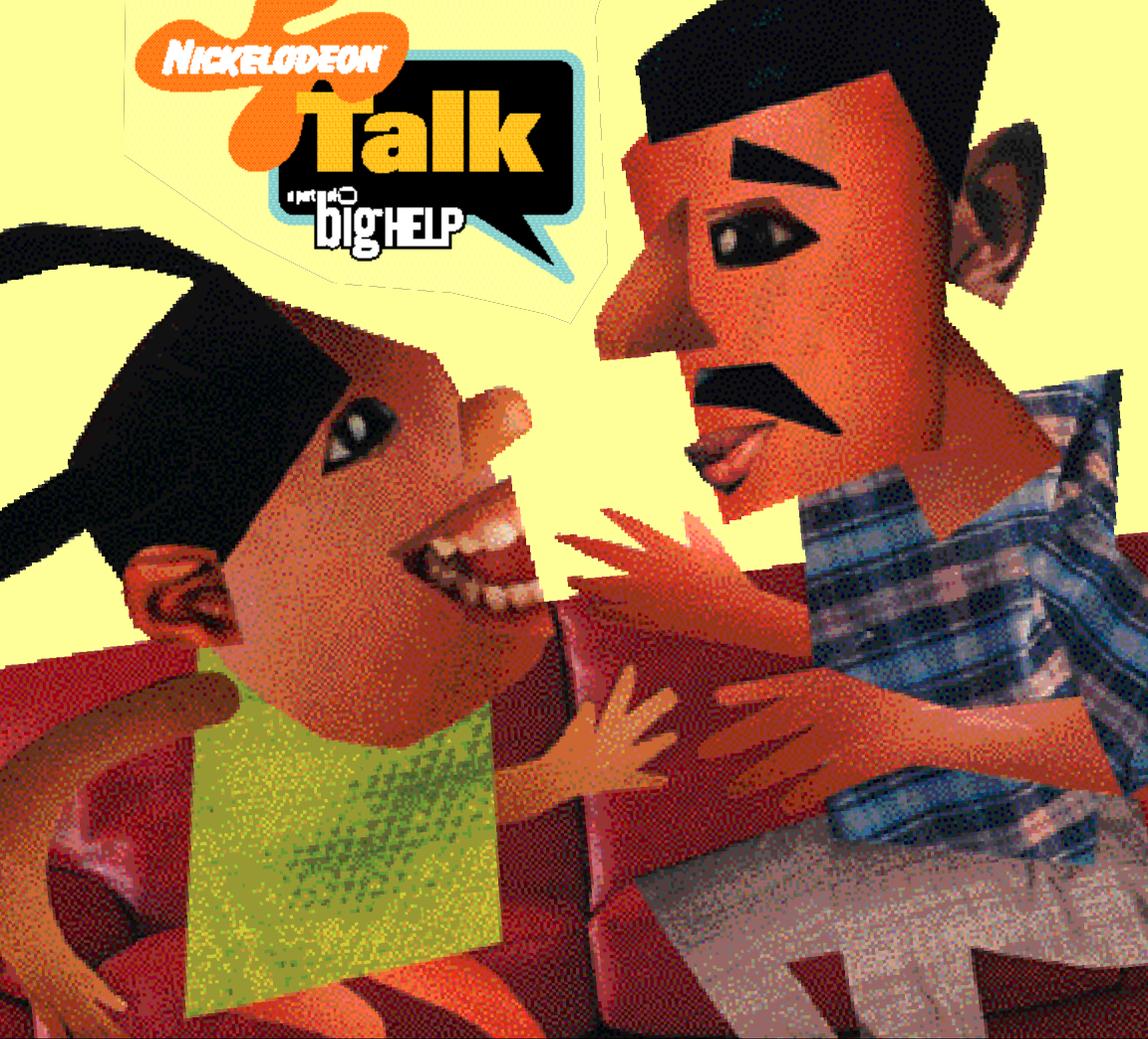


NICKELODEON

Talk

a part of
BIG HELP



TALKING WITH KIDS

about tough issues

SEX • VIOLENCE • DRUGS • RESPECT

We're here to support your family talks about tough issues. Nickelodeon and Talking with Kids, an ongoing campaign of the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now, have teamed up to bring you free resources and suggestions that'll help get you and your child talking—together! Additional copies of this brochure are available through the campaign's toll-free number (1/800/CHILD44). You can also go online for more information (www.everythingnick.com and www.teachers.nick.com) and visit the website we set up for your kids (www.nick.com/your_world). Look out for our public service advertisements, which air on Nickelodeon and other Viacom networks.

