

Healthy Relationships

By Jane Stueve, Adolescent and School Health Consultant

In parents' conversations with adolescents, the topics of sex, pregnancy, tobacco, alcohol and drugs are covered most of the time. There is one subject that is often overlooked when conveying information to adolescents: a healthy relationship. This subject is of utmost importance because it will build a foundation for current relationships and for how they form relationships as adults.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy has developed a set of suggestions that they think might be important to cover in conversations with adolescents. Some of the points they make include:

- Parents influence their adolescents' decisions about dating and relationships.
- Actions speak louder than words-demonstrate respectful relationships.
- Encourage high school and higher education as goals because these teens have higher expectations and are more successful.
- Remind teens they are in charge of their life. Teach them friends first, dating and relationships later.
- Do not dismiss teens' feelings, listen and help

them to make responsible decisions. Don't lecture; listen and have conversations with the teen.

- Is the person the teen is dating respectful of others independence and not trying to control them? Teach the teen how to recognize dominating relationships and how to avoid them.
- Caution teens about dating older partners.
- Teach the teen that if sex is the price of a relationship, find someone else.
- If a teen is sexually involved, teach physical consequences (pregnancy and STDs) and emotional consequences.

Experts in the area of sexuality recommend parents or trusted individuals address teen questions and concerns with respect and sensitivity. Over time, the teen will become comfortable and consider the parent or trusted individual as a resource of reliable information and know that the teen's best interest is part of any advice they impart.

For more information on healthy relationships, go to www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/relationships.aspx.

Teen Licensing Laws

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Changes to the teen licensing laws will be implemented by the Department of Revenue and by law enforcement across the state on January 1, 2010. The Kansas Traffic Resource Office and the Kansas Department of Transportation asks for assistance in bringing this message to teens and parents of teens across the state.

For more information on the changes in the drivers licensing laws for teens go to www.ktsro.org/index.cfm?Page=Teen.