

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

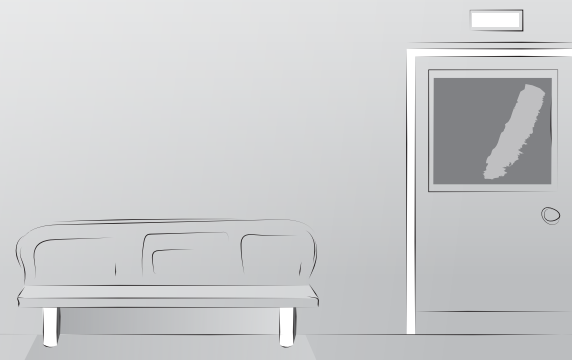
## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS 6TH GRADE

*Facilitator Guide*



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<b>Introduction</b>	2
HeaRT: Background	2
Program Delivery: Nuts & Bolts	2
How to Use the Facilitator Guide	4
Adaptation Guidance for Virtual Implementation	11
<b>Session 1: Parents Make a Difference</b>	13
Part 1: Opening (5 minutes)	14
Part 2: Goals of HeaRT for Parents (5 minutes)	14
Part 3: Overview of Sessions (5 minutes)	15
Part 4: Ground Rules and Expectations (10 minutes)	16
Part 5: Icebreaker (15 minutes)	17
Part 6: Pyramid of Success (15 minutes)	17
Part 7: Understanding Pre-teens and Teens (27 minutes)	18
Part 8: Pressures Children Will Face (25 minutes)	20
Part 9: What Can Parents Do? (5 minutes)	23
Part 10: Why Focus on Children 9- to 12-Years Old? (15 minutes)	23
Part 11: Session Recap (15 minutes)	25
<b>Session 2: Parenting Positively</b>	27
Part 1: Opening (10 minutes)	28
Part 2: Review and Introduction (10 minutes)	28
Part 3: Effective Parenting Practices (15 minutes)	29
Part 4: Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship and Communication (60 minutes)	30
Part 5: Supervision (25 minutes)	35
Part 6: Session Recap (10 minutes)	37
<b>Session 3: Parents Are Educators</b>	39
Part 1: Opening (5 minutes)	40
Part 2: Review (10 minutes)	40
Part 3: Why Should I Worry?: The Realities of Adolescent Relationships and Sexual Behaviors (25 minutes)	41
Part 4: Parents as Relationship Models (40 minutes)	42
Part 5: Increasing Our Own Knowledge and Parents Can Promote Sexual Health (40 minutes)	45
Part 6: Session Recap and Home Session Overview (10 minutes)	49

<b>Session 4: I Think I Can, I Know I Can</b>	51
Part 1: Opening & Review (5 minutes)	52
Part 2: Preparing to Deliver Your Message (35 minutes)	53
Part 3: Seven Tips for Talking with Your Child about Relationships and Sex (15 minutes)	56
Part 4: Role-Play—Teachable Moments (45 minutes)	56
Part 5: Figuring Out What to Say (5 minutes)	58
Part 6: When to Say What (15 minutes)	58
Part 7: Session Recap (10 minutes)	60
<b>Session 5: Parents Are Role Models</b>	71
Part 1: Opening and Review (5 minutes)	72
Part 2: Understanding Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships (40 minutes)	73
Part 3: Why Should I Worry?: The Realities of Unhealthy Relationships (30 minutes)	78
Part 4: Parents Can Promote Healthy Relationships (35 minutes)	80
Part 5: Session Recap (10 minutes)	83
<b>Session 6: Moving Forward</b>	92
Part 1: Opening (5 minutes)	93
Part 2: Review Homework Assignments (15 minutes)	93
Part 3: Communication Practice With Your Child (30 minutes)	95
Part 4: Peer Pressure (10 minutes)	96
Part 5: Four-Step Parenting Plan for Peer Pressure (20 minutes)	97
Part 6: Parent-Child Exercise on Peer Pressure (30 minutes)	98
Part 7: Summary (15 minutes)	98
Part 8: Closing (10 minutes)	101
<b>Appendices</b>	102
Appendix A: Using Technology Safely	103
Appendix B: References	106
Appendix C: Icebreakers	107
Appendix D: Session Materials at a Glance	109
Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations	110
Appendix F: Acknowledgments	115

# Introduction

## Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents: Background

Parenting during the teen years has always been a challenge, but today's parents must also deal with the exposure of their children at younger and younger ages to difficult issues and topics—including sex, dating, and the dangers of unhealthy relationships. With greater exposure to technology and media, children and teens are bombarded with messages about relationships and sex in songs, music videos, movies, television, video games, and online. These topics are not easy for most parents to discuss with their children—and, as a result, most of the information and messages children receive about these important topics come from others. However, if parents do not teach their children about sex, dating, and relationships, they hand over that responsibility to the media, their children's peers, and others. Parents' voices are powerful. When parents overcome their own fear and discomfort with these conversations, they can deliver their own messages. **The purpose of this program is to help parents realize that their message is important—that parents make a difference!**

In addition to promoting sexual health, positive parenting practices and good parent-child communication can help protect children from violence in adolescence and their involvement in other unhealthy relationships. Talking about healthy relationship development before children become romantically or sexually involved with peers is key to promoting healthy adolescent development. In addition, the relationships that children form early in life with their parents and others will heavily influence their relationship experiences later in life. Parents are also uniquely positioned to teach their children about healthy relationships through the relationships they establish and model for them.

Healthy Relationships Toolkit (HeaRT) for Parents (previously referred to as Parents Matter! for Dating Matters) is a modified and updated version of an evidence-based parent training program—called Parents Matter!<sup>1</sup>—developed by CDC to improve adolescent sexual health through parent education and training. HeaRT for Parents includes additional content highlighting the need for parents to discuss healthy relationship

development with their children to promote optimal sexual and relationship health. This program helps parents talk with their children about sexual issues before the teen years. In addition, this program addresses parents' needs to help their children recognize the difference between caring, supportive relationships and controlling, manipulative, or abusive relationships. It is during the critical pre-teen and teen years that young people begin to learn the skills needed to create and foster positive relationships. This program provides an opportunity for families to start talking about healthy and unhealthy relationships and dating violence.

## Program Delivery: Nuts & Bolts

### Program Overview

HeaRT for Parents is designed to increase parents' awareness of their role as relationship and sex educators for their children and to provide opportunities for parents to build positive parenting skills. Parents participate in a series of six weekly 2 1/2 hour sessions. The six weekly sessions focus on the following topics:

- Increasing parents' awareness of the issues children face
- Improving participants' ability to communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sex
- Encouraging parenting practices that increase the chance that children will not engage in risk behaviors related to unhealthy relationships or sex

Parents who have participated in this program in community settings reported feeling more competent and comfortable addressing issues concerning sex with their child after completing all sessions.

The core content for each session is outlined below. Sessions should be conducted in order because each session builds on previous sessions. Sessions cover many topics and provide opportunities for the participants to learn and enhance skills.



# Introduction

## Session 1: Parents Make a Difference

- Understanding the purpose and goals of the program
- Introduction to the “Pyramid of Success” concept
- Understanding children and adolescents
- Pressures children face in today’s society
- What parents can do to help their children confront these issues
- Why this program focuses on children between 9- and 12-years-old
- The influence that parents have on their children

## Session 2: Parenting Positively

- Effective parenting practices
- Strengthening the parent-child relationship
- Improving parent-child communication
- Communication role-plays
- Supervision of children

## Session 3: Parents Are Educators

- The realities of adolescent relationships and sexual behaviors
- Why parents should be relationship and sex educators
- Sexual health information
- Parents can promote sexual health in their teens

## Session 4: I Think I Can, I Know I Can

- The difficulties of discussing relationships and sexual issues with your children
- Seven tips for parents to talk with their child about relationships and sex
- Role-playing
- Figuring out what to say
- When to say what

## Session 5: Parents Are Role Models

- Understanding healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Realities of unhealthy relationships
- Parents can promote healthy relationships

## Session 6: Moving Forward

- Parent-child exercise for the parent to practice effective communication skills
- Peer pressure
- Four-step parenting plan for peer pressure
- Parent-child exercise
- Program in review

## How to Use the Facilitator Guide

This facilitator guide provides detailed information on how to implement HeaRT for Parents. It includes information and tips for facilitators on ways to enhance facilitation skills. It also includes session guides that describe materials for each session, how much time to spend on each activity, and detailed instruction on how each activity should be conducted. Facilitators will use the facilitator guide to deliver each of the six group sessions. However, reading this manual is not sufficient preparation to facilitate HeaRT for Parents. Before delivering the program, facilitators must **complete the HeaRT Training for Facilitators** [<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/heart-facilitators>]. This training includes online education and in-person activities completed with your HeaRT Coach. Your HeaRT Coach or Prevention Lead can provide you with access to this training.

Ideally, two facilitators should work together to facilitate each group. When possible, we strongly suggest having both a male and a female facilitator. This approach provides parents with both male and female perspectives about parenting and allows for a richer experience. However, it is okay if your organization is not able to provide two facilitators, or if both facilitators are either male or female. If there are two facilitators, you should equally share responsibilities for conducting the sessions, setting up the room, and preparing the materials needed for each session. Before each session, agree how to divide the responsibilities (e.g., who is going to lead which sections, and who will record participant responses). You and your co-facilitator should meet after each session to debrief and discuss what worked, what did not work, concerns raised during the session that you will address later, and strategies to improve facilitation in the next session.

Your role as a facilitator is essential to the success of HeaRT for Parents. Below, you will find information and tips to help ensure successful delivery of this crucial information.

Session guides with the specific information you need to facilitate each session begin on page 13.

## Qualities of Effective Group Facilitators

### **As facilitators guide groups, they:**

- Provide a supportive learning environment
- Value what parents bring to the group
- Handle sensitive issues and conflicts
- Are nonjudgmental
- Know the influence of their own thoughts and expectations

### **Skilled communicators:**

- Facilitate discussion
- Observe and listen
- Are approachable
- Speak clearly
- Use words that are easily understood by participants

### **Facilitators display warmth as they:**

- Establish warm relationships with group members
- Speak well of everyone
- Like and trust group members rather than fear them
- Build trust with participants

### **Well organized facilitators:**

- Have objectives and goals clearly outlined
- Have information well categorized, so they can retrieve it in response to questions
- Acknowledge what they do not know (i.e., the facilitator is not always the expert)
- Use time well
- Have working knowledge of multimedia devices (e.g., laptop, projector)
- Prepare in advance

### **Enthusiastic facilitators:**

- Are enthusiastic about the content of the program
- Are enthusiastic about people
- Are enthusiastic about the process

### **Facilitators have the ability to conduct role-plays, which will:**

- Model skills taught
- Allow participants to practice those skills

## **Tips for Facilitators**

Here are some tips that contribute to the successful facilitation of HeaRT for Parents:

### **1. A clear and thorough understanding of the themes and messages of HeaRT for Parents is extremely important.**

While this program does not require that you read a lot of information to participants word-for-word, the topics, activities, and messages embedded in the materials throughout the manual are important. You should understand these points and emphasize them during sessions.

### **2. Be mindful that parents may have prior or current history with experiencing violence.**

Creating a respectful and non-judgmental environment is essential. Start by having the group set ground rules. This creates trust and safety in the group. Some of the participants in the group may have experienced, witnessed, or perpetrated violence or abuse, either in their own personal relationships, their friends' relationships, or their family relationships. Disclosure and discussion of the information in this program may be distressing for some group members. Thus, it is important to be aware of signs that participants are becoming uncomfortable or upset. If participants become uncomfortable or upset, you, as the facilitator, should recognize and normalize those feelings. If needed, speak with the participant(s) at the end of the group session.

### **3. Confidentiality of members of the group cannot be assured.**

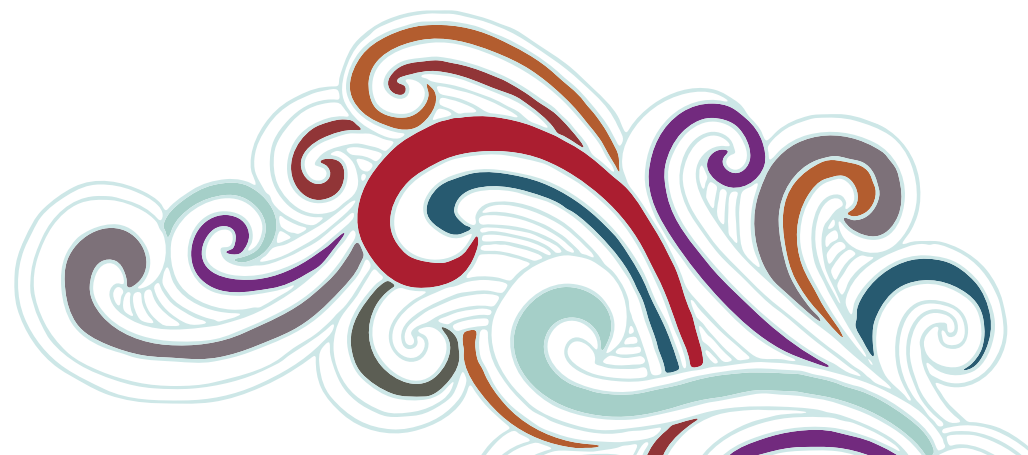
Although we would like to make sure that the information provided by individuals in the groups remains confidential and private, this cannot be assured in a group setting. Confidentiality and privacy can only be kept to the degree that each group member chooses not to share with others. This risk should be clearly communicated to individuals participating in the groups.

### **4. Time management strategies are crucial to cover the necessary material in each session.**

Some participants may want to spend excessive amounts of time discussing certain issues. While group discussion is welcome and invited, it becomes a problem when it interferes with getting through all the material for a session. As a facilitator, you need to ensure that time is managed well as participants move through the program. Each activity in the program has a suggested time allotment listed at the beginning of the activity. A suggested time allotment is also included for each part of the session. You can find these time allotments in the Session Overview or at the beginning of each new part in the program.

Use these strategies to limit group discussion and get through all of the session's material:

- Establish appropriate expectations in the first session. Emphasize the importance of discussion and the need to review all of the material for each session while discussing ground rules in Session 1.



- Refer to the ground rules during discussion, stressing the importance of getting through all material for a session. When needed, tell participants that it is time to move on to the next topic. Start by acknowledging the positive aspects of the discussion (e.g., “this is a great discussion” or “those are some great points”) and then inform participants that to get through all the material, talks need to move forward (e.g., “We have some additional points to cover and we need to move on.”). Ask for a volunteer to be the group’s time keeper.
- Develop a “Parking Lot” list. Ask the group if they want to put the topic/issue on the “Parking Lot” list (e.g., on a sheet of easel paper labeled “Parking Lot” and attached to the wall). If there is time at the end of the session, the group can go back to the Parking Lot and agree to discuss the topics/issues listed. Have post-it notes and pens available for participants to use.
- Impose a 1-minute rule to reduce discussion time (or to limit the domination of discussions by one or two participants). When the 1-minute rule is in effect, each parent is limited to 1 minute to make their point or express their view. If there are problems with parents adhering to the time limitation, ask a volunteer timekeeper to keep track of the time and signal when the person’s 1 minute is up.
- If one parent is continually dominating the discussion by interrupting others, impose a rule of one comment per person. When this rule is in effect, no person can comment again until all members of the group have had the opportunity to comment.

**5. Build on the existing skills, experiences, and knowledge of the participants. Don’t assume they are unskilled or inadequate.**

Each participant will come to the group with a different set of skills and experiences. Thus, it is important to focus on each participant’s individual strengths rather than their weaknesses. Try not to compare participants to each other.

