

CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE WITH TEENS



THE DEVELOPING FRONTAL LOBE



- ✔ Research has shown that the human brain does not develop completely until ages 20-30 yr.
- ✔ Teenagers need guidance and protection. The frontal lobe is still working to make the “connections” and understand the consequences of their actions.
- ✔ Minors are responsible for 40% of all incidents of sexual abuse. Take responsibility – raise children and teens with a firm understanding of proper sexual conduct and appropriate sexual behavior. Effectively and efficiently address any problematic behaviors exhibited by your teen.



SCHOOL, ACTIVITIES, AND ON THE JOB

- ✔ Teens spend a large part of their time around other adults and peers, many of whom they may not know very well.
- ✔ Ask your school about the policies and procedures for hiring and training staff to reduce the risk of sexual harassment and abuse.



EDUCATE AND EMPOWER

- ✔ Remind teens that abuse is never their fault.
- ✔ Promote healthy body image. Puberty can poke holes in the self-esteem of even the most confident teen.
- ✔ The internet is the “stranger danger.” Social media is a gateway for bullying, predators, and human trafficking.



- ⦿ Keep devices in common areas and out of bedrooms.
- ⦿ Use up-to-date filters for blocking adult content.
- ⦿ Use apps that enable parental monitoring.
- ⦿ Make sure personal information is not being shared.
- ⦿ Make sure your teen understands the long-term implications of sexting, sending, receiving, and distributing explicit images of other minors—it is against the law.

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- ✔ Pornography is more violent and more accessible today than ever before and can be addictive. Pornography can negatively affect adult romantic relationships. Talk to your teen and prepare them for when they are exposed to these images; address the misconceptions and violence portrayed as sex.
- ✔ Talk to your teen about consent. Teach consent, respect, and personal responsibility. No matter what, no one “owes” sex to anyone else. Discuss that during a consensual sexual encounter either partner has the right to discontinue the activity without guilt or fear.

ROCK THE TALK

- ✔ Through media and peers, teens are constantly exposed to unhealthy negative influences regarding body image, gender equality, sex, and relationships. Use real-life examples from the news to discuss the connection between sex, emotions, relationships, and health.
- ✔ Encourage your teen to talk with you if someone tricks or threatens them into doing something that makes them uncomfortable.
- ✔ Reinforce the idea that sometimes even people we love can break the touching rule, but it is never the teen’s fault, and it is never too late to tell.

FREEDOM
 **HOUSE**

Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services

(800) 474-6031 | www.freedomhouseillinois.org

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