

# For Parents Of....

## Why Adopt the New 3Rs?

As we have shown, open family communication about sexuality is one of the reasons Western Europe has far fewer teen pregnancies, abortions, births and sexually transmitted infections. Family Communication also contributes to European teens waiting longer than their American counterparts to begin engaging in sexual activity. What makes us think this could work in the U.S. too? Here are some interesting facts that support the European model of family communication:

Adolescents prefer parents as their primary Sexuality Educators:

- 88% of teens, in a national study, said they agree that- “It would be much easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.”
- 46% of teens report that their primary source of influence when it comes to decisions about sex is their parents- this was the top ranked choice.<sup>1</sup>

Often family communication about sexuality issues is inadequate:

- In a recent study, just half of the teens surveyed said they had had one “good talk” about sexuality in the past year with their mothers- and only one third reported talking with their fathers.<sup>2</sup>
- In another study, 72% of mothers said they had talked with their teens about sex, while only 45% of the teens reported that their mothers had done so.<sup>3</sup>
- Children need their care givers to bring up and talk about sexuality issues to feel comfortable and safe discussing them. Reasons teens state they do not talk with their parents about sex:
  - Concern about their parents’ reaction- 83%
  - Worry that their parents’ will think they are having sex- 80%
  - Embarrassment- 78%
  - Not knowing how to bring up the subject- 77%
  - Belief that parents won’t understand- 64%<sup>1</sup>

The more parents talk with their children, the better choices those children make:

- Overall closeness between parents and their children, shared activities, parental presence in the home, and parental caring and concern are all associated with a reduced risk of early sex and teen pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>
- Teens, whose parents are clear about the value of abstinence, and/or about the dangers of unprotected intercourse, are more likely to delay first intercourse.<sup>5</sup>

- Teens whose parents discuss contraception and sexually transmitted infections are more likely to use contraception and/or condoms when they become sexually active.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2003 National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy National Survey Results

<sup>2</sup> Raffaelli, "Parent-teen Communication about Sexual Topics" Journal of Family Issues, vol. 19, p.315-33

<sup>3</sup> Dittus, "Parent-adolescent Communication about Premarital Pregnancy," Families in Society, vol. 74, p. 329-43

<sup>4</sup> Blum, 1998 "Reducing the Risk," Center for Adolescent Health and Development, University of Minnesota

<sup>5</sup> Blum, 2002 "Improving the Odds," Center for Adolescent Health and Development, University of Minnesota

## What Can You Do?

1. Start talking with your children about sexuality. It is never too early or too late. Use some of the resources in this packet to help you start, depending on the age(s) of your kid(s).
2. Sign up for one of MBPP's family programs, which is a great way to begin a conversation and learn more communication tips and tools from other parents.
3. Find out what is being taught in your children's schools. Encourage teachers and schools to incorporate information about sexuality into their lesson plans rather than skipping it or using the "just say no" approach.
4. Support legislation for Comprehensive Sexuality Education. To learn more about your legislators and how they have voted in the past visit: [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov) or [www.mbpp.org](http://www.mbpp.org).
5. Invite an MBPP educator in to do a program about Rights, Respect, Responsibility© to a community group you belong to such as your church, PTA, Rotary, or other volunteer or service group.
6. Write a Letter to the Editor of your local newspaper in support of Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Rights, Respect, Responsibility. For help, contact [advocacy@mbpp.org](mailto:advocacy@mbpp.org).
7. Call MBPP at (360) 734-9007 if you have any questions or for further specifics on what you can do to promote Rights, Respect, Responsibility©.

### Resources

#### General Books and Websites for Parents:

\*Please review any resource thoroughly before sharing it with your child to ensure you approve of the content and that it corresponds with the values and beliefs you wish to share. Look for age specific resources behind each tab in this packet.

#### Books:

From Diapers to Dating: A Parents Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children from Infancy to Adolescence, by Debra W. Haffner.

Sex and Sensibility: The Thinking Parent's Guide to Talking Sense about Sex, by Deborah M. Roffman.

The Teen Health Book: A Parent's Guide to Adolescent Health and Well-Being, by Ralph I. Lopez, M.D..

Raising a Child Responsibly in a Sexually Permissive World, by Sol and Judith Gordon.

How to Talk with Your Child about Sexuality: A Parent's Guide, by Planned Parenthood.

**Web:**

Mt. Baker Planned Parenthood: [www.mbpp.org](http://www.mbpp.org)

Planned Parenthood Federation of America: [www.ppfa.org](http://www.ppfa.org), [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com)

Advocates for Youth [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)

Sexuality Education and Information Counsel of the United States: [www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org)

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)

Allan Guttmacher Institute: [www.agi-usa.org](http://www.agi-usa.org)