**6. Set up the room so that parents can see each other.**

Arrange seating that will facilitate easy conversation between you and the participants, such as a semicircle, a U-shaped table, or a single table. This also makes it easier to see each of the group members and identify when group members look confused or disinterested.

**7. Do not act as the expert.**

Your role is to act as a guide and assist in the learning process. Although you should be well versed in parenting techniques and teen dating issues, some questions or situations raised by the participants might be new to you. In these cases, you may have to research information and respond to the participants in the next session. You could also ask other group members for ideas, opinions, and experiences related to the topic.

**8. Some facilitator self-disclosure is good and can be helpful in building rapport.**

You may choose to share some personal information with participants. For example, sharing personal stories about your experiences with parenting may make participants more comfortable sharing their stories and improve group cohesion. However, adding information or messages to the program such as religious views or personal values is not appropriate, as it may alienate participants with differing views or practices.

**9. Relax and have fun!**

One final tip is to have fun while implementing the material. If you are excited and enthusiastic about the material, it will be evident in your delivery. This will translate into enthusiasm and engagement by the participants.

## Managing Role-Plays

Role-plays allow participants an opportunity to practice the skills they learn in a session. The scenarios used in the role-plays are similar to situations participants may face at home with their children. You should be as involved during role-plays as you are in other parts of the session. When setting up role-play groups, avoid placing the same people together all the time. In some instances, you may need to model role-plays before asking participants to practice. This helps participants feel more comfortable before they try it themselves. Once participants start role-playing, you should circle through groups and provide positive and constructive guidance. For example, compliment participants for attempting to use new skills. Provide recommendations, if needed, about how participants can improve their skills. After the role-plays, bring the group back together, ask for examples of how they were able to use new skills, and discuss what worked and did not work.

## Addressing Personal Problems

Sometimes a participant may try to use the group to discuss personal problems. This type of discussion can dominate the group. Make sure the session does not become a personal therapy group by using the following approaches:

- Clarify expectations during the first session by talking about what the group “is not.”
- Use the Parking Lot. Participants can write their issues or questions on post-it notes and place them on the posted easel paper.
- Tell parents they can speak with facilitators during breaks or at the end of the session for additional information or assistance.
- When appropriate, provide a list of resources where parents can get information or assistance. Include this list in the parent handbook.
- When answering personal questions, be careful not to step outside of your area of expertise.
- When personal issues come up, in most cases other group members want

to move on, direct the parent the Parking Lot or simply say something like, “That seems really important to you. Why don’t you and I talk about that during the break?”

## Respecting Family Diversity

As we will be discussing thoughts and expectations around dating relationships and sex, participants may bring up their personal beliefs about marriage and sex. While parents and caregivers are encouraged to share their ideas with the group, some opinions may not support healthy relationships with their children. For example, an opinion that is disrespectful or discriminates against others based on their relationships or individual identity could be harmful to other participants or their relationship with their child. As a facilitator, it is your responsibility to ensure a safe and acceptive environment for all participants.

## Participant Retention

For participants to benefit fully from HeaRT for Parents, they will need to attend all sessions. The following things can be done before and during the program to encourage completion of all sessions:

- **Make sure the right people are recruited and registered.** The ideal parents:
  - » Are genuinely interested in what will be covered during the sessions.
  - » Are concerned for their children’s well-being.
  - » Believe that the program will benefit their family.
  - » Have at least one child in middle school.
- **Be organized and prepared.** Sessions must be well organized and easy to follow so that participants understand what they are doing and learning. This will help them to actively participate in the sessions and anticipate what comes next. This requires that you plan sessions in advance and have the room and materials ready when participants arrive.
- **Deliver the sessions as designed.** If the program is delivered as planned,

then meaningful content and session activity will increase retention. Participants will want to return if:

- » They feel they are gaining useful skills.
- » They get positive and productive reinforcement.
- » They can relate to their facilitator.
- » The delivery of sessions is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

- **Make it easy for people to attend.**

- » Create an atmosphere that makes people want to come back.
- » When necessary and possible, make arrangements for child care or transportation.
- » Consider light snacks or water for people who may come directly from work.
- » Find out when community events are and try to schedule around them.

## What to Do When a Participant Misses a Session

If participants miss a session without notification, contact them after the session to let them know that they were missed and casually find out why they missed the session.

If participants plan to return, they will need to learn what they missed. Share any homework assignments, so they will be prepared for the next session, and encourage them to contact their “buddy” (assigned in Session 1) to find out what was discussed during the session. If at all possible, provide opportunities for your participants to make up a missed session in one of the following ways:

1. Give the participant the option of joining a different group, preferably led by the same facilitators. (The participant should return to their original group for the rest of their sessions.)
2. Meet one-on-one to review material covered in the missed session. This should occur after the missed session but before the next

session. When conducting a one-on-one make-up session, be sure to cover all new material, such as video content, information, concepts, and homework assignments. Role-plays should be practiced together. Any handouts participants missed should be given to them at this time. You do not need to review question and answer sessions or icebreakers. On average, a one-on-one session make-up should take 30 minutes to an hour.

3. Add a make-up group session if several participants have missed a session. For instance, if a large number of participants miss Session 3, you may want to hold a make-up group session for those participants. Such a session could be held directly before the next session starts if you can accommodate it.
4. Conduct a make-up session over the phone. As a last resort, a make-up session can occur over the phone before participants continue on to the next session. When conducting a make-up session, be sure to cover all new material, including information, concepts, and homework assignments. If participants want to view the video or practice role-plays, this can be done at the next group session.

## Other Situations

If the participants want to continue in the program but cannot do so at the time of the current groups, place them on the waiting list for the next round of parent groups.

If participants are no longer interested in attending HearT for Parents sessions and do not plan to return, thank them for participating and provide information on future opportunities to participate in HearT for Parents or referrals that better meet their needs. Whenever possible, find out why participants lost interest in participating and discuss it with your HearT Coach.



## Using the Session Guides

In the session guides that follow, each activity is presented in an easy-to-follow format for use during sessions. The format of the sessions takes into consideration the different learning styles and preferences of adults. HeaRT for Parents uses a mixture of information sharing, review, discussion, video, role-plays, and group exercises. It uses both verbal and visual (e.g., easel paper, slides) presentation techniques.

### Session Preparation

The first page of each session guide includes key materials to help you prepare for the session. Here is an outline of what is included:

1. The first section includes a summary of the **purpose of the session**, or the key goals you will want to achieve during that session.
2. The second section includes **key messages**, or the essential “take-home” points. It is important to reinforce these messages throughout the session.
3. The third section lists the **materials** you will use during the session and how to prepare them. It is important that you review each session closely prior to facilitation and prepare the necessary materials. Some materials (e.g., cut-out materials) need to be prepared well in advance of the session. Other materials could be prepared several minutes before the session (e.g., preparing easel paper).
4. Finally, the fourth section details the **time allotments** for each part of the session.

### Scripts

Each session guide includes scripts for you to say at certain points. These scripts include important messages to deliver during the session to achieve session goals and objectives. **They do not need to be read verbatim and can be adapted to reflect your style and the needs of participants.** You should, however, clearly convey the messages and instructions contained within the scripts. This is especially important the first few times you deliver

a session. With practice, the phrasing used within the scripts will become more natural. Look for “SAY” or “ASK” in color, with lines before and after, to identify a script. An example of a script is below.

---

**SAY:** You each have a pie crust in front of you. You will divide the pie into pieces. Each piece of the pie will be an ingredient that you think is needed for great parenting and a good parent-child relationship. The things you consider more important for great parenting should be larger pieces of the pie. The pieces of the pie should be smaller for things you consider necessary, but less important for great parenting.

For example, maybe you think discipline is important, but you do not think it is as important as unconditional love. In this case, your love piece of the pie will be larger than your discipline piece.

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Some of the script boxes are long. If needed, pause to check-in with participants, answer questions, and provide appropriate examples.

**Remember, you are encouraged to rephrase messages and questions in several different ways to communicate intended messages.**

### Icons

We use icons throughout the facilitator guide to indicate specific types of information:



The estimated time allotted for a particular portion of a session.



Tips and Reminders. These are important reminders for you to take note of while conducting the session.



Slides are used throughout the program to provide a visual display of important points or facts. When the instructions call for you to reference a slide, an icon with the slide appears in the facilitator guide. Have the slides ready to be displayed to the group.



Videos are used throughout the program. When instructions call for you to play a video, an icon with the video number appears in the facilitator guide. Have the videos ready to be played to the group.



Refer participants to a page in their parent handbooks.



For some activities, we offer suggested adaptations you can make if you are hosting a session virtually instead of in-person.

### Easel Paper

Throughout the program, you are encouraged to write participant responses on easel paper. This helps participants who did not hear the response. Some individuals are also visual (as opposed to verbal) learners; writing information on easel paper ensures support for all learning styles.

### Videos

Videos are included in this program. Make sure you set up videos for screening before the session begins. Links to the videos (located on CDC's YouTube.com channel) are provided in this guide. Note that the videos are accessible only through the direct links provided and are not searchable on YouTube. The videos are also available in the Resources section of the HearRT for Parents Program Facilitator Training.

### Slides

PowerPoint slides will be used in all sessions. You will need a computer and projector to present slides to the group. If obtaining the equipment to present PowerPoint slides is a challenge in your setting, you can print copies of the slides and hand them out during the session. Slides are available on the HearRT website, along with other program materials.

## Materials Common to Every Session

You should have materials for each session prepped and ready ahead of time. Materials unique to each session are outlined in the Materials Needed section. Materials common to every session include:

- Parent Handbooks [including a copy for facilitator(s)]
- Printed copy of the slides for reference (optional)
- Pens, pencils, or markers
- Masking tape (for posting easel paper)
- Post-it notes
- Blank easel paper pad
- Computer and projector

## Appendices

Additional resources are included in an appendix at the end of the facilitator guide to assist you in delivering HearRT for Parents. The contents of the appendices include:

- Using Technology Safely
- Icebreakers
- Session Materials At A Glance
- Proverbs & Quotations

## Parent Handbook

Bring a personal copy of the parent handbook with you to each session. Consider bringing extra copies of the handbook as well, in case a parent forgets theirs.

## Local Data and Resource Lists

Ask your HearRT Coach for a list of state and local data on teen dating violence and adolescent sexual health and a handout with local resources for parents. You will need this information in Session 5.

## Adaptation Guidance for Virtual Implementation

Virtual learning is increasingly common. It can save money, time, and make it easier for participants to attend. Your community may find it helpful or necessary to implement one or more of the HeaRT youth and parent programs in a virtual classroom rather than in person. The following guidance is provided to help you adapt the in-person programs for virtual implementation.

Although the potential impact of virtual implementation on program effectiveness is unknown, the adaptations suggested here were designed to maintain essential elements of the program without compromising fidelity or efficacy. These adaptations primarily provide alternate options for delivery of the original content. To learn more about adapting evidence-based programs, see: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/adaptation-guidance/>.

### Tech Tips

There are many video conferencing platforms that can be used for virtual program implementation, and many people are now more familiar with their use after the shift of many workplaces and schools to online instruction. Popular platforms include Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting, and WebEx. Each platform has different features that can be useful when implementing HeaRT for Parents programs online. Here we highlight some features that might be available in your video conferencing software and other tips for implementing online.

**Screen Share** allows participants to see your screen and is usually the best way to share slides, images, or videos. Participants will see everything that you see.

**Polls** are useful for engaging participants in discussions and the material. Instead of asking participants to raise their hands, consider doing a quick poll and then seeing the results pop up on the screen for discussion.

**Breakout rooms** are available in some programs and allow you to divide the class into small groups for discussions or work on activities together.

With youth, you may want to have extra facilitators on hand to supervise each of the small groups.

**Videos** can be helpful ways to break up program content and engage participants. This may be especially useful for online implementation, which can be challenging to attend to continuously for some participants. HeaRT for Parents programs include video content in some sessions as part of the core content; all are available for viewing through YouTube. Facilitators may choose to supplement the sessions with additional short, appropriate video clips, like funny cat videos, to keep the group's attention and lighten the mood. Showing videos through video conferencing platforms can pose some technical challenges to be aware of. For example, when a video is displayed on the host's screen and shared, users may experience buffering or sound transmission issues. One solution can be posting a link to the video in the chat and allowing muted users to open and view the video on their own screen before returning to the group session.

**Whiteboards** are screens that allow the host and/or participants to type, draw, or insert images on the screen for everyone to see. They can be used in place of slides or a real-life whiteboard in a classroom to convey program content. They can also be used as a fun way for participants to share ideas and answers to discussion questions.

**Chat boxes** are screens that allow the host and/or participants to type, draw, or insert images on the screen for everyone to see. They can be used in place of slides or a real-life whiteboard in a classroom to convey program content. They can also be used as a fun way for participants to share ideas and answers to discussion questions.

## General Program Adaptations

### Virtual Implementation Tips

Below are some general tips for implementing online that can be applied across multiple sessions and programs. These specific options may or may not be available on your video conferencing platform; they are provided here as example approaches to adapt in-person activities for online use.

### **Question of the Day & Icebreakers**

Instead of using easel paper for Questions of the Day and Icebreaker discussions, have a PowerPoint slide with questions/icebreakers and try using the whiteboard, chat box, or poll functions.

### **Parking Lot**

Create a blank PowerPoint slide or Word document titled “Parking Lot” in a separate file. When issues arise that need to be “parked”, pull up this slide or document on Screen Share and allow the participants to watch you add the item to this list. When there is extra time at the end of a session, pull this file up and let the group decide which item(s) to revisit with more discussion. This is also a good place to document questions that you cannot address during the session (e.g., you need to look up the answer or consult with your Coach). It will prompt you to return with a response during the next meeting.

### **Group Agreements/Ground Rules**

During the first session when creating Group Agreements, type the agreed-upon “rules” into a blank PowerPoint slide. After the first session, you can add some formatting or fun graphics. You can then pull this slide up as a quick reminder at the beginning of each session or just leave it shared on your screen while you wait for all of the participants to arrive so everyone will have a chance to review it.

### **Handouts**

Handouts and other print materials can be shared with participants in print form by mail before the program starts, by email for self-printing, and/or the facilitator can share their screen during the session to show the handout and ask participants to use a notebook to record their answers or responses. Some handouts can also be replaced with PowerPoint slides that provide the prompts for discussion or self-reflection.

### **Prizes**

Some program sessions suggest providing participants with small prizes to incentivize participation or as rewards for completing activities. Instead of physical prizes, consider using the clapping feature (available on Zoom), awarding ‘points’ that can be exchanged for extra credit or a special privilege at the end of the program, or choosing a “HeaRT MVP of the Day”

to highlight at the end of every session for their contributions that day.

### **Easel Paper**

Easel paper is used regularly for in-person implementation. Instead, discussion or activity prompts can be displayed on a PowerPoint slide (see below) or using the whiteboard feature. In place of writing participants responses on easel paper to record them, consider having participants type them on to a whiteboard while you read them aloud to the group as they appear. You can then ask participants to elaborate on a few of the most relevant or interesting responses, making it easier to control the time spent on the activity (e.g., “I see that Alicia wrote this response. Would you mind telling us more about that, Alicia?”).

### **PowerPoint slides**

A set of editable PowerPoint slides are provided to make it easier to prepare to present some content using slides and the screen share feature in place of a chalkboard, easel paper, or physical whiteboard. HeaRT Coaches may wish to edit and prepare the final slides for use by facilitators to increase consistency and tailor the content to the desired mode of delivery for each session or activity.

