

Get-Out-of-Jail-Free Conversation Starters

Important Things To Remember

1. Remember how hard it is for your son or daughter to admit that they are struggling with pornography or sexual activity.
2. Be patient and understanding. It may take a while for them to be able to tell you everything that is going on.
3. Be aware of your feelings. If you feel you may overreact or have strong feelings, either because of anger or sadness, take a break for a little while. If you still feel overwhelmed, schedule an appointment with a pastor or counselor to help with the conversation.
4. Remember that the problem is rarely the problem. Wrestling with sexual issues is usually a symptom of other emotional struggles going on inside your son or daughter.
5. If you don't know what to do, that's okay. You can tell your son or daughter that you're not sure what to do next and that you're going to find someone who can help out. Its okay to learn together.

Conversation Starters

1. Can you tell me how hard it was to give me this card?
2. Can you describe how you're feeling right now?
3. How long have you been wanting to talk to me about this?
4. How long has this been a struggle for you?
5. Can you tell me how you got introduced to some of this stuff?
6. What have you done to try and stop?
7. We'd like to help you work through this. What will be the best way for us to check in on you on a regular basis to see how things are going?
8. We will work together to put some things in place to make it as easy as possible for you to work through this.

Sexploration Tips Just For Parents

1. Don't lecture them. I promise, they won't hear as much. Ask lots of questions in conversational ways, not in the "you're in trouble so you better answer my questions" interrogation way.
2. Teens are designed to question everything, and that's a good thing. We lose credibility as a reliable source of wisdom and information when we rely on religious dogma without understanding it or being willing to discuss or defend it.
3. If you can't talk to your kids about everyday stuff, you will not be able to talk to them about something personal like sexuality. Practice with the everyday easy things.
4. We can't escape this culture. We have to figure out how to live in it safely. Hiding doesn't work.
5. If talking to your kids about sex is so uncomfortable that you can't do it, then it may be time for you to find someone who can help you work through your own sexuality. Redeeming your sexuality will protect your children's sexuality.
6. People are busy. At a time when parents have less and less time with their children, there is an abundance of advertisers ready to fill the gap. It will cost you time and energy to train your teens. Do it anyways. It is time well spent.
7. Use common sense when it comes to technology. Don't assume "my kid won't do that." Tell your kids that you will check up on them and then do it, but in an honest and kind way. Remember, you are guiding them, not trying to catch them.
8. With older teens, and when appropriate, share about your life and sexual choices. Let your kids know that you're not perfect and tell them about the impact of your choices. When they understand where you're coming from, they are more likely to listen.
9. Your kids will push back and fight you on some of this. That is normal and appropriate. Always be willing to explain why you are doing what you are doing and then find ways to work together to accomplish the ultimate goal.
10. Remember that your goal is to equip your kids to make it on their own. You don't want them dependent upon you to make their decisions. Give them lots of opportunities to practice making decisions that, if it doesn't work out, they can live with the consequences.

Sexploration Tips Just For Kids

1. The less information you give your parents, the more they will assume you're doing the things they did when they were teens. Giving more information will work out better for you in the long run.
2. You've got the advantage in today's culture. You'll always know more than your parents, sooner, faster, more easily. They will try to guide you but you also need to be responsible for yourselves.
3. Your parents may be uncomfortable talking about sex with you. Be nice to them. This is probably the first time they've been parents of teenagers and they have to learn how to do it. They will make mistakes. Be nice and forgive them... often.
4. Learn to trust yourself. Your conscience will usually warn you when situations are wrong. Start listening to that voice and you'll avoid lots of situations that could bring some long-term pain.
5. Remember you're not alone. Most adolescents forget that they are not the only one who may be wrestling with something. Just knowing other people have been through what you are going through will be helpful.
6. Don't isolate yourself. When teens get worried or make mistakes, its common to try and hide those mistakes. Find the safe adults in your life and let them know what's going on. Hopefully, they'll be understanding and kind as they guide you toward a solution.
7. Even though you'd like it, you're not free to do whatever you want. Life doesn't work that way. Good people are accountable to others, whether that's a boss, church, God, spouse, family, or friends. Learn how to work with your parents instead of against them.
8. Understand that sex can be used to manipulate you. Boys use love to get sex. Girls use sex to get love. Corporations use sex to get money.
9. Boys use sexuality to feel significant and important. Girls use sexuality to find safety and security. Both boys and girls want to be wanted.
10. Our sexuality was created by God and comes with a users manual—the Bible. If sex is misused it can have life-long consequences that your parents want to help you avoid. Guard your hearts now and you will have a life-time enjoying what God created.

Share The Power

Teens want more control over their lives and, as parents, its appropriate to give it to them. The following are several topics of conversation where you and your teen can start to have discussions and come to some mutually beneficial agreements. As a suggestion, read through each topic and individually decide how you would answer the questions. Then share your answers with each other. Discuss the areas where there is different expectations, listening to why the other person thinks the way they do. See if everyone can come to some form of agreement—Something that works well for everyone.

Remember The Why Rules

- For Parents—Kids can ask why a certain rule or restriction is in place and expect a reasonable, thought out answer. If the only answer you can think of is, "because I said so" then its time to examine the rule.
- For Kids—Parents can ask why and expect a reasonable answer as well. If the only answer you can think of is, " 'cause" or " I dunno" then its time to examine the request.

Beginning Topics

Internet & Cell Phone Usage

1. Time of day to be online?
2. Length of time to be online?
3. Whom I will communicate with?
4. Appropriate sites and ares to visit?
5. Inappropriate sites and areas to visit?
6. What sites will parents have access to?
7. What sites will be private?

Dating

1. When would it be appropriate for me to start dating?
2. What does dating mean? How do we define it?
3. What type of person should I be allowed to date?
4. What activities are considered appropriate while on a date?
5. What physical forms of affection is appropriate and at what stages?
6. How does faith and God play into my dating choices?

Media

1. Are there any TV shows that you feel are inappropriate? Why are they inappropriate?
2. How should we respond to the sexual content on our favorite TV shows?
3. Are there any restrictions on movies? Why or why not?
4. When we accidentally run across pornography how should we respond?

Sexploration Sexual Intensity Scenarios

Different situations have different levels of sexual intensity. This is okay as long as you know which ones are appropriate and which ones are trying to manipulate you.

Examine each situation listed below. Parents and kids independently rate where they would place the appropriate level of sexual intensity. Explain why you chose that specific rating.

After you rate them, what things are done, either by the media or the people around you to increase the sexual intensity of each situation in an attempt to manipulate you?

Rating System—1=no sexual intensity, 8=Very intense sexual energy

1. Math class
2. At the mall with a group of friends
3. At the beach
4. A first date
5. Prom night
6. A football game
7. Lunchtime at school
8. Texting a boy or girl you're interested in
9. On a date with a boyfriend/girlfriend of 3 months
10. Engaged
11. Weeknight Youth Group at church
12. Weekend Youth Group camping trip
13. Checking your email
14. Driving to work
15. Working at a coffee shop
16. Hanging out at school with someone you like
17. Watching a movie with your friends at someone's house

What situations would you add that you feel its appropriate to have an appropriate level of sexual intensity? What number would you give it?