Nickelodeon is...KIDS! All kinds of kids, with all kinds of tastes. Nickelodeon lives and breathes to connect with kids and connect them to their world through entertainment. Nick entertainment takes many forms: cable TV programs, movies, live shows, consumer products, online activities, magazines, recreation, and public affairs campaigns like The Big Help. They all exist to touch the lives of K-I-D-S, from preschoolers to early teens. Anything that helps kids build confidence, develop positive attitudes, and feel good about their status and their place in the world, is just fine by Nick.

Kaiser Family Foundation is an independent, national health philanthropy dedicated to providing information and analysis on health issues to policymakers, the media, and the general public. The Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

Children Now is a nonpartisan, independent voice for America's children. Using innovative research and communication strategies, Children Now promotes pioneering solutions to problems facing America's children.

THE EXPERTS BEHIND THIS BOOKLET

Dominic Cappello is the author of *Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Violence*. He's the coauthor of *Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Sex and Character*, and *Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Drugs* (Hyperion, September 2001). Mr. Cappello designs parent-child communication programs and works with national and local agencies setting up parent support and education systems. He is also the creator of the National Education Association's "Can We Talk?" and "¿Conversamos?" parent-child communication programs.

Karen Gravelle is an author creating materials for children on issues related to sex and human development. She is the author of *What's Going On Down There: Answers to Questions Boys Find Hard To Ask*, and *The Period Book*.

Lynne S. Dumas is a parent-child communication specialist who has written numerous books, including *Talking With Your Child About a Troubled World*. She is the author of the original Talking with Kids parent guide, *Talking with Kids About Tough Issues*.



WELCOME

A lot of people talk about putting “kids first.”

As parents, you put “kids first” every day. And it’s not always easy.

Nickelodeon and Talking with Kids want to help.

Kids seem to be growing up faster today than when we were young. They see more violent entertainment, are exposed to more seductive and provocative images, and have access to more information than any earlier generation. Maybe that’s why they appear to be more sophisticated about so many issues compared to when we were their age. This is also why, like you, we believe they need—and want—more adult guidance.

While kids seem to “get it” quicker, they also seem to want to grow up more slowly. We’ve found that they yearn to spend more time with you—their parents—and want and need your guidance even when they may suggest otherwise. You can be a guide through these critical years by offering your own messages—from your own family’s values—about tough issues like sex, violence, drugs and respect.

It’s not always easy to talk with your kids—but it’s always important. And the first step is just to be there for them. Don’t worry about “the big talk.” Try to listen to what they’re saying and use everyday opportunities to talk—when you’re driving, watching television, or before they go to sleep. These little talks are important because your kids will quickly know you’re interested—and it’s less preachy and more natural. It will also give them a greater opportunity—under less pressure—to say exactly what they’re feeling.

This booklet can help. What follows are practical suggestions for how you can start talking with your elementary school-age child. We’ve consulted parent-child communication experts, conducted research, and talked with parents and kids across the country to develop these materials.

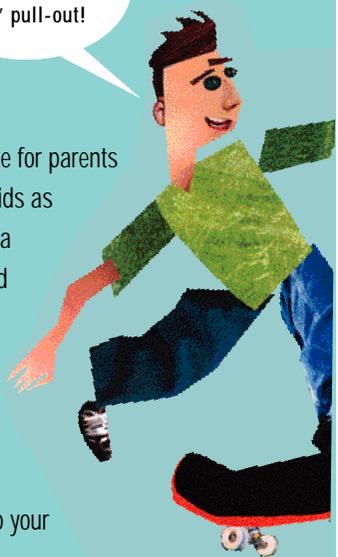
In addition to this booklet, Nickelodeon and Talking with Kids have a website for parents (www.everythingnick.com) where you can learn about how to talk with your kids as they grow. The site also has links to other online resources and reading lists, a space for parents to chat about their own experiences, and real questions and conversation-starters to help you break the ice with your kids.

There’s also a website designed for your children (www.nick.com/your-world), where Nickelodeon and Talking with Kids provide games and information on issues like puberty, bullying, drugs and being different.

We’ve also developed some really innovative on-air messages that will help your kids—and you—when you’re watching Nickelodeon.

It’s not always easy being a kid. And it’s not always easy being a parent. So get together with your kid, and check out the parent-child contract on page 4 of this booklet. Then start talking. Your kid needs it—and you may just learn something too.