### **Plan Ahead to Be Prepared**

Adapting to virtual implementation will require some extra planning before each session, as the specific guidance provided in the facilitator handbooks will not always apply. Be sure to spend some time looking through each session to be sure you know how participants will access or view materials and prompts, how they will respond and share, and whether activities will need to be modified.



Suggested adaptations for selected activities are included throughout the facilitator handbook indicated by the virtual implementation icon.

# Session 1: Parents Make a Difference

## Purpose of Session

1. Provide an understanding of the purpose and goals of the program.
2. Establish a comfortable, non-threatening learning and discussion environment that will encourage continued participation.
3. Provide basic information on child and adolescent development.
4. Emphasize parents' influence on their child's health and decision-making.
5. Call attention to the role of parents in helping youth realize their life goals.

## Key Messages

1. Children and adolescents face many issues, such as early sexual activity, that can prevent them from being successful in life.
2. Children at this age are exposed to many messages about relationships and sex. They are starting to form their own beliefs. It is important for parents to have their own messages too.
3. Because children are exposed to relational and sexual issues at an early age, parents must start addressing these issues with their children between the ages of 9 and 12.
4. Although many things influence children, parents can influence children and the decisions they make. Parents make a difference.

## Materials Needed

- Posters 1–5
- Session 1 PowerPoint slides
- Videos 1–2

## Preparation

- Arrange seating to facilitate easy conversation between facilitators and parents.
- Put Posters 1–5 on the wall, so they are visible to participants.
- Set up the computer and projector with Session 1 slides.

- Prepare equipment needed to view videos. Cue video 1.
- Prepare easel paper titled “Parking Lot” and put to the side or near the back of the room.
- Place a Post-it notepad somewhere accessible to participants.
- Prepare easel paper page with the following bullets:
  - » Your first name?
  - » Your favorite food?
- Prepare second easel paper page with the following bullets:
  - » Where were you born?
  - » Where do you live?
  - » How many children do you have?
  - » Tell me something about your child (age, sex, etc.)
  - » Why did you decide to participate in HearT for Parents?
- Prepare easel paper page with Mapping Risk for Early Sexual Activity Exercise (see page 5 in the parent handbook).



## Session Overview

Today's session will cover the following topic areas:

Part 1: Opening (5 minutes).....	14
Part 2: Goals of HearT for Parents (5 minutes).....	14
Part 3: Overview of Sessions (5 minutes) .....	15
Part 4: Ground Rules and Expectations (10 minutes).....	16
Part 5: Icebreaker (15 minutes).....	17
Part 6: Pyramid of Success (15 minutes).....	17
Part 7: Understanding Pre-teens and Teens (27 minutes).....	18
Part 8: Pressures Children Will Face (25 minutes)...	20
Part 9: What Can Parents Do? (5 minutes).....	23
Part 10: Why Focus on Children 9- to 12-Years Old? (15 minutes)...	23
Part 11: Session Recap (15 minutes)...	25

## Part 1: Opening



1. Welcome parents and introduce yourself and the co-facilitator (if applicable).
2. Go around the room and ask each participant to state their first name.
3. Introduce HeaRT for Parents.

---

**SAY:** Over the next 6 weeks, we will give you information about ways to reduce the chances that your children will engage in unhealthy relationships and other risky behaviors. HeaRT for Parents is designed to give you the knowledge, comfort, skills, and confidence to discuss healthy relationships and related issues with your children.

---

4. Distribute parent handbooks and explain how they will be used.

---

**SAY:** These handbooks are yours to keep. They have information we will cover in the sessions and space for you to take notes. The handbooks include worksheets you will complete in the program. We will refer to the handbook frequently during each session, so please bring them with you.

---

## Part 2: Goals of HeaRT for Parents



1. Facilitate an overview and brief discussion of the goals of HeaRT using the “Goals of Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents” slides and Posters 1–3.

Read and discuss the first goal of HeaRT - learn how to become better health teachers for our children.



---

**SAY:** Throughout this program, we will refer to different quotations. Each one has a message related to the session, but they can be interpreted in many ways. There are no wrong answers.

---

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**ASK:** Here is the first example on Poster 1. This poster says: “You are your child’s most important teacher.” What does this mean to you?

This is the rationale for why parents matter. Not only are parents the first teachers for their children, they are also the most important teachers of life’s lessons. One of the goals of HeaRT for Parents is to learn how to become better health teachers for our children.

---

**ASK:** Let’s look at Poster 2. “You must have a message, too.” What does this mean to you?

Children are bombarded with messages about sex and portrayals of unhealthy relationships. Parents must have a message to counterbalance these messages. Many things outside the home influence children and their choices.

---



---

**ASK:** Let's look at Poster 3. "If you want to know the end, look at the beginning." What does this mean to you?

Parents have an opportunity now to influence decisions their children will make later about relationships and sex.

---

2. Read and discuss the second goal of HeaRT - learn how to help our children cope with messages about relationships and sex that may not be good for them.



**TIP!** Think ahead about some recent examples of violent or sexualized media that might resonate with the parents in your group. Ask parents for examples.

---

**SAY:** Even young children receive many messages about sex. For example, [give some examples from TV or radio, such as sexually explicit songs or videos]. Children are also exposed to models of unhealthy relationships. For example, [give some examples from TV or radio, such as lyrics from songs or videos, celebrities, athletes, or other well-known people assaulting partners]. When we don't talk to our children about relationships and sex, we let other influences have control. *You must have a message, too.*

---

3. Read and discuss the second goal of HeaRT - build our knowledge and skills so we can communicate our expectations about relationships and sex to our children.

---

**SAY:** The purpose of the program is not to judge or tell others what is right or wrong. People have different views. There isn't one right view. Our role as facilitators is to support you to promote healthy viewpoints with your children.

---

4. Read and discuss the second goal of HeaRT - provide you with information you can share with others in your family.

---

**ASK:** Let's look at Poster 4. What does "He who learns, teaches" mean to you?

Researchers have found that when we teach information to others, it actually helps us remember it better. Do you have any family or friends you could share information from HeaRT for Parents with?

---

5. Remind parents that having fun and enjoying time together is an important part of HeaRT.

## Part 3: Overview of Sessions



1. Introduce the sessions using the "Overview of Sessions" slides.

---

**SAY:** Now we're going to take a look at what will be discussed during each of the six sessions.

---

2. Provide a short overview of sessions.

## Part 4: Ground Rules and Expectations



1. Introduce the concept of ground rules and expectations to the group.

---

**SAY:** We want to make sure that HeaRT for Parents is a safe environment where everyone feels respected. The topics discussed might be difficult or uncomfortable to discuss in a group setting. You may want to share personal or sensitive information. When people come together in situation like this, it is important to have a common understanding of how the group will work.

One way to do this is by setting “ground rules,” which everyone agrees to respect and follow. Since we are a group and will work together, let’s make the “ground rules” together. I will start with a suggestion. For example, it is important that we get through all the material for each session. Discussion is important, but there may be times when I limit the length of our discussions, so we can cover all the material. Is everyone ok with this being one of our rules?

If participants are okay with this rule, write the rule on easel paper prepared with “Ground Rules” at the top.

Write participant responses on easel paper. Encourage participants to also write the rules in their parent handbook on page 3.



---

**Note:** Post the rules on the wall and review with participants at the beginning of each group session.

2. If the following ground rules are not included, ask the participants if they should be added:

- **Respect each other’s privacy.** Although we would like to make sure that the information provided by individuals in the group remains confidential and private, this cannot be assured in a group setting. Confidentiality and privacy can be kept to the degree that group members choose not to share with others. Thus, to protect each other’s privacy, we will not repeat any personal issues discussed in the group sessions.
- **We have the right to our point of view.** We will all respect each other and our different points of view. We will not be critical of each other. If you disagree with something, focus on the idea and not the person who said it.
- **Everyone deserves to be heard.** We will not interrupt others when they are speaking.
- **We will strive to be supportive and encouraging of each other.**
- **There is no such thing as a stupid question or one “right” answer for any parenting question.** Each family is unique, and each participant should be honored. Everyone is attending the group to find good ways of working within their families, but each family may have different solutions.
- **Attendance at all sessions is important and expected.**
- **No use of cell phones during sessions.** All cell phones will be muted to prevent interruptions.

3. Review expectations:

- Specific times the group will begin and end each week.
- Location for the group meeting each week.
- Group members should arrive on time. However, parents are busy people. If they are late sometimes, that is okay.
- Reiterate sessions will end on time.
- Convey any applicable information about childcare and/or transportation.

#### 4. Explain the Parking Lot.

---

**SAY:** There will be times where we need to cut the conversation short. When this happens, we can write the topic on the “Parking Lot” list [point to the Parking Lot easel paper] and return to it at the end of the session or at the end of the last session. You also have space at the end of your handbook to write down topics you want to return to.

---

## Part 5: Icebreaker



1. Facilitate a two-part icebreaker so participants get to know each other (names, children, and why they chose to participate in the program). Use the icebreakers below or select another from Appendix E.
2. Explain part 1 of the icebreaker.

**Virtual Option** - To keep everyone in order for the icebreaker during virtual implementation, add the participants’ names to a slide and ask them to remember the favorite food of everyone before them on the list, in order.



---

**SAY:** Everyone, including facilitators, will participate in this next activity to get to know each other. First, each person will state their first name and favorite food. Then the next person will repeat that information and add their name and favorite food. Each person that follows has to repeat everything said before, adding their information. As we go around the room, it will be harder to remember all the information given. We should help each other.

Select one person to start and indicate the order to follow (e.g., “Let’s

go around the table”). Facilitators should go last.

Reduce frustration by interjecting and asking for help (e.g., “Can anyone help?”) as participants get stuck.

---

#### 3. Explain part 2 of the icebreaker.

---

**SAY:** We’re going to learn a little more about each other in this next part. [Point to the prepared easel paper that has the four icebreaker questions.] We’ll go around the room, and each person will answer the four questions posted.

Go around the room and let each participant answer the four questions on the prepared easel paper.

---

#### 4. Thank everyone for their participation.

## Part 6: Pyramid of Success



1. Use the answers participants shared about why they chose to participate in HeaRT for Parents to introduce Video 1 (e.g., “Many of you indicated that you chose to participate in HeaRT for Parents because you want to protect your child...”).



---

**SAY:** We’re going to watch a video of young people talking about some of their expectations, hopes, and goals. Parents have many roles. One of those roles is to guide your children in ways that will help them achieve their goals.

Show [Video 1 : Kids Discuss Their Goals in Life](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J7nQ9tCWzY) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J7nQ9tCWzY>).

---

2. Facilitate group discussion.

---

**ASK:** In the video, what goals did the youth have?

How similar or different are the goals expressed in the video from those of your children?

What goals do you have for your children?

---

- Instill a sense of cultural pride.
- 

---

**SAY:** HeaRT for Parents helps children achieve their life goals and avoid risky behaviors that can divert them from their path to success. Even if your children have already engaged in risky behaviors, you have the opportunity to redirect their path and help them achieve success.

---

## Activity: Pyramid of Success

3. Introduce and explain the Pyramid of Success.

Show the “Pyramid of Success” slides.



---

**SAY:** The pyramid is based on research with children and adolescents. It illustrates that certain characteristics are important for children to achieve their goals in life. Turn to page 3 in your handbooks to see the Pyramid of Success.



Review the goals and describe the child characteristics.

---

5. Make a clear link between adolescent choices and accomplishing life’s goals using the pyramid.

---

**SAY:** There’s a link between the choices children make and accomplishing life’s goals. For example, children who have good school and study habits are more likely to get a good education and a good job.

---

4. Facilitate group discussion.

---

**ASK:** What can parents do now, during childhood and adolescence, to help children achieve their life goals?

List responses on easel paper. Provide examples as needed, such as:

- Be actively involved in the child’s life.
- Talk about goals and ambitions with children.
- Help children feel good about who they are.

## Part 7: Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers



1. Introduce next topic.

---

**SAY:** In order for children to reach their life goals, parents must understand what their children are experiencing. Now is a critical time, as children approach adolescence, for parents to have a better understanding of the changes their children are going through. Children do not suddenly become adolescents. It is a

process, and children between ages 9 and 12 have already started this process.

---

**ASK:** What kinds of changes have you seen in your own children? For example, changes in their relationships with other children, behaviors, attitudes, and emotional and physical changes.

Write responses on easel paper.

---

2. Using responses generated by participants and the “Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers” slides, discuss issues children face through the coming years.



**ASK:** (“Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Emotional Changes” slide) **What emotional changes have you observed in your child?**

---

**ASK:** (“Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Relational Changes” slide) **What have you heard your child say or do to show that friends are becoming important?**

---

**SAY:ASK:** (“Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Physical Changes” and “Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Sexual Changes” slide) **What changes have you seen in your children—in the way they dress, act, or look? Although your child’s friendships with their peers will change, and they may begin forming and**

exploring new relationships, it is important for you to stay close to your child and spend time together. Remember, parents can still make a difference.

---

**SAY:** (“Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Parents Make a Difference” slide) **Think of any personal experiences from your own adolescence related to feeling unique and misunderstood.**

Ask volunteers to share experiences.

---

**SAY:** (“Understanding Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Parents Make a Difference” slide) **Although your child’s friendships with their peers will change, and they may begin forming and exploring new relationships, it is important for you to stay close to your child and spend time together. Remember, parents can still make a difference.**

---

3. Wrap up this section.
- 

**SAY:** By 6th grade, most young people have started to experience sexual development, such as breast and genital development, periods, and erections and sexual arousal. Some may have experimented with masturbation. Children at this age are also experiencing changes in their social relationships and may begin spending extra time with individuals they find attractive.

These experiences provide opportunities for parents to talk to children to help them understand better what is happening in their changing bodies and relationships with others. This, in turn, helps

parents establish open lines of communication with their children to continue talking about sex and dating with them.

Refer participants to page 4 in their handbooks for the information you just covered.



## Activity: Buddy Cards

4. Introduce the buddy concept. Give participants the option to identify a “buddy” for the remaining sessions.

**Virtual Option** - Ask for volunteers in case some parents know each other, but otherwise, you can assign buddies since it would be difficult for parents to connect one-on-one during a virtual session to pair up. Use breakout rooms or private meeting links to connect buddies.



**SAY:** We have the option to identify a “buddy” for the remaining sessions. A buddy is another parent in the class you can connect with to discuss the issues raised in each session in the days following the session. Buddies may also call each other to remind one another about session dates or check in if their buddy has missed a session.

**ASK:** Is this something everyone would like to do?

5. If participants decide to select buddies, explain what to do next.

**SAY:** Great! Buddy cards are located on page 6 in your handbooks. When you select a buddy, write down your contact information on the buddy card in their handbook and your buddy should write down their contact in your handbook. As you learn more about each other, start thinking about who your buddy can be. We’re about to take a break, you can use this time to talk with each other to help you identify a buddy.



— Break (10 minutes) —

(If participants have opted to select buddies, remind them that they can use this time to identify a buddy.)

## Part 8: Pressures Children Will Face



1. Introduce [Video 2 : Pressures Teens Will Face](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqWSQhLNKKU) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqWSQhLNKKU>.)



**SAY:** Next, we are going to watch a video of young people talking about what it is like to be a teen and the kinds of pressures they face, including pressures related to sex and relationships. It also highlights how important it is for parents to guide their children through this challenging stage.

Play the video.

2. Facilitate group discussion.

**ASK:** What were some of the pressures the teens in the video



talked about?

Possible answers include: peer pressure, fitting in, dating.

