

GET | REAL

Comprehensive Sex Education That Works

Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

As you know, your child is attending a program called *Get Real: Comprehensive Sex Education That Works* in health class. The program gives young people the facts, in an age-appropriate way, on a range of sexual health and relationship topics. *Get Real* is based on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). It teaches students five skills that lead to healthy behavior.

Self-awareness, or getting to know and trust yourself.

Self-management and self-control to express feelings in healthy ways.

Social awareness, or being able to put yourself in “another person’s shoes.”

Relationship skills to build healthy relationships, deal with conflict, and seek help when needed.

Responsible decision making, such as how to think through pros and cons of choices and how your actions may affect others.

Get Real supports parents and other trusted caregivers as the primary sexuality educators of their children. The teen years and changes of puberty can bring lots of questions and concerns, for both parents and their kids. For many reasons, it can be hard to talk with children about sex. But results of a national survey show that parents have the most influence on their children’s decisions about sex. A recent study from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (currently publishing as Power to Decide) found that 87% of U.S. teens said it would be easier to put off having sex if they were able to talk more openly about sex with their parents. But 37% said they had never had a talk with their parents on this topic.

Students in the *Get Real* program will bring home Family Activities for each class. These offer a way for parents and kids to start conversations and share information. Please complete the homework with your student, sign, and return the sheet to class. Students who can’t do the homework with a parent can work with a guardian or other trusted adult.

These Family Activities give parents a way to explore their own values about sex and sexuality. They’ll help you provide facts and information your child can understand, and build skills for having ongoing talks about this important topic. Good information and other resources can also be found on the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts parent education website. Just visit www.pplm.org/education and click on “Parent Education.”

Good communication between parents and children helps families share their values and enables young people to make healthier, safer and wiser decisions about sex. The themes below can help with your ongoing talks. Remember, it’s your right and responsibility to share your values and the facts about sex with your child!

(continued)

Continued

Themes for Parents to Think About

Rights and Responsibilities

- As a parent, you have the right and responsibility to be your child's primary sexuality educator.
- Children *will* get information about sex from the culture around them.
- Taking action to teach your children about sexuality gives you the best chance of having a positive effect on their choices and experiences.
- Children have a right to get information from their parents. They also have a responsibility to understand that their choices about sexuality can have risks.

Values

- Think about your own beliefs and values, so you can clearly share them with your child.
- Look at where your beliefs and values come from. Which are universal? (For example, all children have a right to be safe.) Which are more individual? (For example, people differ in their beliefs about when it's OK for young people to become sexually active.)
- Honest communication between parents and children is key.
- It's OK for parents and children to disagree about values. Examining values can be a powerful, positive influence on a child's developing sexuality.

Feelings and Self-Esteem

- Explore your own feelings around sexuality. Share some of these with your child. Encourage your child to share feelings too.
- Practice how to listen closely. Don't judge or criticize. This will build trust and help your child feel comfortable coming to you with questions or concerns.
- Help your children feel good about who they are. This will build healthy self-esteem and lead to good decisions.

Facts and Knowledge

- Find the resources you need to give your child clear and accurate information about sexuality.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Promise to get back to your child with the answer. Or look for it together.
- Connect. Keep talking in an ongoing, open way.

When You Were In Middle School

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should work on this activity together.

Students, ask your parent or other caring adult to think about when they were in middle school, then ask them the following questions. If they answer “yes” to a question, ask them to sign their initials on the line. Ask them the follow-up questions in italics to get more information. If you want, you may ask other parents or other caring adults in order to get as many lines initialed as possible. Feel free to share knowledge from class today with your parents or other caring adults.

When you were in middle school, were you someone who...

knew the difference between sex and sexuality? _____

Do you know the difference now?

was taught slang words for private body parts? _____

Why do you think people use slang words?

was ever lied to by someone you cared about? _____

Why did they lie? How did it feel?

had a trusted adult to talk to about sexuality? _____

Why might it help to have a trusted adult to talk to?

