

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS 6TH GRADE

*Parent Handbook*



Write your name here:



U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE  
CONTROL AND PREVENTION



# About the Program

## Welcome to the Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (6th Grade).

Of all the jobs that we will have in our lives, being a parent is the most rewarding—but it can also be the most challenging. As parents we want to raise our children in the most healthy manner possible. We strive to provide our children with a safe, secure, nurturing, loving, and supportive environment. We want them to have the knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviors they need to become productive adults who contribute to their own well-being, as well as their families, communities, and society. As parents, what we do and say when they are children and young teens will matter. It can make a difference as they grow into older adolescence and adulthood.

Healthy Relationships Toolkit (HeaRT) for Parents will help you grow as a parent and support system for your children. Over the next 6 weeks, we will talk about strategies that will help you protect your child from unhealthy relationships and unsafe sexual behaviors. This handbook contains information that will be covered in six sessions, resources for locating additional information, and at-home activities you can do to practice your skills. To get the most out of each session, please bring this handbook with you to each session.

**Thank you for participating in HeaRT for Parents.**

**Note:** The Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Empowering Teens to Build Safe and Supportive Relationships was previously referred to as Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships.

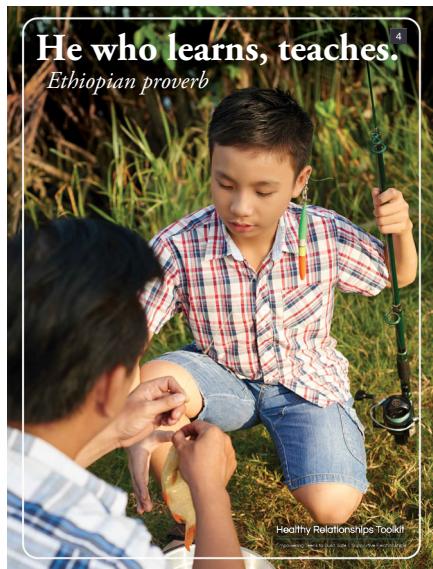
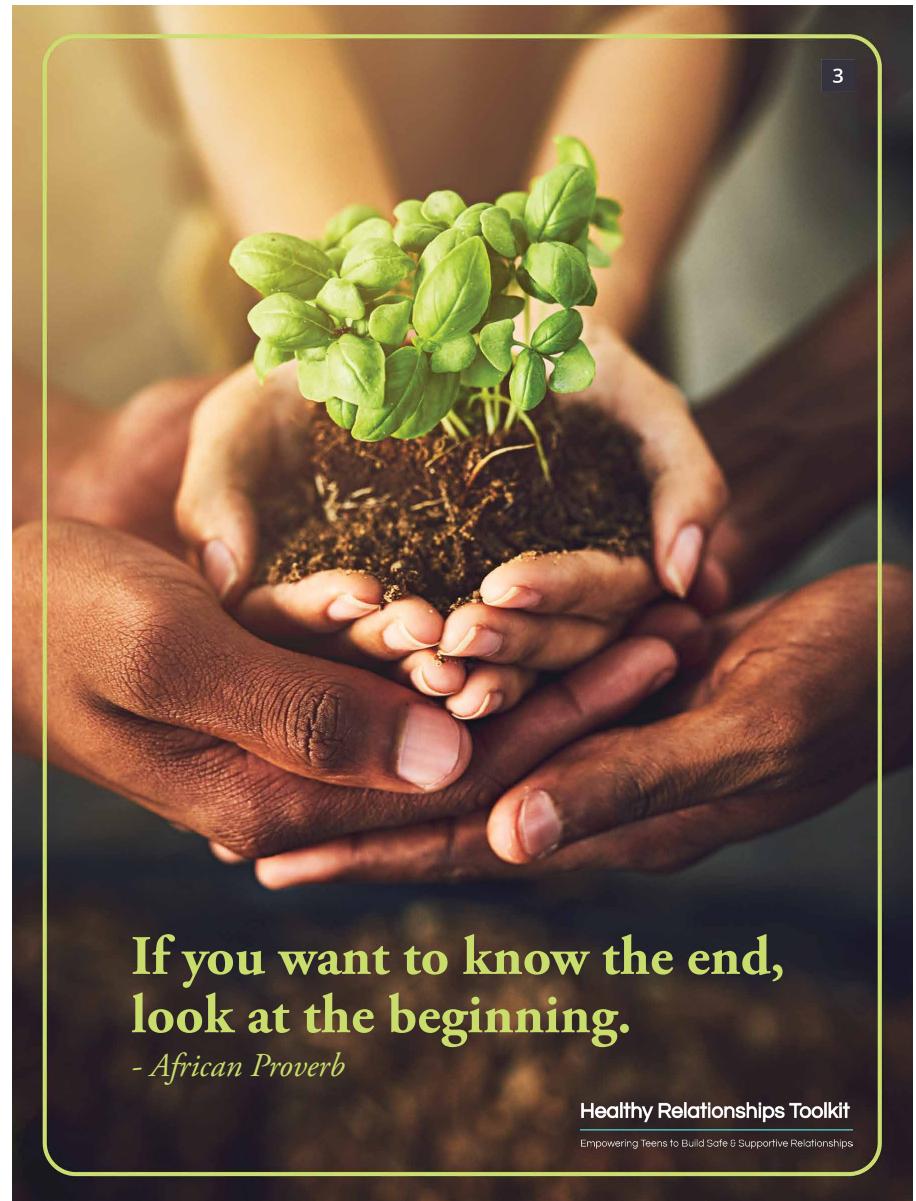
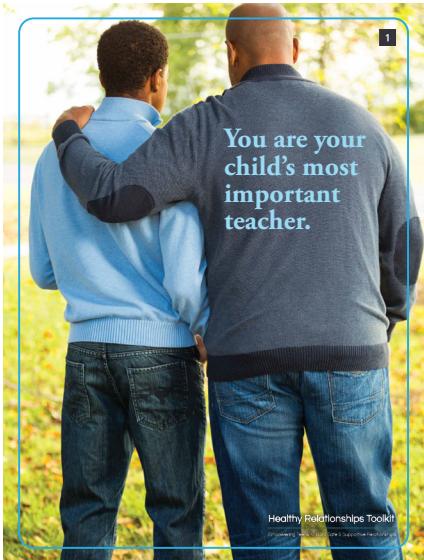


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# Session 1: Parents Make a Difference



## Goals of HeaRT for Parents

### Learn how to become better health teachers for our children.

- *You are your child's most important teacher.*
- *If you want to know the end, look at the beginning.* (African proverb)

### Learn how to help our children cope with messages about relationships and sex that may not be good for them.

- Even young children are bombarded with messages about unhealthy relationships and sex.
- When we do not talk to our children about difficult topics like unhealthy relationships and sex, we let the other influences in their lives have control.
- *You must have a message too.*

### Build our knowledge and skills to communicate our expectations about relationships and sex to our children more effectively.

- The purpose of this program is not to judge or teach parents what is right or wrong. Instead, HeaRT provides you with information and ideas for communicating your thoughts and expectations more effectively with your child.
- We are not pushing one viewpoint—we want to support you as a parent in promoting your viewpoint with your child.

### Provide information that we can share with others in our family.

- *He who learns, teaches.* (Ethiopian proverb)
- Have fun and enjoy our social time together!

## Overview of Sessions

### Session 1: Parents Make a Difference

- Introduce the “Pyramid of Success” (what children need to achieve life goals).
- Pressures children face.
- The important role of parents.

### Session 2: Parenting Positively

- Strengthening the parent-child relationship.
- Improving parent-child communication.
- Supervising your child.

