



# The Talk

How Adults Can Promote Young People's  
Healthy Relationships and Prevent  
Misogyny and Sexual Harassment

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MAKING  
CARING  
COMMON  
PROJECT

HARVARD



GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION

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# Executive Summary

**P**arents and other adults often fret a great deal about the “hook-up culture.” But that focus ignores two far more pervasive troubles related to young people’s romantic and sexual experiences. The first is that we as a society are failing to prepare young people for perhaps the most important thing they will do in life—learn how to love and develop caring, healthy romantic relationships. Second, most adults appear to be doing shockingly little to prevent or effectively address pervasive misogyny and sexual harassment among teens and young adults—problems that can infect both romantic relationships and many other areas of young people’s lives.

Over the past several years, in an effort to understand young people’s romantic and sexual experiences, Making Caring Common has surveyed over 3,000 young adults and high school students from many parts of the country and has gathered insights from scores of formal interviews and informal conversations. We have also talked with adults who are key to young people, including parents, teachers, sport coaches, and counselors.

What we found—and what our report describes—stands in stark contrast to the common story in our culture about young people’s romantic and sexual experiences.

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## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. Teens and adults tend to greatly overestimate the size of the “hook-up culture” and these misconceptions can be detrimental to young people.

- ➔ Research indicates that a large majority of young people are not hooking up frequently, and our research suggests that about 85% of young people prefer other options to hooking up, such as spending time with friends or having sex in a serious relationship. Yet according to our research, teens and adults tend to greatly overestimate the percentage of young people who are hooking up or having casual sex. This overestimation can make many teens and young adults feel embarrassed or ashamed because they believe that they are not adhering to the norms of their peers. It can also pressure them to engage in sex when they are not interested or ready.

### 2. Large numbers of teens and young adults are unprepared for caring, lasting romantic relationships and are anxious about developing them. Yet it appears that parents, educators and other adults often provide young people with little or no guidance in developing these relationships. The good news is that a high percentage of young people *want* this guidance.

- ➔ While parents wring their hands about whether to have the “sex talk” with their kids, far fewer parents fret about how to talk to their kids about what mature love is or about what it actually takes to develop a healthy, mature romantic relationship. Yet 70% of the 18 to 25-year-olds who responded to our survey reported wishing they had received more information from their parents about some emotional aspect of a romantic

relationship, including “how to have a more mature relationship” (38%), “how to deal with breakups (36%), “how to avoid getting hurt in a relationship” (34%), or “how to begin a relationship” (27%).

- ➔ 65% of respondents to our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds wished that they had received guidance on some emotional aspect of romantic relationships in a health or sex education class at school. Yet sex education also tends not to engage young people in any depth about what mature love is or about how one develops a mature, healthy relationship. Most sex education is either focused narrowly on abstinence or is “disaster prevention”—how not to get pregnant or contract sexually transmitted diseases.

### 3. Misogyny and sexual harassment appear to be pervasive among young people and certain forms of gender-based degradation may be increasing, yet a significant majority of parents do not appear to be talking to young people about it.

- ➔ In our national survey of 18 to 25-year-olds, 87% percent of women reported having experienced at least one of the following during their lifetime: being catcalled (55%), touched without permission by a stranger (41%), insulted with sexualized words (e.g., slut, bitch, ho) by a man (47%), insulted with sexualized words by a woman (42%), having a stranger say something sexual to them (52%), and having a stranger tell them they were “hot” (61%). Yet 76% of respondents to this survey had never had a conversation with their parents about how to avoid sexually harassing others. Majorities of respondents had never had conversations with their parents about various forms of misogyny.

➡ The more females are outperforming males in school and outnumbering them in college, the more subject many appear to be to certain forms of gender-based degradation. Research suggests that when women outnumber men in college, men are especially likely to dictate the terms of relationships (Regnerus, 2011), and a “bros over ho’s” culture now prevails on many college campuses and in other settings. Casual sex is often narrowly focused on male pleasure (Orenstein, 2016), and words like “bitches” and “ho’s” and terms for sex like “I hit that” are now pervasive. That far greater numbers of teens and young adults over the last decade are watching porn regularly may fuel certain forms of misogyny and degradation.

#### **4. Many young people don’t see certain types of gender-based degradation and subordination as problems in our society.**

- ➡ 48% of our survey respondents either agreed (19%) or were neutral (29%) about the idea that “society has reached a point that there is no more double standard against women.”
- ➡ 39% of respondents either agreed or were neutral that it’s “rare to see a woman treated in an inappropriately sexualized manner on television.”
- ➡ 32% of male and 22% of female respondents thought that men should be dominant in romantic relationships, while 14% of males and 10% of females thought that women should be dominant.

#### **5. Research shows that rates of sexual assault among young people are high. But our research suggests that a majority of parents and educators aren’t discussing with young people basic issues related to consent.**

➡ Although this report does not focus on the many issues involved in consent and sexual assault, we found that this is another area where many adults don’t appear to be having meaningful and constructive conversations with young people. Despite the fact that 1 in 5 women report being sexually assaulted during college according to a recent national survey (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015), most of the respondents to our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds had never spoken with their parents about “being sure your partner wants to have sex and is comfortable doing so before having sex”(61%), assuring your “own comfort before engaging in sex” (49%), the “importance of not pressuring someone to have sex with you”(56%), the “importance of not continuing to ask someone to have sex after they have said no” (62%), or the “importance of not having sex with someone who is too intoxicated or impaired to make a decision about sex” (57%). About 58% of respondents had never had a conversation with their parents about the importance of “being a caring and respectful sexual partner.” Yet a large majority of respondents who had engaged in these conversations with parents described them as at least somewhat influential.

**The good news is that a high percentage of young people want guidance.**

# Recommendations

The good news is that, because most parents and educators don't seem to be engaging young people in meaningful conversations about mature relationships or misogyny and harassment, there is substantial room for improvement. It is also hopeful that young people want to have these conversations—in particular, about romantic relationships.

We offer the following guidelines for parents and sex educators embarking on these conversations.

## 1.



### Talk about love and help teens understand the differences between mature love and other forms of intense attraction.

Many parents may not see providing guidance on romantic relationships as their role, not know what to say, or feel hobbled in these conversations because of their own romantic failures. But relationship failures can generate as much wisdom as relationship successes, and all adults can distill their wisdom and share it in age-appropriate ways with teens and young adults. Adults might puzzle through with teens and young adults questions at the core of learning how to love and develop healthy relationships: *What's the difference between attraction, infatuation, and love? How can we be more attracted to people the less interested they are in us? Why can we be attracted to people who are unhealthy for us? How do you know if you're "in love?" Why and how can romantic relationships become deeply meaningful and gratifying? How do they contribute to our lives? How can the nature of a romantic relationship and the nature of love itself change over a lifetime?*

## 2.



### Guide young people in identifying healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Adults can help teens identify the markers of healthy and unhealthy relationships. They might ask teens, for example: *Does a relationship make you—and your partner—more or less self-respecting, hopeful, caring, generous? What are some examples of healthy and unhealthy relationships in our own family and community? In television and film? What makes these relationships healthy or unhealthy?*





# 3.

## Go beyond platitudes.



Almost all teens know they're supposed to be self-respecting and respectful in their romantic and sexual lives; what many teens *don't* know is what these kinds of respect actually mean in different romantic and sexual situations. Adults can identify for teens common forms of misogyny and harassment, such as catcalling or using gender-based slurs. Sharing data from this report about the high rates of misogyny and harassment can help crystallize the problem. Adults can also discuss with teens various examples of caring, vibrant romantic relationships, including relationships in books, television, and film that show how thoughtful, self-aware adults deal with common stresses, miscommunications, and challenges and use these examples to explore with teens the capacities and skills it takes to develop and maintain a healthy, energizing romantic relationship.



# 4.

## Step in.



It is imperative that parents and sex educators proactively address healthy relationships with young people and that parents and other adults intervene when they witness degrading words or behavior. Silence can be understood as permission. Use the resources in the Appendix to help guide these interactions.


# 5.

## Talk about what it means to be an ethical person.



Helping young people develop the skills to maintain caring romantic relationships and treat those of different genders with dignity and respect also helps strengthen their ability to develop caring, responsible relationships at every stage of their lives and to grow into ethical adults, community members, and citizens. Adults can support young people in becoming ethical in this broader sense by connecting discussions about romantic and sexual relationships and misogyny and harassment to ethical questions about their obligation to treat others with dignity and respect, intervene when others are at risk of being harmed, and advocate for those who are vulnerable. See the resources in the Appendix for additional prompts for these conversations.

Read the full report and find additional resources at [www.makingcaringcommon.org](http://www.makingcaringcommon.org).



**“For adults to hand over responsibility for educating young people about romantic love—and sex—to popular culture is a dumbfounding abdication of responsibility.”**

# The Talk

## HOW ADULTS CAN PROMOTE YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND PREVENT MISOGYNY AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**T**he story about young people's romantic and sexual lives<sup>1</sup> tends to go something like this: Hormone-addled teens and young adults are ricocheting among sexual partners, "hooking up" often and casually, frequently in semi-exhibitionistic ways.<sup>2</sup> These young people allegedly have either little interest in or little capacity for intimacy, and they seem to constantly confuse sex and intimacy. Instead of being tender and deeply attentive, sex tends to be self-indulgent and perfunctory—especially for men—with each sex act chipping away at any real capacity for authentic feeling.

Our mission at Making Caring Common is to help educators, parents, and communities raise children who develop caring, responsible relationships at every stage of their lives and who grow into ethical community members and citizens. Over the past several years we have sought to understand the relationships that are perhaps the most complex and fraught for young people—their romantic and sexual relationships—and to determine the truth of this story about the "hook-up" culture. We have also sought to uncover the romantic and sexual feelings and experiences young people have outside these relationships, and we've tried to

understand the factors that influence them. Along the way, we have surveyed over 3,000 young adults and high school students from many parts of the country<sup>3</sup> and have gathered insights from scores of formal interviews and informal conversations. We have also talked with key adults in young people's lives, including parents, teachers, sport coaches, and counselors.