Tips for Parents

The goal of this activity is to promote conversations between *Get Real* students and caring adults in their lives. It provides a great chance to review material covered in class, research resources for additional information, and share your feelings and values.

Note: If it's embarrassing to discuss these issues with one another, you can decide to:

Say so—and do the exercise anyway.

Skip parts of it.

Write down your answers and then read each other's answers.

Laugh, giggle, blush, and go right on talking.

Parent or Other Caring Adult Signature

Student Signature

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week in *Get Real* class, we explored communication skills. Ask your child what it means to be an “active listener” and to describe the steps for effectively communicating a message to another person.

You can use the handout your child received in class as a guideline during your conversations and while doing the family activity. This handout outlines the skills learned and practiced in class.

It’s important for young people (and adults) to learn how to communicate in ways that can reduce misunderstanding, build positive interactions with others, and clearly express what they mean. These skills help people be good friends and are useful in all relationships.

Some ways to communicate are more effective than others. Here are three different ways people might communicate.

Two ineffective methods:

- **Passive communication** involves giving in and saying “yes” when you aren’t sure, feel confused, or really don’t want to do something. It means not asking for what you want in order to feel liked, be nice or avoid hurting another person’s feelings.

Results: You don’t get what you want. You can feel used, manipulated or as if people are stepping on you.

- **Aggressive communication** involves trying to get your own way by showing the anger, frustration, or fear you feel in response to a situation or something someone says. It involves reacting strongly, for example, by name-calling, without thinking about how it might hurt or insult another person. Sometimes it leads to getting into a fight.

Results: You may get the outcome you wanted, but at the cost of hurting the other person’s feelings. You may also get outcomes you didn’t want (violence, rejection).

An effective method that builds healthy and supportive relationships:

- **Assertive communication** is giving people an honest answer about things you want and don’t want. It involves making sure you are speaking up for yourself and your feelings. It includes asking for time to think when you feel confused and aren’t sure what you want. It also means not hurting or using other people and not letting yourself be used.

Results: You often get what you want. You build self-respect and respect for others.

Role Reversal

Instructions: Read the scenario below. Then, use role reversal so the parent gets a chance to be the kid in the situation!

Parents, pretend you are the “kid” in this situation. Communicate with your child, who will play your “parent.” Try to get what you want using either passive, aggressive or assertive communication skills. The “parent” will respond. Try it three different times using each of the three methods.

All your friends are going to see the big new movie. You really want to go too. You have it all planned. You can get a ride with your neighbor, and you have enough of your own money to get in. But here's the problem: it's a late show that will be over much later than you're usually allowed to stay out. You don't know if your parents will let you go. They feel strongly about your being home at a certain time. What could you do?

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Laugh, giggle, blush, and go right on talking.

Continue your discussion using the following questions as guidelines:

- How did it feel to reverse roles?
- Which method was the easiest/most difficult?
- What are the pros and cons for each kind of response?
- Which communication method worked the best for each person to get what was wanted in a respectful way?

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

Some of the topics talked about in *Get Real* class this week were respecting personal space, setting boundaries, and how to deal with peer pressure.

“Personal space” is defined as the amount of space or distance around your physical body that you feel comfortable having between yourself and other people. Young people and adults have the right to choose whom they will allow in their personal space. It’s important to pay attention to and respect other people’s nonverbal and verbal communication about how they feel about having others in their personal space.

Students also talked about the concept of consent, or getting someone’s permission before doing something with or to that person. Consent matters in everything from teasing to sexual behavior. Although most adolescents your child’s age are not sexually active, including discussion of sexual behaviors when talking about consent helps them be prepared for pressure in the future. Be clear and specific when talking about consent with your child.

Here are some points you may want to include:

- “No” means no. If a person has not clearly said “yes” to something, the response should be considered a “no.”
- People can change their minds and stop consenting at any time.
- Consent is about doing something because you want to, not because you feel pressured or manipulated.
- Any sexual behavior (talking, kissing, touching, sexual intercourse) should be mutually consensual. Both people must agree to the activity.
- Consent is an active process. People can’t give consent if they are drunk, drugged or asleep.