### Session 3: Parents Are Educators

- The realities of adolescent sexual behavior.
- Why should parents be relationship and sex educators?
- Sex education.
- What parents can do.

### Session 4: I Think I Can, I Know I Can

- Difficulties of discussing relationships and sexual issues.
- Tips for talking to your child about relationships and sex.
- Figuring out what to say when.

### Session 5: Parents Are Role Models

- Healthy versus unhealthy relationships.
- The realities of teen dating violence.
- What parents can do.

### Session 6: Moving Forward

- Child participates in discussions with parent(s).
- Four-step parenting plan for handling/addressing peer pressure.
- Graduation.

## Group “Ground Rules”

List below the rules that are decided upon by members of your group.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

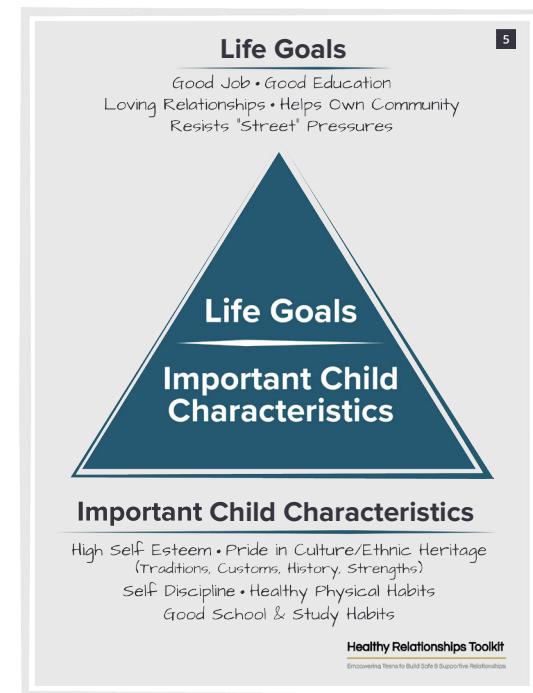
## Pyramid of Success

### Life Goals

- A good job
- Good education
- Loving relationships
- Helps own community
- Resists “peer” pressures

### Important Child Characteristics

- High self-esteem
- Pride in cultural/ethnic heritage (traditions, customs, history, and strengths)
- Self-discipline
- Healthy physical habits
- Good school and study habits



HeaRT for Parents is about helping our children achieve their life goals and avoid things (e.g., HIV, teen pregnancy, unhealthy relationships) that can divert them from their path to success.

## Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers

**The pre-teen and teenage years are a period of change.** Our children are experiencing new and emerging attitudes and skills that lay the foundation for adulthood, even though they are not yet adults. They are adjusting emotionally to a place between childhood and adulthood. For example, you might see a child who wants to be like an independent adult one day but is very childlike the next.

**During the pre-teen and teenage years, our children's relationships with others change.** Our children begin to rely more on friends, though perhaps not as much as it feels like sometimes. They begin to explore the values and opinions of peers, want to spend more time with friends, and may even start talking or acting a lot like their friends.

**Parents need to help pre-teens understand and negotiate the changes that occur during this period.** We have heard from a lot of kids who say that parents and their opinions still matter. It may not seem like it at times, but children do want to know the opinions of their parents. Therefore, it is important not to give up on trying to stay close to your child and spending time together. Remember parents make a difference.

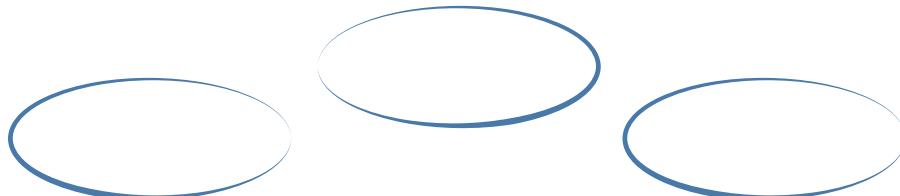
**Pre-teens and teenagers feel like their experiences are unique and no one can really understand where they are coming from.** The pre-teen years are a really good age to show them that you can understand where they are coming from. To do this, try putting yourself in the shoes of your child. Also, think back to what it felt like when... (e.g., you did not get asked out, people laughed at you, you did not make the team.)

**Adolescent bodies are changing a lot in addition to all the emotional and social changes that are occurring.** Most pre-teens between the ages of 9-12 have started to have some normal experiences related to sexual development such as periods, breast and genital development, erections and sexual arousal, and experimentation with masturbation. As their bodies are changing to look more like adults, they will begin engaging in more adult-like behaviors and will start having sexual feelings. As a result, they may display these feelings through the way they dress and act. Some will start experimenting with sexual behaviors. Overall, it is important to consider that these physical changes are tough for them and sometimes for parents too.



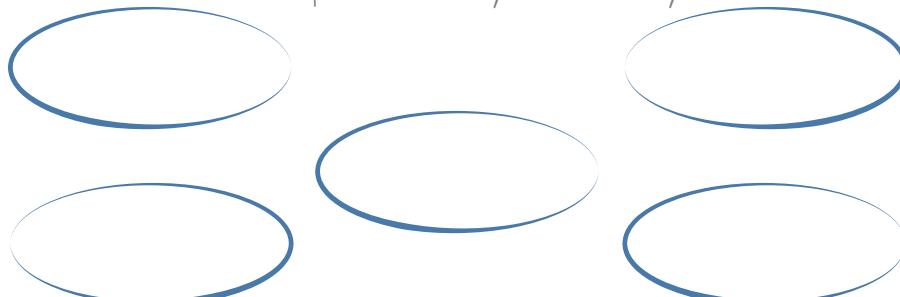
## Mapping Risk for Early Sexual Activity

Reasons for Becoming Sexually Active



### Early Sexual Activity

Consequences of Early Sexual Activity



### Difficulty in Achieving Life's Goals

## Why Focus on Children 9- to 12-Years-Old?

What you do now, as a parent when your child is young, will lay the foundation for what happens later during the pre-teen and teenage years. If parents wait too long to discuss issues such as healthy relationships and sexuality, they have lost their chance to have the greatest impact.

**Your children are entering a phase (puberty) where so many things are changing.** They are changing physically and emotionally, as well as in the ways they think and what they are exposed to. Puberty is also occurring at earlier ages than in the past.

**Children can be very cruel to each other at this stage.** When this happens, it can open the door for parents to improve their relationship with their child by offering the unconditional love that peers often do not provide.

**Children are bombarded with information about unhealthy relationships and sex every day.** They need parents to filter this information. If parents say nothing then outside influences (e.g., media and peers) will be in control. Therefore, it is important for your children to learn about sexual issues and relationships from your words and actions.

**Now is the time to help your child develop the values, attitudes, maturity, and skills** that will help them make good decisions about relationships and sexual experiences throughout adolescence and adulthood.

**Puberty is a time of increased sexual feelings and it's common for young people to question their sexual orientation.** The average age when youth may begin to feel they are something other than straight or heterosexual is age 12. How parents engage with their lesbian, gay, or bisexual child can have a tremendous influence on their current and future mental and physical health.



**HeaRT for Parents** will help you build skills to begin talking to your child now and to prepare for the upcoming years.

## Questions to Think About...

To assist our discussions in future sessions, think about the answers to the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of healthy relationships you model for your children?
- Which characteristics do you value and/or do you want your child to expect in a relationship?
- Are there aspects of your current or former relationships you want your child to avoid?
- What term(s) does your child use to describe their relationships with others?
- What term(s) does your child use to describe relationships where there is a romantic interest in the other person?