---

**SAY:** Children and teens also face a lot of pressure from the media. Children are bombarded with references to inappropriate or unhealthy relationships, sex, and drugs through movies, television, radio, music, magazines, newspapers, billboards, and the internet.

See Appendix C for guidance on responding to parent concerns about the internet and refer parents to page 34–36 in their parent handbooks.



- 
3. Facilitate a discussion on music and images that participants remember from their childhood. Be prepared to provide examples from your own experiences.

---

**ASK:** What do you remember about music and media related to sex and relationships from your teen years?

How does that compare with the kind of music and images you see these days in terms of sexual content or other things?

- 
4. Summarize discussion.

---

**SAY:** Given all the influences children face, it is encouraging that many of them are making good choices. The purpose of this group is to help parents help their children make good choices.

Refer to Poster 2, *You must have a message too*.

---

## Activity: Mapping Risk for Early Sexual Activity

**Virtual Option** - Use the supplementary slide to introduce the activity. Ask parents to brainstorm and add ideas to a whiteboard for each question. They can first spend a few minutes writing ideas in their handbook.



- 
5. Introduce the Mapping Risk for Early Sexual Activity exercise. Refer participants to page 5 in their handbooks.



---

**SAY:** Early sexual activity is related to many things. It can prevent children from achieving their life goals. This next exercise will help us to see what factors relate to early sexual activity and how our children's plans may be affected.

- 
6. Use the prepared easel paper and ask participants to brainstorm reasons that an adolescent would become sexually active.

---

**ASK:** What are some reasons that an adolescent would become sexually active?

Fill in the ovals on the diagram, above “Early Sexual Activity”, with participant responses (choose at least three mentioned by group and add to the diagram; examples below) see Mapping Risk for Early Sexual Activity template for hints).

Possible Reasons for Becoming Sexually Active:

- Drug/Alcohol Use

- Peer Pressure
- Sexual Development/Interest
- Sexual Coercion
- Poor Emotional Health/Self Esteem
- Unhealthy Relationships

**7. Draw arrows to show the relationship between the reasons given and early sexual activity.**

Draw arrows between the reasons given to show their relationship with each other (e.g., Peer Pressure → Drug/Alcohol Use → Early Sexual Activity). Multiple arrows can come and go from each oval.

Draw additional ovals as necessary.

If participants do not mention alcohol or other drug use, ask parents if alcohol or other drug use would be a factor. Then, facilitate a brief discussion regarding the relationship between alcohol and other drug use and sexual activity.

**ASK:** What are some ways that alcohol and drug use might contribute to unwanted or unsafe sexual behavior?

If not mentioned, note that alcohol and drugs are related to sexual activity in several ways:

- In some cases, alcohol or drugs can be used to coerce someone into engaging in sex when they do not want to—either by intentionally reducing their inhibitions and in some cases, alcohol or drugs can be used to coerce someone into engaging in sex when they do not want to—either by intentionally reducing the coerced person’s inhibitions and their control of the situation, or by assaulting them while they are incapacitated (e.g., passed out, too high or drunk to consent) while they are incapacitated (e.g., passed out, too high or drunk to consent). This is sexual violence, and when perpetrated by a dating partner, it is a form of teen dating violence.

- Alcohol and drugs can also contribute to risky sexual behavior—without coercion or force—by reducing inhibitions and impairing one’s judgment and ability to consider the consequences and risks of their behavior, such as pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.
- Although people who perpetrate of sexual violence often use alcohol, it is important to remember that alcohol does not excuse or justify their behavior. Alcohol typically only increases sexual aggression among those with other risk factors for violence. It does not cause sexual violence.

**8. After identifying reasons an adolescent would become sexually active, discuss consequences of early sexual behavior. Facilitate a brief discussion on the short- and long-term consequences of children engaging in risky sexual behaviors and how those consequences can make goal attainment more difficult.**

**ASK:** What are some short- and long-term consequences of early and risky sexual behavior? How might those consequences impact a child’s life goals? [Add consequences to map diagram].

Make sure that the following are included on the map:

- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Dropping out of school

Other possible consequences of early sexual activity:

- Emotional health problems
- Unhealthy relationships
- Higher risk for sexual violence victimization or perpetration

Draw arrows to show how some of these consequences link to each other (e.g., pregnancy and not finishing school).

Draw arrows from the identified factors to the final node, the oval—Difficulty in Achieving Life Goals.

---

9. Summarize activity.

---

**SAY:** This exercise helped focus attention on how risky behavior can impact your child's life, now and later. We will discuss these issues in more detail over the remaining sessions.

---

## Part 9: What Can Parents Do?



1. Bridge previous discussions and activities with actions parents can take.

---

**SAY:** So far, we have looked at the pressures children face as they get older. In the video, we saw how one person's decisions had big consequences. In an exercise, we examined how early sexual behaviors can affect children's attainment of their goals. All of this shows that your children will have to make some difficult decisions as they grow up.

---

2. Emphasize what parents can do.

---

**SAY** Remember—children with parents involved in their lives tend to make good decisions. Parents can act as health promoters. Remember, parents make a difference!

---

3. Remind participants of the purpose of this group.

---

**SAY** You are here to help your children move up the pyramid of success—to reach the goals you have for them and the goals they have for themselves. To reach their goals, children must make good decisions about things like sexual activity and relationships. You, as parents, can help your children make good decisions.

Many parents either avoid having discussions with their children about healthy relationships and sex or take approaches that are not effective, such as lecturing. You should model healthy relationships for your children and talk to them about what is important in a relationship.

Over the six sessions, you will have an opportunity to gain knowledge, comfort, skills, and confidence. These are the tools you need to talk with your children about relationships and sex.

---

## Part 10: Why Focus on Children 9- to 12-Years-Old?



1. Introduce next topic.

**Note:** While HeaRT for Parents is focused on parents of 6th graders, the original Parents Matter! program addressed 9- to 12-year-olds. Most of the program content applies to this broader age group as well. You may need to provide this context to parents to explain the focus of this section on 9–12 year olds.

---

**ASK:** Why do you think parents should start addressing adolescent risk behaviors with children as young as 9-12?

Record responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned, point out the following:

- Adolescence is a period of many changes.
- Many sources influence adolescents.
- You have a better chance of protecting children from risks if you address the risks before sexual activity starts.

Discuss additional reasons to focus on children between 9 and 12 years old using the “Why Focus on Children 9- to 12- Years Old?” slides. Show and briefly discuss each slide. Refer parents to page 5 in their handbook for the same information.



- 
- 2.** Discuss how children are exposed to sexual messages in their everyday lives and why it is important to start addressing relationship and sexual behaviors early on.

---

**SAY:** Children are exposed to messages about relationships and sex through their friends, music, television, social media, video games, and other media. Sexual content is everywhere and often times, the messages can be inappropriate. By age 9, children are already exposed to these messages. It is important to start addressing adolescent risks by ages 9 to 12, at the latest. Earlier is even better! That way, you can provide your children with correct information about relationships and sexuality before they learn about it from someone else. However, most of your children are at the upper end of this age range and have likely received information about relationships and sex already. Some may have

already engaged in risky behaviors. Know that it is not too late! Talk to your children to make sure the information they have is correct and they are aware of risks.

---

- 3.** Ask parents for examples of images, media, or even news stories related to sexual behavior or relationship violence (for example, celebrity relationships, examples of violence in relationships or sexual violence in the news; movies or TV plot lines; and music) that they know their children have been exposed to.

---

**ASK:** What messages about violence and sexuality are your children receiving from these sources or stories?

What messages do you want to share with your children instead to counter those influences?

---



**TIP!** You can prepare a visual aid for this discussion by finding clips of music videos, images from movies and reality TV shows, images from video games, any other examples of sexual content in the media that children may be exposed to.

- 4.** Facilitate a discussion about how these images can affect youth decision making by asking the following questions:

---

**ASK:** What might happen if parents and caregivers aren't sharing accurate information? How might regularly seeing and hearing this information affect their decisions about sex and relationships?

Youth may feel a lot of pressure to engage in sex and dating. That

social pressure increases as kids get older, spend more time with their peers, and take in media or societal messages. You cannot prevent your children from being exposed to all negative messages from their peers or society. The best way to balance the steady stream of information is with supervision and regular conversations that convey your support and expectations.

---

**5.** Conclude the discussion.

---

**SAY:** Children are exposed to messages regarding relationships and sex at very young ages. This can lead to inappropriate assumptions about healthy relationships. That's why it's important to address these risks early and talk to your children about your thoughts and expectations. We have discussed the important role parents play in protecting children from relationship and sexual risks.

---

## Part 11: Session Recap



1. Review the rationale for HeART for Parents. Direct the group's attention to Poster 5, Pyramid of Success.

---

**SAY:** We're going to take another look at the Pyramid of Success poster. Parents need to build a good foundation so that their children can reach their life goals. Parents also need to equip children with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices.

Sexual risk behaviors and unhealthy relationships can make it difficult for children to succeed. Children at this age are exposed

to many messages about relationships and sex. They are starting to form their own beliefs. [Point to the Mapping Risk for Early Sexual Activity completed earlier]

---

---

**SAY:** As parents, you need to communicate your messages about relationships and sex through your words and actions. This program focuses on helping you communicate your message to your children.

---

2. Facilitate a brief review. Go around the room and ask participants for one take-home message.

---

**SAY:** What was one take-home message from our session today?

Record responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned, add the following:

- Early sexual activity and engagement in unhealthy relationships can prevent youth from being successful in life.
- Parents must have a message, because children are exposed to many messages about relationships and sex.
- Children are exposed to messages about relationships and sex early, so parents should start addressing these issues when their children are between 9 and 12 years old.
- Pre-teens are beginning to form their own beliefs about relationships and sex. Parents should also share their thoughts and expectations.
- Parents have influence and can use it to protect their children from risk.

Remind participants to pair up with a buddy and complete their "buddy

cards” if the class decided to use a buddy system. Instruct pairs of buddies to contact each other between sessions to discuss issues and questions raised in the session.

---

3. Review the homework assignment with participants.

---

**SAY:** Between each session, we are going to ask you to complete some “homework” in your handbook. The homework provides you with an opportunity to think about some of the issues discussed in today’s session.

On page 6 in your parent handbooks, you will see five questions to think about for discussion next session.



4. Refer participants to Posters 1–4 and reiterate the purpose of this group.

---

**SAY:** Remember that you are here to learn to be better teachers for your children, because parents make a difference!

Does anyone have any questions from today’s session? [If time, check the Parking Lot for questions.]

---

5. Close the session.

---

**SAY** Thank you for attending the first session of HeaRT for Parents. We hope to see everyone back at the next session. Remember that the next session is located at (location of session) at (time of session).

---





# Session 2: Parenting Positively

## Purpose of Session

Teach positive parenting and communication skills that foster and reinforce risk reduction.

## Key Messages

1. Parents can strengthen the parent-child relationship by paying attention to their child's positive behavior, encouraging their child, and spending time with their child.
2. Parents can improve parent-child communication through listening, using open-ended questions, using "I" messages, and expressing openness to other viewpoints.
3. Parents should supervise older children closely by knowing where they are going, who they will be with, and when they will be home.

## Materials Needed

- Posters 3, 5, and 6
- Session 2 PowerPoint slides
- Videos 3-5

## Preparation

- Arrange seating.
- Put Posters 3, 5, and 6 on the wall, so they are visible to participants.
- Prepare equipment needed to view videos. Cue video 3.
- Prepare easel paper with the following homework assignment review questions:

- » What are the characteristics of healthy relationships you model for your children?
- » Which characteristics do you value and/or do you want your child to expect in a relationship?
- » Are there aspects of your current or former relationships you want your child to avoid?
- » What term(s) does your child use to describe their relationships with others?
- » What term(s) does your child use to describe relationships where there is a romantic interest in the other person?
- Set up the computer and projector with Session 2 slides.

## Session Overview

Today's session will cover the following topic areas:

Part 1: Opening (10 minutes).....	28
Part 2: Review and Introduction (10 minutes).....	28
Part 3: Effective Parenting Practices (15 minutes) .....	29
Part 4: Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship and Communication (60 minutes) .....	30
Part 5: Supervision (25 minutes).....	35
Part 6: Session Recap (10 minutes).....	37

## Part 1: Opening



1. Welcome participants back.
2. Introduce icebreaker (or select an icebreaker from Appendix E).

---

**SAY:** Let's go around the room and get to know each other a little better.

Go around the group and ask people to give their names.

Also ask the respondents to share something they enjoy doing with their 6th grader (e.g., cooking, sports, a hobby). Repeat until everyone has shared some activity they enjoy doing with their child.

---

3. After all participants have shared, ask if anyone thinks they can remember everyone's name and what they like doing with their child. Ask them to give it a try and cheer them on! Provide assistance if they get stuck. If no participants volunteer, ask for collective input from participants.

## Part 2: Review and Introduction



1. Briefly review Ground Rules.
2. Facilitate review of Session 1.

Refer participants to Poster 3, *If you want to know the end, look at the beginning*.

---

**ASK:** What do you think this proverb means?

Have a few volunteers respond.

---

---

**SAY:** Parents have an opportunity now to influence decisions their children will make later, including decisions about relationships and sexual behavior.

---

---

**ASK:** What discussion topics from Session 1 were consistent with the message of this proverb?

Possible answers include:

- The importance of parents talking to their children before they become sexually active and involved in relationships.
- Children are exposed to messages about relationships and sex at very young ages.

Write responses on easel paper.

---

3. Refer participants to Poster 5, Pyramid of Success.

---

**SAY:** Parenting is important to help children be successful, make good decisions, and develop characteristics that help them reach their goals.

---



4. Ask participants to share their experiences with the homework assignment from Session 1.

---

**ASK:** What values or behaviors of healthy relationships do you model for your child? What do you want your child to expect in a healthy romantic relationship?

What terms does your child use to describe their relationships with others? What about for romantic or dating relationships?

The goal of the last question is to find out how the child refers to dating partners, like a boyfriend.

---

## Part 3: Effective Parenting Practices



1. Introduce Session 2 topics—the importance of parent-child communication and effective parenting.

Refer participants to Poster 6, *Talking to one another is loving one another*.

---

**ASK:** What do you think this proverb means?

---

---

**SAY:** Communication is a critical part of being a parent. When parents are willing to listen actively to their children, they show their children they are special and loved. Session 2 covers how to listen and communicate more effectively with your children. We will discuss strategies to help you protect your children from engaging in risky behaviors.

---

2. Set up [Video 3 : How Are Your Parents Important to You?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-3SDPpyEBs) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-3SDPpyEBs>).



---

**SAY:** Many people think that as children grow older, they need parents less, but in reality they may need parents more.

We know that parents protect and guide their young children through dangers in the home by keeping their toddlers away from poison, stairs, and hot stovetops. But as children grow older, parents also need to protect and guide their teens through dangers outside the home by keeping their teens away from drugs, gang influences, unhealthy relationships with friends or partners, and risky sexual behavior.

This next video shows children and teens discussing the important role parents play in their lives.

Play the video.

---

Facilitate a brief discussion to emphasize how parents are important. Use statements made by youth in the video.

3. Facilitate discussion on what it takes to be an effective parent.

---

**SAY:** In the video, we heard how young people think parents are important to them. We are going to look at what we can do to become more effective as parents.

---

---

**ASK:** What do you think it takes to be an effective parent?

Prompt participants with questions, so their responses include strengthening the parent-child relationship, communication, and monitoring. Example prompts include:

Facilitator: "What kinds of things do we need to do as parents to be effective?"

Participant: "We need rules."

Facilitator: "If we have rules, how do our children know about the rules?"