TV Time!

Instructions: Set aside a time to watch a television show that focuses on the interaction between members of a family or a close group of friends. This might be a show the student currently enjoys or a “classic” from the parent’s or other caring adult’s past. (Note: You could also watch a movie, if time allows.) As you watch, look for examples of what you think are healthy or unhealthy relationships. Use the statements below to talk more about what you observed.

1. Share an example of a healthy relationship between characters on the show.
2. Share an example of an unhealthy relationship between characters on the show.
3. Did anything happen on the show as a result of being in an unhealthy relationship? How was this situation resolved?
4. Did the characters treat each other with respect? If so, how could you tell? If not, what made the communication seem disrespectful?
5. Was there a character who had qualities you would look for in a friendship? In a dating relationship? If yes, what were these qualities and why are they important to you?

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week's Family Assignment focuses on reproductive anatomy, specifically the penis and related parts. Most of this information might be a review for you, but don't be surprised if your child can teach you something new about the human body!

When you talk about sexuality, it's important to understand the language used. Sometimes parents and other adults may use terms for body parts and functions that can confuse or mislead children. If children don't learn the correct terms, they may not have the respectful language to discuss sexual facts and feelings with parents, teachers, health care providers, or eventual future partners. Knowing the facts allows adolescents to make healthier, safer, well-informed decisions related to sexuality.

Try to use "accurate" language when discussing sex and sexuality with your child. This includes using the medical or biological words for parts and functions, such as *penis*, *vagina*, *urine*, and *semen*. Parents sometimes punish children for using sexual slang without making sure that the children understand why these words are offensive. So, if your child uses a slang word, a helpful response might be, "There are many silly-sounding words (sometimes called "dirty" words) about sex and bodies—words like 'boobs' and 'balls.' Some people think it's fun or OK to use these words, but others can feel embarrassed or uncomfortable when they hear them. It's important to respect other people's feelings about slang and 'dirty' words or jokes, whatever those feelings may be."

The Parent Buzz is a bimonthly newsletter that contains helpful strategies for communicating with kids about sex and sexuality. It's a great resource for information, and offers tips for parents around talking with their children, current information about sexuality issues and trends, links to useful websites, and descriptions of adolescents' developmental stages.

To receive *The Parent Buzz*, please visit www.pplm.org/parenteducation to sign up. If you decide *The Parent Buzz* isn't for you after reading one issue, simply click on the opt-out box in the newsletter.

Word Connect: The Penis and Related Parts

Instructions: Draw a line between the reproductive anatomy word on the left and the correct definition of the word on the right.

Foreskin	Organs that produce sperm and the hormone testosterone
Scrotum	The tube that carries ejaculate, pre-ejaculate and urine out of the body
Testes	Tubes that carry sperm from the testes to the urethra
Urethra	The sack of skin that holds the testes outside the body and helps control their temperature
Vas deferens	The loose skin that covers the head of the penis at birth

Bonus: Write down an additional fact you remember about three of these body parts.