What we found, and what this report describes, stands in stark contrast to the common story about the hook-up culture—a story that hides far more than it reveals. There's no question that some young people are hooking up frequently and that, especially combined with substance use, hooking up can cause many forms of harm. It's vital for educators and parents to work to prevent these harms. But the fact is that far fewer young people are hooking up than teens and adults commonly imagine; hooking up is far from the norm. Further, it appears that a large majority of young people prefer other options to hooking up, such as spending time with friends or having sex in a serious relationship. And this truth is no small matter. The myth about the frequency of hooking up itself has costs, with many young people self-doubting or viewing themselves as "defective" because they wrongly perceive that they are out of step with their peers.

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1 This report examines the "hook-up culture" as it is commonly depicted in media narratives and perceived by adults, and also focuses on high rates of misogyny in different forms. Because of this, the report largely discusses relationships between different genders and also tends to refer to binary genders. This is in no way meant to detract from the critical importance of promoting the health of LGBTQIA romantic and sexual relationships, which deserve dedicated exploration and attention. We plan to take up the relationship experiences of LGBTQIA young people in future work.

2 "Hooking up" covers everything from making out to intercourse.

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3 We administered two surveys in the development of this report. The first survey was administered over the course of three years to students in three high schools and five colleges across the country. Although the survey was administered to around 1,300 students in total, some questions were only asked of a subset of those students. The second survey—the main survey we cite in the report—was administered to 2,195 respondents aged 18 to 25 nationwide. Unless otherwise specified, when we discuss "survey findings" in the report, we are referring to the second, larger survey. For more information about our methodology, please see the Appendix.

# The Talk

What's more, young people are dealing with two far more pervasive and damaging romantic and sexual troubles than those connected to the hook-up culture. The first is that a large number of young people are unprepared for caring, lasting romantic relationships, are anxious about developing them, and as a society, we are failing miserably to prepare them. Freud argues that two things matter most in life—work and love—and parents, schools, and many other industries in this country devote tremendous attention and resources to preparing young people for work. Yet we do remarkably little to prepare them specifically for the focused, tender, subtle, generous work of learning how to love and be loved. Nor do we help many young people develop key skills they need to maintain energizing, mature romantic relationships. While we wring our hands about impulsive young people hooking up, debate whether to have the “sex talk” with our kids, and focus on self-control, we tend to ignore this more important challenge.

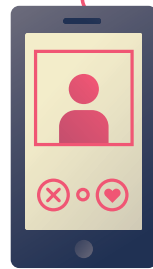
This lack of modeling and conversation about romantic relationships in both homes and schools creates a perilous void—a void that is commonly filled by popular culture. The harm is not simply daily exposure to misogynistic songs, pornography, and other debased images of sex—serious as that harm is. Many forms of entertainment and media also spawn all kinds of misconceptions and reinforce deeply ingrained cultural myths about romantic love: that love, for example, is an intoxication or an obsessive attraction; that “real love” is clear, unmistakable, and undeniable; that love happens suddenly and is forever, which means that you shouldn't give up on it even if it means that you are degraded or shamed. Media images of love, in part because we are not taught to view them as aberrant, may be more harmful than media images of violence. For adults to hand over responsibility for educating young people about romantic love—and sex—to popular culture is a dumbfounding abdication of responsibility.

This abdication and our failure to prepare young people for healthy romance have huge emotional and financial costs, including high rates of divorce, marital misery, alcoholism, depression, and domestic abuse. Yet the good news, our survey suggests, is

that a large majority of young people appear to *want* some form of guidance in both homes and schools on the emotional aspects of romantic relationships.

The second problem is widespread misogyny and sexual harassment among teens and young adults that can impair their romantic relationships and infect many aspects of their lives. Ironically, as girls and young women continue to make great gains in school and work—outperforming boys in school, outnumbering them in college, outpacing them in many professional fields—the more subordinate many appear to be in some aspects of their romantic and sexual relationships, and the more subject many appear to be to certain forms of degradation. Rates of sexual harassment, misogyny, and sexual assault among teens and young adults are startlingly high—and certain forms of degradation appear to be increasing. Yet parents and other adults often do shockingly little to address these problems. Far too often, adults are either dodging these issues or dispensing a platitude about respect. Few adults appear to be working to assure that their teens understand the vital importance of care and respect for those of different genders or engaging young people in a thoughtful way about what care and respect actually mean in various romantic and sexual contexts.

This report seeks to shift attention to these two related troubles and offers a new view of young people's romantic and sexual challenges—a view quite different from the dominant view today. We first briefly take up myths about the “hook-up culture” and look at how these myths themselves can be harmful. We then turn to the widespread failure to prepare young people for caring, ethical romantic relationships and provide guidance and resources for parents and educators to help teens and young people develop these relationships. Finally, we explore the ways in which misogyny and sexual harassment have become normalized in many young people's lives; how passive or ineffective adults commonly are in responding to it; and what parents, educators, and other adults—as well as young people themselves—can do to prevent these problems and to develop meaningful respect and care across gender.



## The destructive myth of the “hook-up culture”

Over the past four years, in workshops, classes, and presentations, we have asked several hundred teens and adults the three related questions below. These teens and adults have included high school students, college students, graduate students, members of the military from various parts of the country, and older adults, including senior citizens. We also asked these questions on our national survey of 2,195 young people ages 18 to 25.

1. What percentage of 18 and 19-year-olds nationally have had more than one sexual partner in the past year?
2. What percentage of college students have hooked up with more than 10 different people in college?
3. What percentage of 18 to 25-year-olds are dating casually? (Other options were dating exclusively, married, cohabitating, or no relationship.)

The results were striking: Teens’ and adults’ estimates have not only been off, but far off, and off by roughly the same amount. The estimates of teens and young adults—the age group of the “hook-up culture”—are just as far off as those of older adults, including senior citizens.

For all of these questions, most people in our workshops and presentations estimate that the answer is somewhere between **50% and 70%**. On our survey, respondents’ answers to these questions averaged in the **52% to 54%** range.

- According to the Center for Disease Control, approximately **27%** of 18 to 19-year-olds nationally (in and out of school) had more than one sexual partner<sup>4</sup> in the previous year, and only **8%** had four or more partners (Chandra, Mosher, Copen, & Sionean, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Sex is defined as vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

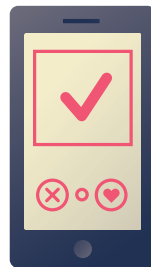
- By senior year in college, according to a national survey, **20%** of students have hooked up more than 10 times<sup>5</sup> (Armstrong, Hamilton, & England, 2010). That’s about 2.5 hook-ups on average a year, or a little over one hook-up on average a semester. The average number of hook-ups during a student’s college career is just under 8 (Ford, England, & Bearak, 2015).
- Among 18 to 25-year-olds, only **8%** reported casually dating; **67%** reported dating exclusively, cohabiting, or being married; and **25%** reported having no relationship (Scott, Steward-Strong, Manlove, Schelar, & Cui, 2011).

In his book, *Guyland*, Michael Kimmel (2008) reports finding similar misperceptions: “I asked guys all across the country what they think is the percentage of guys on their campus who had sex on any given weekend. The average answer I heard was about 80 percent... The actual percentage on any given weekend is closer to 5 to 10 percent” (p. 209).

Further, fewer young people appear to be having sex than their immediate predecessors. Among those aged 20-24, 15% of Millennials, born in the 1990’s, reported having no sexual partners since age 18, compared to 6% of Gen Xers, born in the 1960’s (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2016). The percentage of U.S. 9-12th graders who are virgins increased from 46% in 1991 to 59% in 2015 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Nor, according to our data, do 18 to 25-year-olds generally *prefer* casual sex to other options. We asked students in our sample about their ideal Friday night and gave them the following choices: sex in a serious relationship, sex with a friend, sex with a stranger, hooking up (but not sex), going on a date or spending time with a romantic partner, hanging out with friends, spending time alone, or something else. About 16% chose an option related to casual sex: 10% wanted to have sex with a friend, 4% wanted to have sex with a stranger, and only 2% wanted to hook up. The remaining

<sup>5</sup> We expect that an even smaller percentage of students hooked up with more than 10 different people over that time.



respondents (84%) reported either wanting to have sex in a serious relationship or chose an option that did not involve sex. In our first survey of high school and college students, only 19% of high school students and 6% of college students wanted to be single and sexually active. On both surveys, females were less likely than males to be interested in casual sex, but large majorities of males also did not choose one of the options related to sex or hooking up. Other research, as well as our own conversations with young men, indicate that boys and young men tend to be more interested in and anxious about romance than is commonly believed (Giordano, Longmore & Manning, 2006; Schalet, 2012).

It's important to note that our survey findings probably exaggerate the percentage of students who want to have casual sex. Prior to this question on our survey, we asked an open-ended question that didn't refer to and thus didn't prompt thinking about sex: "What would you most like to do on a Friday night?" Almost no respondents indicated casual sex. In this case, respondents typically answered some version of "hang out with friends," "watch tv," "go out to dinner with my boyfriend," or "spend time alone." This preference for options that did not involve casual sex was true in our survey across race, gender, religion, and political affiliation.

As we've pointed out, the truth here is not simply academic; the myth about the scope of the hook-up culture takes a toll. Our conversations with teens and young adults suggest that they can feel embarrassed or ashamed—that they are lacking in some way—because they believe they are not adhering to the norms of their peers. As a female college student from a small college in New York told us, "People make you feel like you're weird if you don't hook up. But I want a relationship. I'm not interested in hooking up." A psychotherapist who works with young people told us that several of his clients "feel inadequate because they think that a lot of other people are having more sex than they are." Several young people, exposed to the facts about hooking up, have indicated to us what a relief it was to hear

this myth debunked. The perception that hooking up is the norm may also push teens and young adults to hook up when they are not interested or ready and to twist themselves into unhappy shapes to fit the norms of this culture.

## WHY THE MYTHS ABOUT THE HOOK-UP CULTURE?

Why do so many people greatly overestimate the size of the hook-up culture? A steady stream of stories in the media over the last 15 years have inflated the hook-up culture, and images from these stories have been reinforced by pervasive sexualizing in media, entertainment, fashion, and many other aspects of our culture. Hooking up also tends to be high profile. On college campuses at night, even those students who don't participate in the party culture, can see or hear—or hear about—parties where hooking up is common, and all the competition and drama around sexual relationships among teens and the young can become, of course, an endlessly fascinating topic of conversation: the hook-up culture is theater. The myth about hooking up also fits neatly into a story that older adults in many eras have told about teens. Parents and other adults ranting and gossiping about oversexed, gone-to-hell teens and young adults is certainly not new. In the hit 1970's show "All in the Family," Archie Bunker, for example, declared that young people "think with their glands."