## Notes:

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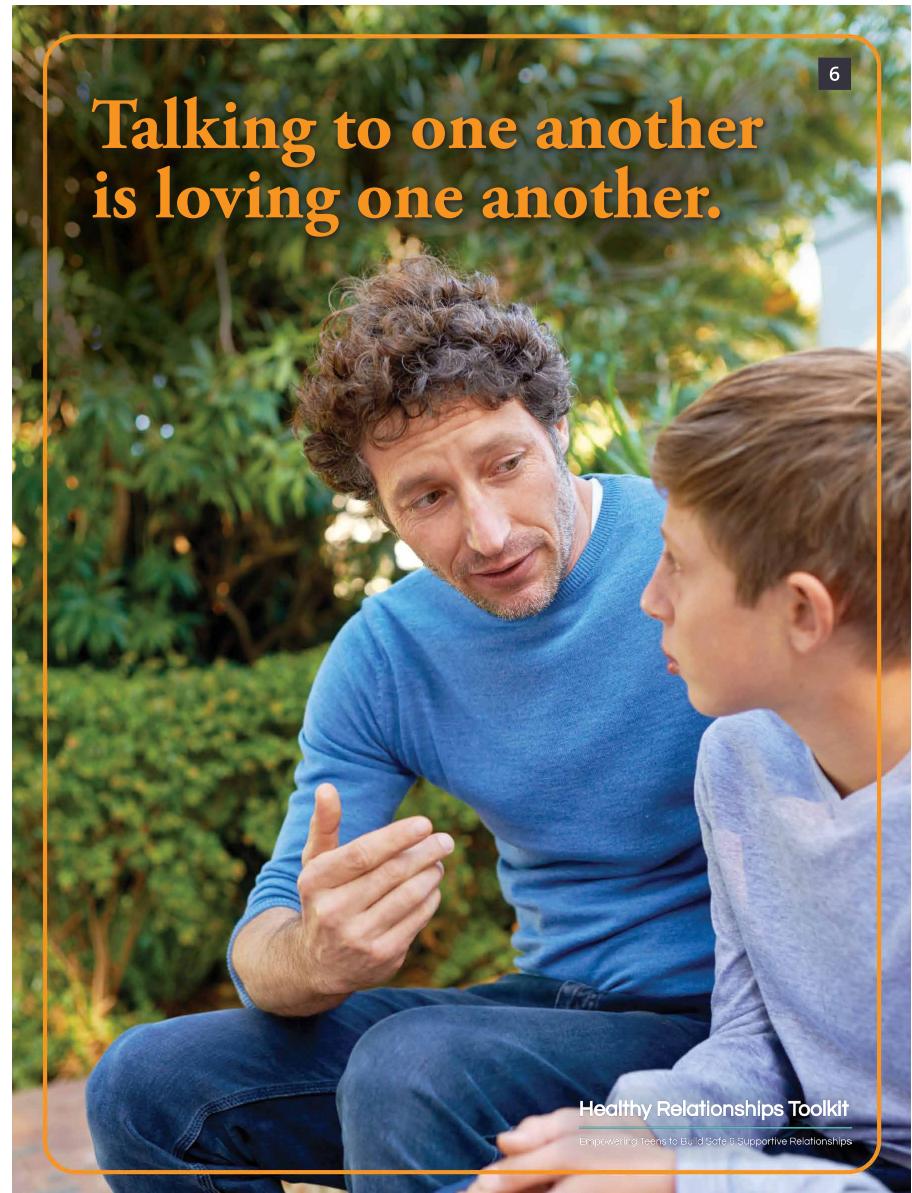
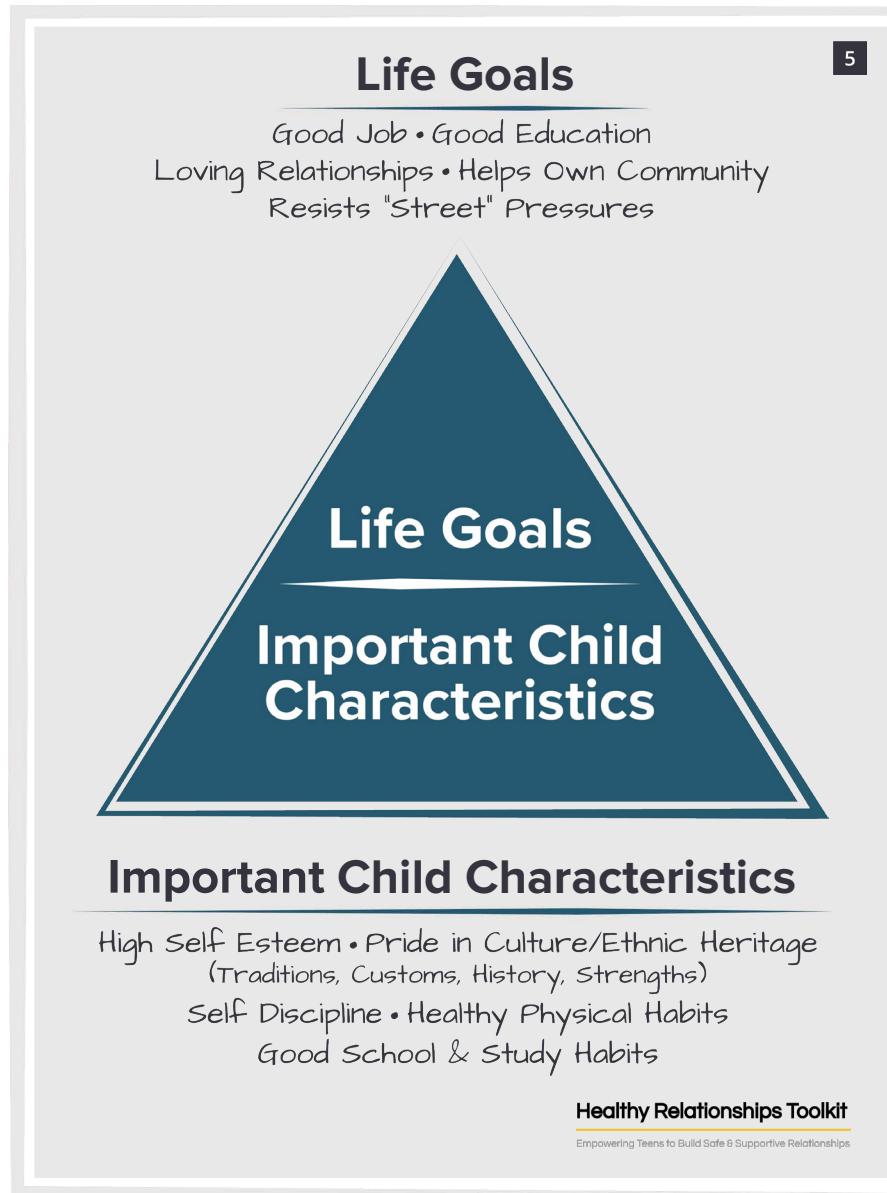
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## BUDDY CARD

# Session 2: Parenting Positively



## Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship

**Pay attention to your child's positive behavior** and do not take your child's good behavior for granted. You can do this by letting your child know that you notice when they are behaving well, not just when they do something wrong. Catch them being good!

**Provide your child with a lot of encouragement.** Try to make a lot of encouraging statements to your child such as these below:

- That's the way!
- You can do it!
- You are figuring it out!
- You are trying so hard!

**Spend one-on-one time with your child.** Try to find something that you and your child enjoy doing together (e.g., cooking, sports, hobbies). Spending enjoyable time together helps strengthen relationships.

