



SEXUAL INTEGRITY INITIATIVE

A resource of CPYU and Project Six19



HELPING TEENS SET BOUNDARIES IN RELATIONSHIPS

| By Julia Feeser

Teens need to understand your values when it comes to setting boundaries. Today's cultural landscape gives young people a number of different places to overexpose themselves physically, socially, or even spiritually in a relationship. Discussing relationship boundaries with your kids is important.

Amount of disclosure: Helping your teen practice good disclosure is key to not diving into a relationship too quickly. Vulnerability creates closeness and intimacy, and while they will feel the desire to establish this closeness with their boyfriend/girlfriend, help them be aware of what is being shared, how much, and how early in the relationship. Telling every secret or life experience to their boyfriend/girlfriend early on in a relationship can speed up the intimacy process before either of them are ready or have earned that level of trust.

Time: While a new relationship can sometimes be all consuming, it's important to help your teen maintain time and activities outside the relationship. Spending all their time with a boyfriend/girlfriend can take a toll on previously established friendships and their overall well-being. Teach them how to have a life and activities outside of their romantic relationship so if (when) the relationship ends someday they will still have a strong support system of friends that does not depend on whom they are dating.

Alone Time: Couples need time alone with each other for the same reasons friends do: to have meaningful conversations and experiences together that enhance the depth and quality of a relationship. However, age appropriate behavior need to be considered, values need to be discussed for how you want your teen to spend time alone, and helping



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them realize that excessive time spent alone can create opportunities for prolonged physical intimacy. While alone time is important and necessary for older couples, it is not needed for younger couples. Placing limits on the amount of time your son or daughter spends alone with their boyfriend/girlfriend is invaluable to maintaining healthy physical boundaries.

Agree on where you'll draw the line physically: Be on the same page with your son or daughter long before they ever start to date. This will not only help establish boundaries on something like alone time but it will also help your teen focus on the more important details that allow a relationship to thrive. Know where you would like your teen to draw the line, communicate it, and seek their feedback. This will help instill trust and also help you continue to be the authority on subjects related to sex. These

boundaries are important to establish before your son or daughter begins dating, not after. Without them knowing where you stand as a parent will create a greater chance they will not share the same physical expectations, causing division, and potentially unwanted or unhealthy pressure within the relationship without your knowledge.

Establish situational boundaries: Part of helping your teen establish healthy boundaries is helping them be aware of what situations they put themselves in, particularly as it relates to maintaining sexual integrity. Teach them to ask questions such as: How often will we hang out alone? Will I go over to his/her house when his/her parents are not home? Will we attend a party where there could be drinking and thus poor judgment on the part of others or ourselves?

Don't share social media passwords or accounts:

Finally, teach your children not to share social media account passwords. This occurs in a teen's life because sharing this level of personal information may seem like a form of intimacy and "maturity" within a relationship, when in fact it can be detrimental to the relationship. Remind your son or daughter that whatever is put online tends to stay there in one form or another, and they take a great risk in giving another person this power on your behalf (especially if the relationship ends).

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For additional information or resources to help kids navigate their sexuality, visit the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding and Project Six19's Sexual Integrity Initiative website at SexualIntegrityInitiative.com.

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