Participant: "We need to tell them what the rules are."

Write responses on easel paper.

Make sure the list includes strengthening the parent-child relationship, communication, and monitoring.

---


**SAY:** One way to strengthen parent-child relationships and improve communication is through positive parenting. Positive parenting opens up the relationship and communication channels to talk to your child about relationships and sexual issues. We will be talking about these issues today.

---

## Part 4: Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship and Communication



1. Introduce discussion on strengthening the parent-child relationship by engaging participants in a brainstorming activity about their experiences.



---

**SAY:** Think about one supervisor or manager you have worked for at some point in your life who was very good. Now, think about one who was not good.

If participants have a hard time thinking about their own experience, suggest that they think about supervisors or managers they have heard about from relatives or friends.

---

**ASK:** What were the qualities of the "bad" supervisor? How did it feel working for that person?

What were the qualities of the "good" supervisor? How did it feel working for that person?

Record unique responses on easel paper. Responses may include "fair," "good listener," "respectful," and "made them feel motivated or appreciated."

---

2. Use statements given by participants and recorded on easel paper to show results of good communication.
- 

**SAY:** People are often more motivated to do a good job when they get positive feedback from, and are able to communicate well with, a supervisor. The same principle holds true for parents and children.

---

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**ASK:** What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about keeping your children out of trouble?

Solicit volunteer to respond.

When “discipline” or “getting them to behave” is given as a response, ask how many others thought about discipline.

---

**3.** Shift to the importance of building a strong relationship.

---

**SAY:** Discipline is very important. An important part of discipline is for parents to build strong, positive relationships with their children. When a parent forms a strong, positive relationship with their child, there is less need for corrective consequences, and the chances increase that the child will stay out of trouble and reach life goals.

---

**4.** Facilitate brainstorming on how to build a strong relationship.

---

**SAY:** What are some ways that parents can build strong, positive relationships with their children to keep them out of trouble?

Possible responses include encouraging positive, healthy behavior and spending quality time with the child.

Write responses on easel paper.

---

**5.** After a few responses, refer to the generated list and point out the many ways to build strong, positive relationships with children.

---

**SAY:** There are many ways to build strong, positive relationships with children. Some of these ways include giving attention for positive behavior, giving encouragement, spending one-on-one time with your child, and practicing good communication.

---

**6.** Facilitate discussion on strategies for strengthening parent-child relationships.

---

**SAY:** Now, let’s look at some approaches to strengthening parent-child relationships. Some of these may be different than what you are currently doing, but these tools can be easily learned and, with practice, will begin to feel natural.

Review and elicit participants’ thoughts on each approach presented on slides the “Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship” slides. Refer parents to page 8 in their handbooks.



Facilitate discussion by asking questions like these below.

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**ASK:** How is this similar to working with a “good” supervisor as discussed earlier?

An example response: “You try harder when you are getting positive feedback.”

---

— Break 10 minutes —

---

**ASK:** What are some ways parents can be more attentive to a child's positive behavior?

Possible answers include acknowledging when the child behaves appropriately, by saying, "I appreciate you putting your dishes away," or "Your room looks great, thanks for keeping it tidy."

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**SAY:** The attention of a parent is very important to a child. The more attention a parent gives a behavior, the more likely a parent will see that behavior again.

---

---

**ASK:** When are some times it would be important for you to encourage your children?

What are other ways you can encourage your children?

Why do you think spending time with your children is so important?

What are some examples of ways you can spend more time with your children?

---

7. Thank participants for the discussion and summarize.

---

**SAY:** There are many different ways of strengthening the relationship between parents and their children. This relationship is critical for building a strong foundation for children.

Next, we will have a 10 minute break.

---

8. Introduce [Video 4 : Parent and Child Interactions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kErWedIBD00) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kErWedIBD00>).



---

**SAY:** Before the break, we discussed strategies parents can use to strengthen relationships with their children. This next video shows different parent-child interactions. It shows both desired and less desired parent-child interactions and gives examples of how parents can communicate.

Some scenes may not represent the realities faced by all parents.

As you are watching, observe what the parent says and does in each scene and how the child reacts. Pay attention to their body language.

---

9. Play the first vignette of Video 4. Stop the tape after the first segment of the vignette that shows a poor example of parental response (example of parent-child interaction). Facilitate discussion.
- 

**ASK:** What do you think the parent did that was ineffective?

Possible responses include "parent was not listening to the child" and "parent lectured the child without letting them share their point of view."

---

10. Show the next segment of the first vignette (a repeat of the same scenario showing more positive and effective parental responses).



---

**ASK:** What do you think the parent did that was more effective compared to the first example?

---

11. Repeat showing and discussing one segment at a time for each vignette.
12. After completing all vignettes, ask participants for examples of how they have used positive communication approaches.

---

**ASK:** How have you used positive communication approaches with your own children?

Possible responses include attention for positive behavior, encouragement, and active listening.

---

13. Discuss barriers to communication and solutions to overcome those barriers.

---

**ASK:** What are some barriers to effectively communicating with your children?

Possible responses include not knowing what to say or being unsure how the child will react.

Write responses on easel paper prepared with columns for barriers and solutions. Draw a T on easel paper to create two columns. Write “Barriers” as the heading on the left and “Solutions” as the heading on the right.

---

---

**ASK:** Have you overcome similar barriers in the past? What did you do?

---

14. Review the characteristics of good communication skills using the “Effective Parent Communication” slides.  
Refer parents to pages 8–9 in their handbooks.
15. Provide an example of re-stating. Then ask a volunteer to make a statement and use re-stating to clarify (e.g., “I think I heard you say...”).
16. Demonstrate the importance of consistency between verbal and nonverbal messages by saying something pleasant (e.g., “I care what you have to say”) while your body is saying something different (e.g., looking away, slumping, frowning).
17. Discuss the importance of open-ended questions.



---

**ASK:** Why is it important to ask open-ended questions? [You get more information from open-ended questions.]

**What are some examples of open-ended questions?** [e.g., “What happened at school today?” or “What were your favorite parts of that movie?”]

**What are some examples of being judgmental?** [e.g., “That’s a stupid way to look at it.”] **How could these examples close off communication with your child?**

**Why is it important not to dwell on past problems when trying to resolve conflicts?** [e.g., takes attention away from current issue]

---



- 18.** Give an example of an “I” message.

For example, “I really worry when you are away from home, and I don’t know where you are or who you’re with.”

---

**ASK:** What are some other examples of “I” messages?

Facilitate brief practice with two to four participants, providing feedback and guidance as needed. Ask participants to think of conflicts they have regularly with their children when coming up with examples, such as cleaning their room, breaking rules, arguing with a sibling, etc. Practice phrasing their reactions or responses as “I” statements.

- 
- 19.** Briefly discuss why “I” messages are important (e.g., owning your difficulties or feelings about the situation; reducing defensive reactions by the child that result in “power struggles”).
- 20.** Discuss issues that are difficult to discuss with children and which communication skills may be useful.

---

**ASK:** What are some issues that would be difficult to discuss with your children? Which communication skills just discussed may be useful?

Write responses on easel paper.

Offer examples if participants have difficulty generating responses.

- Your child asks about your sexual history or wants to know what happens during sexual intercourse.
- Your child seems to be withdrawn and moody and is spending less time with their childhood friends and more time with their new partner.
- You are worried your child may be using drugs or alcohol.

- Something you saw on your child’s internet browser history concerned you.

---

## Activity: Role-Play

- 21.** Introduce and demonstrate the role-play activity.

**Virtual Option** - Divide the group into pairs and use breakout rooms for each pair, or have each pair demonstrate one role-play for the group. The facilitator may need to demonstrate how to do a virtual role-play the first time with a volunteer or with a second facilitator.



---

**SAY:** Over the next few minutes, you will have an opportunity to practice discussing difficult issues.

One facilitator assumes the role of the child. The other assumes the role of the parent. Ask a participant to select one issue from the items written on the easel paper.

Briefly demonstrate what the parent-child pairs will do, illustrating at least one of the elements of effective communication.

Answer any questions participants may have.

- 
- 22.** Divide participants into pairs. One participant plays the role of the parent. The other plays the role of the child.

Instruct participants to select two issues from the list of participant responses on easel paper generated in the previous activity.

Allow five minutes for the first issue. Then instruct participants to switch roles and practice the second issue they selected. Allow five minutes, then ask participants to come back to the large group.

23. Wrap up the activity.

---

**ASK:** What communication skills did you use while practicing? How did it feel to use [that skill]? Was it helpful?

---

## Part 5: Supervision



1. Transition to the topic of supervision.

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**SAY:** Communicating effectively with your child strengthens your relationship and conveys your child's importance. Building and maintaining a strong relationship and making your child feel important is one aspect of protecting your child from risk.

Another way to protect your children from risk and let them know how important they are is to know where they are and what they are doing when they are away from home. This is the role of supervision. Many children want to be supervised—more than they indicate to parents. It makes them feel safe, protected, and loved.

---

2. Discuss the importance of supervision.

---

**ASK:** Why would supervision be important, especially as your children get older?

If not mentioned, bring up the importance of building trust and ensuring safety and responsibility.

---

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**SAY:** Supervision promotes clear communication between the parent and child, shows that the parent cares, and thus strengthens the parent-child relationship.

---

3. Facilitate a brief discussion with participants about their childhood experiences with supervision.

---

**ASK:** What did your parents expect of you when you were in middle school and wanted to go somewhere without your parents? What about when it was with a friend of the opposite sex?

Allow participants to respond. Review the responses, bringing attention to the participants' parents' expectation to know where they were and what they were doing when away from home or when doing something without their parents.

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**ASK:** What do you expect of your children when they want to go somewhere or do something without you?

---

4. Stress the importance of supervision.

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**SAY:** As children get older, parents tend to let children do more things without direct parental supervision. But, as your children do more things and go more places without you, it's very important that you know where your children are, what they're doing, who they're with, and when they will be back. We call these the 4 W's of supervision: Where, What, Who, and When.

---

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**ASK:** What are some other questions parents should ask or information they should get from their children when their children are going out?

Possible response include: “Is there going to be adult supervision?” “How can I contact you while you’re there?” “How are you getting there?”

Record responses on easel paper.

---

5. Introduce [Video 5 : Supervision \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrNVuSqQ7KM\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrNVuSqQ7KM). It portrays a parent not getting information about where their child is going or when they will return.



---

**SAY:** We’re going to view a video that focuses on child supervision and discuss what was portrayed after each vignette. Pay attention to what the parent said and did. What is the impact of the parent’s actions on the child?

Play the first segment of the vignette in Video 5.

---

6. After the vignette, initiate a discussion.
- 

**ASK:** What could the parent do differently?

What are some possible reasons the parent did not do more? (What were the barriers?)

How do parents overcome these barriers?

---

7. Show the second segment of the vignette (parent finds out where the child is going and tells child when they should be home).

Generate a discussion on what the parent did differently.

---

**ASK:** How did that affect the child?

What message was the parent sending?

How does supervision reduce the possibility that a child will engage in risky behavior or be involved in an unhealthy relationship?

How might supervision vary based on the type of relationship? For example, friends compared to those dating partners?

---

8. Show the additional vignettes and generate discussion after each one.

Make sure the following points are made:

- Parents should know specifically where their child is.
- Children should have consequences for not being where they are supposed to be or for returning late, and they should know in advance what the consequences will be.
- All children need supervision.
- Supervision levels may vary depending on the type of relationship, activity, or individuals with whom your child is spending time. Amount of supervision needed may change over time.

9. Facilitate a discussion summarizing strategies for parents to supervise more effectively, especially as their children get older.

---

**ASK:** What roles can neighbors and friends play in supervising children? How can technology help?

Write responses on easel paper.

---

10. Use the “Supervising Your Child” slide to discuss the need for parents to have a personal supervision plan.



---

**SAY:** The plan should include the following basic information whenever your child leaves the home: where they are going, what they will be doing, who they will be with, and when they will be home.

Refer participants to page 9 in their handbooks for the four W’s.



- 
11. Facilitate discussion on how to make sure that the child understands the parent’s plan and the purpose of the plan.

---

**ASK:** Can I get a volunteer to demonstrate how they would explain the plan to their child?

Get the input of several parents pointing out that there is more than one “right” way.

Prompt examples of how parents would respond to a child who accused the parent of not trusting them (e.g., mention dangers in society, tell the child how important they are to you, note that trust must be earned over time and close supervision may be less necessary as they get older).

---

## Part 6: Session Recap



1. Review the homework assignment with participants.

---

**SAY:** The homework after this session provides an opportunity to practice the parenting techniques discussed in today’s session. You do not need to write anything down for the homework.

Look at page 10 in your handbooks. The assignment has two parts. First, you are encouraged to practice positive communication with your child. You can use the example questions and prompts listed in the first part. The second part goes over the four pieces of information you need to know whenever your child leaves home without you.



- 
2. Facilitate a brief review of concepts covered during the session.

---

**ASK:** I’m going to go around the room and ask each person to say one thing they see as a “take-home message” from today.

Write responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned by participants, add the following:

- Giving attention to positive (desired) behaviors, encouraging your child, and spending time with your child will strengthen your relationship with them.
  - To improve parent-child communication, listen actively, use open-ended questions, use “I” messages, and express openness to the child’s point of view.
  - Supervising children helps prevent problems. It includes knowing where they are going, who they will be with, and when they will be home.
-

**3.** Close the session.

Refer and read the proverb on Poster 6, *Talking to one another is loving one another.*

---

**SAY:** Communication is an important part of being a parent. When parents are willing to actively listen to and talk with their children, they are letting their children know how much they are loved.

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---

**SAY:** Thank you for attending another session of HeaRT for Parents. We hope to see everyone back at the next session. Remember that the next session is located at (location of session) **at** (time of session).

---



# Session 3: Parents Are Educators

## Purpose of Session

1. To increase parents' understanding of adolescent sexual behavior.
2. To increase awareness of the need for parents to be relationship and sex educators.
3. To increase parents' understanding of what it means to be sexually healthy.

## Key Messages

1. Children are at risk for sexual health problems.
2. Parents are in the best position to be their child's most effective relationship and sexual health educator.
3. Parents can promote healthy relationships and sexual health in their children in a number of ways. They should be knowledgeable, approachable, and understanding when they talk to their children about relationships and sex. They should also model healthy behaviors and communicate their expectations.

## Materials Needed

- Posters 5, 7, 8, and 9
- Session 3 slides
- Box of question and answer cards on adolescent sexual behavior

## Preparation

- Arrange seating.
- Put Posters 5 and 7-9 on the wall, so they are visible to participants.
- Prepare question and answer cards ahead of time with local facts and statistics. Ask your HeaRT Coach for help obtaining local data and information.
- Place the box of question and answer cards so it is easily accessible.
- Prepare easel paper with the following homework assignment review questions:
  - » What did you say to start the conversation with your child?
  - » How did your child respond?
  - » What thoughts or feelings did you experience while talking with your child?
  - » What were some of the challenges?
  - » How did you respond to those challenges?
- Open slides for the session on a laptop or other device connected to a projector and have them ready to present.

## Session Overview

Today's session will cover the following topic areas:

Part 1: Opening (5 minutes) .....	40
Part 2: Review (10 minutes) .....	40
Part 3: Why Should I Worry?: The Realities of Adolescent Relationships and Sexual Behaviors (25 minutes) .....	41
Part 4: Parents as Relationship Models (40 minutes) .....	42
Part 5: Increasing Our Own Knowledge and Parents Can Promote Sexual Health (40 minutes) .....	45
Part 6: Session Recap and Home Session Overview (10 minutes) .....	49



## Part 1: Opening



1. Welcome participants back.
2. Facilitate an icebreaker to start the session. Use the icebreaker below (Fact or Fiction) or select one from Appendix E.

