

How to Talk to Kids About Healthy Relationships

Children encounter many relationships in their lives, from relationships with adults to friendships, and eventually romantic relationships. Teaching children to have healthy friendships will help them develop skills needed for healthy romantic relationships in the future.

Here are key messages to help your child understand what makes a healthy relationship—from friendships to romantic relationships:

It is okay to disagree with other people. The way you disagree is important. It's never okay to call someone else names, bully another person, or be disrespectful or mean.

In a relationship, one person should not be making all of the decisions or picking all of the activities.

No one deserves to be bullied or harassed. If you see someone being treated poorly, it is important to say something. If you don't feel you can say something to the person who's doing the teasing or bullying, tell an adult right away.

There is a lot of pressure at your age to be in a relationship. It may feel simple to say this, but it's better to not be in a relationship than to be with someone who makes you feel badly about yourself in any way, or who doesn't make you feel happy and excited to be with.

You should never do anything sexual with another person you do not want to do. It doesn't matter if you've already done it before, even with that person. You should also never force or pressure another person into doing something sexual they do not want to do. If they are hesitant, assume they really don't want to, and stop. And remember, consent can only be given if someone is sober and not under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

TIP:

Model healthy behavior in your relationships as much as you can including communication, compromise, respect, support and healthy boundaries. If you have special friendships, talk with your kids about what makes them great.