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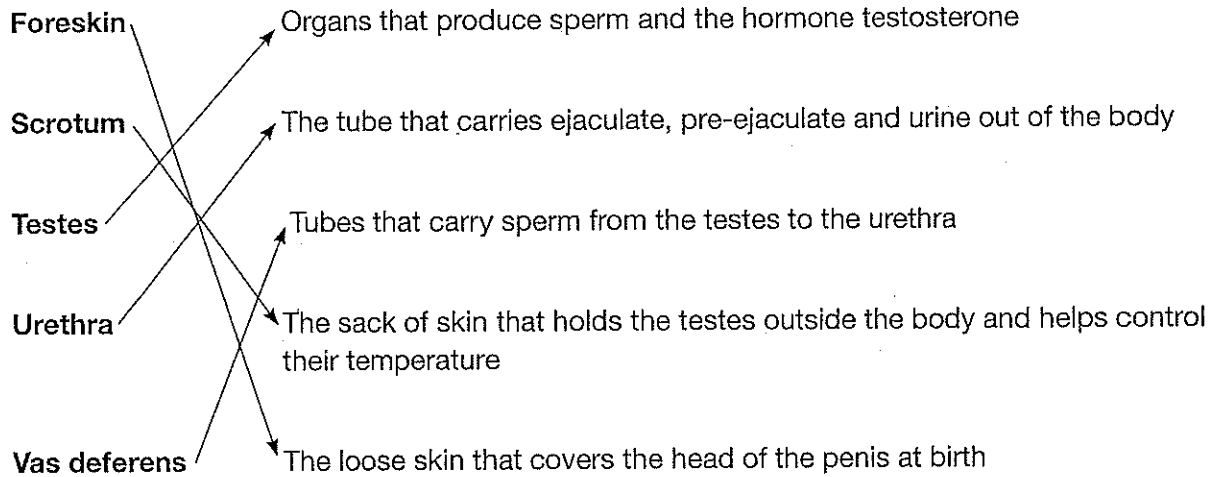
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Parent or Other Caring Adult Signature

Student Signature

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Comprehensive Sex Education That Works

Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week's Family Assignment again focuses on reproductive anatomy, specifically the vagina and related parts. The vagina and related sexual and reproductive parts are just as fascinating as the penis and related sexual and reproductive parts! Knowing the facts about bodies and how they work helps young people make healthier, safer, well-informed decisions related to sexuality.

Puberty, or adolescence, refers to the span of time between childhood and adulthood. It is a time of many changes. Between the ages of about 9 and 16, young people do more than just grow taller and bigger, as they have done since birth. During this time, hormones cause young people to grow and change in many ways—socially, emotionally, mentally, physically and sexually. The changes don't all take place at once. Most happen slowly over a few years' time, although a few may happen quickly. They often take place in a certain order, but not always.

As a parent, it's important to help your child realize that all of these changes are normal. It can be reassuring to remind your child that:

- Puberty is a process, not a single event. *Everyone* will go through it.
- During this time, a person's body and feelings begin to change from a child's to an adult's.
- Puberty tends to occur between the ages of 9 and 16; but it can happen sooner or later as well.
- No matter when puberty begins or ends, the whole process is very normal.

The "Events of Puberty" chart outlines the age range for young people when some of the physical changes of puberty usually happen. But, remember, it's very normal for physical changes to happen before or after these ages.

To learn more about puberty, including the challenging but exciting emotional and social changes that take place, visit the parent education website at www.pplm.org/education and click on "For Parents." Keep on talking *and* listening to your child!

(continued)

Continued

The Events of Puberty

— People with a Vagina and Related Parts —

- 1. Age Range: Usually 8–11** There are no outside signs of development, but the ovaries are enlarging and hormone production is beginning.
- 2. Age Range: Usually 8–14, Average 11–12** The first sign is typically the beginning of breast growth, including “breast buds.” A person may also grow taller and heavier. The first pubic hairs start out fine and straight, rather than curly.
- 3. Age Range: Usually 9–15, Average: 12–13** Breast growth continues. Pubic hair becomes darker and more coarse, but there still isn’t a lot of it. The body is still growing. The vagina is enlarging and may begin to produce a clear or white discharge. This is a normal self-cleansing process. Often young people get their first menstrual periods late in this stage.
- 4. Age Range: Usually 10–16, Average: 13–14** Pubic hair growth takes on the triangular shape of adulthood, but doesn’t quite cover the entire area. Underarm hair is likely to appear in this stage, as is menstruation. Ovulation (release of egg cells) begins in some young people, but typically not on a regular monthly basis until the last stage.
- 5. Age Range: Usually 12–19. Average: 15** This is the final stage of development, when a person is now physically an adult. Breast and pubic hair growth are complete. Full height and physique are usually attained. Menstrual periods are well established, and ovulation occurs monthly.

