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Sex Education from Toddlers to Teens

 February 10, 2008 by [Christine](#)

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At what age should you talk to your kids about sex? According to Dr. Steven Abelowitz, [sex education should be a series of conversations](#) from toddlerhood to teenagerhood. Parents should take clues from their kids on what to say and when to talk about s-e-x. Kids are influenced by a lot of sources; friends, teachers, coaches, television, movies, etc. But parents are still the greatest influence and need to be open to answer questions. It may feel awkward to talk to kids about sex, but it's important to open that line of communication so they can trust you and feel comfortable enough to come to you when they have questions.

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The conversation starts as a simple anatomy lesson. Parents may not think of that as a sex talk, but it really is the beginning lessons on teaching kids about their bodies. As toddlers we name the body parts. As they get a little older we talk about the differences between a boy and a girl. By elementary school they may begin asking where babies come from. Young kids don't need to know the intimate details. They are often satisfied with vague answers. A simple, "mommies and daddies make babies and then the baby grows in the mommies tummy" is fine at that age. For us this was also the start of the "you don't have babies until your married" message.

As they get in to the tween years their questions become a little trickier. In fourth and fifth grade and on in to junior high (or middle school) they begin to go through puberty. They likely have tons of questions about their changing bodies. They begin to get self-conscious about these changes. They wonder how they compare to their classmates. This is really the time to be watchful of their self-esteem and encourage them to embrace their uniqueness. Explain puberty and how different people mature at different rates. Be open with them and willing to answer their questions.

By middle school they usually have a sex education class. This is a perfect opportunity to uncover what your tween really knows about sex. This is the time to demystify any misconceptions they may have heard or any questions they may have. At this age they may hear terms from their friends or on television or in movies that they don't understand. I love the scene in *Stepmom* where Susan Sarandon's character gets angry with Julia Roberts character because she told her daughter about "snowblowing" (which, honestly I've never heard that term before this movie cause apparently I'm old fashioned). Kids may ask you about terms like "snowblowing." If you don't know the answer consult the [Urban dictionary](#).

By the time they are teenagers they may start having "serious" (at least what they consider serious) relationships with members of the opposite sex. Make sure they know your family rules and your expectations. They may not always do what you say, but at least they'll have you in the back of their head when they make decisions. Make sure they know how to stay protected and know their options. Continue your self-esteem conversations. Be a shoulder to cry on during breakups.

But don't stop there. Your teen also needs to know how to be a good boyfriend or girlfriend. Talk to them about respect (both being respectful and getting respect from their partner). Discuss how to compromise and solve disagreements. Ask them what they look for in a boyfriend or girlfriend. If they are looking for a beautiful blond with a smoking hot body, then talk about other attributes; such as honesty, compassion and humor.

Communicating with your teen is crucial. In the article, Dr. Abelowitz says, "It is generally considered that in families where there is positive and healthy communication, children generally delay the initiation of sexual relations until reaching older ages and are more likely to use contraception and protection against sexually transmitted diseases." So shake off any fears you may have and sit down with your teen.