**Good communication improves relationships between parents and their children.** When parents communicate effectively with their children, they are showing their children respect. On the other hand, when parents communicate ineffectively with their children (e.g., not really listening, interrupting, only paying attention when they do something wrong, etc.), it can lead children to believe that they are unimportant, unheard, or misunderstood. Ineffective communication may also cause children to see their parents as unhelpful and untrustworthy.

## Effective Parent-Child Communication

**Really listen to your child.** Make and maintain eye contact. If you are watching television or looking at something else when your child is talking to you, or when you are talking to your child, it says you are not interested in them. Stop what you are doing and focus on your child. Listen with a closed mouth. Try not to interrupt your child while they are talking—it is very frustrating. Think about how you feel when someone frequently interrupts you! Let your child know you have listened by restating what they said or by making appropriate comments about what they said.

**Do not take over the conversation.** Request feedback and take turns talking.

**Make your verbal and nonverbal messages consistent.** Avoid "mixed" messages (where the verbal and nonverbal messages you send are inconsistent). For example, you tell your child that you are really interested in her account of what happened on the school bus, but you do not look up from the phone or television while she is talking.

- It has been estimated that only 7% of what we communicate is done through words.
- 38% of what we communicate is through nonverbal vocal characteristics such as tone and volume.
- 55% of what we communicate is through body movements such as facial expressions.



**Ask open-ended questions to encourage talking** (“why” and “what” type questions) as opposed to close-ended questions (questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no” or other one-word responses). For example, ask: “What was your favorite part of the movie?” instead of: “Did you enjoy the movie?”

**Express openness to listen to other views.** Try not to be too judgmental. Do not criticize your children for their opinions.

**Stick to the present issue during conflict.** Do not dwell on past problems. Focus on developing solutions to problems rather than who is to blame.

**Be respectful and avoid put-downs.**

**Use “I” messages.** “I” messages are describing how you feel about something rather than making accusations. For example say, “I get very worried if I do not know where you are.” Instead of saying, “Not letting me know where you are when you are out is very irresponsible.”

**Notes:**

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## Supervising Your Child

**As your children get older they will be doing more things without you.** Always know ***at least the four W's*** whenever they leave to go out:

- **Where** they are going.
- **What** they will be doing.
- **Who** they will be with.
- **When** they will be home.

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## Practicing at Home

**Practice your communication skills with your child over the next week.**

Here are some examples of what you could say to your child to start conversations:

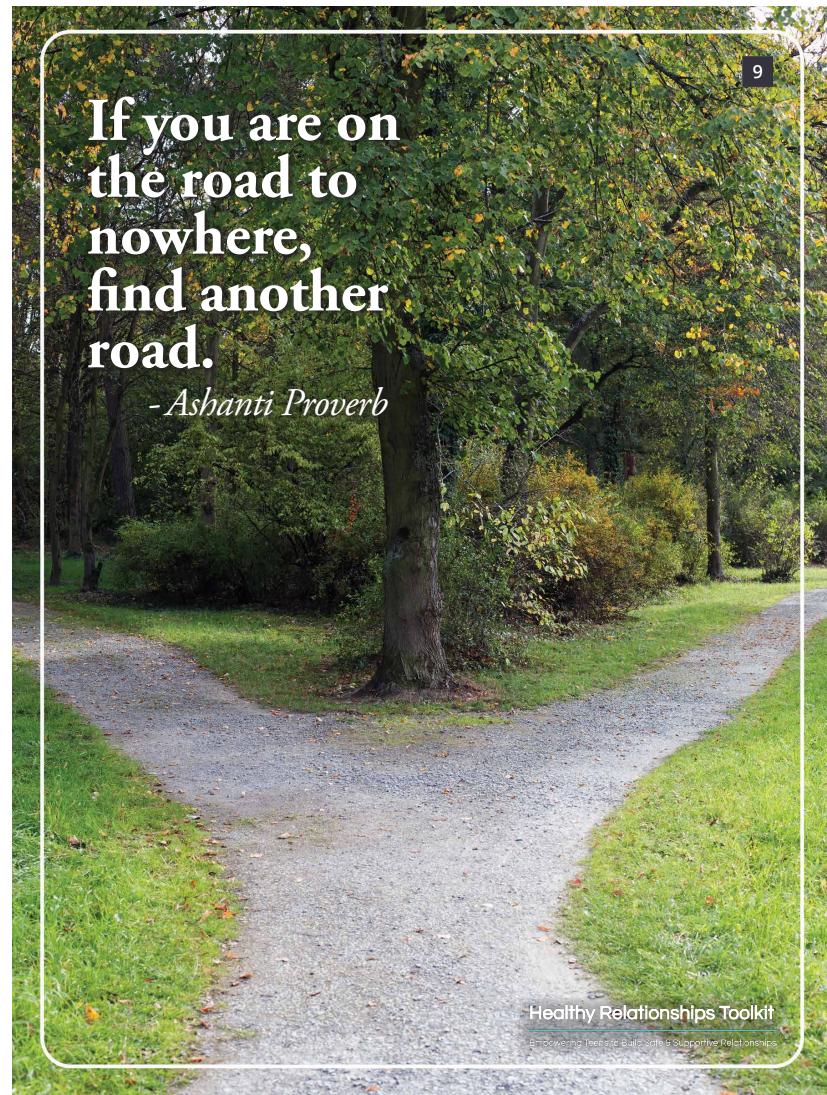
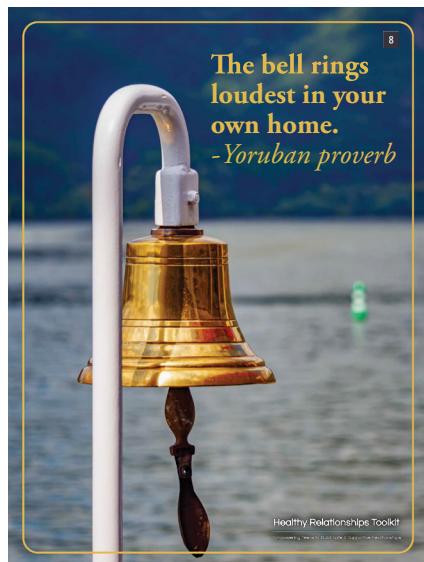
- What's going on?
- What's up?
- I see that you are...
- It is cool that you...
- What do you think about (any topic of interest)?
- Tell me about what's going on in (any school subject).

**Know *at least the four W's* whenever your child leaves the home without you:**

- **Where** they are going.
- **What** they will be doing.
- **Who** they will be with.
- **When** they will be home.

## Notes:

# Session 3: Parents Are Educators





## Parents are the Best Relationship and Sex Educators Because...

**Parents can provide ongoing information.** Children and adolescents want information about relationships and sex from their parents. Parents providing this information is beneficial because the information they can provide is not limited to a one-time event such as a sex education class. They can provide information over time that builds on information provided during previous talks. Additionally, parents can also provide information that is time sensitive to a child's specific questions or experiences.

## Parents as Relationship and Sex Educators

**Parents should start discussing relationships and sexual issues with their children when their children are young and talk about these issues again and again.** Parents need to provide information at the right time, ask about the questions their children have and provide answers, and also provide information based on their needs at that age. As your child gets older, build on the information you have already provided.

## Things We Know From Research

**Talking to your children about relationships and sex does not increase the likelihood that they will become sexually active.** In fact, talking to your children about relationships and sex will decrease the likelihood that they will engage in early sexual activity.