There's no question that we should be concerned about some aspects of the hook-up culture. Many of these harms are serious and well-documented (Bogle, 2008; Kimmel, 2010; Wade, 2017). Hooking up, especially because it is often mixed with substance use, is sometimes associated with unwanted sex and sexual violence (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). Many young people hook-up with higher expectations about intimacy and commitment than their partner and wind up feeling betrayed and disillusioned. Young people can treat romantic feelings like they're a disease and try strenuously to protect themselves from "catching feelings" as a result of a hook-up. Beauty and sexuality tend to be too central in the hook-up culture, despite the fact that young people are at an age when they are quite capable of developing more mature romantic attractions. During a time when young people should be becoming more other-focused, the hook-up culture, depressingly rife as it often is with males competing for females and ranking them based on appearance, can reinforce narcissistic tendencies and make sex about one's self-esteem. As one high school student told us: "Boys are concerned about quantity, not quality—the number of girls they sleep with. It's like acquiring air miles."

But to focus so much attention on the relatively small percentage of young people who are frequently hooking up badly fogs our understanding of the big picture. It also neatly fits into a familiar story that older adults in many eras have told about sex-crazed teenagers (see "Why the myths about the hook-up culture?" sidebar) that lets adults off the hook for confronting more pervasive harms.

## Why we need to talk about romantic love

*"As a society, we always tell kids, 'Work hard, just focus on school, don't think about girls or guys—you can worry about that stuff later, that stuff will work itself out,' but the thing is, it doesn't."*

- Student speaking to Laurie Abraham in *The New York Times* (Abraham, 2011)

*"There's this idea that somehow you develop a relationship naturally. But it doesn't happen naturally. It's incredibly hard."*

- 27-year-old, Cambridge, MA

While parents commonly fret about whether and how to have the "sex talk" with their children, many seem to assume that teens and young adults on their own will magically decipher how to develop healthy, mature romantic relationships. Our conversations with parents and young people suggest that few parents talk to teens and young people in any depth about the many forms of love, about what mature love is and how it develops, or about how healthy relationships are sustained. Nor are these topics, as we take up on p. 15, commonly addressed in sex education.

Yet it is strikingly evident that many people of all ages are not having healthy, mature romantic relationships, and this failure can reverberate destructively in various domains of their lives. Many types of school troubles often have roots in romantic anxiety and failure. The problems



**Over 70% of respondents to our survey reported wanting more information from their parents about some emotional aspect of a romantic relationship.**

**65% wanted this type of guidance at school.**

we have described, such as divorce (which ends nearly half of all first marriages), constant marital conflict or quieter marital misery, substance abuse, depression, and domestic abuse often have costs not only for romantic partners but also for children. The countless therapies, mediations, and legal settlements charged with managing relationship failures take a staggering financial toll.

Unsurprisingly, many young people, faced with these realities, are anxious—often deeply so. They are undertaking perhaps the most daunting, complex, important challenge of their lives without strong guideposts from older adults. To be sure, one key form of preparation for a romantic relationship is growing up with adults who model a warm, mature relationship. But the reality is that high rates of divorce, single parenthood, and troubled marriages mean that a majority of children are not growing up with these models (although single parents and parents in troubled marriages, as we take up below, can certainly be effective guides for teens in their romantic relationships). Nor are students commonly receiving meaningful guidance about healthy romantic relationships in schools (see sidebar on sex education).

What's hopeful is that young people appear to *want* more conversation with both parents and educators about romantic relationships. Over 70% of respondents to our survey, for instance, reported wishing they had received more information from their parents about some emotional aspect of a romantic relationship, including “how to have a more mature relationship” (38%), “how to deal with breakups” (36%), “how to avoid getting hurt in a relationship” (34%), or “how to begin a relationship” (27%). Respondents reported wishing they had received more information from their parents about other topics, including “how to compromise in a relationship when you're both stubborn,” “how to deal with falling out of love with someone,” how “to wait” to have sex, and how to “deal with cheating.” Several respondents reported that when it comes to romantic relationships they want to talk with their parents about “everything.” This widespread interest in guidance is

**“I think lots of middle schoolers and high schoolers experience trauma at their first and failed attempts at relationships, and this needs to be a focus. Making sure that kids know that break-ups are not the end of the world.”**



roughly similar among respondents across race, religion, gender, and political affiliation.

Large numbers of respondents also wished they had received more guidance on these topics in a health or sex education class at school. Sixty-five percent wanted guidance on some emotional aspect of romantic relationships, such as developing a mature relationship, dealing with break-ups, avoiding getting hurt in a romantic relationship, or beginning a relationship. In response to an open-ended question, respondents indicated that they wished they had received guidance in school on, for instance, “signs of a toxic relationship,” “how to deal with nasty breakups... where betrayal, cheating are involved,” and relationships skills, including “how to communicate with a partner” and “how to be in a committed relationship.” Other respondents puzzled about how to know what a healthy relationship is.

In our high school survey, 43% of high school students wanted to talk with school adults about how to have a mature romantic relationship and almost 30% wanted to talk about how to deal with break-ups. A high school junior told us, “I think lots of middle schoolers and high schoolers experience trauma at their first and failed attempts at relationships, and this needs to be a focus.



Making sure that kids know that break-ups are not the end of the world.” Many high school and college respondents reported that they wanted to learn how to do the “work” of relationships and many indicated that they are eager to talk about what love is and how you know when you’ve found it. “My students can talk about love forever,” observed a Boston-area high school teacher, who teaches a section of his English class on romantic love. “They’re much more present, thoughtful, available to themselves when they talk about love. I always feel bad when we have to move on to another topic.”

## Helping young people prepare for healthy relationships

How can parents and schools prepare teens and young people for caring, ethical romantic relationships? Many parents and educators, to be sure, may not see providing this guidance as their role, may not know how to have these conversations, or may feel hobbled in these conversations because they view themselves as failures in their own romantic relationships—they don’t believe they have wisdom to share. Yet relationship failures can generate as much insight into the ingredients of healthy relationships as relationship successes. What’s important is for adults to distill their wisdom, which often means reflecting and consulting with other respected adults about what their past relationships illuminate about, for example, their own vulnerabilities, hopes, dispositions, and misconceptions.

And the good news is that if older adults do this work they can often—even if they don’t have all the answers—have frank, wonderful conversations with young people that powerfully guide them, greatly enrich their relationships with them, and also help them understand and develop skills in their own romantic relationships.

For example, parents and sex educators might puzzle through with young people why and how romantic relationships can be deeply meaningful and gratifying; how to distinguish immature from mature love; how to parse attraction, infatuation, and love; why relationships

fall apart and how to break up with respect and care. Together, they might think through why we can be more attracted to people the less interested they are in us (the eternal question of why we want to join clubs that won’t have us) and why we can be attracted to people who are unhealthy for us. Adults might take up with young people how love is understood in other cultures and across time—in many cultures, for example, married couples have not been expected to love each other, and the infatuation and intoxication that we have come to associate with young love in our culture have been treated as a madness or illness in other cultures (Ackerman, 1995; Kass & Kass, 2000). Parents and educators might encourage teens to reflect on the many forms of romantic love—“There are as many kinds of love as there are hearts,” Tolstoy writes—and talk with young people about how the nature of a romantic relationship and the nature of love itself can change over a lifetime. The kind of romantic love people experience after being married for many years can clearly differ a great deal from young love.

Parents and sex educators might explore with young people the markers of healthy and unhealthy relationships. They might ask teens, for example: “Does a relationship make you—and your partner—more or less self-respecting, hopeful, caring, generous?” (The novelist Ann Patchett suggests that anyone in love should ask whether their partner makes them better and whether they make their partner better.) Adults might discuss with teens various examples of caring, vibrant romantic relationships, showing how thoughtful, self-aware adults deal with common stresses, miscommunications, and challenges and exploring the capacities and skills it takes to develop and maintain a healthy, energizing romantic relationship. One can imagine teens and parents or sex educators watching and discussing examples in popular culture, which might include, for instance, the compelling marriages depicted in television shows such as “This is Us,” “Black-ish,” and “Friday Night Lights.”

Sex educators might select one of several useful curricula for teaching healthy relationships, such as the Unitarian Universalist Association’s “Our Whole Lives” curricula (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2015) or Sharon Lamb’s Sex Ed for Caring Schools (Lamb,



2013a). They might also draw on the experience of several other countries where romantic relationship education in schools is the norm. In Norway, South Korea, parts of Australia, and New Zealand, for example, some form of relationship education is compulsory for students (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2009). Scattered efforts in the U.S. may also prove instructive. Prompted in some cases by the second Bush administration's focus on marriage education, schools and some community settings around the country have taken up romantic relationship education. In 2012, several organizations, including the American Association of Health Education and the American School Health Association, also collaborated to advance guidelines for addressing healthy relationships as part of sex education (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012).

Sex education isn't the only place in schools where teens can glean insights about romance and sexuality. History, English, and social studies courses are among subjects ripe with opportunities to talk about love. After-school programs offer numerous opportunities to spark conversations about romantic relationships. Sports coaches especially need guidance on talking about both romance and sex, given how commonly they're viewed as mentors by the more than 40 million children who play organized sports and how frequently they overhear sexually degrading and homophobic talk on buses and in locker rooms.

Done well, these conversations about romantic relationships can respond to young people's underlying fears, help them avoid badly wounding and scarring each other and repeating destructive relationship patterns, and improve their ability to develop and maintain a wide range of close relationships. Further, reflecting on romantic and sexual relationships is a powerful way to teach young people ethics because ethical issues in romantic relationships meet teens exactly where they are emotionally. We have found that high school and college students enthusiastically plunge into these kinds of ethical questions: "What do I do if I know my friend is cheating on his girlfriend who is also my friend?" "Is infidelity justified under any circumstances?" "Is it

exploitation when a high school senior hooks up with a first-year high school student?" Reflecting on these questions can develop complex thinking and problem-solving skills, enable students to consider multiple perspectives and sort out their ethical obligations to others, learn how to ethically reason when dealing with conflicting values and loyalties, and take up questions about human rights and dignity. Relationship education can be a profound moral education. (For additional recommendations for talking to young people about romantic relationships, see resources for parents and educators in the appendix).

