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TOPIC
DATING

Faith at
home

Dating: Sex, Gender, & Relationships

Don't Outsource the Conversation

If you were to ask most millennials or Gen Xers if their parents sat them down to talk to them about dating and sex, their answer would be no.

The New Talk

There's a common conception about "the talk." A parent goes into their child's room to have an awkward conversation about sex. The parent stumbles over their words, avoids eye contact, and leaves little time for their child to respond. The objective is to tell them to wait and maybe also to be safe if they can't.

Know and Grow Your Kid

You know your kid. And if you feel that you don't, we encourage you to do the hard work of getting to know them and understanding what they value and think. This work is foundational for any and every conversation you will have with your kid. As it relates to dating, it will assist you in assessing their readiness, potential pitfalls, and areas in need of growth to date well.

Should I Let My Child Date?

- Maybe.
- "Contrary to the prevalent idea that children are growing up faster than previous generations did, [Gen Z] is growing up more slowly: 18-year-olds now act like 15-year-olds used to, and 13-year-olds like 10-year-olds. Teens...are more mentally [and emotionally] vulnerable."
- Given this new reality, we recommend parents steer away from an "age approach" where they allow their child to date once they reach a certain age to a "readiness approach."

Trends You Need to Know

- **Everything is fluid.** Gen Z and Gen Alpha highly value individualism and refuse to live in boxes. This creates a lot of fluidity in how they understand and express their sexuality and gender.
- **Ghosting.** If they start to lack interest in a person, their attraction for them doesn't grow, or conflict occurs, they tend to withdraw without communicating and go radio-silent instead of ending the relationship.
- **Dating happens online.** While teens are hungry for face-to-face interaction, many still prefer communicating their attraction via social media apps like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. Social media apps will also likely be their primary way of communicating with

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someone they are interested in or dating. This shift requires monitoring and coaching around screen time, appropriate communications, and talks about catfishing and sexting.

Dating Violence Among Teens

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, over 71% of women and over 55% of men first experienced intimate partner violence (sexual or physical violence, and/or stalking) under the age of 25. This unfortunate reality will require you to talk to your child about emotional and physical boundaries and what to do when they feel uncomfortable with someone they are dating. You will also need to look out for warning signs like enmeshment and codependency that can fly under the radar as puppy love and pay attention to any considerable shifts in your child's personality or activities. Are they all of a sudden withdrawn? Are they no longer participating in activities you know they love? Are their relationships with their friends changing? Do they get inordinately defensive when you express concern or ask about the person they are dating? These are all things to keep a close eye on to keep your child safe.