**When parent-child discussions are conducted in an open and responsive manner there are benefits for teenagers** who are sexually active and for teenagers who are likely to become sexually active. Sexual behavior is reduced among teenagers who **are** sexually active. Additionally, sexual behavior is also reduced among teenagers who are **likely to become** sexually active.

**When you do not talk about relationships and sex with your child, there are consequences.** Your child is going to learn about relationships and sex from other sources. Those sources may have less knowledge, resulting in more risky behaviors for your child. They may not have accurate information or your child's well-being as a priority. Yet, they may have a stronger influence on your child than you have.

**Puberty is a time of increased sexual feelings and it's common for young people to question their sexual orientation.** The average age when youth may begin to feel they are something other than straight or heterosexual is age 12. How parents engage with their lesbian, gay or bisexual child can significantly impact their current and future health and well-being. In addition, supportive and accepting parents can help youth cope with the challenges of identifying as a sexual minority.

## Sexual Health Information

### Male Reproductive System

Sperm is produced in the testicles, which are held in a sack of skin called the scrotum. Sperm travel through the penis in the urethra and are ejaculated (released) from the end of the penis during sexual intercourse or night emissions (wet dreams).

### Female Reproductive System

Eggs or ova are stored in the ovaries. Once a month, an egg is released from one ovary and travels through the fallopian tube to the uterus. This process is called ovulation. If the egg is not fertilized by a sperm, it comes out of the body through the vagina, along with built up uterine lining (blood and tissue). This shedding of the uterine lining is known as menstruation (period or monthly) and happens about once a month. If sexual intercourse has occurred around the time of ovulation, a sperm may fertilize the egg when it is in the fallopian tube. The fertilized egg then moves into the uterus and attaches to the uterine wall. This is where the baby develops. Menstruation does not usually occur while the baby is developing.

Physical Changes During Adolescence	
Male	Female
The penis and testicles get bigger.	The breasts get larger.
Hair grows under the arms, in the genital area (pubic hair), and on the male's face and chest.	The body shape gets more curvy as breasts and hips develop.
The body changes shape as the muscles increase in size.	Hair grows under arms and in genital area (pubic hair).
Acne (pimples) may develop on the face and back.	Discharge of a small amount of fluid from the vagina may occur.
The voice deepens.	Acne (pimples) may develop on the face and back.
Night emissions or wet dreams begin to occur around age 13 or 14.	Menstruation (period) typically begins around age 11 or 12.
Body odor develops.	Body odor develops.
Growth spurt.	Growth stops or greatly reduces.

### **Social and emotional changes for all youth:**

- They may question their gender or sexual identity.
- They may have concerns about being accepted by their friends. They want to fit in and be like their peers.
- They struggle between dependence (needing their families a lot) and independence (pushing their families away).
- They may have concerns about their body image, acne, and the clothes they wear.
- They begin to become sexually attracted to others.
- They often believe that nothing bad will happen to them, no matter how risky their behavior.
- They embarrass easily and often.

### **Parents Can Promote Sexual Health by Teaching Kids**

Sexual health is not defined by whether or not an adolescent has been sexually active. **Sexually healthy adolescents:**

- Appreciate their bodies.
- Take responsibility for their behaviors.
- Communicate with their parents and families about relationships and sexual issues.
- Communicate effectively, appropriately, and respectfully about relationships.
- Express love and intimacy in ways that are age appropriate.
- Know their principles when it comes to sexual activity.
- Understand sexual development and the consequences of their actions.
- Are educated about the risks involved in sexual activity. If they do not know, encourage them to ask.

- Are confident in their ability to negotiate sexual situations in a way that keeps them protected from these risks.
- Respect themselves enough to take care of themselves.
- Are open and honest with their partner and expect the same in return.

### **What Parents Can Do to Help Their Adolescent Become Sexually Healthy**

- Communicate that it is okay to be unsure about your sexual identity at this age and/or to feel attracted to people of the same gender.
- Model sexually healthy attitudes in your own relationships.
- Be clear about your own thoughts and expectations.
- Be knowledgeable about relationships, sexuality, and sexual issues.
- Be able to provide accurate information and know where to get more information if you need it.
- Discuss puberty, sexuality, and healthy relationships with your children.
- Be open to questions from your children. Encourage your children to ask questions.
- Try to understand your child's point of view. Do not just lecture, and try to put yourself in their shoes.
- Foster responsible decision making.
- Help young people understand their thoughts and expectations about sex and dating.
- Set and maintain limits for dating and other activities outside of school.
- Stay actively involved in your adolescent's life. Ask questions about their friends and romantic partners.
- Provide your adolescent with access to health care services.

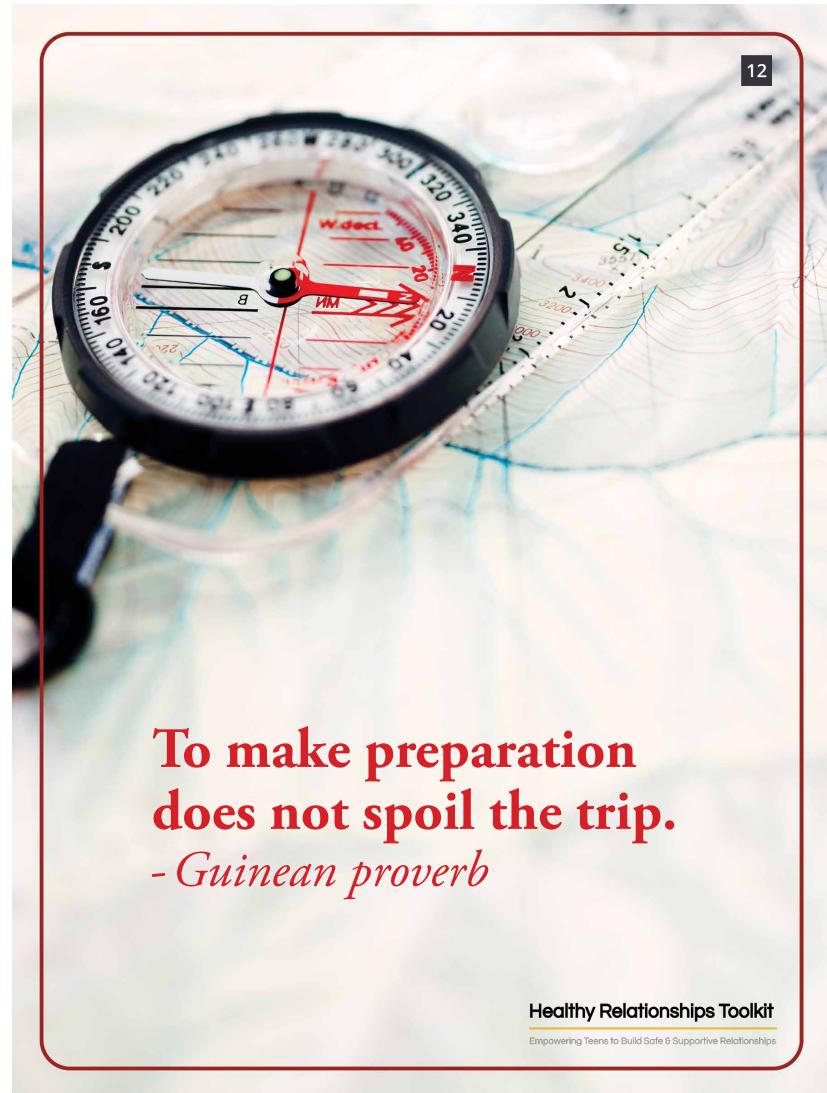
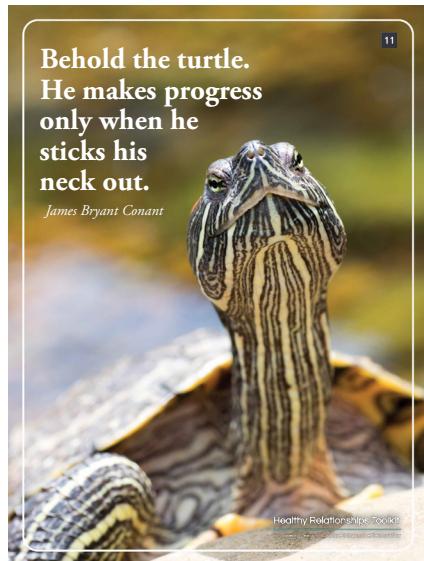
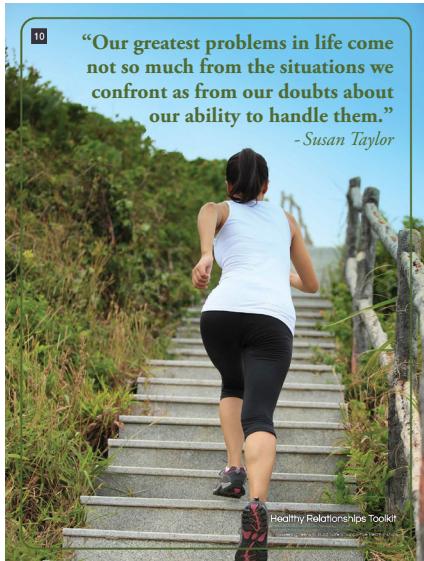
## Think About Ways to Help Your Child Become Sexually Healthy