And these types of conversations are likely to get traction in a wide range of communities. It's a travesty that political and morality wars about sex have obscured the very hopeful fact that young people want and need many uncontroversial, vital forms of romantic relationship education. Both liberal and conservative parents are on the side of healthy romantic relationships. And according to our survey, young people who identify as conservative, moderate, and liberal are roughly equally likely to want to have more conversations with older adults about romantic relationships.

# The disturbing state of sex education

While schools teach sex education in myriad ways—in part because of the absence of a national curriculum—courses in most states tend to focus on either “abstinence only until marriage” or “abstinence-plus,” which provides information about contraceptives and safe sex. A smaller number of courses teach comprehensive sex education, but these courses are often limited to what’s called “disaster prevention”—that is, how to avert pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Lamb, 2013b). It’s the uncommon sex education class that provides students meaningful guidance on what respect and care really mean in romantic and sexual relationships. These courses are even less likely to address LGBTQIA relationships. As adults, we recognize the importance of children learning to constructively manage their feelings in many domains of their lives, and yet we commonly let young people wade into a riptide of sexual feelings without meaningful moral guidance. Some teens and adults we have spoken with view their sex education courses as stupefyingly distant from their daily hopes, questions, and worries.

The problem with sex education is not simply a narrow curriculum. Because of meager funding and because nearly half of all of these classes combine health education with physical education or some other topic, students may also have only one course or just several sessions that deal with sex over their entire school career (Campos, 2002). Further, sex or health education is frequently taught by adults with little or no training, support, or status. Without preparation and status and faced with teaching in what may be a political minefield, there’s also little incentive

for educators to become sex education teachers. Often, that means that untrained, unsupported, or unqualified teachers are seeking to guide young people in one of the most consequential, subtle, wonderful, treacherous areas of their lives.

What to do? Perhaps most important, educators and community leaders of many kinds can move toward making romantic and sexual relationship education what it should be—a high-status, prized, vibrant activity—while providing more meaningful training and support to relationship and sex educators, including training in teaching the ethical dimensions of romantic and sexual relationships. As psychologist and author Sharon Lamb argues, sex education should be a moral education (Lamb, 2013a). Uphill as this battle may be, it’s vital for university-based schools of education, superintendents, school boards, and foundations to take on larger roles. High-profile, university-sponsored sex and romantic relationship education institutes and certification for sex educators, for example, could elevate the status and legitimize the teaching of sex education. Foundations can support innovative programs and online resources and help create greater public interest in relationship education. In addition, it’s vital to spread promising programs that utilize youth themselves to provide many forms of sex and healthy relationship education, as well as to increase awareness of numerous online resources that can be useful to teens and young adults. See a partial list of resources in the Appendix.

## The failure to adequately address pervasive misogyny and harassment

Over the past several years, in numerous classes and workshops, we have given teachers and other adults this scenario:

*A high school teacher overhears three boys in the cafeteria. As a girl walks by their table, one of the boys says that he “hit that” last week. Another boy mentions that he just broke up with his girlfriend, and that he doesn’t want to go to a party because he might see her with other guys. “Hit on all her friends,” one of his friends advises him. “A couple of them are total sluts.”*

We ask participants in these classes and workshops how they would handle this situation. Many of the teachers said that they wouldn’t say anything. Many said that they would want to say something but they’re not sure what. Most agreed that whatever they would say would be ineffective. Women participants especially indicated that they would just “be written off.”

We have also asked several parents how they have responded or would respond when their boys or their boys’ friends make misogynistic comments, and their responses are similar in many respects. Most report that they would say something but, like teachers, many of these parents doubt how effective they would be. At the same time, there is a prevalent view in this country that this is just “boys being boys.” When President Trump was caught on tape making sexual comments about his freedom to violate women, many male and female Americans interviewed across the country agreed with him that this was just “locker room talk.” Bill Clinton’s degrading treatment of Monica Lewinsky and his alleged sexual assaults were also diminished or dismissed by significant numbers of Americans.

Misogyny and sexual harassment are distressingly common among young people and are damaging to their romantic relationships and to many other areas of their lives. In the spring of 2016, a group of students at

a Boston-area high school staged a walkout to protest what they characterized as daily misogyny and sexual harassment at school, and instances of sexual violence among students. They reported that girls were called “bitch,” “whore,” and “slut” in class and that boys catcalled and groped girls in the hallways and stood near water fountains leering at girls as they leaned over to drink (Handy, 2016; Lander, 2016). The previous month, in Colorado, girls from a sex-segregated Jesuit high school walked out to protest the school’s inaction over severe online harassment from boys at their school, including rape threats on Twitter and jokes about sexual assault. Two boys from the school were suspended after the protest (Hernandez, 2016). As a 16-year-old high school sophomore from California told us: “One thing that I think all girls go through at some age is the realization that their body, seemingly, is not entirely for themselves anymore...the unfortunate thing is that we all just sort of accept it as a fact of life.”

**“One thing that I think all girls go through at some age is the realization that their body, seemingly, is not entirely for themselves anymore... the unfortunate thing is that we all just sort of accept it as a fact of life.”**

This day-to-day harassment and degradation of girls and young women largely flies under our radar, but it appears to afflict deeply troubling numbers of young people. One national report indicates that nearly half of students in grades 7-12 reported experiencing sexual harassment in the previous year and 87% describe

negative effects such as absenteeism and poor sleep (Hill & Kearl, 2011). A frightening 87% of women in our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds report at some point in their past having endured at least one of the following: being catcalled (55%), touched without permission by a stranger (41%), insulted with sexualized words (e.g., slut, bitch, ho) by a man (47%), insulted with sexualized words by a woman (42%), having a stranger say something sexual to them (52%), and having a stranger tell them they were “hot” (61%). Half of men on our survey reported that they’d harassed a woman in at least one of the ways mentioned above. Words like “bitches” and “ho’s” are stunningly commonplace in many school hallways across the country, and many teens and young people are still labeling girls as “good” or “bad,” based on those who are friends and romantic prospects and those they consider “sluts” and “ho’s.” “Bad girls” are especially fair game for harassment.

A “bro’s over ho’s” culture exists among many men on myriad college campuses across the country and misogyny is often brazen, if not celebrated. Fraternities host parties with taglines that flaunt degrading gender stereotypes—“CEO’s and Secretary Ho’s,” “Ninja Bros and Geisha Ho’s,” “Tight and Bright” (a tagline that instructs women what to wear) and students dance exuberantly to songs with lyrics like “pop that pussy.” when young women outnumber men in college and work environments, men are especially likely, research suggests, to dictate the terms of relationships (Regnerus, 2011), and women may be more likely to experience degradation. Terms that many boys and young men use to describe sex these days—“I hit that,” “I nailed that,” “I crushed that”—are unnervingly degrading and violent. Even though it appears that sex is not as common as perceived, when sex does occur it appears to disproportionately involve females servicing males (Armstrong, Hamilton, & England, 2010; Orenstein, 2016; Taylor, 2013). Lifestyle magazines that are popular among young women are often astonishingly creative in finding new ways to instruct females on how to sexually please males. Males as young as middle school are now often saturated with porn, which itself is steeped in misogyny and reinforces all sorts of pernicious ideas about sex—that women want what men think they want, that seeking to dominate is a sign of strength rather than fragility and

## TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT

In a 2015 national report from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 1 in 5 women reported being sexually assaulted during college. The many causes of and solutions to the problem of sexual assault are beyond the scope of this report, but here again our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds suggests that too many parents have been silent. According to our survey, most young people have never spoken with their parents about “being sure your partner wants to have sex and is comfortable doing so before having sex”(61%), assuring your “own comfort before engaging in sex” (49%), the “importance of not pressuring someone to have sex with you”(56%), the “importance of not continuing to ask someone to have sex after they have said no” (62%), or the importance of not having sex with “someone who is too intoxicated or impaired to make a decision about sex” (57%). About 58% of respondents had never had a conversation with their parents about the importance of “being a caring and respectful sexual partner.” Almost 1/3 of respondents had never had a conversation with their parents about any of these topics, although a large majority of respondents who had engaged in these conversations with parents described them as at least somewhat influential.

Educators, including sex educators, often skip these conversations as well. Many respondents had never had a conversation with a school adult, for example, about the “importance of not pressuring someone to have sex with you” (48%), the importance of “not continuing to ask someone to have sex after she or he has said no” (50%), or the importance of not having sex with “someone who is too intoxicated or impaired to make a decision about sex” (46%).