Skate over to page 4 for a special kids’ pull-out!



10 TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS

Here are ten tips to keep in mind as you start to talk with your kids. Consider it your checklist as you talk with them about sex, violence, drugs and respect.

1. Start Early
2. Create an Open Environment
3. Start Conversations With Your Child
4. Trust Yourself
5. Talk About Your Values
6. Be Honest
7. Be Patient
8. Listen Carefully and Watch Closely
9. Use Everyday Opportunities To Talk
10. Talk About It Again and Again

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO TALK

When should parents start talking about “tough issues,” like sex, violence, drugs and respect? Experts say the earlier, the better. Because the reality is that if you don’t, someone else will. The only way you can ensure that your child knows what YOU want them to about these issues is to tell them yourself.

Starting to talk—when your kids are in elementary school—means catching them when they really want your guidance (even if they haven’t said so!), especially about life’s “tough issues.”

THE LITTLE TALKS REALLY ADD UP

Sack “the big talk.” Focus on “the little talks” and the listening time spent along the way. Try to find everyday opportunities to talk—informal times such as when you’re in the car, or before your child goes to sleep at night, or while you and your kids are watching TV. They’ll be more encouraged to tell you what’s going on in their lives—including the tough stuff like sex, violence, drugs and respect. These topics are hard to talk about (you’re not alone if you feel this way!). But the little talks you have with your kids are going to be a lot easier than one of those grueling “big talk” marathons—and better for your kids, too.

GETTING STARTED

How do you start? Before you dive in, ask yourself a few questions. How do you feel about these issues and what do you want your kids to know? What are YOUR “family’s values,” your religious beliefs in life? What did you learn from your parents that you want to pass along to your child?

Once that’s done, talking with your kids about your own beliefs regarding sex, violence, drugs and respect will be a lot easier. Your values give you a framework, so your kids can better understand why you feel strongly about all sorts of things: like treating others with respect,

avoiding drugs, building healthy relationships, and not engaging in violence.

You and your kids can use your family's values to talk about these issues as they grow, establishing ground rules that you can all live by.

TOUGH TOPICS: SEX AND PUBERTY

Talking about sex and puberty with your kids is difficult. There's just so much ground to cover—from puberty to crushes to (gulp) dating. First thing...take a deep breath and RELAX. When it comes to talking about "sex" with your fourth grader, it's a whole different set of issues than what you're going to talk about with your teenager.

Still, starting to talk about these issues at a young age is important. It establishes a relationship with your kids that continues as they get older. By the time they reach high school they'll not only know the facts, but they'll also feel they can be open with you about their feelings and what's going on in their lives. Research shows that kids in families that talk early and openly about tough issues—and especially S-E-X—are more likely to turn to their parents when they're faced with a difficult situation.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you begin these talks:

Starting as early as kindergarten, kids joke and tease using sexual words. They get misinformation about sexuality, as well as messages about the "ideal body," from the media. While some information helps, these messages can confuse them. Your kids are growing up and changing all the time. They need to hear the facts from you as they grow.

Puberty starts with some kids in elementary school. Other kids see their peers developing and start wondering about themselves. This is when puberty needs to be explained—including the emotional and physical changes boys and girls go through. It's time to talk about things like growing hair, changing voices and new feelings.

When it comes to sex, start by asking what your kids know. You'll probably be surprised by



how much they've heard—and how much misinformation they've received.

By elementary school, consider the following topics to guide your talks:

- *The names of sexual organs and body parts
- *Explaining sex and reproduction
- *Pregnancy
- *Building healthy relationships
- *Setting personal boundaries, and respecting others' boundaries

Before your child enters junior high school, talk about:

- *Sexual decision-making
- *The emotional side and consequences of sexual relationships
- *Sexually transmitted diseases
- *Contraception

These talks will help your child make good decisions later on. It sends the message that they can always talk to you about this tough issue.

TOUGH TOPICS: VIOLENCE

Your kid's world is filled with uncertainty. While a lot of attention is paid to serious incidents of violence in school today, the reality is that most kids aren't facing guns in the classroom. Bullies and teasing are more likely—and should be addressed as well as the more serious incidents of violence. Consistent teasing takes its toll on kids. Take a moment and remember the most obnoxious kid from your grade school. Now picture them by your side throughout your workday. Pretty annoying, huh? So how do we help our kids deal with this

and other types of aggressive behavior?