---

**SAY:** I am going to say two unusual things about myself. One will be true and the other will be false.

Present your fact and fiction statements, and ask participants to guess which is fact and which is fiction.

---

---

**SAY:** Now it's your turn. I'm going to go around the room and ask each of you to share two unusual things about yourself or your family. One should be true and one should be false.

After each participant presents their fact and fiction statements, ask other participants to guess which statement is fact and which one is fiction.

---

## Part 2: Review



1. Briefly review the ground rules.
2. Facilitate a review of Session 2.

Ask participants to share their experiences with the homework assignments from Session 2, using the "Supervising Your Child" slide.



---

**ASK:** What did you say to start the conversation with your child?

How did your child respond?

What thoughts or feelings did you experience while talking with your child?

What were some of the challenges?

How did they respond to those challenges?

---

3. Facilitate a review of Session 2.

---

**SAY:** Remember that in Session 2, we discussed how certain parenting practices promote and reinforce positive behaviors that reduce children's risk.

---

---

**ASK:** What were some of the strategies discussed in the last session?

If not mentioned by participants, add the following:

- Active listening
  - Using "I" messages
  - Positive reinforcement
  - Providing encouragement
  - Spending time with your child
  - Supervision
-



4. Facilitate discussion to reinforce the importance of supervision and parental influence.

Refer participants to Posters 7-9 on the wall. Read each one and ask participants what the proverbs mean to them.

Use the interpretations that follow, as needed and appropriate, to guide brief discussion:

**Poster 7: *Let not what you cannot do tear from your hands what you can.***

- As children move into adolescence, parents think they have less control and less influence (perceived barriers—what parents think they cannot do).
- Parents cannot afford to take the attitude that they have no control. Supervision is a tool that allows them to protect their children.
- As children become adolescents, parents will not be with them at all times. Supervision (what parents can do) is a strategy parents can use to protect their children from risky behavior.

**Poster 8: *The bell rings loudest in your home.***

- Despite all the influences outside the home, what children learn in the home lays the foundation for life and has the greatest influence on them.
- Change starts in the home.

**Poster 9: *If you are on the road to nowhere, find another road.***

- Parents have to be open and prepared to discuss issues about relationships and sex with their children.
- The task is not always an easy or predictable one.
- Parents need to be flexible and responsive in their approaches.
- If one approach does not work, parents must try another, and another.

## Part 3: Why Should I Worry?: The Realities of Adolescent Relationships and Sexual Behaviors



1. Introduce the topic for Session 3.

Refer participants to Poster 5, Pyramid of Success, on the wall.

---

**SAY:** Many children leave the path to success because of the consequences of risky sexual behavior. In this session, we will talk about risky sexual behavior. The focus of the group is not on “sex or no sex” but on “sexual health.”

---

### Activity: Facts about Dating and Sex in Adolescence

2. Engage participants in an activity to learn about teen dating and sexual behavior.

**Virtual Option** - Use the slide provided in lieu of cards.  
Add your own facts with local statistics.



---

**SAY:** We are going to look at some facts about adolescent behaviors, such as sex and dating, across the country and more locally.

Ask a volunteer to take a card from the box and read it to the group, or read the cards yourself. Assess the comfort and reading level of participants before asking a volunteer to read.

Ask other participants to guess the answer.

---

**Include the following Q&A items on cards. Create additional cards with local statistics.**

**Q:** How many out of 10 high school students report having sex?

**A:** 3 in 10 high school students report having sex.

**Q:** What percent of teens did not report using a condom the last time they had sex?

**A:** 48% – Almost half of sexually active high school students report they did not use a condom the last time they had sex.

**Q:** What percentage of 8th graders report dating?

**A:** 40% of 8th graders reportedly date.<sup>4</sup>

- 3.** After a few answers, ask the volunteer to open the card and read the answer. Personalize the statistics (e.g., “That means that on average, 4 out of 10 children will be sexually active within a few years.”)

---

**ASK:** What are your thoughts about that? Are you surprised?

---

- 4.** Repeat the process, using other volunteers until all of the cards have been read and answered.

---

**ASK:** Which of these facts worry you?

Record responses on easel paper for use in Session 4.

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## Part 4: Why Should Parents Be Relationship and Sex Educators?



- 1.** Introduce and review the discussion of the importance of parents being relationship and sex educators for their children by starting with the concerns recorded on easel paper from the previous discussion.

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**SAY:** The concerns you pointed out are some of the reasons that parents must be relationship and sex educators for their children. It’s common for children to ask their parents questions about relationships and sex, but often parents do not know what to say.

Raise your hand if any of you have ever been in this position or heard another parent say they were in that position.

---

- 2.** Explain teachable moments.

---

**SAY:** We reviewed some facts about adolescent sexual behavior and talked about some of the risks our children face. Now it’s time to think about opportunities to be relationship and sex educators for our children.

We’re going to talk about situations that can be opportunities for parents to discuss sexual health related issues with their children. Sometimes these situations and questions can be uncomfortable for parents but you can use these moments to talk about and help your children understand important issues. These are “teachable moments”.

An example of a teachable moment is if your child hears the term “hooking up” from their friends or TV shows and asks you what that means. This is a great time to figure out what your

child already knows, ask them what they think, and discuss your thoughts and expectations. It can also be a chance for you to correct misinformation or give explanations. You can talk about more than just the facts—you can talk about feelings, relationships, and how they affect other people.

---

3. Ask parents to come up with examples of teachable moments, whether from their own lives or otherwise. Write response on easel paper, you will refer back to these responses for an activity in Session 4.

---

**ASK:** What are some other teachable moments that might happen between parents and children?

Other examples of teachable moments:

- When you, another family member, friend, or neighbor announces they're pregnant
  - Child finds a condom in the house and asks parent what it is
  - Child asks about puberty/hair growth
  - Child starts period for the first time and calls parent
- 

---

**SAY:** It is important for parents to be prepared to talk with their children about issues related to relationships and sex.

---

4. Facilitate a discussion by asking participants to think about the following questions:

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**ASK:** How do you think parents can best serve their children in their role of relationship and sexual health educator?

Write responses on easel paper.

If participants are having difficulty generating responses, remind them that the group will talk more about strategies as the session continues.

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**SAY:** When these teachable moments arise, we can think about the questions: “How do I talk?,” “When do I talk?,” and “What do I say?”

Let's talk some more about the “how,” “when,” and “what.”

---



**TIP!** During this part of the program, parents may express strong views. To handle this, say there are many different viewpoints/messages, and parents must decide themselves what their own message will be. Then ask the group for other viewpoints/messages.

5. Introduce a discussion on the sources of information about relationships, sexual issues, and sexual health.
- 

**SAY:** In our previous discussion, we heard examples of some of the questions that our children may ask. Let's start thinking about where our children may be getting information about relationships, sex, and other issues.

---

6. Transition into a discussion with participants about their sources of information on relationships and sex when they were growing up.

---

**ASK:** Think back to when you were between in middle school, or younger. What kind of information did you receive about relationships and sex?

Who did you receive that information from?

If not mentioned after a few responses, ask participants if they received information about relationships and sex from their friends, which they later discovered was not true.

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**ASK:** What did your parents communicate to you about sex, dating, and relationships, both verbally and nonverbally?

Did you receive good sexual health information from your parents? If so, how did you benefit from that information?

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7. Generate group discussion by asking questions like the ones below.

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**ASK:** If you do not discuss relationship and sexual issues with your child, how will they learn about these issues?

Possible responses include peer, media, and school.

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**ASK:** What are some concerns you have about your child learning from these other sources?

Make sure that responses include the following:

- Information may not be accurate.
  - Information may not reflect the expectations for healthy relationships and sex you want your child to develop.
- 

8. Discuss the difficulties parents may have when talking with their children about relationships and sex.

---

**SAY:** It is extremely difficult for parents to discuss relationships and sex with their children. In many cases, parents may not have had an example to follow. Because of this, many parents have adopted easy but ineffective strategies, such as just saying “no,” “not now,” “ask your mother,” “ask your father,” or having a “don’t ask, don’t tell” mindset.

Discussing relationships and sex may be hard, but it is important that parents do so, especially when other sources of information may not reflect the attributes of healthy relationships you want your children to have.

---

9. Refer parents to two of the proverbs introduced at the start of the session:

Poster 7, *Let not what you cannot do tear from your hands what you can.*

Poster 8, *The bell rings loudest in your own home.*

10. Lead a discussion on why parents may be the best relationship and sex educators.

---

**SAY:** In a survey of parents and children ages 10 to 15, preteens reported they wanted more information from their parents on issues such as safe sex, STIs, the pressure to have sex, and how drugs and alcohol affect one's decision to have sex. (Survey by Kaiser Family Foundation)

---

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**ASK:** Why do you think parents are in the best position to be the most effective relationship and sex educators for their children? Write responses on easel paper.

---

11. Discuss the reasons that parents are the best relationship and sex educators for their child, how to be relationship and sex educators, and how research supports this.

Refer to the following slides:

- “Parents are the Best Relationship and Sex Educators Because...”
- “Parents as Relationship and Sex Educators”
- “Things We Know from Research”

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**SAY:** There are some additional reasons why parents are the best relationship and sex educators for their children.

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**SAY:** A lot has been learned from research regarding the importance of parents being relationship and sex educators for their children.

You can tell parents to refer to page 12 in their handbooks if they want to review this topic at a later time.



Let's take a 10 minute break now before we move on.

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— Break (10 minutes) —

## Part 5: Increasing Our Own Knowledge and Parents Can Promote Sexual Health



1. Bridge previous discussion to one about talking to kids about sexual health.

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**SAY:** Before the break, we talked about the importance of parents being relationship and sexual health educators for their children. As relationship and sexual health educators, parents must be prepared to share accurate information with their children.

We're going to go over basic information for parents regarding talking to their children about topics related to sex. It can help guide you on how to answer common questions.

---

2. For this next role-play, you can either perform it with the other facilitator or you can ask for a parent volunteer.

You're the child in this role-play, who started her period and has cramps. Ask the other facilitator or volunteer to play the role of the parent. They don't need to be prepared with a response, their

response should replicate a real conversation between a child and a parent slightly caught off guard with a sexual health question. Follow the script below with the person playing the role of the parent.

---

**SAY:** (child) Hey mom/dad, my stomach hurts and I'm bleeding, what's wrong with me?

Let the person playing the parent respond. If they get flustered, you can stop them and let participants know that this is okay, if you don't know how to answer, you can always look it up on your own or together.

---



**TIP!** You can change or add additional role-plays if time allows. For example, you can do role-play as a male child who asks their parent about having an erection or nocturnal emissions ("wet dreams"). You could also role play a relationship question (e.g., "Your child likes someone at school and doesn't know how to tell them" or "Someone asked your child to go out with them multiple times, and isn't taking no for an answer.")

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**SAY:** Talking to your kids about relationships and sex is not always an easy conversation but thinking ahead about what you want to teach your kids will help when the topic comes up. Good ways to communicate this information to your children is talking about it a little at a time.

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**ASK:** Do you think lecturing is a good way to communicate with your child? Why not?

If not mentioned, point out:

- Lecturing is one-way communication.
  - Communication should be two-way to promote asking questions.
- 

---

**ASK:** Do you think it is important for both parents to talk to their child, when possible? Why?

If not mentioned, add that it is important that children hear the perspectives of both parents, when possible.

---



**Tip!** Keep in mind that not all children have a male and female parent in the home. Some children have only one parent, are raised by grandparents or other family members, or have same-sex parents. Be sure that the discussion remains respectful of all family structures.

---

**ASK:** Why do you think all kids, boys and girls, need to know about issues like menstruation, erections, and ejaculation?

If not mentioned, add that it is important to hear different perspectives, to understand how their future partners' bodies work and may be different from theirs, and to understand basic information about human development. Everyone needs to understand how reproduction works - from pregnancy to birth.

---

## Suggested list of resources

### Educational Videos:

[AMAZE.org](http://AMAZE.org)

AMAZE creates age-appropriate animated videos for adolescents ages 10 to 14 and offers their parents and educators trusted resources to open lines of communication about important sexual health topics—in a fun, engaging format they will want to share with their peers.

### Books for Parents:

*Birds + Bees + Your Kids: A Guide to Sharing Your Beliefs About Sexuality, Love, and Relationships* by Amy Lang, MA

*Dating Smarts: What EVERY Teen Needs to Know to Date, Relate, or Wait!* by Amy Lang

*Beyond Birds & Bees: Bringing Home a New Message to Our Kids about Sex, Love, and Equality* by Bonnie J. Rough

### Books for Young Kids:

*It's NOT the Stork!: A Book About Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families and Friends* by Robie H. Harris

*What's the Big Secret? Talking about Sex with Girls and Boys* by Laurie Krasny Brown

*It's So Amazing! A Book About Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies and Families* by Robie H. Harris

## Suggested list of resources

### Books for Older Kids and Pre-Teens:

*Puberty Is Gross but Also Really Awesome* by Gina Loveless and Lauri Johnston (Illustrator)

*It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health* by Robie H. Harris

*The Boy's Body Book* by Kelli Dunham

*The Girl's Body Book* by Kelli Dunham

*Will Puberty Last My Whole Life? Real Answers to Real Questions from Preteens about Body Changes, Sex, and Other Growing Up Stuff* by Julie Metzger, RN, MN and Robert Lehman, MD

### Books for Teens:

*Dating Smarts: What EVERY Teen Needs to Know to Date, Relate, or Wait!* by Amy Lang

*Spare Me 'The Talk': A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up* by Jo Langford, MA

*Spare Me 'The Talk': A Girl's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up* by Jo Langford, MA

*What's Going On Down There? A Boy's Guide to Growing Up* by Karen Gravelle

*S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-To-Know Sexuality Guide to Get You Through Your Teens and Twenties (Second Edition)* by Heather Corinna

Credit: This resource list is based on suggestions compiled by Amy Lang, MA on [Birds + Bees + Kids](#).





**TIP!** Books and videos designed for children and parents can also be helpful. See the list above for some suggestions, or update with newer options you find to share with parents. Your organization may even want to purchase some books to loan to parents during the program!

3. Discuss the parents' role in answering their child's questions.

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**ASK:** Sometimes children will ask us personal questions. Do we have to share personal information with our children just because they ask?

If not mentioned, say that some things are private.

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**ASK:** The role plays we just did assumes that children will approach parents with questions. What should you do if your child does not ask questions about relationships, sex, or sexual issues?

If not mentioned, say that just because your child doesn't ask, doesn't mean they don't have questions. Parents need to initiate the conversation.

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**SAY:** Many children will not ask questions about relationship and sex. Therefore, parents need to bring the topics up. Having regular conversations will send the message that these topics are important and are a normal part of life. Remember, you can have these conversations when you see a teachable moment.

---

4. Explain the importance of terminology.

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**SAY:** When talking to your children about relationships and sex, you should be aware of current terms for relationships and sexual behaviors. As well as terms that may be used by your children among their friends. We discussed some of the terms used by your children to describe their relationships when we reviewed your homework from Session 1.

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**ASK:** Have you learned of any new terms since then? Do you have an understanding of the terms your child uses now to describe relationships or sex?

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**SAY:** It is important to understand current terms if you are going to communicate with your children effectively. They will be more likely to understand and hear you if you speak their language.

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5. Tell participants to reference their parent handbooks for additional information on sexual health and puberty. Refer them to pages 12–15.