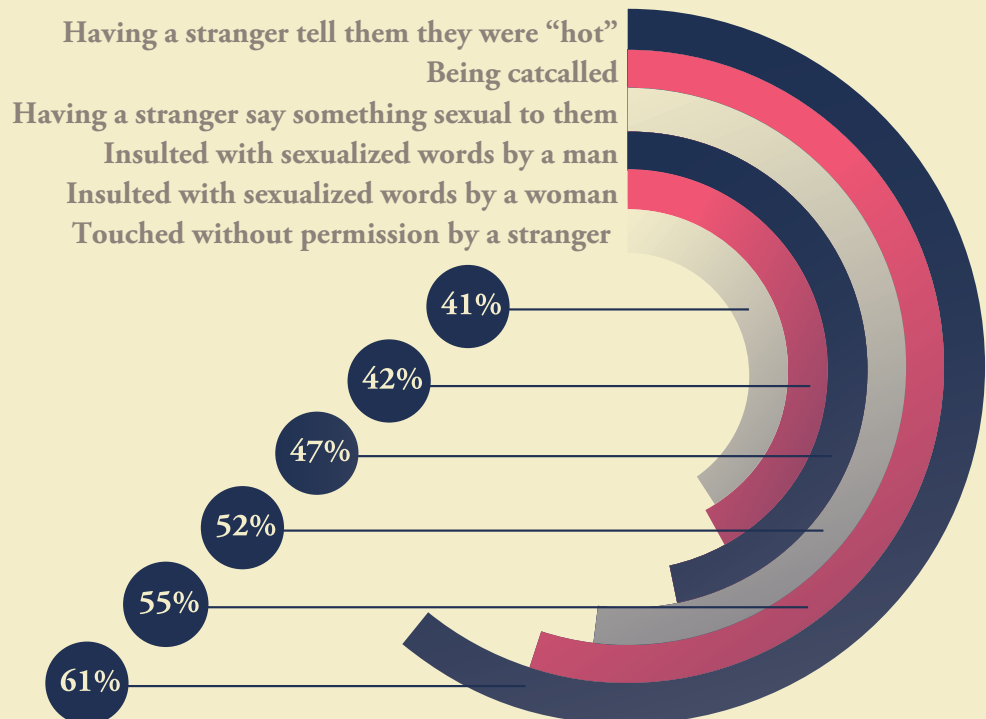
## The Talk

that women enjoy domination and degradation, and that real intimacy is unerotic. This porn-bingeing may be one reason that 82% of males and 76% of females in our survey either agreed or were neutral about the statement that, “Women are turned on/find it sexy when men get a little rough with them.” As girls and women, as we have noted, have made impressive gains in school and work over the last thirty years, it seems that many boys and men may be increasingly bent on diminishing and sexualizing them. This misogyny is destructive to romantic and sexual relationships in many ways, and can result in many other kinds of harm, burdening girls and women, for example, with lasting fears and shame that can impede their well-being and success in school, in the workplace, and in many other domains of their lives. It can also corrode men’s capacity to have meaningful relationships with both females and males, to be ethical, to be fully human.

What makes these disturbing trends especially worrisome is that large numbers of parents, educators,

and other adults, like the educators and parents who responded to our hypothetical scenario above, appear to be either unaware of the seriousness of the problem or don’t know how to deal with it. Significant majorities of our survey respondents reported having never had a conversation with their parents about what sexual harassment is (62%) or what they should do if they experience sexual harassment (67%). In addition, 76% of respondents (72% of men and 80% of women) had never had a conversation with their parents about how to avoid sexually harassing others. Similarly large numbers of male survey respondents had not had conversations with their parents about not catcalling (69%) or not making degrading comments to girls like calling them “bitches” or “ho’s” (55%). Most respondents also had not had these conversations in schools. (As we take up in the “Talking about sexual assault” sidebar, it appears that significant majorities of young people have also never had basic conversations with parents or with educators about critical issues involving coercion and consent).

### Harassment reported by survey respondents



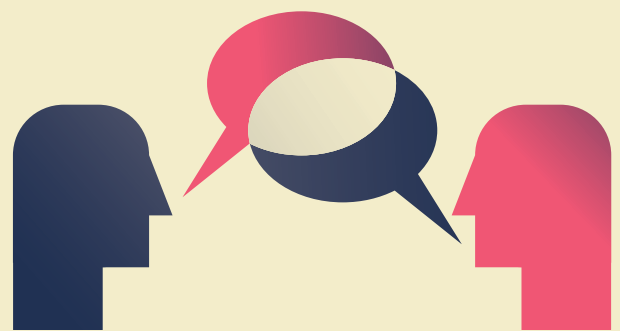
## Young people are desensitized to misogyny and harassment

Making matters worse, large numbers of young people themselves seem to be inured to misogyny and sexism—such as the girl quoted above who laments that she and her peers accept it as “a fact of life”—or don’t know how to deal with it. Our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds indicates that almost 60% of respondents—66% of males and 51% of females—would not say anything if they overheard a male friend say about a woman, “I’d hit that.” Young people appear not to intervene because, among other reasons, they don’t think it will make a difference (“It’s so commonly used in our society there’s no point in saying anything because it won’t change anything”), because it doesn’t involve them (“It isn’t my business”), because they would experience negative repercussions (“I would just be looked at as a bitch”), or because they view it as meaningless (“People just say that for fun”). Other respondents reported: “I’m numb to it,” “They can say that if they want; it’s America,” and “I’m too shy to talk about my beliefs in the moment because nobody else thinks like I do or would be able to understand where I’m coming from.”

Many young people also see concerns about misogyny and sexual harassment as inflated. Sixty-seven percent of respondents to our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds—60% of women and 73% of men—agreed with or didn’t oppose the view that, “the government and the media have shown more concern about sexual harassment and sexual assault than is warranted.” Forty-eight percent either agreed (19%) or were neutral (29%) that “society has reached a point that there is no more double standard against women.” Thirty-nine percent of respondents either agreed or were neutral that it’s “rare to see a woman treated in an inappropriately sexualized manner on television.” Some respondents suggested that the sum of their sexual morality, of their understanding of care and ethics in sexual relationships, is simply “don’t rape.” As one young man told us: “I think most of my friends and me in middle school and high school didn’t have any idea what sexual

harassment or assault was. We just thought assault was some messed up guy pulling a woman into a dark alley and raping her. That was all we knew we couldn’t do.”

**“We just thought assault was some messed up guy pulling a woman into a dark alley and raping her. That was all we knew we couldn’t do.”**



**76% of respondents had never had a conversation with their parents about how to avoid sexually harassing others.**

# Are we making progress on gender roles?

Are young people committed to gender equality in romantic relationships? Not as strongly as you might think. Sociologist Stephanie Coontz recently summarized key research on this topic (Coontz, 2017). After rising steadily from 1977 to the mid-1990s, the percentage of young people expressing views that support gender equality in domestic arrangements has since declined. For example, the percentage of high school seniors who agreed that the best family arrangement was for a man to be the prime income provider and for a woman to stay home rose from 42% in 1994 to 58% in 2014. The percentage of high school seniors who reported that “the husband should make all the important decisions in the family” increased from less than 30% in 1994 to 40% in 2014 (Cotter & Pepin, 2017).

In another study, Nika Fate-Dixon found that, in 1994, 83% of young men ages 18-25 did not view the male-breadwinner family as superior, but that percentage decreased dramatically to 55% in 2014. The drop in the percentage of women who expressed this view was less dramatic, from 85% in 1994 to 72% in 2014 (Fate-Dixon, 2017). Fate-Dixon also examined young people’s beliefs about whether working mothers were equally good parents as stay-at-home mothers. Since 1994, the percentage of young women who supported that idea has slowly risen, but the percent of young men holding this belief has declined (Fate-Dixon, 2017). As Coontz puts it: “...by 2014, men aged 18 to 25 were more traditional than their elders” (Coontz, 2017).



On our own survey of young people ages 18 - 25, 60% of males and 65% of females reported that males are more “dominant than women in romantic relationships,” while 14% of males and 11% of females thought that women are dominant in relationships, with the remainder reporting that women and men tended to be equal partners in relationships. Thirty-two percent of male and 22% of female respondents thought that men should be dominant in romantic relationships, while 14% of males and 10% of females thought that women should be dominant.



## How adults can help reduce and prevent degrading behaviors

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So what can be done?

While adults need to communicate the importance of young people being self-respecting and respectful in their romantic and sexual lives, they also need to go beyond these platitudes. Almost all teens know they're supposed to be self-respecting and respectful; what many teens don't know is what these kinds of respect actually mean in various romantic and sexual situations. Adults can start by identifying for teens common forms of misogyny and describing to them what constitutes harassment. Responding to a scenario in which a man whistles at a woman, large numbers of females (69%) reported that the woman would be offended, angered and/or frightened, while one in three males reported that a woman in this situation would find it "flattering" or "sexy." Teens need to hear directly that this kind of behavior is harassment, and also that it's not ok to touch a female who is a stranger (or, for that matter, to touch any stranger without permission). It's vital that both parents and educators go one critical step further and check in with young people periodically to see if they've actually absorbed these messages.

Our data also suggest the importance of cultivating boys' empathy for girls and women from early ages. We presented respondents with a scenario in which a man engaged in a form of street harassment towards a woman he didn't know—whistling at her, telling her that she was "hot," or telling her that she was beautiful when she smiled. We asked respondents how acceptable the behaviors were, and to identify how the woman was likely to feel. Even among the 45% of men who thought that the woman would experience a negative emotion as a result of street harassment, one-third of these men still thought that the harassment was acceptable.

There is much that parents and educators can do to promote empathy,<sup>5</sup> including engaging children in exploring both what is positive and what is challenging about being another gender. Parents might, for example, ask children of different genders in their families to explain what it's

like from their perspective—what does it feel like to be a teen girl in relation to males in the family, in the community, and in school?

Adults might also push young people to consider the nature of real honor, courage, and dignity. There is, of course, no honor or courage in degrading or sexualizing others. But there can be honor in standing up to your peers when they label or "slut-shame" girls or shun peers whom they find unattractive. There is dignity in stepping in to protect peers in one's midst who are vulnerable to harassment or assault.

It's important to note that these conversations often don't need to be painfully awkward, deliberate, face-to-face conversations. There are countless opportunities to address these issues more informally. Parents may be with their teen in the car and hear misogynistic song lyrics, be watching some form of misogyny or sexual harassment with their teen on television, or be with their teen when they learn about harassment or sexual assault in the news. In fact, it is irresponsible for those of us who are parents not to say something in these situations. These conversations also help teens become more critical consumers of media and culture, helping them recognize, for example, sexism, misogyny, and many forms of male entitlement. If teens are too uncomfortable to have some of these conversations with parents, parents can suggest other respected adults who can guide teens and/or connect teens to resources that treat these issues wisely. For additional guidelines on preventing misogyny and harassment, see the Appendix.

None of this, to be sure, will stop a culture of misogyny and sexual harassment in its tracks. But parents and educators should be experimenting with and learning from a variety of approaches in schools and homes, approaches that may differ based on race, culture, class and other factors. What's vital is that we stop ducking these problems, find ways to manage our discomfort, consult with each other, and become more effective in engaging young people on these critical topics.

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<sup>5</sup> Making Caring Common's parent resources for raising empathetic children can be found at: <http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/parenting-resources-raising-caring-ethical-children/cultivating-empathy>. Our educator strategy guides can be found at <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/educators/toolkit/strategy-guides>.



# Summary

The myths about the size of the hook-up culture are stubborn, and they're not likely to be upended just by facts (we are clearly not the first to present some of these facts), but by concerted efforts to widely publicize these facts and to engage young people in high schools, college campuses, and other settings about how to combat these myths. It will also not be simple to sustain attention on misogyny and sexual harassment or for unpracticed parents and other adults to guide young people in developing mature romantic relationships.