First, talk with your kids about their school rules regarding violence. Reassure them about their safety at school, and encourage them to come to you if they feel afraid, or if they see or hear about weapons like guns. Kids might hear on the news or from their friends about things that happen in other schools. Your child may need to have this news explained, or be reassured about his or her own safety.

When talking about violence with your elementary school child, try the following topics:

- *What do you consider to be "violent"?
- *Common behaviors at school, like roughhousing, hitting and bullying, are different kinds of violence
- *The importance of telling an adult—you, or a teacher—about bullying, threats and weapons

Before your child reaches junior high school, try discussing:

- *Reporting the use of or threats to use weapons
- *Reporting harassment
- *Dating violence
- *Self-defense

You can reinforce what you talk about by modeling nonviolent behavior, and by not encouraging your child to tease or be violent toward others.

TOUGH TOPICS: ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS

Most elementary school kids aren't experimenting with alcohol, tobacco or drugs, but they may know kids who are. Go over your family's rules about alcohol, tobacco and drug

TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

Most elementary school kids have heard something about HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, few kids know the facts—which can lead to misunderstanding and fear. You can help by talking with your kids about HIV/AIDS. Start by finding out what your child knows about the illness.

Much of their confusion at this age is about how HIV is transmitted; i.e., from person to person through contact with bodily fluids, and not by shaking hands or sharing a glass. You can tell them that there are things people do to help protect themselves from HIV. These

include not having sex, or using a condom if they do.

As a parent, you'll decide how much your child needs to know about HIV/AIDS and other issues. The main thing is to make sure your child feels safe and knows the truth.

// In our family we believe in respecting others. This is a family value and a family rule. My kids understand that adults and kids are to be respected and that there are consequences for being disrespectful. //

use. Tell your kids what you expect from them. If you use alcohol or smoke, be prepared for a challenge from your child. Don't get mad. Simply explain the difference between an adult responsibly using alcohol versus abusing alcohol. Your kids may not want to hear it, but there are some things they don't get to do until they're older.

In elementary school, explain what drugs, alcohol and cigarettes are, and prepare your child for the pressure they'll experience to use them.

Focus your conversations on:

- *The difference between prescription drugs and illegal drugs
- *The health risks of smoking, alcohol, and drug use
- *Your child letting you know about any pressure he or she experiences to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or use drugs

By junior high school, talk with your child about:

- *The increasing pressures your child will feel in junior high and high school to drink, smoke

MONITORING THE MEDIA

Parents are concerned about what their kids see in the movies, on the Internet, in video games and on TV. Of course you can't always be there, but it's important to try and pay attention to what your kids watch on television. It's great to watch together when you can—not only will you know what your kids see, but television also provides some great “teachable moments.” If something comes on that you're uncomfortable with—or just raises an issue you want to talk about—ask your child what he or she thinks about what you just saw. You can also seek out programs that help to explain topics, although it's important that they hear it from you. Television can get your conversations going, but it can't replace the rewards of a one-on-one with your child.

When you can't be there, understanding the TV ratings and the V-Chip will help. You've probably noticed a “TV Parental Guidelines” symbol that appears on the screen at the beginning of most television programs. The symbol provides information about the content (e.g., violence, sexual situations, language, etc.), so you can make informed decisions about what you and your kids are watching. The V-Chip (built into most new TV sets) is a way to “screen out” certain types of shows. You can program the V-Chip to block programming that you don't want your family viewing, based on the TV Parental Guidelines ratings and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) movie ratings (used on many cable channels).

To learn more about TV ratings, the V-Chip and ways to monitor the media, call 1-877-2CHIP-TV for a free booklet, or visit www.vchippeducation.org.

BREAKING THE ICE

There are various ways to get your conversations started. Here are some possible questions you can ask your child.

SEX AND PUBERTY

Have you noticed any changes in your body?

Do kids ever talk about kissing or boyfriends and girlfriends at school?

While you're watching TV with your kids, start a conversation by making an observation like: "Those two seem to fall in love quickly. What do you think is going on?"

VIOLENCE

Do you ever feel scared walking to school or at lunch?

How much teasing goes on in school?

Do you know the school rules about bullies and violence?

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS

What have you heard about smoking?

Has anyone at school ever talked about drugs?

Do you ever see older kids drinking alcohol?

What are our family rules about drinking alcohol or smoking?

RESPECT

Have you seen other kids teased for being different?

What does respect mean?

