

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

As a parent, you want to invest your time in things that matter. Like having the right conversation with your child at the right time, with the right things to say at your fingertips. These conversation guides will help you navigate the critical issues you face at each phase, as you imagine the end for your child. They are based on research from **The Phase Project**, a collaborative, ongoing effort assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.



High School

SEXUAL INTEGRITY

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for great conversations with kids

Your high schooler has only a few short years until they're out of the house—and don't you both know it! They're becoming increasingly independent, and you're shifting as a parent from authority to influence. In the push and pull, just remember you still have a critical role to play when it comes to helping them grow with sexual integrity. Don't disconnect. Now more than ever you need to be available for them. Even though the conversations may be challenging, they need for you to show up. During this phase, your role is to...

COACH
them toward healthy
relationships



So they will . . .
**ESTABLISH PERSONAL BOUNDARIES
& PRACTICE MUTUAL RESPECT**

This guide is designed to help you meet your high schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say and not to say as you navigate the critical issue of sex. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal for your child in mind:

Sexual Integrity: Guarding my potential for intimacy through appropriate boundaries and mutual respect

WHAT TO SAY:

"Let's talk about and agree on some guidelines for dating."

"What are some of your favorite things about *(person of interest)*."

"What are some of your personal values? Let's talk about some things that are really important to you in a friend or someone you date." *(Continue conversations about wise choices and healthy relationships.)*

"Are you working toward becoming the person you want to be that supports your personal values?"

"Does *(person)* fit into your personal values?"

"How does that person make you feel about yourself? Do they respect you?" *(Stay curious. Ask questions to help them clarify boundaries)*

"Don't give someone else control of your life."

"Do you have someone else you can talk to about things you aren't talking to me about?" *(Prioritize their relationship with other adult leaders or mentors you both trust.)*

"Let's talk about a few ways you can respond if you ever get into an uncomfortable situation."

"Thank you for telling me." *(Encourage conversation through your words, tone, and body language.)*

"Let's talk about this when I have a chance to process it." *(Create a response plan when you find out something you aren't expecting.)*

Check out books like *Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality* by Jim Burns to help with this conversation.

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"I don't think we need to talk about that."

"You will forget about this relationship in a year." *(Be careful about overly minimizing what is significant to them)*

"We should invite your boyfriend/girlfriend on the family vacation! You guys are so good together." *(Be careful of overly emphasizing what may not be permanent.)*

"You've already messed up so there's no need to talk about it."

"Stop feeling sorry for yourself and just get over it." *(Breakups can be hard and you want them to talk about how they are feeling.)*

Make sure to involve professional counselors as needed, as well as your ministry leaders.

JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The high school years are the years to mobilize their potential, so encourage their questions and affirm their sound decision-making. Keep the lines of communication open by asking questions that help them clarify their values and boundaries. Remember, your role as a coach is to encourage and affirm their growth.