Yet the good news is that, because it appears most adults and young people have not attempted to address these issues, there is substantial room for improvement. And what inspires hope is that young people appear to want to talk about these issues—in particular, issues around romantic relationships. Other research we have conducted at Making Caring Common suggests that parents are considerably more intentional and systematic about cultivating their children's achievements and happiness than their care for others. It is up to us—parents, educators, sport coaches and other important adults to young people—to be just as deliberate about cultivating in children care in their relationships, including, and perhaps especially, care in their relationships across gender.

The real question is this: Given the troubling downsides of our neglect of these issues and the large health, educational, and ethical benefits of taking them on, how can we not push down this path? We can continue to bewail, based on misconceptions, sex-crazed teenagers. Or we can take real steps toward preventing misogyny and helping young people develop the skills and wisdom they need to love well at many stages of their lives—and perhaps gain wisdom, heal, and mature ourselves.

# Methodology

**SURVEY 1:** The first survey was administered over the course of three years to students in three high schools and five colleges across the country. Although the survey was administered to around 1,300 students in total, some questions were only asked of a subset of those students. While our sample from these high schools and colleges included a range of racially and economically diverse young people from several regions of the country, this survey was largely a sample of convenience—students elected to take the survey—and high schools and colleges were not chosen randomly, so it’s hard to know how generalizable these results are to the country as a whole (although results from this survey were consistent with our nationally representative survey below).

**SURVEY 2:** The second survey—the main survey we cite in the report—was administered to a pool of survey takers maintained by Qualtrics, an online survey software. MCC contracted with Qualtrics to recruit a sample that was nationally representative of a variety of demographic characteristics, including racial/ethnic background, gender, political affiliation, and region. Participants were recruited through a variety of methods, including targeted emails, social media, and member referrals.

The sample was comprised of 2,195 respondents aged 18 to 25. The sample was disproportionately female, but all results are weighted to create a sample which is 50% female and 50% male. Survey takers were required to be able to read and write English. Survey takers are unique in that they have all opted to participate in the Qualtrics pool of survey takers. However, we have no reason to believe that this fact in this case negates the generalizability of our findings, and the results of this survey are consistent with our first, non-Qualtrics survey.

We’ve also learned a great deal from leading workshops and teaching about healthy romantic and sexual relationships with a variety of young people, including undergraduate and graduate students from all over the country and men and women in the military. In these conversations, we have asked young people about what they see as both positive and troubling about romantic and sexual interactions among their peers and about their own relationships—what they question, anticipate, long for, fret about. Our findings from these conversations tend to be consistent with our survey findings on harassment, misogyny, and romantic love.

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# Appendix

# Appendix A

## 5 Tips for Parents: Guiding Teens and Young Adults in Developing Healthy Romantic Relationships

As a society—and as parents—we are often failing to prepare young people for what can be most meaningful in a life: caring, healthy, lasting romantic relationships. We wring our hands about impulsive young people hooking up and debate whether to have the “sex talk” with our kids, but we tend to ignore this more important challenge. We often do very little to prepare young people for the focused, tender, subtle, generous work of learning how to love and be loved and developing a mature romantic relationship. As one teen told us in our research for our report, “All we are taught is how to prevent stuff, how not to get pregnant. We should be discussing the values that should guide you in love and how to really love and respect someone else. And how to be loved by someone else. That’s a lot more important.”

This lack of modeling and conversation about romantic relationships in both homes and schools creates a perilous void—a void that is commonly filled by popular culture. Media and entertainment promote many harmful notions about what a healthy romantic relationship is and about what love is: that love, for example, is an intoxication, an obsessive attraction; that “real love” is clear, unmistakable, and undeniable; that love happens suddenly and lasts forever. Because we don’t assume they’re harmful and thus don’t question them, media images of love may do more damage than media images of violence.

Our failure to prepare young people for romantic love can reverberate destructively throughout their lives, reflected in a range of problems including divorce, substance abuse, domestic violence, and marital conflict.

The good news is that, according to our national survey of 18 to 25-year-olds, a large majority of young people actually *want* some form of guidance on the emotional aspects of romantic relationships. Over 70% of respondents, for instance, wanted more information from their parents about either how to develop “a mature relationship” (38%), “how to deal with breakups” (36%),

“how to avoid getting hurt in a relationship” (33%), or “how to begin a relationship” (27%). Many high school students also report wanting this guidance.

How can we as parents prepare our teens and young adults to develop healthy, caring romantic relationships? Many of us may not know what to say or feel hobbled in these conversations because we view ourselves as failures in our own romantic relationships—we don’t believe we have wisdom to share. Yet relationship failures can generate as much insight into the ingredients of healthy relationships as relationship success. What’s important is for us to distill our wisdom, which often means reflecting and consulting with adults we respect about what our past relationships illuminate about our own vulnerabilities, hopes, dispositions, and misconceptions. And the good news is that if we as older adults do this work we can often have frank, wonderful conversations with young people—even if we don’t have all the answers—that powerfully guide them, greatly enrich our relationships with them, and help us understand and develop skills in our own romantic relationships.

Below are five tips to guide these conversations.



# 1 Be a romantic philosopher.

**WHY?** There is a great deal of confusion in our culture about what romantic love is. Our research indicates that young people and adults often mean very different things when they say they're "in love"—Tolstoy says, "there are as many kinds of loves as there are hearts"—and what people experience as love often changes over time. When a newly-married couple says they're "in love," they're often referring to a quite different set of feelings than when a couple married 30 years says they're "in love." In part, because our understandings of love are vague and varied, young people may confuse love with infatuation, lust, idolization, or obsession. They may think, for example, that they are in love with someone because they can't stop thinking about them. Sometimes young people may confuse love with the boost in self-esteem they experience when someone is romantically interested in them.

## **TRY THIS:**

- ➡ Explore with your teen or young adult what love is and the many forms of love. What is romantic love? Have they ever been in love? What did it feel like? If they haven't been in love, how do they think they will know when they are? Explain what you mean when you say that you are in love with someone. You might take up with your teen or young adult how love is understood in other cultures and across time—in many cultures, for example, married couples have not been expected to love each other, and the infatuation and intoxication that we have come to associate with young love in our culture these days have been treated as a madness or illness in other cultures (Ackerman, 1995; Kass & Kass, 2000). Convey to your child that they may define being in love quite differently than someone else and that there is no "right" definition of being in love. However, as we discuss below, there are ways of knowing whether intense feelings for someone else are likely to lead to healthy or unhealthy romantic relationships. Explore with your teen why and how love can be deeply meaningful and change the course of our lives.
- ➡ Explore with young people how they think about different types of intense feelings about someone else. You might ask them if they think there is any difference between infatuation, attraction, and love. If so, what's the difference? Talk about how people can be attracted to or preoccupied with other people for a range of positive and negative reasons, and discuss the importance of understanding why your teen or young adult might be attracted to or preoccupied with someone else. Are they attracted to someone at least partly because they're kind, generous, and honest? Or are they attracted to someone because that person is elusive, seems unattainable, or mistreats them in some way? Do they feel more or less attracted to a person when that person shows less interest in them or mistreats them? Discussing these questions can give them tools for determining whether a relationship is likely to be healthy or unhealthy. Although these exercises may not stop your teen or young adult from entering a harmful relationship, they can reduce the odds, and they can help them avoid repeating harmful relationships.

## 2 Talk about the markers of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

**WHY?** Many teens may not know if they are in a healthy or unhealthy romantic relationship. They also may be unsure if their worries, feelings of disappointment, or criticisms of their partner are normal.

**TRY THIS:**

- ➔ Examples of healthy and unhealthy relationships are everywhere in our daily lives. Talk to your teen or young adult about examples of relationships among the couples you both know, examples from the media, or both. Which examples are healthy? Which ones are harmful? Why? If your teen or young adult is in a relationship, you might also ask them if the relationship makes them more or less self-respecting, hopeful, caring, and generous. How often does the relationship make them worried or depressed? Does their partner have qualities that are concerning or troubling?

## 3 Talk about the skills needed to maintain healthy relationships.

**WHY?** Maintaining healthy relationships requires a range of skills, including the ability to communicate honestly and effectively, to jointly solve problems, to manage anger, and to be generous. Healthy relationships also greatly benefit from the ability to *zoom in*—to take another’s perspective in a real and deep way—and to *zoom out*—to step back for a more wide-angle view of the relationship and its dynamics, strengths, and challenges.

**TRY THIS:**

- ➔ Discuss with teens and young adults various examples of caring, vibrant romantic relationships, showing how thoughtful, self-aware adults deal with common stresses and challenges and exploring the capacities and skills it takes to develop and maintain a mature romantic relationship. These examples might be relatives or friends who you think have mature romantic relationships or couples portrayed in books, television, or on film. You might watch with your teen, for instance, the compelling marriages depicted in television shows such as “This is Us,” “Black-ish,” and “Friday Night Lights.” You might also explore why a couple on TV is struggling and what skills they may lack.

## 4 Consider distilling and sharing lessons from your own romantic relationships.

**WHY?** We can often mine our romantic experiences for insights about mature and immature forms of love and why relationships do—and do not—work. And teens and young people are often keenly interested in our experiences, in part because they're often sorting out how they are like, and unlike, us. Consider sharing these lessons and insights in ways that are appropriate given your child's interests and maturity.

### TRY THIS:

- ➔ Think about what your relationships have taught you. What was healthy about them? What was unhealthy? If they were troubled in some way, why did they become that way? What attitudes or behaviors would you change if you could? Were there warning signs in your relationship or concerning qualities in your partner that you should have seen or taken more seriously? It's often helpful to discuss these questions with trusted friends or to consult experts. Share with your teens any lessons you've learned about the skills, attitudes, and sensitivities that it takes to maintain a healthy romantic relationship or any close relationship.

