



the campaign to prevent unplanned pregnancy

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## **POWER TO DECIDE SEX EDUCATOR PROVIDES 5 WAYS PARENTS CAN DISCUSS SEX, LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

(Washington, D.C.) — May is Talking is Power Month, a national effort to spark meaningful conversations between young people and the parents and champions who care about them. The focus of Power to Decide’s #TalkingIsPower campaign reminds parents, trusted adults and other champions how powerful they are in the lives of young people. Power to Decide’s Mackenzie Piper, MPH, CHES, provides five strategies parents, trusted adults and other champions can use to discuss sex, love and relationships with young people.

**Use teachable moments:** Sheltering in place is adding extra stress to many households with some parents working from home while also trying their hand at home schooling their children. In these moments of stress, engaging in conversations about sex, love and relationships may seem impossible. One method to open conversations with young people is to engage in media together, like [TV shows](#) or books, and to discuss the sex, love and relationships that you see or read about. Another approach of doing ‘hands-on’ activities alongside young people can be similar to taking a drive together. Not having direct eye contact and time to think/process is often helpful for “awkward” conversations.

**Be an ask-able champion:** Even when your young person asks something you deem “cringe-worthy,” remain neutral and open. Before you answer their question, find out what your young person already knows, and ask follow-up questions to learn more. This will give you an opportunity to get at the root of your young person’s questions or concerns, and it will also empower them to make sense of the experiences they are having. Staying open, asking good questions and reflecting back what you hear are all techniques to building trust and maintaining a healthy rapport with your young person.

**Admit when you are stumped:** Perhaps the biggest misconception is thinking that every question needs an immediate answer. According to the [CDC](#), admitting when you don’t know something can build trust. Instead of trying to provide an answer “from the books,” think about connecting to your young person by sharing a personal story that offers insight on how you thought about sex, love and relationships when you grew up. Through sharing honestly about yourself, you are creating vulnerability and acknowledging the normalcy of these topics.

**Start early, talk often:** It is never too early to start conversations about sex, love and relationships and the key is to normalize them by engaging in them often. Oftentimes, we think about “the talk” as a formal, one-time conversation between an adult and young person, but instead, they are ongoing, age-appropriate conversations. Such conversations can start by teaching young people the anatomically

correct terminology about their body parts and about appropriate and inappropriate touch, and then can progress to conversations about dating, consent and birth control.

**Stay Informed:** It is important to stay informed about where your young person is receiving information and what messaging they are receiving. In knowing these, you can ask questions of them and provide accurate information when necessary. As a parent or champion, providing accurate information is also dependent upon staying informed yourself. There are numerous resources from trusted resources, such as the [Power to Decide Toolkit](#), that can aid your learning and help navigate conversations with your young person.

**Power to Decide** is a private, non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to ensure all people—no matter who they are, where they live or what their economic status might be—have the power to decide if, when and under what circumstances to get pregnant and have a child. Please visit us at [www.PowerToDecide.org](http://www.PowerToDecide.org) or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.