

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, self-management, awareness of others, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

Get Real recognizes and 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.

Like last year, students in the *Get Real* program will bring home Family Activities for each class. These are designed to help families 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 enable 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 about 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.

What Are Three Things...?

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should share their answers to the following questions with each other.

1. What are three things that make growing up exciting?
2. What are three things that make growing up scary?
3. Whom do you consider your best friend(s)? What are three things you like about them?
4. Is there a person your own age whom you don't like? Why?
5. What are three things that I do around you that embarrass you? Why?
6. What are three things that I do that make you proud of me?
7. What are three things that other people like about you?
8. How do you think life would be different if you were a different gender?
9. What is a goal you have for this year?

Tips for Parents

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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's class explored healthy and unhealthy relationships. Your child learned more about what makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy. Students also talked about the importance of respect and boundaries, and created a plan for building healthy relationships. The Family Activity will give you a chance to share some of your memories, hopes and wishes for your child regarding healthy relationships. Families want their children to be in healthy, safe and satisfying relationships. What can you say to help them along the way?

The Parent Buzz is a bimonthly newsletter that contains strategies for talking with kids about sex and sexuality. It offers an easy way for parents to get helpful tips, current information about sex and sexuality, links to useful websites, and facts about how children and teens develop.

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

Looking at Relationships

Instructions for students: Find out what your parent or other caring adult's experience was like when they were younger. Ask these questions and discuss their answers.

1. When did you have your first crush or partner?
2. What were some of the feelings you remember having?
3. What were some of the good parts of that relationship? What do you wish had been different?
4. What do you think are the ten most important characteristics of a healthy relationship? Choose your top three and explain why they are important.
5. As my parent or other caring adult, what is 1 important message you'd like to give to me about building healthy and fulfilling relationships?

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week in *Get Real* class, your teen had a chance to learn more about 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 talk more about your individual and family definitions of abstinence and what makes it easier or more difficult for young people to abstain from sex.

Abstinence Quiz

1. **False** Abstinence means to not do something. It can refer to smoking, doing drugs or drinking. When it comes to sexual activity, abstinence or postponement is a choice that means not having sex at this time in someone's life.
2. **False** Anyone, no matter how old or young, can decide to abstain from, or postpone sex, even if that person has had sex before.

Note to Parent/Caring Adult: This response doesn't apply to forced sexual behavior, or sexual assault. In the case of sexual assault, perpetrators are exerting power over a victim. Sexual assault is unrelated to a person's choice to postpone or abstain from sexual activity. For resources on sexual assault or rape, see:

RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network)

1-800-656-4673

www.rainn.org

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Crisis intervention and support, answers to questions regarding sexual assault, basic medical issues information, resources on the reporting process, referral services in your area, and information for friends and family of survivors.

3. **False** Peer pressure and other outside influences can pose great challenges to decision making. Being clear about their values can help teens make healthy decisions, but they also need to have a plan for facing any challenges that may arise.
4. **True** Positive and effective communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal, are a very good way to help people stay firm in their decisions.
5. **False** According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 75% of prime time television programs contain sexual content. Only 14% of these show people discussing the risks or responsibilities of sexual activity.
6. **False** Pregnancy is one risk of unprotected vaginal intercourse between two individuals when there is an egg and sperm present. STIs are another risk for anyone who is sexually active with a partner. In addition, any kind of sexual activity that a person is not ready for can pose emotional risks.
7. **True** Deciding to postpone or abstain from sex is considered by many to be a healthy choice for teens because it's the most effective way to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and STI transmission, and, when used correctly and consistently, abstinence offers 100% protection.

Abstinence Quiz

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should work on the following Abstinence Quiz together, then read and discuss the answers on the reverse side.

If the statement is true, circle T. If the statement is false, circle F.

1. T F Abstinence means never having sex.
2. T F Once people choose to have sex, abstinence is not a choice for them anymore.
3. T F If teens have strong values, they should have no trouble sticking with a decision to abstain from sex.
4. T F Knowing how to communicate effectively is a good way to help avoid sexual activity that a person isn't ready for.
5. T F TV shows have rules against references to sexual intercourse during prime time.
6. T F The only risk of having sex before you are ready is getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant.
7. T F Abstinence can be a healthy choice for teens.

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

In addition to being human beings, most of us are sexual beings. Sexuality is a normal, healthy, natural part of being human at every stage of life. Not experiencing sexual feelings is also completely normal. People's sexuality is made up of many aspects of their lives—sex is just one part.

Sexuality includes gender, the body and how it works, values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings about life, love and other people, as well as a person's sexual behaviors. Young people learn about their sexuality from the day they are born, and home is the first place they begin to learn about it. When kids feel good about their sexuality, it's easier for them to ask questions about sex later in life.

Parents and other caring adults can start to talk with kids about sexuality using many different themes, including relationships, communication, respect and body image, as well as intimacy and sexual behavior. These talks are a way to share values and facts that will help young people take charge of their lives, have loving relationships, and make healthier, safer and better-informed choices related to sexuality.

Here are some ways to define key terms:

Sex can refer to sex assigned at birth or sexual behaviors.

- *Sex assigned at birth* refers to how a person is most often assigned a sex (male, female, intersex) at birth based on their external genitalia.
- *Sexual behavior* usually involves touching oneself or another person in ways that cause sexual feelings and pleasure. Sexual behavior includes many different ways of touching. It can range from holding hands or massage to masturbation or intercourse (vaginal/ oral/ anal).

Sexuality changes and grows throughout a person's life. It includes sexual behaviors, sexual relationships and intimacy; but also includes:

- How we choose to express ourselves as people through our gender identity and expression (including our names, pronouns, and the way we talk, dress and relate to others)
- Sexual orientation (straight, gay, bisexual or any other sexual orientation)
- Values, beliefs and attitudes as they relate to our sex and/or gender
- Changes bodies go through during life stages such as puberty, pregnancy and menopause
- Whether and how people choose to have children
- Relationships with romantic partners, friends and others
- The way people feel about how they look, who they are as a person, and how they treat others

Protection Methods Quiz

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should answer the questions below together. Or answer them separately and compare answers to see how much you both know (or need to know)! The answer key is on the reverse side.

1. What is the only protection method that is 100% effective, if practiced perfectly?
2. What does it mean to use a method perfectly?
3. Name three (or more) hormonal methods of birth control.
4. Condoms reduce the risk of _____
and _____.
5. True or False? Condoms can be reused.
6. Dental dams used during oral sex reduce the risk of _____.

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1. What is the only protection method that is 100% effective, if practiced perfectly?

Abstinence

2. What does it mean to use a method perfectly?

“Perfect use” means that the method is used correctly, every single time

3. Name three (or more) hormonal methods of birth control.

Birth control pill, the shot, the ring, the patch, the progestin IUD, the implant

4. Condoms reduce the risk of _____ and _____.

Pregnancy and STIs (sexually transmitted infections), including HIV

5. True or False? Condoms can be reused.

False

6. Dental dams used during oral sex reduce the risk of _____.

STIs (sexually transmitted infections)

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Comprehensive Sex Education That Works

Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

Here are some helpful resources you can refer to in your talks with your child about sex and sexuality. They include call centers, websites and booklists. Try exploring some of the websites with your child to help you start talking and find some more activities to do together!

Phone Resources

Planned Parenthood Sexual Health Counseling and Referral Hotline

English/Spanish: 617-616-1616, Toll-Free: 1-800-258-4448, Option #3

Mon., Tues., Thurs., 9 a.m.–8 p.m.; Wed., Fri., 9 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sat., 9 a.m.–3 p.m. (EST)

Trained health center staff and volunteers are available to discuss a wide range of issues related to birth control, pregnancy options, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and other aspects of reproductive health.

AIDSinfo

1-800-HIV-0440 (1-800-448-0440), TTY: 1-888-480-3739

Mon.–Fri. 1 p.m.–4 p.m. (EST)

Chat room available in English and Spanish: Mon.–Fri. 12 p.m.–4 p.m. (EST)

Offers information on HIV treatment and research, customized clinical trial searches, and referrals to a host of other useful government-approved resources. Health information specialists can confidentially answer questions in both English and Spanish.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network

English/Spanish: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

National Sexual Assault Hotline offers access to a range of free services including:

- Confidential, judgment-free support from a trained staff member
- Help with finding a local health facility trained to care for survivors of sexual assault that offers services such as sexual assault forensic exams
- Someone to help you talk through what happened
- Local resources that can assist with your next steps toward healing and recovery
- Referrals for long-term support in your area
- Information about the laws in your area
- Basic information about medical concerns

(See reverse side for more resources)

Continued

Websites

Planned Parenthood: www.plannedparenthood.org

This website contains information on contraception, pregnancy testing, emergency contraception, pregnancy options, STI and HIV testing and treatments, as well as a pro-choice action network and sex education programs.

SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States):

www.siecus.org

SIECUS provides medically accurate information about sex and sexually transmitted diseases. They also provide many guides for talking with children about these topics.

Advocates for Youth: www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents

This organization creates programs and advocates for policies that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): www.pflag.org

PFLAG's mission is to promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons and their families and friends. PFLAG provides support in coping with a hostile society, and offers education and advocacy.

Books for Parents

Debra Haffner, *Beyond the Big Talk: Every Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Teens.*

Debra Haffner, *From Diapers to Dating: A Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children.*

Justin Richardson and Mark Schuster, *Everything You Never Wanted Your Kids to Know About Sex.*

Deborah Roffman, *Sex and Sensibility: The Thinking Parent's Guide to Talking Sense About Sex.*

Ellen Rosenberg, *Get a Clue: A Parent's Guide to Understanding and Communicating with Your Preteen.*

Books for Adolescents (14–18)

Carol Weston, *Girltalk.*

Columbia University Health Education Program, *The Go Ask Alice Book of Answers: A Guide to Good Physical, Sexual and Emotional Health.*

Ruth Bell, *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships.*

Books for Preteens (10–14)

Robie Harris, illustrated by Michael Emberly, *It's Perfectly Normal* (also en Español).

Lynda Madaras with Area Madaras, *"What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls: A Growing-Up Guide for Parents and Daughters* (recommended for ages 8 to 15).

Lynda Madaras with Area Madaras, *"What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys: A Growing-Up Guide for Parents and Sons* (recommended for ages 8 to 15).

Ranking Sexual Health Issues

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should answer the following questions on their own. Then compare your lists. Are they similar or different? Discuss differences and the reasons you each had for choosing what you did.

Rank the three following sexual health issues from most concerning to least concerning:

HIV/AIDS

Unintended Pregnancy

STIs

Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- What do you notice? Are your rankings similar?
- Does anything surprise you?
- How difficult was it to choose? What factors helped you decide?
- Does society view these issues differently? Is there more or less stigma surrounding STIs and HIV than unintended pregnancy? How did that affect your decision?
- Are there similar concerns and risks involved with all three?
- What can you personally do to prevent all of these sexual health issues from affecting your family and loved ones?

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Parent or Other Caring Adult Signature

Student Signature

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

Many parents wait for their kids to ask a question about sexuality instead of bringing up the topic of sex and sexuality. But many children won't ask a parent questions about sexual topics, and some parents may avoid the subject because they are uncomfortable. 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 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.

Open-ended questions can be used to start these conversations and begin talking about sexuality in a comfortable way. Remember, it's your right and responsibility to be your child's primary sexuality educator. Try to stay calm and relaxed. Keep in mind that you're talking about these things 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 Those 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 subject) and where did you hear it?"

Questions Parents Can Ask 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 the 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 embarrassing to talk about, and I get embarrassed, too. But there are so many things you need to know about 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." People with a vagina urinate through a urethra, a small tube in the body that is connected to the bladder. People with a penis also urinate through a urethra.

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 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?

HIV: Do You Know It All?

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should work on the following quiz together, then discuss the answers on the reverse side.

If the statement is true, circle T. If the statement is false, circle F.

1. T F You can tell by looking whether a person has HIV.
2. T F HIV can be transmitted through six body fluids.
3. T F Saliva is one of the fluids that can transmit HIV.
4. T F People who identify as straight can't get HIV, so they only have to worry about other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
5. T F One way HIV can get into another person's bloodstream is through sores in the mouth.
6. T F Teens need a parent's consent to get an HIV test.
7. T F HIV can be transmitted through mosquito bites.

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Continued

HIV: Do You Know It All?

- 1. False** HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that lives inside a person's body. Some people believe you can tell whether a person has HIV by looking. The reality is that some people who have HIV don't even know they're infected. The only sure way for people to know if they've been infected is to get tested.
- 2. True** The fluids that can transmit HIV from someone who is infected with the virus are ejaculate, pre-ejaculate, vaginal fluid, rectal fluid, blood and breast milk. Any sexual contact or other behavior (such as sharing needles) that brings someone in contact with these fluids puts a person at risk for HIV.
- 3. False** HIV is present in such small amounts in saliva that it cannot be transmitted to another person.
- 4. False** Anyone who has sex, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, and comes in contact with infected ejaculate, pre-ejaculate, vaginal fluid, rectal fluid, blood or breast milk can get HIV. Because of the way their bodies are made, people with a vagina are twice as likely as people with a penis to get HIV through vaginal intercourse, but people with a penis are still at risk. People with a penis and people with a vagina are at equal risk of getting HIV when exposed to ejaculate through oral or anal sex.
- 5. True** HIV can be transmitted through oral sex (the sexual behavior of putting the mouth on the vulva, penis or anus) because ejaculate, pre-ejaculate, vaginal fluid or rectal fluid could get into the bloodstream through open sores or cuts in someone's mouth (e.g., from flossing teeth, canker sores, cold sores).
- 6. False** Anyone of any age can get sexual health services for HIV testing, STI testing and pregnancy prevention.
- 7. False** HIV is a virus that only infects humans. Mosquitoes are insects so they don't carry HIV. (But some mosquitoes do carry other infections, such as malaria and West Nile virus.) If a person who has HIV is bitten by a mosquito and that mosquito then bites someone else, HIV will not be passed through the mosquito bite.

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

For many teens, saying “no” assertively is one of the most difficult aspects of a friendship or romantic relationship. Teens may think that saying “no” to a friend or dating partner will make them seem immature, or cause them to be left out or rejected. Some worry that refusing may hurt someone’s feelings.

Coping with peer pressure from friends or partners can be hard for young people. Surveys find that many teens misrepresent or exaggerate their sexual experiences in order to fit in. They need to know that having sex or engaging in other risky behaviors to please a partner or a friend won’t make them feel good about themselves.

One way to help teens build self-confidence to say “no” more easily is to stress self-respect and being assertive. Young people need to know they have the freedom to choose, and the right to refuse to have sex at any time, for any reason. It doesn’t matter how far they have gone or whether they have had sex before. They always have the right to refuse, even when they are older with a future partner. Parents and other trusted adults can support teens in knowing that what they do with their bodies is their own business and nobody else’s. Encourage your children to respect their bodies, feelings and choices.

The Family Activity gives you a chance to talk about and practice refusal skills. Remember, talking to teens before they are involved in a serious relationship helps them build the skills to make healthier, safer and better-informed decisions related to sexuality.

Using Refusal Skills

Instructions: Student and parent or other caring adult should answer and discuss the following questions together.

1. Count how many times each of you said “no” today. Were any of those times more difficult than others? Why?
2. What makes saying “no” easy, and when might it be more difficult?
3. What was the most difficult “no” you’ve ever had to say to anyone?
4. What can make it difficult for a person to say “no” to sexual pressure?
5. What might make it easier to say “no” to sexual pressure?
6. Take a few minutes to imagine a life situation in which a person might want to say “no.” Practice using the following parts of saying “no” effectively.

- Say the word “no” firmly, directly and clearly.
- Give a strong nonverbal “no” message.

People need to practice a lot when learning a new skill. It’s important to practice in many contexts, especially at home in real life. Tomorrow, be aware of when you say “no.” Pay attention to which situations are more difficult than others. Notice which part of the refusal skills work or don’t work, and think about what you could do to make it easier next time.

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Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

This week in *Get Real* class, your child thought about personal goals and how sexual decision making can affect goals. Self-esteem is a powerful influence that affects goal setting, as well as sexual decision making. Teens who feel good about themselves are more likely to make positive decisions about school, friends, relationships, sex, drugs and much more. The parents' role in nurturing a child's self-esteem is very important.

You can help your child acknowledge personal values, abilities and strengths. The teen years can be hard on a young person's self-esteem at times. Point out the growth you've noticed. When you need to reprimand your child, focus on the behavior as being unacceptable, not the person. Tell your child "I love you" often.

Encourage your child to repeat positive image-building statements (affirmations) every day, such as "I'm successful," "I like myself," and "I have a good attitude."

Work to set short-term goals at which your child can be successful. Give your child the freedom to make decisions, take on responsibilities, and make mistakes. Then process the results together.

Each success builds self-esteem. With higher self-esteem, comes a greater chance of having a positive, fulfilling life.

A Future Letter

Instructions: Imagine opening up an envelope in 15 years that is addressed to you from your parent (if you are the child now) or from your child (if you are the parent now). The envelope contains a letter from the other person stating hopes, dreams, wishes and goals for you for your future. These can include career, health, relationships, family, travels, or personal qualities.

Then student and parent or other caring adult should each write that letter to the other person. Exchange and read each other's letters. Take a few minutes to talk about why you chose a certain goal for the other person or why you have a special hope for the other person.

Then seal each letter in an envelope with the other person's name on it. Put the letters in a safe place where you can keep track of them. Open them in 15 years and share these life affirmations with each other!

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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

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 have 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, messages about sex assigned at birth, 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 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

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