



# October is Let's Talk Month

**“Let’s talk…”** These are two very simple words, but for many parents, they are not so simple when the rest of the sentence is “... **about sex.**”

While it may be uncomfortable, especially at first, research continues to show that children and teens want to receive their information about sexual health from their parents and caregivers. And the simple fact is that parents have an enormous influence on their children’s decisions about sex and other risk-taking behaviors—more than friends, the media or teachers.

Each year the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy commissions an independent survey of adults and teens nationwide. Many of these questions focus on parents and their role in preventing teen pregnancy. Collected here is a sampling of polling results that parents may find of interest:

- Who adults believe most influence teens' decisions about sex: **teens' friends**
- Percentage of teens who say it would be easier for them to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations with their parents: **87%**
- Percentage of teens who say they haven't had a single such conversation with their parents: **37%**
- Percentage of parents of teens who believe they should talk to their kids about sex but often don't know what to say, how to say it, or when to start: **90%**

So if the kids want to talk, how does a parent get started? Initiating conversations about the facts of life may be difficult for some parents because they did not grow up in an environment where the subject was discussed. Some parents may be afraid they do not know the right answers or feel confused about the proper amount of information to offer. To help, here are 10 tips from the experts at Advocates for Youth:

## Ten Tips

1. First, encourage communication by reassuring kids that they can talk to you about anything.
2. Take advantage of teachable moments. A friend's pregnancy, news article, or a TV show can help start a conversation.
3. Listen more than you talk. Think about what you're being asked. Confirm with your child that what you heard is in fact what he or she meant to ask.
4. Don't jump to conclusions. The fact that a teen asks about sex does not mean they are having or thinking about having sex.
5. Answer questions simply and directly. Give factual, honest, short, and simple answers.
6. Respect your child's views. Share your thoughts and values and help your child express theirs.
7. Reassure young people that they are normal—as are their questions and thoughts.
8. Teach your children ways to make good decisions about sex and coach them on how to get out of risky situations.
9. Admit when you don't know the answer to a question. Suggest the two of you find the answer together on the Internet or in the library.
10. Discuss that at times your teen may feel more comfortable talking with someone other than you. Together, think of other trusted adults with whom they can talk.

**October is Let's Talk Month**, a community campaign conducted nationally that supports parents in making stronger connections with their children and in talking honestly and openly about sexual health and relationships. For more resources about how to be your children’s primary sexual health educator, visit the following sites: [www.moapp.org](http://www.moapp.org); [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org); [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)