— People with a Penis and Related Parts —

- 1. Normal Age Range: 9–12, Average: About 10** The hormone testosterone is becoming active, but there are hardly any outside signs of development. Testicles are maturing. Some young people start a period of rapid growth late in this stage.
- 2. Normal Age Range: 9–15, Average: 12–13** Testicles and scrotum begin to enlarge, but penis size doesn’t increase much. There is still very little, if any, pubic hair at the base of the penis. Increase in height and change in body shape.
- 3. Normal Age Range: 11–16, Average: 13–14** Penis starts to grow in length but not much in width. Testicles and scrotum are still growing. Pubic hair starts to get darker and more coarse and spreads toward the legs. Growth in height continues, and body and face shape start to look more adult. Voice begins to deepen (and crack). Some hair grows around the anus.
- 4. Normal Age Range: 11–17, Average: 14–15** Penis width and length increase. Testicles and scrotum are still growing. Pubic hair begins to take on adult texture but covers a smaller area. Most young people have their first ejaculations. Underarm hair develops. Facial hair increases on chin and upper lip. Voice gets deeper, and skin gets more oily.
- 5. Normal Age Range: 14–18, Average: Around 16** Full adult height and physique are nearly reached. Pubic hair and genitals have adult appearance. Facial hair grows more completely, and shaving may begin. During the late teens and early 20s, some people grow a bit more and develop more body hair, especially chest hair.

Word Connect: The Vagina and Related Parts

Instructions: Draw a line between the reproductive anatomy word on the left and the correct definition of the word on the right.

Fallopian tubes	The organs that contain egg cells (ova) and produce the hormones (estrogen, progesterone) that cause body changes, ovulation and menstruation
Vagina	The tube that carries urine out of the body
Urethra	The lower part of the uterus that contains the opening to the vagina
Cervix	The term that refers to the clitoris, both sets of labia, urethral opening and vaginal opening (external genitalia)
Ovaries	The passageway that connects the uterus to the outside of the body
Vulva	The small passageways an egg travels through to get from the ovary to the uterus

Bonus: Write down an additional fact you remember about three of these body parts.

Tips for Parents

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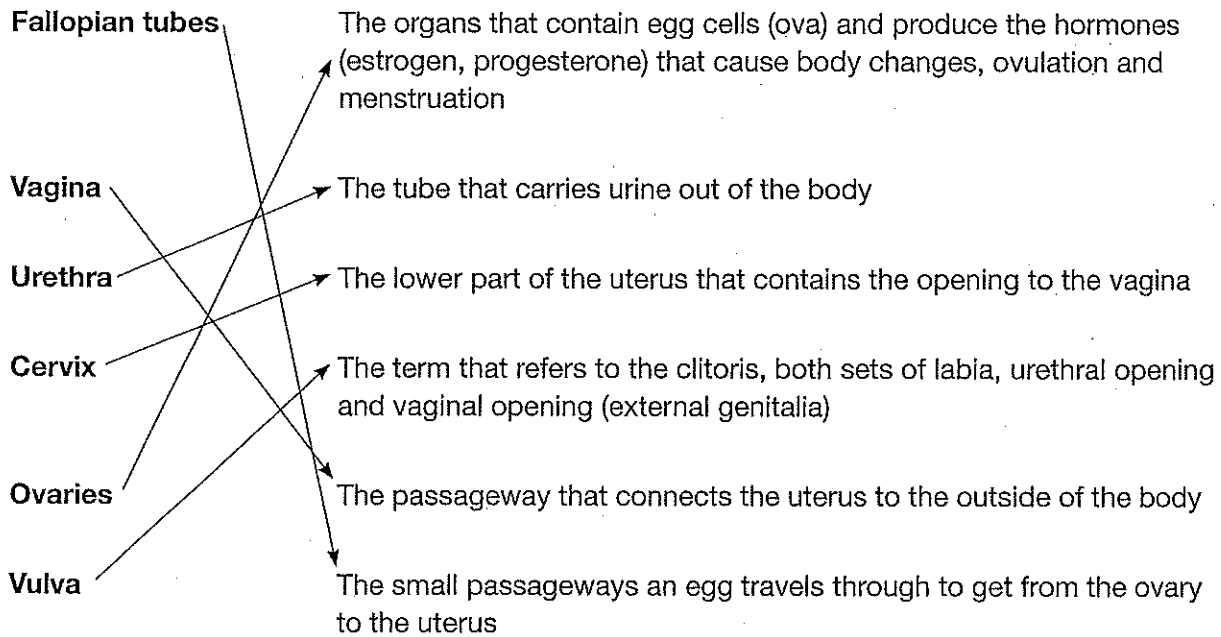
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Comprehensive Sex Education That Works

Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

Many parents wait for their child to ask a question about puberty or sexuality rather than start the conversation themselves. But many children won't ask their parents about sexual topics, and parents may also avoid these conversations, because they feel uncomfortable with the subject. In fact, a study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (currently publishing as Power to Decide) found that 87% of U.S. teens said it would be easier to postpone sexual activity if they could talk more openly about sex with their parents, but 37% of teens had never had a single talk with their parents on this topic!

Open-ended questions can be a good way to begin talking about sexuality with your child in a comfortable way. Remember, it's your right and responsibility to be your child's primary sexuality educator. As much as you can, stay calm and relaxed, and keep in mind that you're talking because you care about your child's happiness and well-being. Try these conversation starters today!

For Kids Who Don't Bring Up the Subject

- "I can't believe how tall you've grown already. Have you noticed other changes in your body? What do you like (or what don't you like) about the changes you're going through?"
- "When do you think a person is ready to be a parent?"

Answering Tough Questions You Don't Feel Ready for

- "That's a really good question. It's normal to be curious about [fill in the topic]. I'd really like to talk about it with you, but I need some time to think about it first."
- "What have you heard or learned already about [fill in the topic], and where did you hear it?"

Questions That Open the Door to Discussing Values

- "How do you think people know for sure whether they're ready to have sex?"
- "What do you think about how that couple on [fill in a favorite TV show] deal with each other when they get angry?"

(See reverse side for more ideas)

Continued

Ways to Give the Facts and Clear Up Slang While Responding to the Question

Q. Why do we need to talk about this stuff? I'm not having sex.

A. I know it can be difficult to talk about this stuff, and I get embarrassed, too. But there are so many things you need to know about your body, and about human sexuality and reproductive anatomy, as you grow and mature. Your body is going to change, and some of those changes can seem scary or strange. I want you to have all the right information so you can stay safe and healthy.

Q. Where do girls pee from?

A. Another word to describe peeing is "urinating." All people have a urethra from which they urinate, which is connected to the bladder where urine is stored.

Q. Everyone is talking about "hooking up." What does that mean?

A. That's a great question. I think it means different things to different people. Some people might use it to describe going out or dating, but others might use it to describe having sexual contact in a casual way (not in a serious relationship with a partner). Here's what concerns me about that: *[Insert your personal and family values here]*. What do you think "hooking up" means?

The Time Machine

Student instructions: Imagine you are a journalist researching a story called “The Time Machine.” Set up a time to interview a parent or other caring adult. You want to understand what middle school and puberty were like for this person. Lead them through a walk down memory lane by asking the questions below. Keep some notes so you can have a good picture of what life was like when this adult was your age.

1. Try to picture yourself as a teenager around the age of 11, 12, or 13. Describe where you lived. What did your room at home look like? Did you share a room with a sibling?
2. Describe your school. What was it like for you to walk down the hallway, enter a classroom, get dressed for school every day? Was school easy or hard for you? What were you interested in (sports, music, art)?
3. Who was important to you? Did you have a big group of friends? Did you have friends who were girls or friends who were boys? What did you do together for fun? How did you feel around them? Did you have a crush on anyone? Did this person know, or was it a secret?
4. What was going on with your body? Were you the first to change in your class, or maybe the last? Did you want it to happen, or did you hope it didn't? Did anyone tell you about these changes or answer your questions? Did you understand what was happening?
5. Did your parents talk to you about this stuff? Were they easy to talk to? Did you tell them everything about your life—your friends, your body, and your feelings? Did they drive you crazy sometimes? Did you feel they understood you?
6. If you didn't talk to your parents, whom did you talk to—your friends? A sibling? An aunt or uncle?
7. Finally, how did you feel about life at that time?
Name one feeling word to describe this time in your life. Is there anything you would change about this time if you could?