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**SAY:** Turn to page 12 in your handbooks. You'll find more information about sex education there.

---

6. Introduce participants to the topic of helping children become sexually healthy.

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**ASK:** We've been talking about the role of parents as educators. Parents also have a role to play in making sure that children become sexually healthy.

What do you think being sexually healthy means?

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7. After a few responses, use the "What Does it Mean to be Sexually Healthy?" to generate discussion on what it means to be sexually healthy.



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**SAY:** Sexual health involves physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being.

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8. Use the "Helping Your Adolescent Become Sexually Healthy" slides to facilitate a discussion on what parents can do to help their children become sexually healthy.



Discuss each item and ask for examples.

Tell parents to refer to pages 13–14 in their handbooks for more information on these topics.



## Part 6: Session Recap



1. Facilitate a review of the session.

---

**ASK:** What are your take-home messages from today?

Write responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned by participants, include:

- Children are at risk for sexual health problems.
  - Parents are in the best position to be relationship and sex educators for their children.
  - To be effective health educators and promote relational and sexual health in their children, it is essential for parents to show the following characteristics: be knowledgeable, approachable, and understanding; model healthy behavior for relationships and sex; and communicate their expectations for positive relationships and good sexual health.
- 

2. Explain the homework assignment.

---

**SAY:** Turn to page 15 in your handbooks. This assignment is to think about three specific examples of what you can do to help your children become sexually healthy. If you choose to, you can write the three examples on the page provided.



In the next session, we will talk about how to take steps for your children to become sexually healthy.

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3. Refer to posters 7–9. Read each proverb and ask participants to explain how each relates to the discussion.
4. Close the session.

---

**SAY:** We hope that you have learned something that will help you be better relationship and sex educators for your children.

Thank you for attending another session of HeaRT for Parents.  
We hope to see everyone back at the next session. Remember that the next session is located at (location of session) at (time of session).

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# Session 4: I Think I Can, I Know I Can

## Purpose of Session

To increase parents' comfort level and skills discussing relationships and sex with their child.

## Key Messages

1. Talking to children about sex is difficult but important.
2. Parents need to be aware of their beliefs and behaviors regarding relationships and sex and how they are communicated to their children.
3. There are seven tips for talking to children about relationships and sex.
  - Be prepared
  - Relax
  - Start now
  - Listen to your child
  - Continue to talk about relationships and sex
  - Use the Facts + Expectations Formula
  - Accept your child

## Materials Needed

- Posters 10–12
- Session 4 slides
- Question cards—children's questions about sex for parents
- Box of Teachable Moments cards
- Easel paper with the small group discussion topics

## Preparation

- Arrange seating.

- Put Posters 10–12 on the wall so they are visible to participants.
- Make copies of Difficult Sex-Related Questions, cut out the cards, and place them in a box, which is easily accessible.
- Make copies of Teachable Moments, cut out the cards, and place them in a box, which is easily accessible.
- Prepare easel paper with three questions on it:
  - » What are different expectations parents can have about relationships and sex?
  - » What effect do these expectations have on the messages parents give their children?
  - » What are some strategies parents can use to overcome their resistance to discussing relationships and sex-related topics with their child?
- Prepare easel paper for the Barriers and Solutions activity in When To Say What:
  - » Draw a T to create two columns.
  - » Write Barriers as the heading on the left.
  - » Write Solutions as the heading on the right.
- Open slides for the session on a laptop or other device connected to a projector and have them ready to present.

## Session Overview

Today's session will cover the following topic areas:

Part 1: Opening & Review (5 minutes) .....	52
Part 2: Preparing to Deliver Your Message (35 minutes).....	53
Part 3: Seven Tips for Talking with Your Child about Relationships and Sex (15 minutes).....	56
Part 4: Role-Play—Teachable Moments (45 minutes) .....	56
Part 5: Figuring Out What to Say (5 minutes).....	58
Part 6: When to Say What (15 minutes).....	58
Part 7: Session Recap (10 minutes).....	60

## Part 1: Opening and Review



1. Welcome participants to Session 4 and briefly review general ground rules.
2. Facilitate review of the homework assignment.

---

**ASK:** Your homework was to think about ways you can help your child become sexually healthy. Would anyone like to share their ideas?

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3. Facilitate a review of the key concepts discussed in Session 3.

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**SAY:** We talked about some of the realities of adolescent sexual behavior, as well as the role of parents as relationship and sex educators for their children.

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**ASK:** Who remembers why it is important that children receive information about relationships and sex from their parents?

Write responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned by participants, add:

- Parents need to have a message to compete with the messages children get from other sources.
  - Children should feel able to approach their parents to discuss relationships and sex.
- 

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**SAY:** (Refer to responses recorded on easel paper.) **We have learned from the research that these actions can help prevent early and unsafe sexual activity and involvement in unhealthy relationships.**

---

4. Transition into a discussion on how parents communicate messages through their behavior.

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**SAY:** We know that when we talk to our children about any kind of behavior, they are looking at what we do and our unspoken messages.

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**ASK:** What are some ways we can send unintentional messages to our children about relationships and sex?

Examples may include:

- Music we listen to or TV shows we watch.
  - Body language when we children ask questions.
  - Casual comments we make about relationships and sex.
  - A single parent's dating behavior.
  - How parents interact with each other.
- 



## Part 2: Preparing to Deliver Your Messages



1. Introduce the Session 4 topics by referring participants to the quotations and proverb.

---

**SAY:** Let's look at the posters for today. These reflect the topics we'll be discussing today.

Read each quotation or proverb and ask participants for their interpretation.

---

2. Use the information that follows to clarify the quotation or proverb, as needed.

**Poster 10:** *Our greatest problems in life come not so much from the situations we confront as from our doubts about our ability to handle them.*

Parents must be confident in their ability to communicate with their children about relationships and sexual issues and influence their children's decision-making. Relationship and sexual issues are difficult for most parents to discuss, and can be intimidating, but parents must be confident.

**Poster 11:** *Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.*

Despite obstacles, parents must be willing to provide appropriate guidance for their children. It may be uncomfortable, children may resist, and parents may not know what to say, but they cannot allow those fears to deter them. Parents have to desire sexual health for their children and work to ensure it.

**Poster 12:** *To make preparation does not spoil the trip.*

Taking the time to prepare yourself—knowing your expectations,

deciding what can be discussed, and thinking about what to say in advance—makes discussions more effective. Planning and practicing talking to your child does not take anything away from those interactions.

3. Tell participants what the session entails.

---

**SAY:** In this session, we will prepare you for discussion with your children on relationships and sex.

---

4. Set up the exercise and discussion.

**Virtual Option** - Divide the group into pairs and use breakout rooms for each pair, or have each pair demonstrate one role-play for the group. The facilitator may need to demonstrate how to do a virtual role-play the first time with a volunteer or with a second facilitator.



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**SAY:** To effectively talk with your children about relationships and sex, you need to understand your own expectations and think ahead of time about what you might say. We will practice this next.

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## Activity: What Do Children Want To Know?

5. Introduce the exercise. Have the box of cards with Supplement 4.1: Difficult Sex-Related Question Cards.

---

**SAY:** First, we're going to spend some time finding out what children want to know. This box contains cards with questions from children who have participated in the program. These questions are ones that the children said they wanted to ask their parents.

The purpose of this activity is to start thinking about how you would answer each question.

Ask volunteers to pull questions out of the question box and read them.

---

#### Difficult Sex-Related Questions

1. Why do girls get periods?
2. How do you get sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as HIV?
3. Besides HIV, what other kinds of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are there?
4. How does it feel to have sex?
5. How do you know when you are in love and ready to have sex?
6. Why do you have babies when you have sex?
7. Can I have a baby at a young age like 12?
8. How do you use condoms?
9. Why do people have pubic hair?
10. What do you do when someone tries to force you into sex?
11. Why do you have to use condoms?
12. I think I might be gay or bisexual. How do I know for sure?

**Note:** Be conscious of the literacy level of participants before asking for volunteers. When appropriate, the cards can be read by facilitators.

6. Facilitate discussion. Allow all participants to provide example answers.

---

**ASK:** Has anyone had other difficult sex-related questions asked by their children?

Ask participants if they are willing to share any of those questions. Then ask:

- How did you answer the questions?
  - How did your answer make you feel?
  - What would you have said differently if you had another chance?
- 

7. Comment on the difficulties of discussing relationships and sex with children.

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**SAY:** Many things can make it difficult to discuss relationships and sex with children. You might be uncomfortable, not know what to say, or not know when to say it.

---

8. Introduce discussion on the importance of parents communicating expectations for healthy relationships and sex.

---

**SAY:** We all have expectations for our children regarding relationships and sex but may not have thought about them much. They are second nature to us.



It is important that we think about how we communicate our expectations around sex and relationships to our children. One of the quotations we discussed earlier illustrated the importance of sharing your expectations and working hard to protect your child's sexual health. Protecting your child's sexual health may mean considering things you have not thought of before, such as same-sex relationships. [Reference posters 11 and 12].

---

**9.** Transition to small group activities.

---

**SAY:** The next exercise will help you think more about your expectations for healthy relationships and how you communicate these to your children.

---

**10.** Divide participants into groups of three to five people.

**Virtual Option** - Use the provided slide to show the discussion questions titled "Communicating Our Expectations." Discuss as a large group or divided into smaller groups in breakout rooms.



**TIP!** If you have a small group, do the activity as a class.

Display prepared easel paper with these topics:

- What are different expectations and values parents can have about healthy relationships?
- What effect do these values have on the messages parents give to their children?

- What are some strategies parents can use to overcome their resistance to discussing relationship- and sex-related issues with their children?

Instruct each group to discuss and answer all three questions. Start with an example for the first question, such as both partners respecting each other.

Circulate among the small groups to provide guidance and focus as needed.

Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

**11.** Reconvene the larger group and ask participants to share what they discussed.

Record main points on easel paper.

If not mentioned by participants, introduce the following strategies and discuss how they can help parents overcome resistance to communicating with their children about relationships and sexual issues:

- Have the information you need to give an age-appropriate answer.
- Decide what type of topics you will and will not discuss.
- Decide how to respond to topics you will not discuss (e.g., explicit questions about your past or present sexual behavior)
- Know your expectations and communicate them clearly.
- Seize opportunities to discuss relationships and sexual issues (e.g., child sees something on TV).

— Break (10 minutes) —

## Part 3: Seven Tips for Talking with Your Children about Relationships and Sex



1. Introduce discussion of specific tools for talking with children about relationships and sex.

**SAY:** Before the break, we discussed strategies to overcome resistance when communicating with children and adolescents about relationships and sex. Now, we're going to look at some tips to help you talk to your children about relationships and sex.

2. Discuss the "Seven Tips for Talking to Your Child About Relationships and Sex" slides.



**SAY:** A good formula for answering tough questions is to provide the **FACTS** first, then add your **EXPECTATIONS**. For example, if your child asks "Do people have sex when they aren't married?", you might say, "Yes, many people do have sex before they are married (fact)." You can follow up with your expectation: "I think it's important that you wait until you are mature enough to handle the emotional and physical responsibility of sex, and until you are in a loving, committed relationship. (expectation)"

**SAY:** These seven tips can help you talk to your children about relationships and sex. We have also talked about how to respond to questions children may ask. Now, we're going to practice these skills.

Refer participants to page 18 in their handbooks for these seven tips.



3. Ask for volunteers to provide examples of answers to common questions using the Facts + Expectations formula.

## Part 4: Role-Play—Teachable Moments



1. Introduce and explain the exercise. Participants will practice how to respond to teachable moments.

**Virtual Option** - Use the provided slides in lieu of the question cards to share the role-play scenarios. You can use breakout rooms for small group role plays or do it together in a large group.



Have Supplement 4.2: Teachable Moments Question Cards ready for participants or you can write them on easel paper. The cards are located at the end of the session. Start this activity as a group with volunteer pairs role-playing in front of the class. The facilitators should do the first one to demonstrate. Ask for volunteers to do 3–4 role-plays in front of the class, and then split up into groups of three to practice 3 more scenarios. In the groups of three, each person should have a turn playing the parent, the child, or the observer—and all three should discuss the responses after each scenario.



**Tip!** Parents might be uncomfortable role-playing responses to some of these difficult questions, or might not know the answers. If so, they can feel free to talk about where they would find out the information, the broad strokes of what they might say (or would want to avoid saying), and any tips from that they would use in addressing the question. Bring in the group to help.



---

**SAY:** We're going to practice how to respond to questions from your children—in what can be “teachable moments”. Remember that teachable moments are opportunities for you to talk to your child about important sexual health topics. It is not unusual for children to ask questions that are difficult to respond to. Answering these questions is easier if we've thought about responses ahead of time.

We'll do a few together first and then split up into small groups to trade off practicing how you would respond to a few of these teachable moments.

Think about the seven tips we just discussed when deciding on how to respond to the questions. Remember that we all have different opinions so everyone will have unique responses.

After each group role play, generate discussion on effective ways of handling each issue.

Clarify any misinformation provided by participants during the discussion.

---

2. After a few role plays as a group, divide participants into groups of three. Give participants instructions for the second part of the activity in small groups.

---

**SAY:** One person will read the card they picked to the group. Then, two members of the group will role-play the situation, with one playing the role of the child and the other playing the role of the parent.

After the role-play, all three group members will discuss the situation and offer recommendations.

Your group will do this for two more role-play cards, using different volunteers for the role-play each time until everyone has had an

opportunity to play the role of parent and child.

Allow 5 minutes for each role-play and discussion. Circulate around the room.

---



**TIP!** You can write the instructions for the role-play activity on a piece of easel paper, so participants can refer back to if they forget the steps.

3. After each group has had an opportunity to practice three of the topics, reconvene the group and process the activity.

---

**ASK:** For those playing the parent:

How do you feel about your response?

After thinking about your response, what would you have done differently?

---

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**ASK:** For those playing the child:

How did you feel about the response you received?

What response do you think would have worked better?

Discuss the role-play card that reads: After being at a friend's house, your daughter returns home and asks, 'Has dad ever hit you?' Point out the importance of thinking about messages you send about social norms for being a man or woman and relationships when discussing these issues with children. Violence in relationships is never ok.

---

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**ASK:** Would your responses have been different if your child was asking dad if mom ever hit him? Why?

---

4. After reconvening the large group, summarize the activity.

---

**SAY:** This exercise provided a chance to hear different ways to respond to questions children ask. When you respond to your child, you should respond with accurate answers, followed by your expectations for the healthy relationships you want them to have. How one parent or caregiver responds to a question may differ from someone else's response.

Remember, you do not need to wait for your children to come to you with questions before beginning to talk about relationships and sex. You can initiate these discussions with your children.

---

## Part 5: Figuring Out What to Say



1. Transition into a discussion of topics parents should discuss with their children using the "Relationship and Sex Education Topics" slides

Review the list of topics.



---

**ASK:** Are there any other topics we should add to the list?

Write additional topics on easel paper. Refer participants to page 18 in their handbooks for a list of sex education topics.



---

**ASK:** Where can you obtain information to help you talk with your children about the topics listed?

---

---

**SAY:** In addition to what some of you just mentioned, community resources include a physician's office, health department, and library.

Provide participants with a list of local community resources on a handout or using partner resources (e.g., brochures, websites, etc.). Your HearT Coach should provide this information.

---

## Part 6: When to Say What



**Virtual Option** - Use the provided slide to facilitate a discussion and record responses.



1. Introduce discussion on when parents should discuss relationship and sex-related issues.

---

**ASK:** At what age should parents discuss various relationship and sex-related issues such as intercourse, birth control, STIs, and dating violence?