## 5 Engage young people in ethical questions connected to romantic and sexual relationships.

**WHY?** We have found that high school and college students enthusiastically plunge into ethical questions about romantic relationships: *What do I do if I know my friend is cheating on his girlfriend who is also my friend? Is infidelity justified under any circumstances? Is it exploitation when a high school senior hooks up with a first-year student?* Reflecting on these questions can not only help young people develop better romantic relationships, it can help them develop complex thinking and problem-solving skills, enable students to consider multiple perspectives and sort out their ethical obligations to others, learn how to ethically reason when dealing with conflicting loyalties, and take up questions about human rights and dignity.

### TRY THIS:

- ➔ Together with your teen or young adult, puzzle through answers to the dilemmas above or other ethical questions that you develop together. Start by listening to how your teen would answer these questions and then share your own thoughts. Take multiple perspectives—for example, the perspective of the person cheating, the perspective of the person being cheated on, and the perspective of someone who the person cheating might cheat on in the future. Often there is not one “right” answer to these questions; the answer depends on many contextual factors. What are these factors? Does it matter whether the person being cheated on is a casual or close friend? How does changing these factors change the answer or outcome? Consider, too, how to resolve these dilemmas in ways that are as fair, honest, and caring as possible for all people involved.

# Appendix B

## 6 Tips for Parents: Reducing and Preventing Misogyny and Sexual Harassment Among Teens and Young Adults

Misogyny and sexual harassment are distressingly commonplace in young people's lives—in music lyrics, popular television shows, video games, magazines, and movies. Words like “bitch” and “ho” are thrown around casually in school hallways, a “bro's over ho's” culture pervades many college campuses, and many teens and young people still label girls as either “good” or “bad” and “slut-shame” those they consider “bad.” In our recent national survey, 87% of 18 to 25-year-olds reported that at some point in their lives they had been the victim of some form of sexual harassment.

Yet it appears that most parents have failed to address and prevent misogyny and sexually harassment in their children's lives. While 87% of survey respondents reported that they had been harassed, 76% of our respondents—72% of men and 80% of women—reported that they had never had a conversation with parents about how to avoid sexually harassing others. Similar majorities had never had conversations with their parents about various forms of misogyny.

Given the prevalence of sexually degrading and harassing behavior in young people's lives, these conversations are critical, but it's vital that parents go beyond platitudes like “be respectful.” Following are six tips for parents for engaging in meaningful, constructive conversations.

### 1 Clearly define sexual harassment and degradation.

**WHY?** Many teens and young people don't know the range of behaviors that constitute misogyny and sexual harassment. We as parents need to explain what these violations mean and provide specific, concrete examples.

#### TRY THIS:

➔ Make a point of talking to your teen or young adult about what specifically constitutes sexual harassment and degradation. Make it clear that you take the conversation seriously and that you are open to questions. You might start by asking them both to define these terms and to give you examples of each of these violations. You might then need to clarify any misunderstandings and provide common examples of harassment and misogyny, such as referring to someone as a “bitch” or “ho,” or catcalling, whistling, or commenting on someone's clothes or appearance when those comments might be unwanted. Ask young people to carefully consider what it might be like to be subject to comments like these. Make it clear that girls *and* boys can harass, and that even if the words or behaviors you are discussing are intended as a joke, they risk scaring and offending others. In fact, 62% of female respondents to our survey of 18 to 25-year-olds reported that they would be “offended,” “scared,” or “angry” in response to being catcalled.

➔ Check in with your teen or young adult periodically to see if they've remembered and absorbed this information.

## 2 Step in and stick with it.

**WHY?** If you're the parent of a teen or young adult, chances are you'll encounter a sexist or sexually degrading comment from them or their friends or peers. Yet too many parents stay silent when this happens. Sometimes we freeze—we simply don't know what to say. Parents who do intervene often think that their intervention won't matter or change young people's behavior. It's true that, even if we intervene, offensive comments may not stop; there are powerful forces that have driven males throughout history and across cultures to degrade females. But passivity not only condones these comments, it can also diminish young people's respect for us as adults and role models. Further, even if teens can't absorb or act on our words in the moment, they often still register our words and internalize them as they mature.

### **TRY THIS:**

- ➔ Think about and consult with people you respect about what you might say if your teen or young adult uses a word like “bitch” or “ho.” How might you react in a way that really enables your teen to absorb your message? You might, for example, ask questions that any thoughtful human is hard-pressed to answer affirmatively: “Why is this a way that you and your friends bond?” “How is making a sexist comment different from making a racist comment?” Consider what you might say if your teen says, “We're just joking” or “You don't understand.” You might explain how these types of jokes can come to infect how we think and act towards others and be interpreted by others as permitting and supporting sexual harassment and degradation.
- ➔ Talk to young people about the importance of listening to and appreciating their peers of different genders as a matter of decency and humanity, and work with them to develop empathy from a young age. You might ask your teen or young adult to think about, for example, both what is positive and what is challenging about being another gender, or ask children of different genders in your family to explain to each other what it's like from their perspective to be their gender in their family, school, or community.
- ➔ Encourage young people to think about the nature of real honor, courage, and dignity. There is, of course, no honor or courage in degrading, belittling, or sexualizing others. There can, though, be honor in standing up to your peers when they label or “slut-shame” girls, or shun young women or men they find unattractive. There is also dignity in attending to those who might be vulnerable to harassment and intervening to help defend and protect them.

### 3 Teach your child to be a critical consumer of media and culture.

**WHY?** Many young people are raised on a steady diet of misogyny and sexual degradation in popular culture, but have never critically examined the media they consume or the cultural dynamics that shape their lives. You may be with your teen or young adult in the car and hear sexually degrading song lyrics or be together when you learn about an episode of sexual harassment or degradation in the news. In these situations, it is vital that we as parents speak up and help our children become mindful, critical consumers of this information—even if speaking up makes us uncomfortable. Here again, silence suggests support.

#### TRY THIS:

- ➔ Ask how your teen or young adult interprets something you're hearing or watching that you find sexually degrading. Does your teen find it degrading? Why or why not? If you disagree, explain why you think the portrayal is harmful. Point out how misogyny and gender-based degradation in popular songs, films, and television can be so common that they come to seem normal and can begin affecting our relationships with others in harmful, hidden ways.
- ➔ If you've had an experience similar to what you're listening to or watching, such as being harassed on the street or in your workplace, and it's age-appropriate to share with your teen, try discussing it and talking about how it made you feel.
- ➔ Help your teen in spotting and critically examining troubling male roles, attitudes, and behaviors in our culture. Why do many women continue to be subject to sexual harassment in the workplace? Why do men continue to outnumber women in critical roles in politics and business? What are effective ways of combating entitled male attitudes that diminish or degrade females?

### 4 Talk to your child about what they should do if they're sexually harassed or degraded.

**WHY?** Many teens and young adults don't know what to do if they're harassed or degraded with gender-based slurs, whether it's being called a "slut" or "bitch" jokingly by a friend or being harassed by someone they don't know. It's vital for us as parents to help our children develop strategies for protecting themselves and reducing the chances of the offender harming others.

#### TRY THIS:

- ➔ Ask your teen or young adult if they have ever been harassed or degraded with sexualized words or actions and how they've responded. If they haven't had these experiences, ask them what they think they would do in different situations. Does this differ from what they think they *should* do? All of us, of course, don't always do what we should. Discuss how they can get from *would* to *should* by exploring the pros and cons of various strategies for responding. For example, would they feel comfortable confronting the person harassing them, confronting the harasser with a friend, talking to a teacher or a school counselor, or talking to you or another respected adult? Consider doing a role play with them that helps them explore a variety of strategies, including what specific words they might use in confronting the perpetrator. Brainstorm with your child ways of responding in various contexts.

Many young people, for example, will call their friends sluts jokingly, a situation that's quite different from someone who is not a friend using the word intentionally as a weapon. However, both uses can be harmful.

- ➔ Continue to check in with your teen or young adult periodically to see if they've had these experiences and to find out what strategies they have used—or would use—in dealing with them. Underline the importance of your teen or young adult talking to you or another trusted, respected adult if the offending behavior doesn't stop.

## 5 Encourage and expect upstanding.

**WHY?** As ethical parents, we should expect our teens and young adults to not only protect themselves when they're harassed or degraded but also to protect each other. Because they understand peer dynamics, are more likely to witness harassing behaviors, and often have more weight than adults in intervening with peers, young people themselves are often in the best position to prevent and stop sexual harassment and misogyny among their peers. Learning to be an “upstander” is also a vital part of becoming an ethical, courageous person. Yet upstanding can be risky—perpetrators can turn on upstanders. That's why it's important to brainstorm strategies with young people for actions that protect both them and the victim.

### TRY THIS:

- ➔ Talk to your teen or young adult about the importance of being an ally to peers who are subjected to harassment or misogyny. You might start a conversation by asking about what they *would* do versus what they *should* do. Ask them, for example, what they *would and should* do if a friend is the target of different types of harassment. What about a peer who is not a close friend? Talk to them about what might stop them from intervening in these situations, brainstorm various strategies, and/or do a role play. If confronting the perpetrator is an option, think through the specific words they might use.

## 6 Work to assure that young people have multiple sources of recognition and self-worth.

**WHY?** Young people can be especially vulnerable to degradation and harassment if they're highly dependent on romantic and sexual attention and on peer approval. Many young people are also vulnerable because they have lower social status or are marginalized among their peers. LGBTQIA youth may be especially vulnerable in this respect.

### TRY THIS:

- ➔ Encourage and support your teen or young adult in engaging in activities that build their confidence that don't involve romantic or sexual attention or approval from peers. These activities might involve, for example, the arts, sports, or service to others.
- ➔ Talk to young people about solidarity and taking collective action against harassment and degradation. Sometimes girls and young women in particular can demean and undercut each other in the context of romantic and sexual relationships. It's important to underscore for girls the power of standing together and collective action.

# Appendix C

## Resources

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The following is a partial list of resources for parents, educators, young people, and community members interested in the topics found in this report. These resources offer useful activities, information, websites, and/or programs/curricula. We've tried to identify key resources, but there are a vast number of resources on these various topics, and we surely missed some. We also want to underscore that while we think each of the identified resources contains valuable information, we do not endorse all the recommendations/views in these resources. Some of the resource descriptions listed below have been pulled from organizational websites.

Have suggestions of other powerful resources or websites that we should add to our list? Please email us at [mcc@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:mcc@gse.harvard.edu).