Think about three specific ways you can help your child become sexually healthy. Feel free to talk with other participants during the week. You may choose to write these three ways below to help you remember for next week's discussion.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Notes:

# Session 4: I Think I Can, I Know I Can



## Seven Tips For Talking To Your Child About Relationships and Sex

- 1. Be prepared.** Think about what you might say and decide what topics you will and will not talk about in advance. Know your own expectations and communicate them clearly. Talk to other parents.
- 2. Relax.** You do not need to know all the answers.
- 3. Start now.** It is up to you to begin conversations with your child rather than waiting for your child to start talking to you about relationships and sex.
- 4. Listen to your child.** Do not turn questions away. Find out where their question is coming from (ask them why they want to know what they are asking about) and listen to their point of view.
- 5. Talk about relationships and sex again and again and again.** Talk early and often. Use teachable moments and everyday opportunities to clarify issues about relationships and sex. Consider their age and maturity level when deciding how to share information. Talk about all types of things:
  - Understanding their body and changes.
  - About making healthy decisions.
  - How to handle peer pressure.
  - How they will know when they are ready to be sexually active.
- 6. Use the Facts + Expectations Formula.**
  - Start with the facts. Provide accurate information without any value judgment or opinions.
  - Follow it with a statement of your expectations. Add your personal perspective, experience, or beliefs regarding their behavior.
- 7. Accept your child.** Even if you don't see eye-to-eye with your child on everything, it's important to show them acceptance and support. Children will develop their own beliefs, and their caregivers and immediate family members may have differing beliefs too. Remember that these conversations will not necessarily end with your child agreeing with

everything you think, and that is okay. Continue to show your child your love and support. Research shows that youth who feel close to their parents are less likely to use drugs, have improved mental health, and are less likely to experience physical or sexual violence.

## Sex Education Topics

- Understanding and accepting your gender identify and sexual orientation.
- Understanding your body and how it changes as you grow and develop.
- How to handle peer and partner pressures to have sex.
- Information about STDs.
- Information about birth control.
- Information about abstinence.
- Information about condom use.
- Information about menstruation.
- Discussion of masturbation.
- How to know when you are ready to be sexually active.
- Proper hygiene.

## Think About Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship

One of the purposes of HeaRT for Parents is to help you think about healthy relationships with regard to sexual issues and behaviors—the practices you want your child to have with respect to relationships and sex.

First, think about the characteristics of a healthy relationship. For example, you may want your child to be in relationships with mutual respect. Then think about the relationship and sex-related topics that you would need to discuss with your child to set them up for success. In the example below, the topics related to mutual respect include making good decisions and behaviors that show respect. Similarly, if we want our children to display maturity in a relationship, we may need to discuss making good decisions, using protection, or waiting until they're older to have sex.

<b>Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship</b>	<b>Relationship and Sex-Related Issues To Discuss with My Child</b>
Example: Responsibility	Making good decisions Using protection Waiting until you're older to have sex
Example: Mutual respect	Making good decisions Behaviors that show respect (e.g., listening and validating the feelings/beliefs of others)

## **Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship and Issues You Will Need to Discuss**

<b>Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship</b>	<b>Relationship and Sex-Related Issues To Discuss with My Child</b>

# Session 5: Parents Are Role Models

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**Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.**

*- Robert Fulghum*



Healthy Relationships Toolkit  
Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

14



**Actions speak louder than words; Let your words teach and your actions speak.**

*- Saint Anthony of Padua*

Healthy Relationships Toolkit  
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## Building Healthy Relationships

**What is a healthy relationship?** Both partners are equally powered.

It consists of:

- Trust
- Open and honest communication
- Respectful interactions
- Space for individual interests
- Appropriate boundaries

**What is an unhealthy relationship?** One or both partners feel little or no power, which can include:

- Absence of trust
- Poor communication
- Disrespectful interactions (e.g., name calling, putting down)
- Little or no space for individual interests
- Boundaries may be overstepped or disregarded

**What is Teen Dating Violence (TDV)?** It is a specific type of unhealthy relationship and includes actual or threatened harm. It can be:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional (psychological/verbal)
- Stalking

It can occur:

- In person
- Electronically

## Why Should I Worry? The Realities of Teen Dating Violence

Four out of 10 teens say they've "dated" by the time they are in 8th grade. Dating violence usually first happens when youth are around 12 years of age, but it can begin earlier. Around 1 in 12 high school students report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend. Youth, regardless of sex, are at risk of being a person that experiences and perpetrates dating violence. However, boys are more likely than girls to inflict injuries as a result of perpetrating dating violence. These dating violence trends continue into adulthood.

**The consequences of teen dating violence are serious:**

- Physical, sexual, and emotional consequences
- Tend to do more poorly in school
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors (e.g., using drugs, alcohol)
- Think about or attempt suicide
- Heightened risk for being victimized in the future

**Certain parenting behaviors/family characteristics are associated with increased risk for teen dating violence, including:**

- Parental marital conflict
- Violence in the home (experienced or witnessed)
- Harsh parenting practices
- Low parental supervision
- Negative parent-child interactions
- Blurred parent-child boundaries
- Argumentative, threatening, or critical family communications

**Positive parenting practices and parent-child relationships from an early age are important for healthy relationships in adulthood.**

## Why Should Parents Be Relationship and Sex Educators?

Children and adolescents ask and want information about relationships and sex from their parents. Parents can provide:

- Ongoing information.
- Information over time that builds on previous information.
- Information that is sensitive to the child's questions or experiences.

## What Parents Can Do to Help Their Children Have Healthy Relationships

**Be knowledgeable.** Teach your child about the importance of healthy relationships and the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

**Be approachable.** Be present and available for your child—remember that children want positive and caring adults in their life.

**Be understanding.** Be interested in your child's world; ask about their friends, preferences, and hobbies.

**Be respectful.** Be open and considerate of the things your child is expressing.

**Model healthy relationships.** Your child watches everything that you say and do, good or bad.

**Communicate self-respect.** Encourage your child to feel good about him/herself. Discuss what they like about themselves.