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week's *Get Real* class presented the concept of abstinence and how it relates to sexual activity. *Get Real* defines abstinence as choosing not to engage in certain sexual behaviors, including any sexual behavior that could result in pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection (STI), including HIV.

People may have different ideas about what abstinence is. For some it means no sexual contact of any kind, including kissing. For others it can include everything but sexual intercourse. Still others fall somewhere in between. Some people choose to abstain from sex until marriage. Some decide to put off or postpone having sex until they are older.

The Family Activity gives you a chance to share your personal and family values around dating and romantic relationships, and talk about how these relate to abstinence, with your child. You can communicate your thoughts, concerns and values.

Values are deeply held beliefs about what is right and appropriate for us and what is wrong. Some people think of values as morals. Values guide our decisions in life and can help us stay healthy. They help us model healthy behavior and respect ourselves and others. Even if you and your child disagree about some values, these discussions give you a chance to understand each other's point of view and explain why you feel the way you do.

There are different kinds of values:

- **Personal values** come from our own experiences and are not necessarily agreed upon by everyone. For example, someone might tidy their room every day because of a value for cleanliness. Or different families may have different beliefs about when it's appropriate for people to begin engaging in sexual activity.
- **Cultural values** are influenced by groups, societies or cultures and are largely shaped by their members. For example, a person growing up in the United States might value democracy because that is the accepted political ideal of this country.
- **Universal values** can be defined as those that are important to the majority of humans. For example, across most cultures, people value safety, personal health and self-respect.

Interview Questions

Instructions: Interview a parent or other caring adult. Fill in the blanks using the answers you and your caring adult come up with.

_____ (adult's name)
believes that dating for kids in sixth grade can be

_____ (adult's name)
suggests the following guidelines for parents and their sixth graders:

1. An appropriate age for kids to be going out or dating is _____.

2. Two important rules that must be followed:

_____ and _____.

3. Kids in sixth grade should be allowed to _____

but not to _____

because _____

4. If dating someone started to feel uncomfortable for any reason, a person could

_____ or _____

5. A parent who felt uncomfortable about a child's dating situation could _____

Being assertive and taking care of yourself in dating situations can be difficult because of feelings of excitement and being grown-up. Parents can encourage young people to take care of themselves by teaching their children to _____

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week, the *Get Real* lesson focused on decision making and how it relates to values. As part of this week's Family Activity, your child will be teaching you about the decision-making model taught in class.

Risk taking is a part of life that can result in both healthy and unhealthy outcomes. When parents understand the parts of an effective decision-making process, they can support their children and help them see that avoiding unhealthy behaviors is the best choice.

The *Get Real* decision-making model can be used for any decision in life—from deciding whether to watch television or do homework, to save money or spend it, or to join or refuse to do a risky behavior a friend or partner is encouraging or pressuring you to do.

Having useful skills, accurate information and good resources can empower young people to make healthier, safer and well-informed choices, including decisions related to sex and sexuality. Recent studies show that children who have frequent and open conversations with their parents about sex and sexuality have closer relationships with their parents and are more likely to make healthy decisions.

Teaching the Decision-Making Model

Student instructions: Teach a parent or other caring adult the decision-making model (Steps to a Decision) you learned in class today, using an example you will write ahead of time.

Part 1. Example Decision *(to be written by the student before the Family Activity)*

Write about a decision you are going to have to make in the next month. Be sure it's one you can use to teach your parent or other caring adult about the decision-making model.

Part 2. Teaching the Decision-Making Model

Guide your parent or other adult through the steps of the decision-making model using the case study you've written. Explain each step (your worksheet from class can help) and talk about it with each other before recording your answers.

Tips for Parents

The goal of this activity is to promote conversations between *Get Real* students and caring adults in their lives. It provides a great chance to review material covered in class, research resources for additional information, and share your feelings and values.

Note: If it's embarrassing to discuss these issues with one another, you can decide to:

- Say so—and do the exercise anyway.
- Skip parts of it.
- Write down your answers and then read each other's answers.
- Laugh, giggle, blush, and go right on talking.

1. Name the decision to be made. (This is not a binary Yes/No decision.)
2. List possible choices.
3. Identify all the positive and negative outcomes of each choice for yourself and for others (if...then...).
4. Identify the most important items on the pro/con list and think about how they will affect your short-term and long-term goals.
5. Pick one choice and try it out.
6. Evaluate your decision (how did it work out?) and try again if necessary.

Parent or Other Caring Adult Signature

Student Signature

GET | REAL

Comprehensive Sex Education That Works

Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This was the final week of *Get Real* classes! The Family Activity will help you and your child talk about the experience together. We hope you've found the *Get Real* Family Activities and letters helpful in your ongoing conversations with your child.

As the primary sexuality educator of your child, here are some general strategies to remember as you continue to talk about relationships, communication, decision making and values—the keys to sexual health!

- **Remember, sexuality isn't just about sex.** Sexuality includes gender, reproduction and sexual activity, but it's also much more. Sexuality involves feelings, attitudes, intimacy, caring, messages about gender identity, body image and sexual orientation.
- **Know that children and teens want to hear from their parents.** Teens cite parents as the number-one influence on their sexual decision making. Remind them that you care and want to help them make safe, healthy choices.
- **Be connected with their world.** Be curious about young people's interests (music, TV, sports, etc.) and get to know their friends.
- **Affirm them.** Compliments and support build positive self-esteem and will help your child open up to you.
- **Talk less, listen more.** Ask questions that open the door for discussion (e.g., "When do you think a person is ready to be a parent?"). Validate your child's questions, and really listen to your child's thoughts and views without judging. Start on a positive note by giving a compliment.
- **Choose the right times.** Talk in the car or while having a snack, etc., not when people are on the run or in the middle of an activity such as homework.
- **Be prepared.** Learn about the sexuality education being taught in the schools, faith communities and youth groups. Identify available resources, such as websites, books and professionals.
- **Remember that it's never too late.** Starting early and talking often is great. But it's never too late to begin. Conversations about sexuality should be ongoing.
- **Be honest.** Communicate your true feelings and values. If you believe your child should wait to become sexually active, say so in a positive, supportive way. Don't expect to have all the answers. Admit when you don't know. Be willing to seek answers together. It's OK to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable, as long as you keep talking.
- **Understand why facts and knowledge are important.** Respect your child's right to accurate and honest information about sexuality. Giving them the information they need helps young people make good decisions.

What Have We Learned?

Instructions: Work together to finish these sentences. Think about the things you've both learned and discussed over the 9 weeks of *Get Real* classes and Family Activities.

1. One fact I learned about sex and sexuality is...

2. One value about sex and sexuality I have is...

3. One thing I still wonder about the topic of sex and sexuality is...

4. One thing I want my parent or child to understand about my feelings on this topic is...

5. One thing that's working well in our relationship and communication about this topic is...

6. One of the main messages I want to share with my parent or child about the topic of sex and sexuality is...

Tips for Parents

The goal of this activity is to promote conversations between *Get Real* students and caring adults in their lives. It provides a great chance to review material covered in class, research resources for additional information, and share your feelings and values.

Note: If it's embarrassing to discuss these issues with one another, you can decide to:

• Say so—and do the exercise anyway.

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• Write down your answers and then read each other's answers.

• Laugh, giggle, blush, and go right on talking.

Parent or Other Caring Adult Signature

Student Signature