

TALKING TO TEENS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. Use the #MeToo movement to make it relevant and ask your teen's opinion on the social media movement. Get a copy of Time Magazine and read it with your teen. Ask what they think about the article and answer any questions openly and honestly. Asking their opinion shows them that you value their point of view and opens up the door for more conversation.
2. Use your own experience to tell a safety story. Sharing your own experiences can make these conversations relevant and feel more real to teens. If you don't have an experience you feel comfortable sharing, you can tell a story about someone you know.
3. Tell your teen it is important to calmly speak up if friends make sexist comments or try and pressure or force someone to have sex. Make it personal, asking how they would feel if the comments were directed at their sibling, parent, grandparent or girlfriend/boyfriend.
4. If the situation requires them to speak up, remind them to do it in a calm and rational manner. They can ask the person making the comments if they would appreciate someone making that comment to their sister or mother. If the answer is no, they can explain they person they were talking about is someone's daughter/son or sister/brother.
5. Ask them for their definition of consent. Explain "sexy" clothing or previous sexual activity does not automatically mean consent. Ask if your partner is ok with what is happening. When the dynamics change, ask again. For example, if the situation goes from kissing to heavy petting to the removal of clothing, ask at each step. If the answer is not an affirmative yes (verbal or nodding the head), then it is NOT consent. Consent is about communication, not assumptions.
6. If the school administration will allow it, help your teen start a #NoMeansNo pledge campaign in their school. If the administration will not allow it, lobby the school board. You can also institute the pledge into scout groups, sports teams and youth groups.
7. Talk about ways to support friends who are harassed or assaulted. Explain how to actively listen, and tell them you are there for them and their friends when they need to talk. Provide them with information on available resources for sexual assault survivors and their families.
8. Talk about sexual assault directly. Bring up statistics that relate to them, such as the fact that 93 percent of victims who are minors know the perpetrator.¹ Explain females ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault², that female college

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students are 3 times more likely to experience sexual violence ³ and 1 out of 10 rape victims are male. ⁴

9. Dispel stereotypes. Emphasize although statistics for certain positions of society may show they are more susceptible to sexual assault, sexual violence does not discriminate. #MeToo showed you can be rich or poor, black, white or brown, or live in a mansion or public housing, anymore can be a victim of sexual violence.
10. Explain no one “looks like a rapist.” Sexual predators come in every color, from every nationality, and walk of life, including family members, teachers, coaches and other trusted adults.

¹ RAINN.org

² Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sex Offenses and Offenders

³ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rape and Sexual Victimization Among College-Aged Females

⁴ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Female Victims of Sexual Violence