**Focus on the positive.** Talks about relationships do not have to focus only on negative stuff, talks can also be about positive stuff (e.g., relationships should be fun and fulfilling, supportive).

**Discuss alternatives for dealing with frustration and anger other than violence.**

**Take advantage of teachable moments**—use relevant, real situations to teach your child about the importance of healthy relationships.

## Parent-Child Discussions: What You Can Expect in Session 6

### What Are We Doing?

Next week you will have an opportunity to practice the communication skills that we discussed and practiced in Session 2. You will practice with your child instead of each other. You will also have an opportunity to discuss the experience of trying some of the strategies (e.g., listening, asking open-ended questions, using “I” messages, etc.) and to fine tune your strategy (like pilot testing new skills).

### What Can You Expect?

Only bring your middle-school age child. A separate room will be set up for the children with age-appropriate activities and adult supervision. Your child will participate in two exercises with you during the session: You will have a conversation with your child on an issue that is important to you and your child using the good communication skills discussed in Session 2.

You and your child will watch a video about teens discussing peer pressure. After the video you will try the four-step parenting plan for peer pressure that we will discuss at the beginning of next week's session. After each discussion the children will return to the room set up for them. You will have an opportunity to discuss your experience, give feedback, and receive feedback from the facilitators and other parents. Your child will participate with you in the closing ceremony for HeaRT for Parents.

## How to Prepare Your Child

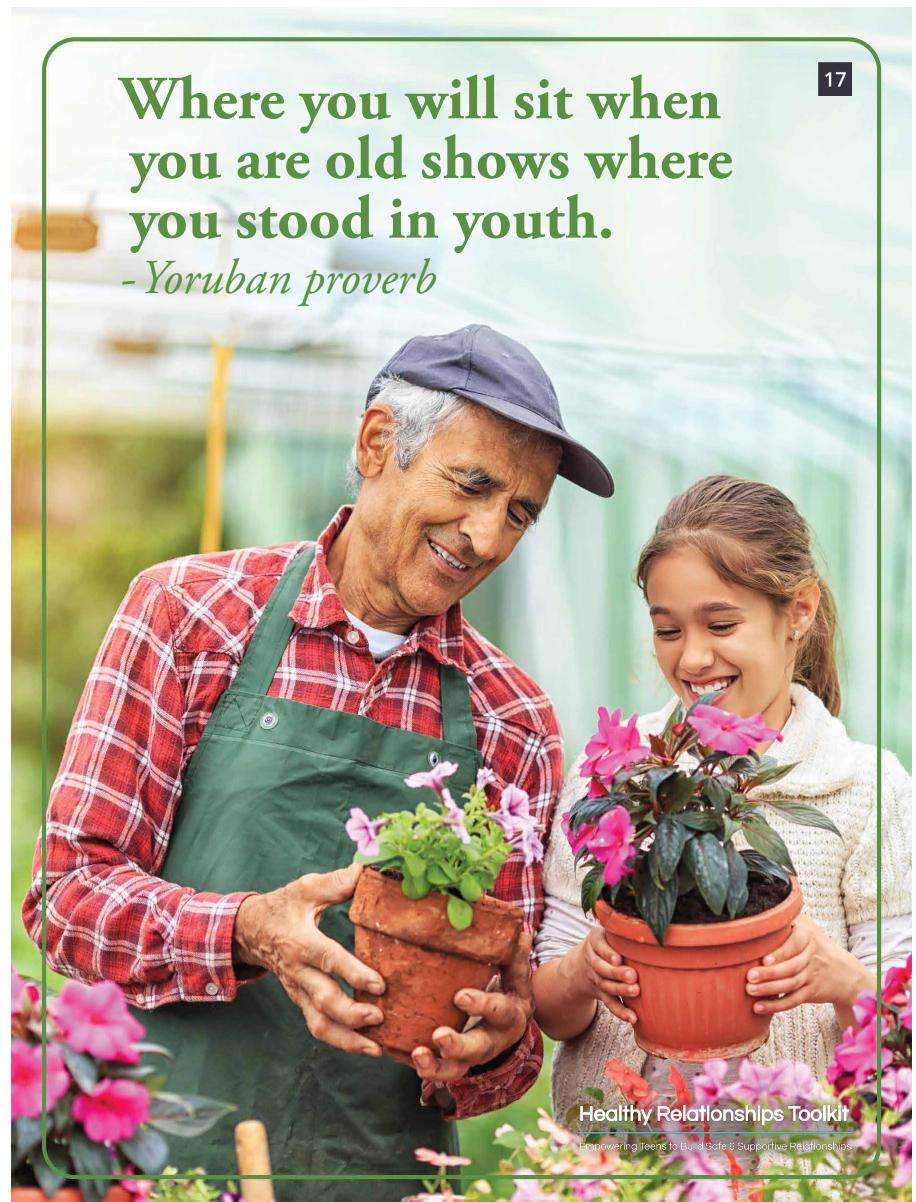
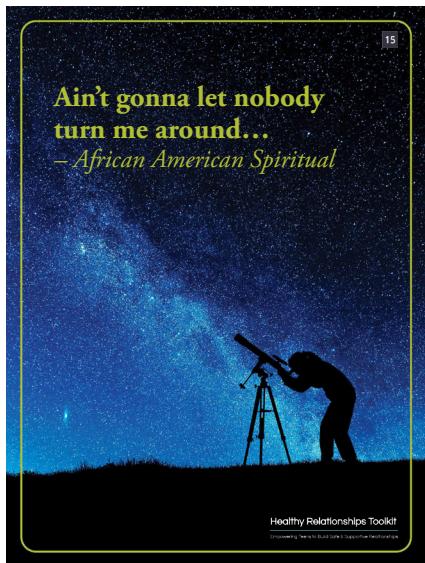
**You may have already explained HeaRT for Parents** to your child. If not, explain that it is a program to help parents learn how to be better parents. You may want to share some of the things you have learned. Tell your child that they will be helping you practice.

**Explain to your child that they and other children will be moving between two rooms.** First they will be in a room with you and other parents and their children. Then they will go to a room set aside for them while you and other parents get more information about communicating with them. They will join you so that you can practice twice, each time returning to the room set aside for them. At the end of the session, they will join you and other parents and youth their age for a closing celebration.

## Think About Ways to Help Your Child Form Healthy Relationships

Think about three specific ways you can help your child form healthy relationships. Feel free to talk with other participants during the week. You may choose to write these three ways below to help you remember for next week's discussion.

# Session 6: Moving Forward



## Four-Step Parenting Plan for Peer Pressure

1. Help your child plan ahead. Identify what situations/peer pressure they are most likely to confront.
2. Help your child recognize signs of potential problems (e.g., boyfriend wants to take you to an empty house).
3. Help your child think ahead about what they can say and do when confronted with peer pressure.
4. Role-play these situations with your child.

## Summary and Review

### Pyramid of Success

There are certain characteristics needed for our children to realize their life goals. Some health choices—such as sexual activity or involvement in unhealthy relationships during adolescence—can keep them from reaching their goals.

### Parents as Relationship and Sex Educators

Start talking with your children about relationships and sexual issues when they are young, before they become sexually active or involved in a romantic relationship. Provide your children with the right information at the right time. Give them honest, correct answers to their questions. Give them information based on their needs at that age. Have conversations with them again and again and again, as they get older, each time building on earlier conversations as they get older.