## Resources for educators

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### Coaching Boys into Men

**TYPE: WEBSITE/TOOLKIT**

Toolkit that provides high school coaches with the tools and resources to talk with athletes about healthy relationship skills, violence prevention, and respect for women and girls.

<http://www.coachescorner.org/>

### Consent Campaign Guidebook

**TYPE: GUIDE**

Classroom teaching tools and guide, planning information, and resource lists for middle and high school educators teaching consent and sexual violence prevention from the Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence.

<http://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/VT-Consent-Campaign-Guidebook-and-Appendicies-2nd-edition.pdf>

### Dating Matters

**TYPE: ONLINE COURSE**

Online course available to educators, school personnel, youth mentors, and others to understand teen dating violence prevention. Uses graphic novel scenarios, interactive exercises, and information gathered from leading experts to prevent teen violence.

<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/datingmatters/#>



## Healthy Relationships Lesson Plan for LGBTQ Youth and Allies

**TYPE: CURRICULUM**

Lesson plans that develop young people's abilities to communicate about relationships, sex, and protective behaviors. Meant to supplement existing sex education programs and specifically designed to reach LGBTQ young people.

<http://thelatrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Workshops-for-LGBTQ-Youth-and-Allies-2015.pdf>

## How Do You Know if Someone Wants to Have Sex with You?

**TYPE: CURRICULUM**

A lesson plan for late high school to college-aged students (17-22), developed by Planned Parenthood, which uses videos, group discussions, and scenarios to teach consent and communication skills.

[https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/2414/4622/8692/Consent\\_Videos.Consent\\_Lesson\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/2414/4622/8692/Consent_Videos.Consent_Lesson_Plan.pdf)

## Our Whole Lives: Sexuality Education for Grades 7-9

**TYPE: CURRICULUM**

Sexuality education for youth, developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association, which teaches and models care, compassion, respect, and justice. It provides participants with information about human development, personal skills, relationships, sexual behavior, sexual health, sexual assault and harassment, and misogyny.

<http://www.uua.org/re/owl/297213.shtml>

## SexEd Library

**TYPE: CURRICULUM**

Categorical listing of over 100 sex ed lesson plans including topics such as human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture.

<http://www.sexedlibrary.org/>

## Sexual Ethics for a Caring Society (SEC-C)

**TYPE: CURRICULUM**

Features sixteen Sexual Ethics for a Caring Society lessons developed for 8th-10th grade. Training and workshops are available for facilitators.

<http://www.sharonlamb.com/the-secs-c-lesson-plan/>

## Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)

**TYPE: WEBSITE/COUNCIL**

Promotes comprehensive education about sexuality, and advocates the right of individuals to make responsible sexual choices. Website features information about available sexuality education programs, fact sheets, and resources and curricula about sexuality education topics.

<http://www.siecus.org/>

## Stop SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence

**TYPE: TECHNICAL PACKAGE**

Compilation of prevention strategies and activities, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that communities and schools can use to reduce sexual violence and its consequences.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-prevention-technical-package.pdf>

## Who are You? Toolkit

**TYPE: TOOLKIT**

Recommended for use with teens that are fifteen or older, this multi-media discussion-based toolkit educates young people about the prevention of sexual violence and ethical sexual decision making.

<http://www.whoareyou.co.nz/product/who-are-you-toolkit/>

## WholeSomeBodies Guide for Facilitators

**TYPE: CURRICULUM**

A curriculum, created by the Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, which aims to increase adults' knowledge about healthy sexuality and give them the tools and motivation to model and discuss healthy sexuality with young people in their lives.

<http://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/WholeSomeBodies-Facilitator-Guidebook-11.13.pdf>

## Resources for parents

### 7 Tips for Talking to Kids about Porn

**TYPE: TIPS**

Tips from Common Sense Media to guide parents in talking with kids about pornography and what they might see on the internet.

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/blog/how-to-help-parents-talk-to-their-kids-about-porn>

### 10 Tips on Talking About Healthy Relationships with Teens

**TYPE: TIPS**

Brief tips for parents, developed by Futures Without Violence, regarding how to talk with their teens about healthy relationships.

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/fwvcorp/wp-content/uploads/20160121110131/10Tips\\_healthyrelationships2.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/fwvcorp/wp-content/uploads/20160121110131/10Tips_healthyrelationships2.pdf)

### Break the Cycle: Dating Abuse

**TYPE: INFORMATION**

Facts, infographics, and handouts from breakthecycle.org for adults about healthy/unhealthy teen relationships, relationship realities for teens, and how to foster LBGTQ inclusivity.

<https://www.breakthecycle.org/back2school-adults>

### Breaking Up Is Hard to Do: 10 Tips for Supporting Your Teen

**TYPE: TIPS**

A list of actions, developed by the Boston Public Health Commission, which adults can take to support teens during break-ups.

[http://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/violence-prevention/start-strong/Documents/BPHC-Breakup%20summit\\_Adult%20Breakup%20Tool-r3.pdf](http://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/violence-prevention/start-strong/Documents/BPHC-Breakup%20summit_Adult%20Breakup%20Tool-r3.pdf)

## How to Talk to Your Children about Consent and Sexual Assault

**TYPE: TIPS**

Suggestions for how parents can talk with their children about consent and sexual assault.

<http://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/2016-12-16/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-consent-and-sexual-assault>

## How to Talk to Your Kids about Pornography

**TYPE: TIPS**

Tips from the New York Times include real examples of how other parents have handled conversations, complete with expert advice.

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/10/garden/porn-intro.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/10/garden/porn-intro.html?_r=1&)

## How to Talk to Your Kids about Sexual Assault

**TYPE: CONVERSATION GUIDE**

Statistics, questions to ask children, and tips for parents to use when talking with teens about sexual assault.

<http://confi.co/parent-conversation-guide-sexual-assault/>

## Respect! Conversation Starters: Digital Dating Abuse

**TYPE: CONVERSATION GUIDE**

Conversation starters and talking points for parents and educators when talking with teens about digital dating abuse.

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/fwvcorp/wp-content/uploads/20160121110132/Digital-Dating-Abuse\\_Conversation-Starters.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/fwvcorp/wp-content/uploads/20160121110132/Digital-Dating-Abuse_Conversation-Starters.pdf)

## Resources for teens and young adults

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### Amaze

**TYPE: WEBSITE/RESOURCE/VIDEOS**

Videos and information for young people about sex, their bodies, and relationships. Website also features discussion questions and conversation starters for parents and educators.

<http://amaze.org/>

### Break the Cycle

**TYPE: WEBSITE/RESOURCE**

A website that motivates and supports young people to speak out about dating abuse in their schools and communities. Features information about healthy relationships, consent, setting boundaries, using online dating apps, etc.

<https://www.breakthecycle.org/>

### Confi

**TYPE: WEBSITE/RESOURCE**

Compilation of information on sensitive health topics, research, and facts. Young people can learn about healthy relationships, how to communicate about sex, consent, setting boundaries, etc.

<http://confi.co/>

### The Halls

**TYPE: WEBSITE/VIDEOS**

Tells the stories of three young men and their struggles sifting through relationships, trauma, masculinity, and their own identities.

<http://thehallsboston.com/>



## I am Courageous

**TYPE:** WEBSITE/RESOURCE

Website that encourages and teaches students how to use their voices to help end teen dating abuse through information sheets, tips, resource lists, and videos.

<http://www.iamcourageous.org/>

## Juicebox

**TYPE:** APP

App for teens to ask questions about sex and relationships, featuring advice from coaches.

<https://www.juiceboxit.com/>

## Love Is Respect

**TYPE:** WEBSITE/RESOURCE

Support, information, and resources for young people who have questions or concerns about abuse in dating relationships. Includes a variety of quizzes and visual graphics about dating violence, healthy relationships, and consent. Also features abuse resources especially for LGBTQ students. Free and confidential phone, live chat, and texting services are available.

<http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

## Scarleteen

**TYPE:** WEBSITE/RESOURCE

Includes “real world” information about sexuality and relationships for teens and emerging adults. Provides guidance and strategies for young people around sexual health and sexuality, consent, healthy relationships, escaping abuse, and sexual communication.

<http://www.scarleteen.com/>

## Start Strong Boston

**TYPE: WEBSITE/RESOURCE**

Program of the Boston Public Health Commission that supports young people to end teen dating violence and to learn skills and strategies for healthy relationships. The website includes relationship communication strategies, a healthy relationship quiz, tools for thinking through break-ups, and activities to think through the misogynistic content of popular music lyrics.

<http://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/violence-prevention/start-strong/Pages/Start-Strong.aspx>

## Start with Respect

**TYPE: TIPS**

Tips and guidance for teen men about how to build and have respectful relationships/sexual relationships with women.

<https://whiteribbonnz.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/white-ribbon-toolbox-2015.pdf>

## The Representation Project

**TYPE: WEBSITE/RESOURCE**

With the goal of eliminating stereotypes, this website features resources such as quizzes that ask teens to assess how well fictional characters defy stereotypes and/or act as positive role models, and conversation starters/activities for youth leaders and female athletes about the ways in which mainstream media shapes their beliefs about women and girls.

<http://therepresentationproject.org/>

## Youth Activist Prevention Toolkit

**TYPE: TOOLKIT**

A project of the Florida Commission Against Domestic Violence's Youth Advisory Board, this toolkit is for students who wish to raise awareness about teen dating violence and prevent its occurrence in their schools and communities.

<https://app.box.com/shared/s4ijq7d35vx4bx47b1pt>

## General resources

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### Fight the New Drug

**TYPE: WEBSITE/CAMPAIGN**

A website about the effects of pornography, featuring guidelines for parents, and recovery programs for porn users.

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/>

### Prevent IPV

**TYPE: WEBSITE/COUNCIL**

The IPV Prevention Council seeks to enhance the capacity of local domestic violence coalitions and programs. Their website includes many prevention resources and a prevention "tools inventory."

<http://www.preventipv.org/>

### "Title IX at 40" Report: Ending Sexual Harassment

**TYPE: REPORT**

"Ending Sexual Harassment," a chapter within the Title IX report, defines sexual harassment, provides statistics about the prevalence of sexual harassment in K-12 schools and among LGBTQ students, highlights the effects of sexual harassment on students, and discusses protections available.

<http://www.ncwge.org/TitleIX40/TitleIX-print.pdf>

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