Do you feel respected at school? At home?

and use drugs. Reinforce school rules about alcohol, tobacco and drugs

TOUGH TOPICS: RESPECT

When it comes to your personal interactions with others, it all boils down to the word "respect." And your kids are no different. Just as every kid should respect those around them, they should absolutely expect the same in return. Kids who feel respected from an early age are more likely to give respect in return. This is why starting early listening to your kids, and continuing as they grow, is so important.

Check in with your kids—see how they feel about classmates, the teachers and other people at school. Ask if your child feels respected, and if kids at school are tolerant of others. Emphasize the importance of being respectful to both peers and adults, regardless of their race, religion, age, or any other characteristic.

Most importantly, your kids need to hear from you—and need to see you model respectful behavior. That way, you'll be their best example of how to give respect to others. Avoid racial slurs and generalizations about people based on their nationality, religion, language, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. Remind your kids that they deserve respect from others, and if they feel otherwise they should talk to you.

By elementary school, you should talk with your kids about:

- *Defining respect
- *How your child deserves respect from others
- *What to do if your child feels disrespected by others, or sees people being disrespected

By junior high school, consider discussing:

- *Your child may be feeling an increasing pressure to conform, as well as intolerance
- *Defining racism, sexism and homophobia

“Talking for us is an everyday activity.
It’s not an event.”



LAST THOUGHTS

Nickelodeon and Talking with Kids know there’s a lot to talk about, and we hope this guide will help. For more information about how to talk with your kids from kindergarten through junior high, please go to our website: www.everythingnick.com, or check out the resource list on the next page.

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

www.canwetalk.org

The website for the “Can We Talk?” campaign, a national education effort from the National Education Association. The program is designed to help parents talk with their children about healthy relationships and sexuality, including the prevention of pregnancy, HIV/STDs, drug abuse and violence. The website provides information on parent and teacher training opportunities, in both English and in Spanish as “¿Conversamos?”

www.npin.org

The National Parent Information Network is a clearinghouse on elementary and early childhood education, and on urban education. The Network provides information to parents and to those who work with parents.

www.tentalks.com

The website for the *Ten Talks* book series on sex, violence and drugs, which provides resources to parents, including background on the books and nationwide communication training for parents, educators and law enforcement.

Talking With Kids About Sex and Puberty

www.teenpregnancy.org/tips.html

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy offers “ten tips” parents can use to reduce the risk of their kids becoming pregnant before they’re adults.

Talking With Kids About Violence

www.noviolence.net/basics/index.html

The National Campaign Against Youth Violence offers its “prevention basics” for parents.

www.ncpc.org

The National Crime Prevention Council provides material on raising safe and healthy children. This includes activities teaching young children how to deal with scary situations and issues, such as run-ins with bullies, guns, drugs and strangers. In English and Spanish.

Talking With Kids About Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs

www.acde.org/parent/main.htm

The American Council for Drug Education is a substance abuse prevention and education agency that develops programs and materials for a range of audiences, including parents. They offer tips for talking with your kids about drugs.

www.drugfreeamerica.org/family/default

The Partnership For A Drug-Free America has many online resources for parents, including information on how to talk to your kids about drugs as they get older.

Talking With Kids About Respect

www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance/tt-index.html

The Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project offers free or low-cost resources to educators and parents.

www.talkingwithkids.org

The website for Talking with Kids About Tough Issues, a national initiative of the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now to encourage parents to talk with their children earlier and more often about tough issues like sex, HIV/AIDS, violence, alcohol, and drug abuse. The website provides information on the four issue areas, links to online spaces for parents to chat, and a host of websites and print resources to support conversations with children on a variety of issues. Materials are available in both English and Spanish.



READING FOR PARENTS

Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Sex and Character

By Pepper Schwartz and Dominic Cappello. (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2000)

Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Violence

By Dominic Cappello. (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2000)

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & How To Listen So Kids Will Talk

By Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. (Mamaroneck, NY: International Center for Creative Thinking, 1990)

From Diapers to Dating: A Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children, From Infancy to Adolescence

By Deborah Haffner. (New York, NY: Newmarket Press, 1999)

How To Talk to Your Child About Sex

By Linda Eyre and Richard Eyre. (New York: Golden Books, 1998)

Preparing for the Drug-Free Years: A Family Activity Book

By David J. Hawkins. (Seattle: Developmental Research and Programs, 1998)

Teaching Tolerance: Raising Open-Minded, Empathetic Children

By Sara Bullard. (New York, NY: Main Street Books, 1997)

40 Ways to Raise a Nonracist Child

By Barbara Mathias and Mary Ann French. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1996)

TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT TOUGH ISSUES

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