### Five Tools for Talking to Your Child About Relationships and Sex

1. Be prepared.
2. Relax.
3. Start now.
4. Listen to your child.
5. Talk about relationships and sex again and again and again. Do not just talk about relationships or sexual issues, talk about all types of things.

### Responding to Peer Pressure

1. Help your child plan ahead.
2. Help your child recognize signs of potential problems.
3. Help your child think ahead.
4. Role-play situations with your child.

### Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship

Supervise **with the four W's** to help prevent problems.

- Know **where** your child is going.
- Know **what** your child will be doing.
- Know **who** your child will be with.
- Know **when** your child will return home.

**Pay attention to your child's positive behavior.** Provide your child with a lot of encouragement. Find interests that you share and spend one-on-one enjoyable time with your child.

**Practice effective communication with your child, such as:**

- Encourage conversation and do not take over.
- Really listen without interrupting.
- Make sure your words, body, and tone are all saying the same thing.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Use “I” messages to own your feelings.
- Stay in the present, focus on solutions.
- Be open to other views and respectful of them.

**Parents can assist their children in developing healthy relationships by:**

- Being accepting.
- Be knowledgeable.
- Be approachable.
- Be understanding.
- Be respectful.
- Model healthy relationships.
- Communicate self-respect.
- Focus on the positive.
- Discuss alternatives.
- Take advantage of teachable moments.

**Helping Your Adolescent Become and Remain Sexually Healthy**

- Encourage your child to ask questions.
- Be understanding of their views and be approachable.
- Communicate your thoughts and expectations and help your child understand them.
- Ask questions about friends and romantic partners.
- Model sexually healthy attitudes in your own relationships.
- Be able to provide accurate information and know where to get more information.
- Discuss puberty and sexuality.
- Discuss the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Provide your adolescent with access to health care services.
- Foster decision making.
- Set limits.
- Remember the importance of supervision.
- Stay involved.

**Remember Parents Make a Difference!**



# Thank You

**Thank you for your time** in completing HeaRT for Parents. We hope you have received information that will be helpful for you as a parent. We also hope that your children are able to reach their goals in life. Sometimes parents who participate in programs like HeaRT for Parents start to take a close look at their own lives and relationships. If you have any questions about the information that has been presented, feel free to ask your facilitators for additional resources. You also may wish to talk to family members, friends, neighbors, clergy, or other individuals you can trust if you have questions or concerns. We wish you the best of luck in parenting during the teen years!





# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Local Resources for Parents

## Possible Local Resources

- Alcohol and drug prevention and treatment programs
- Child care
- Cultural resources and services
- Education programs (include schools)
- Family counseling services
- Food bank
- Health services, clinics, and hospitals
- Job training
- Library
- Parks and recreation programs
- Pregnancy services
- Social services
- State child health insurance programs
- STD/HIV counseling, testing, and treatment services
- Transportation
- Violence prevention programs and shelters
- Youth programs

## Notes:

# Appendix B: Using Technology Safely

Just as it is important to supervise your child's activities when they leave the house, it is equally important that you supervise your child's use of social media, cell phones, and the Internet. The vast majority of people who use social media, cell phones, and the Internet do not encounter serious problems. However, children have been confronted with material that is disturbing or inappropriate.

Teenagers are particularly at risk because they often use cell phones and go online without supervision at home, at the library, and at their friends' homes. They are also more likely to participate in text and online discussions regarding companionship, relationships, or sexual activity.

There are a number of steps you can take to supervise your child's use of cell phones and the Internet.

## **Make sure your child understands safety in general when it comes to the use of cell phones and the Internet.**

- Children need to think about who they text and talk with on cell phones, as well as who they chat and communicate with in chat rooms and on other social sites.
- Children should never text/talk/chat about sex with strangers. Anyone they don't know in real life is a stranger.
- Phones should only be used to communicate with people children know in person and trust.
- Many cell phones have GPS technology installed, which means your children can easily pinpoint their friends' physical location—or be pinpointed by their friends. Talk with your children about using such technology and advise them to use it only with friends they know in person and trust.

## **Make sure computers, laptops, video games, and tablets are used in a central location in the house.**

- Allows you to see what is going on.
- Makes your children more responsible about sites they are looking at.
- Children are less likely to sneak peeks at inappropriate sites or disobey rules.

## **Consider turning off or limiting web access on smart phones, tablets, and other devices.**

- Limited web access allows you to have more control over the material your child is viewing.
- Mobile carriers offer software that allows parents to limit the child's access to information, but the carriers have no control over what is on the web.



# Appendix B: Using Technology Safely

**Establish age-appropriate restrictions for your child.** There are services and software that allow parents to limit access to certain types of information. Some services allow you to personalize settings for different users. Even with limited access you still need to censor what your child sees. Given that filters on the home computer will not work on cell phones, it is important to talk with your children about where they are accessing their profiles or blogs and whether they are using the same good sense about how they are social networking on their phones.

**Set up family rules.** Sit down with your child and together work out some rules for technology use. Clearly outline to your children:

- What uses are not allowed,
- When they can use the technology, and
- How often it should be used.

You can set technology rules that are similar to the rules for phone usage. In addition to when they can use technology, consider rules that address:

- How long they can use it and
- Who they may call or chat with.

You can manage accounts with a password only you know so that unknown apps cannot be downloaded without your permission.

**Remind your children that the same manners you have taught them about “real life” apply when using cell phones and the Internet.** Cyberbullying and harassment occur via cell phones and the Internet. Children should be encouraged to be respectful of themselves and others by not posting or sending pictures or other content via the Internet or through text messages that will embarrass them (or others) or get them (or others) into trouble. Children should be told never to let other people photograph or film them in embarrassing or inappropriate situations (and vice versa). Once it is in the public domain, it will be with them forever.

**Manage incoming information.** Teach your children about malware (i.e., harmful or unwanted software or file, including computer viruses) and the technological damage they can cause. Explain that viruses are often attached to emails and are activated when the attachments are opened. Do not allow children to review attached files before you have reviewed them. Cover all computer web-cams when not in use.

**Set VERY firm rules about what personal information can be provided online.** Establish a clearly defined set of information that your child should NOT provide to anyone online, including:

- Full name
- Address
- Phone number
- Personal information that would expose your child or your family to risk such as social security number and credit card numbers.

Once information is online, it is very difficult to make it go away. Although children may not worry about this now, it can affect them in the future when applying for jobs or school.

**No secret relationships or secret use of technology.** Make sure this rule is clearly understood. Help your child understand that any person online can provide information without regulation.

**Review what your children view.** Monitor which web sites and chat rooms your children have visited. Let your children know that you know what they look at, what sites or chat rooms they visit, and how long they spend there. Make sure your children understand that you are gathering this information for their protection and not to threaten or punish them. Tell your children that if they are exposed to inappropriate material online or if someone does/says something scary or hurtful, it is not their fault and you are there to help.

## Appendix B: Using Technology Safely

## Child's Rules for Online Safety

1. I will not give out personal information such as my full name, address, telephone number, parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
3. I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring a parent along.
4. I will talk with my parents about posting pictures of myself or others online and not post any pictures that my parents consider to be inappropriate.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents right away.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online and using a mobile phone. We will decide on the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online and appropriate sites for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
7. I will not give out my password to anyone (even my best friends) other than to my parents.
8. I will check with my parents before downloading or installing software or doing anything that could possibly hurt our computer or mobile device or jeopardize my family's privacy.
9. I will be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.
10. I will help my parents understand how to have fun and learn things

## Notes:

## Appendix C: References

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**Get more tips  
for staying safe at  
[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)**

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

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Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships