

## How to Talk with Your Kids: Framework for Healthy Conversations

When parents initiate a discussion or an opportunity arises to talk, here are some helpful steps for healthy and meaningful conversations. These steps do not always occur in this order and you may jump around to different steps during different parts of the conversation.

1. **Invite your child to a conversation with you.**
2. **Assess your child's readiness:** If the child's discomfort is high, make the conversation brief and positive to build comfort and trust for further conversations.
3. **Share facts and values with your child:** for example- "I heard your friend say that girls cannot get pregnant before they are 16. That is wrong. A girl can get pregnant any time after her first period arrives. That is one of the many reason I don't believe that girls should be having sex when they are young. What did you think about what your friend said?"
4. **Invite your child to share feelings, thoughts, concerns** (see above example)
5. **What does my child want and/or need from me?** This could mean things like more information, support with what they are thinking/feeling, strategies to help them deal with a situation, and/or space to think things through.
6. **What do I want from them?** The most important thing is for your child to be comfortable to come back for more conversations and to understand what was discussed. For example: "I hope this was not too uncomfortable for you, it can be awkward talking about sex. I think we will get better at it. Can I check in with you to be sure we understood each other today?"
7. **Check back in with your child frequently to double check their understanding and keep the conversation going.**

When your child initiates a discussion or an opportunity arises to talk, here are some helpful steps for healthy and meaningful conversations. These steps do not always occur in this order and you may jump around to different steps during different parts of the conversation.

1. **Begin by really listening:** As a parent it is important to learn more about what the child wants and needs. This could be information, support, strategies, values or combinations of all these.
2. **Answer what the child is asking:** It is important to give the child the information that they want to know. Look for the question behind the question.
3. **Assess readiness for more:** After giving them the information they want, are they comfortable and ready to hear more about this topic and/or related topics? Ask questions.
4. **Share facts and your values:** Kids want to know how you feel about these topics and how they relate to the world around them.
5. **Invite your child to share his/her feelings, thoughts, and concerns on this topic or others that are raised in the discussion.** This is an opportunity to get a window into your child's world...finding out what is happening at school or with friends and how he/she feels about his/her life at that moment.
6. **What does my child want and/or need from me?** This could be more information, support, strategies for dealing with these issues, and/or space. It is okay if you do not know the answers to all of their questions. After validating your child's questions, you can always say, "I am not sure of that answer. Can I find out more information and get back to you?" or "Let's find that out together."
7. **What do I want from them?** The most important thing is for your child to be comfortable to come back for more conversations and to understand what was discussed.
8. **Check back in with your child frequently to double check their understanding and keep the conversation going.**