

TALK IT OUT

Smart Conversations and Smart Decisions

KICKING OFF THE CONVERSATION

Few things in high school are more *awkward* than talking about sex with your friends, boyfriend, or girlfriend (ok, talking about sex with your parents can definitely be the most awkward). But few topics are more *important* to talk about than safer sex or not having sex. So here are some hopefully not-so-awkward ways to kick off the conversation with your friends:

- **TEEN PREGNANCY TALK** — We’ve all heard about Jamie Lynn Spears’ saga and the hit movie *Juno*, so use your obsession with pop culture to talk to your friends about teen sex and pregnancy. When you see Jamie Lynn’s face or *Juno*’s pregnant belly plastered on every magazine cover in the grocery store checkout line, ask your friends, “What would you do if you found yourself in this situation?” or, “How do you keep yourself from being in this situation?”
- **SEX IN THE MEDIA** — Whether in movies, magazines, music, or TV, we’re exposed to tons of sexual references and images on a daily basis. When a steamy scene comes on “Gossip Girl,” talk to your friends about the lack of conversations about using contraception and condoms on TV shows. And mention the unrealistic way the media depicts sexual relationships and high school in general. (Do your friends *really* drive flashy convertibles and wear strictly designer labels?). Say, “Can you believe they’re in bed after just meeting each other five minutes ago? Do you think this is realistic?”
- **PEOPLE YOU KNOW** — You probably know teens who aren’t having sex or who are having safer sex. And you may know older teens who are pregnant or who’ve had babies. In the middle of a gossip session about who’s hooking up with who, bring up your thoughts about how your classmates are dealing with sex and where those teens are now who’ve had babies. One question might be, “At what age do you think teens should start having sex?”
- **SEX ED CHATTER** — Even though no one wants to give their opinions about sex during sex ed class, it’s only natural to want to react to what you heard *after* class with your friends. A couple of conversation topics could be: “Did you realize condoms are 97 percent effective if used correctly, but, in reality, condoms are only 88 percent effective because people don’t know how to use them?” Or, “Did you know you can get gonorrhea just by having oral sex?”

ROLE PLAYING

If you’ve talked to your friends about sex but can’t quite figure out what to say to your boyfriend or girlfriend, let your friends help with role playing. Let your friend play the role of your boyfriend or girlfriend and have a mock conversation about using condoms and contraceptives or about not having sex. After practicing, you’ll feel more confident bringing up this topic with your boyfriend or girlfriend.