

Talking About Consent and Healthy Relationships at Every Age

Talking about these issues is a lifelong conversation for parents and their children. These are some examples of specific messages parents can give to help prevent unhealthy relationships and sexual assault, or know what to do if something happens.

When they're

You can say things like:

8

**years old
or younger**

- "You don't have to kiss or hug anyone you don't want to."
- "You should never touch someone else if they tell you not to."
- "Good friends are nice to each other and take turns talking and listening to each other."
- "If anyone other than me or the doctor ever touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, or touches your penis or vagina, tell them no and to stop. If they won't stop, tell an adult like me or (another trusted adult)."

9-11

years old

- "People who care about each other treat each other with respect, even when they disagree with each other."
- "If anyone tries to make you do anything you don't want to do, you can tell them 'I don't want to do that. Let's do something else instead.'"
- "If someone is treating you in a very mean way or bullying you, it's not ok and it's not your fault. Come talk to me if anything like that happens to you or a friend."

12-14

years old

- "What things are important to feel safe and cared for in a relationship? What wouldn't be OK with you?"
- "Technology and social media can help us stay connected with the people we love, but can also lead to miscommunication, spreading gossip, or following where you're going (stalking)."
- "In a relationship, it's never OK for one person to pressure the other to do anything they don't want to do."
- "Rape and sexual assault are crimes and are never the victim's fault. They are always the fault of the person who committed the crime."

15-18

years old

- "Consent is how you and your partner both know that sex is OK and wanted by both of you. You always need to ask for consent if you want to have sex, and you always have the right to say yes or no to sex."
- "If you were in an unhealthy relationship, how would you break up with someone safely?"
- "If you're drunk or high, it can be really hard to read someone's signals to know if they're consenting or not."
- "There are resources in our community to help people who are sexually assaulted. If you or one of your friends is ever in that situation, you can go there, and of course you can always come to me for help."