slightly less awkward conversation about sex with the young people in your life.

6 #TalkingIsPower Tips to Jumpstart Meaningful Conversations

1. Talk early and often about sex, and be specific.

Age-appropriate conversations about relationships and intimacy should begin early on in a young person’s life and continue through adolescence. Start the conversation and make sure that it is honest, open, and respectful. You don’t have to be a biology text book; just be real. Candidly and confidently explain what you believe to be true about love and sex and why you believe what you do. If you’re not sure about something, it’s okay to say: “actually I don’t know!”.

If you can’t think of how to start the discussion, consider using our #TalkingIsPower conversation prompts located at www.powertodecide.org/talkingispower

2. Cultivate a culture of openness—be an “ask-able champion” and allow the young person in your life to share their feelings without fear of shame or condemnation.

Conversations about love and sex should include asking your young person what they think, what they know, and what other topics they’re curious about. Ask what, if anything, worries them. Listen as much as—or more than—you talk. Again, your words are important, but equally important is making sure that your young person’s voice is being heard and honored.

We’ve listed below a few questions your young person may be curious about. If they’re hesitant to bring these questions up to you, perhaps you could try framing them in a “what would you do if…” way. This could spark a conversation and ease the tension around taboo topics like sex and relationships.

- When is the right time to start dating?
- How do I know if I’m in love? Will sex bring me closer to my partner?
- How will I know when I’m ready to have sex? Should I wait until marriage?
- Will having sex make me popular? Will it make me more mature?
- How do I tell my partner that I don’t want to have sex without them?
- How do I manage pressure from my peers about having sex?
- How does contraception work? Are some methods better than others? Are they safe?
- Can you get pregnant the first time?

3. Don't assume that your young person's emotions aren't valid just because they are young.

Despite sometimes being short-lived, adolescent relationships have a huge impact on young people. They play an important role in young people's day-to-day lives and have a significant impact on their ongoing emotional and social development. They also lay the foundation for romantic relationships in adulthood. Young people's emotions are very real and deserve respect.

4. Build a trusting relationship with the young person in your life.

Providing a supportive and nurturing environment for the young person in your life forms a relationship that is warm and rich in communication. This, in return, will help them form the foundation on which their future relationships will be built. Research shows that talking with young people about sex does not encourage them to become sexually active. Don't assume that a young person is sexually active, or involved in a relationship, just because they ask about sex, contraception, or dating. Be ready to listen to your young person with an open mind.

5. Help the young person in your life plan for the future they envision for themselves.

Young people make more practical decisions—and are willing to delay sex—when they understand that they have a bright future ahead of them. Help the young person in your life set meaningful goals for the future. Talk to your young person about what it takes to make future plans come true and help them reach their goals. Explain how an unplanned pregnancy can interrupt the best of plans; for example, child care expenses may make it almost impossible to afford college. Encourage after school activities, community service, and the exploration of new interests and hobbies. This will not only teach job skills, but can also put young people in touch with a wide variety of committed and caring adults (future champions) who are also committed to helping them achieve their goals.

6. Don't give up.

Even if the young person in your life stonewalls you or appears uninterested in (or horrified by) these conversations, it's your job as their champion to keep talking. Trust us—it makes a difference!

Why have the talk now? #TalkingIsPower Month launches on Wednesday, May 2, 2018. Throughout the month of May, we are posing a nationwide ask for young people, and the champions who care about them, to initiate meaningful conversations surrounding sex, love, relationships, contraception, and having the power to decide if, when and under what circumstances to become pregnant.

We want to help you embrace the inner champion in yourself. We have a variety of new materials to help champions jumpstart these conversations, including videos and conversation prompts. May is all about reminding parents, champions and mentors of how powerful they really are. Our young people are listening. Be a hero—start early, talk often. Take the #TalkingIsPower pledge at <https://powertodecide.org/get-involved>.