

## Helpful Discussion Techniques for Difficult Conversations from Teens

- Express a willingness to answer any questions
  - Open the window to conversations, and allow the teenager to climb through
- Express a message of acceptance and non-judgment while communicating your expectations
  - “I think you should avoid drinking altogether, but if you are going to drink...”
- Avoid the “Don’t! Don’t! Don’t!” messaging and accusations
  - This makes the teens feel attacked
  - Some teens may rebel from overprotection as they are feeling “controlled”
- Avoid peppering the teens with questioning
  - Questions like “Where are you going? Who will be there? Which friends of yours do drugs?” can prevent the teen from communicating as they feel controlled
  - The message of concern for safety is more effective for some teens
- Be understanding that teenagers will be faced with high-risk behaviors
- Although teens are uncomfortable, many would like to have “The Talk”
  - Avoid sitting them down and acting as if they don’t have a clue about high-risk behavior
- Be informed when having difficult discussions
  - For example: Understand the risks and benefits of birth control
  - Explain both psychological and physical dangers of high-risk behavior
  - Avoid scare tactics
- Provide strategies for dealing with difficult situations
  - “If you get into trouble, remember you can call me.”
  - “Text your sister if need to be picked up.”
  - “Travel with a “buddy” everywhere you go.”
- Brainstorm strategies for dealing with “heat of the moment” situations
- Forward emails or print articles that deal with high-risk behavior
  - Let the teenager know that you would be open to talking about the issue, but don’t ask questions like “Did you read the article?”; “Don’t you agree?”
  - Allow the teenager to approach you.
- An in-person Health Education class is important
  - Having a safe space with a non-parent adult to ask questions is important
- Be Honest!
  - Speak from your heart
  - Don’t downplay or lie about your past experiences
- Trust your teenagers
  - Express your concerns for safety, but trust that teenagers can make smart decisions