---



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**SAY:** Only around three percent of people in the United States wait until marriage to have sex. It's important to start discussions with your children when they are young and give more details as they get older.

In fact, the younger your children are, the easier it can be to have these conversations! Kids as young as five can learn about their body parts, how every child's body develops differently, and where babies come from. Younger children are less likely to feel embarrassed, to have already heard misinformation, or to judge you as you stumble through your answers. The younger you start, the more time you have to work up to the tough questions and establish yourself as a resource.

So, middle school is definitely not too early—but it is also not too late! The important thing is to start as early as you can with age-appropriate information that builds as conversations continue over time.

---

2. Facilitate a discussion of what a parent should do if approached by a child who asks a difficult sex-related question.

---

**ASK:** Let's say your child comes to you and asks "How will I know when I'm ready to have sex?" Do you know how you would respond?

---

---

**ASK:** What are some barriers and challenges to having these discussions with our children?

Write responses on easel paper prepared with columns for barriers and solutions (in the Barriers column).

If not mentioned, add parent's lack of knowledge (not having information) and poor parent-child relationship (difficult relationship).

---

---

**ASK:** How can we overcome the barriers we have identified?

Record responses in the Solutions column.

If not mentioned, add:

- Practice talking about these topics with a friend.
  - Build and maintain a good parent-child relationship.
  - Admit that parents do not know everything, then look for information and give the correct response.
  - Always be prepared to talk and answer questions.
  - Do not assume a child is too young to learn about relationships and sexual issues.
- 

3. Summarize the discussion.

---

**SAY:** It's important to take advantage of teachable moments to have discussions with your children about relationships and sex. To help with this, we examined the importance of knowing your own healthy values and expectations and how to communicate those to your child. We practiced using tools to help talk to your children about these topics and listed barriers and solutions to overcome those barriers.

We have agreed that it is important to have these discussions over and over, and it's important to start having these conversations early.

---

4. Reinforce the importance of parents talking to their children about relationships and sexual topics.

Refer participants to the quotation on poster 11, *Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.*

(James Bryant Conant)

---

**SAY:** It's important your desire to answer these difficult questions is greater than your fear.

---

## Part 7: Session Recap



1. Introduce the homework.

---

**SAY:** Remember the importance of understanding your expectations when responding to questions and discussing healthy relationships and sex. The homework activity after this session will allow you to think about this more.

---

2. Explain the homework.

---

**SAY:** Turn to page 19 in your parent handbook. In the left column, "Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship," write down a list of things you want your child to expect in a relationship. In the right column, "Relationship and Sex-Related Topics to Discuss with My Child," write the issues you need to discuss with your child related to each item listed in the left column. This exercise will give you extra practice in "Being Prepared"—one



of our seven tips!—and give you an opportunity to apply skills and information. We'll discuss this again at the next session.

---

3. Facilitate a review of the session.

---

**ASK:** What is one take-home message from this session?

After several responses, if not mentioned, add the following:

- Talking with our children about relationships and sex is not easy, but it is very important.
  - As parents and caregivers, we can try to be aware of our own thoughts and expectations for healthy relationships. We can also pay attention to how we communicate those expectations to our children. What we say to our child should reflect what we model.
  - Tools for talking with our children about relationships and sex include: be prepared, relax, start now, listen, and talk about relationships and sexual issues again, and again, and again.
- 

4. Refer to posters 10–12 and read them.

Poster 10, *Our greatest problems in life come not so much from the situations we confront as from our doubts about our ability to handle them.* (Susan Taylor)

Poster 11, *Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.* (James Bryant Conant)

Poster 12, *To make preparation does not spoil the trip.* (Guinean proverb).

5. Solicit and answer questions.

---

**SAY:** Thank you for attending another session of HeaRT for Parents. We hope to see everyone back at the next session. Remember that the next session is located at (location of session) at (time of session).

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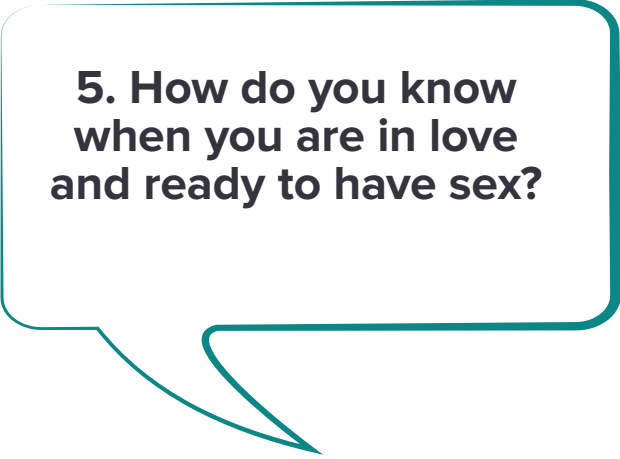
## **Supplement 4.1: Difficult Relationship & Sex-Related Question Cards**

**1. Why do girls get their periods?**


**2. How do you get sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as HIV?**

**3. Besides HIV, what other kinds of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are there?**

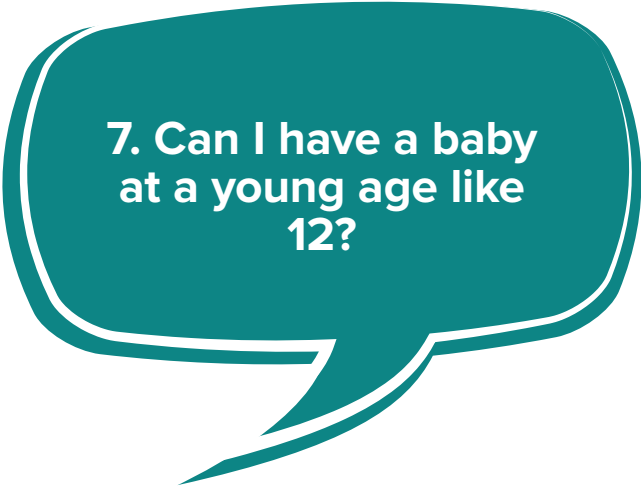
**4. How does it feel to have sex?**



**5. How do you know  
when you are in love  
and ready to have sex?**



**6. Why do you have  
babies when you  
have sex?**




**7. Can I have a baby  
at a young age like  
12?**




**8. How do you use  
condoms?**




**9. Why do people have pubic hair?**



**10. What do you do when someone tries to force you into sex?**



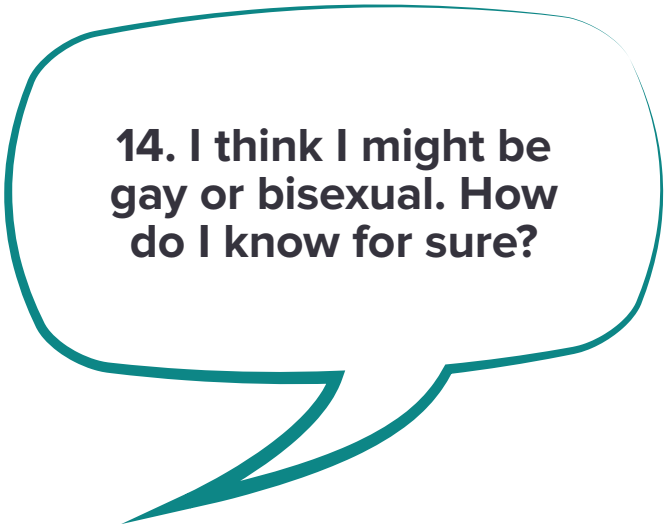
**11. Why do you have to use condoms?**



**12. Is it okay if your boyfriend or girlfriend hits you or calls you names?**



**13. Do I have to  
have sex with  
my boyfriend or  
girlfriend?**



**14. I think I might be  
gay or bisexual. How  
do I know for sure?**

## Supplement 4.2: Teachable Moments Question Cards

**Child gets in the car after soccer practice and tells parent a story about kids “hooking up,” then asks parent, “What is hooking up?”**

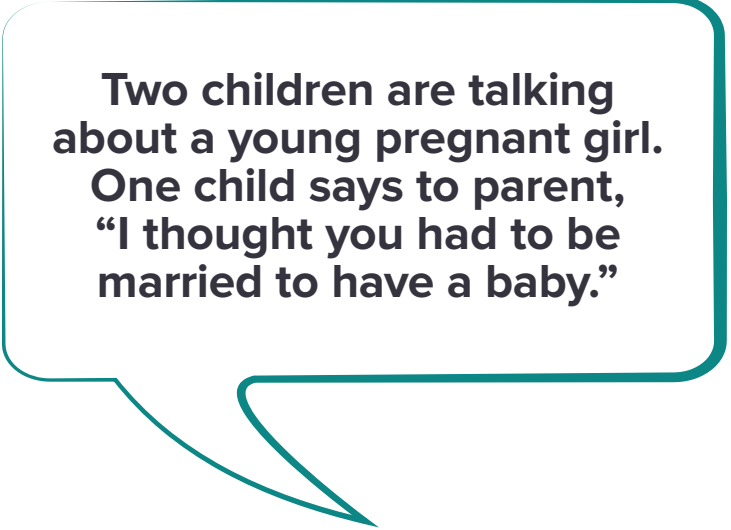
**Child finds a condom in mom’s purse and asks, “What is this?”**

**Pre-teen girl calls mother from school and says she is bleeding from her vagina and asks, “What is wrong with me?”**

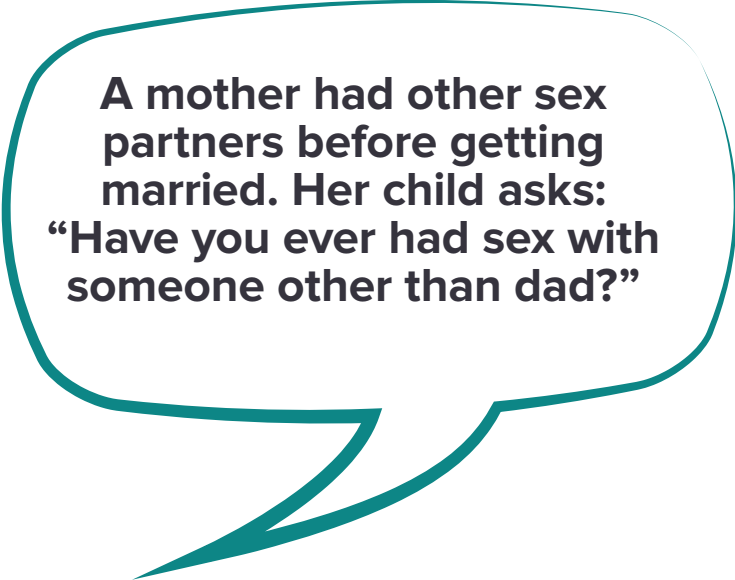
**Child walks in on parents having sex and asks, “What are you doing?”**




**Child finds a tampon in the bathroom and asks parent, “What is this?”**



**Two children are talking about a young pregnant girl. One child says to parent, “I thought you had to be married to have a baby.”**



**A mother had other sex partners before getting married. Her child asks: “Have you ever had sex with someone other than dad?”**



**A mother had sex for the first time in middle school. Her child asks: “How old were you when you had sex for the first time?”**

**A mother and father had sex after dating only a couple of weeks. Their 15-year-old child asks: “How long did you and mom wait to have sex?”**

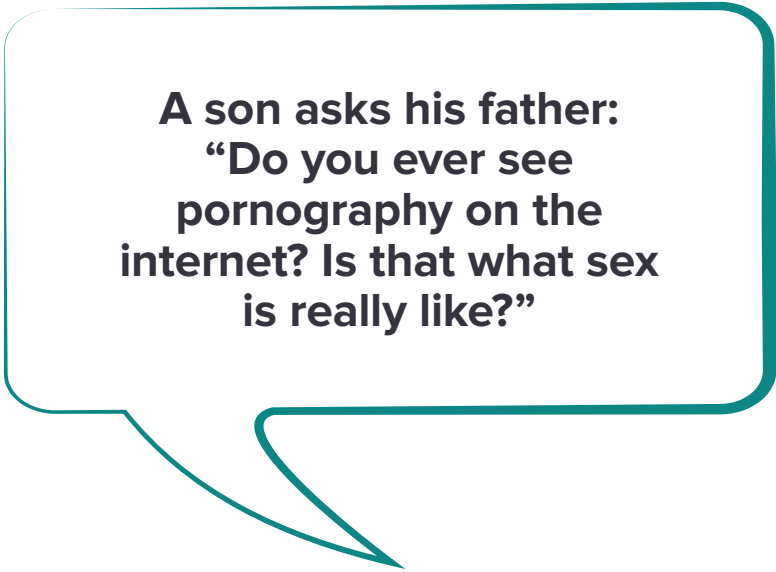
**A divorced mother has been sexually active with dating partners since separating from her child’s father. Her child asks: “Do you have sex with the men you date?”**

**After being at a friend’s house, your son returns home and asks why his friend has two moms.**


**A boy asks his father: “Is it okay to have sex with a girl you don’t really like just because you want to have sex?”**



**Your daughter who has a serious boyfriend asks, “Why do guys get angry when you talk to someone else, even other girls?”**



**A son asks his father:  
“Do you ever see pornography on the internet? Is that what sex is really like?”**



**After being at a friend’s house, your daughter returns home and asks, “Has dad ever hit you?”**





# Session 5: Parents Are Role Models

## Purpose of Session

To increase parents' understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships

## Key Messages

1. Children at this age are beginning to learn the skills needed to create and foster positive relationships.
2. Parents are in the best position to be their children's most effective relationship educators.
3. Parents can promote healthy relationships in their children by:
  - Being knowledgeable, approachable, understanding, and respectful
  - Modeling healthy relationships
  - Communicating self-respect
  - Focusing on the positive
  - Discussing alternatives for dealing with frustration and anger
  - Taking advantage of teachable moments

## Materials Needed

- Posters 13 and 14
- Session 5 slides
- Video 6
- Relationship behavior cards
- Box of question and answer cards on teen dating violence
- Relationship role-play cards

## Preparation

- Arrange seating.
- Put up Posters 13 and 14 on the wall, so they are visible to participants.
- Place the relationship and behavior cards, question and answer cards, and relationship role-play cards so they are easily accessible.
- Prepare equipment needed to view videos. Cue video 6.
- Open slides for the session on a laptop or other device connected to a projector and have them ready to present.

## Session Overview

Today's session will cover the following topic areas:

Part 1: Opening and Review (5 minutes).....	72
Part 2: Understanding Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships (40 minutes) .....	73
Part 3 Why Should I Worry?: The Realities of Unhealthy Relationships (30 minutes).....	78
Part 4: Parents Can Promote Healthy Relationships (35 minutes).....	80
Part 5: Session Recap (10 minutes).....	83



## Part 1: Opening and Review



1. Welcome participants back and review general ground rules.
2. Facilitate a quick review of Session 4.

Read the “Review: Seven Tips for Talking to Your Child About Relationships and Sex” slides.



---

**SAY:** In the previous session, we discussed tools you could use when talking with your children about relationships and sex.

---

3. Ask participants to respond to the questions below (more than one participant can respond to a question if anyone gets stuck). Model providing positive reinforcement and clarify as needed.

---

**ASK:** What are four questions children want to ask parents about relationships and sex?

Why is it important for parents to be aware of their own relationship and sexual behaviors?

What are three things parents can do to overcome their own resistance to talking with their children about relationships and sex?

---

4. Review homework assignment and briefly discuss participant responses.

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**SAY:** Your homework last week was to identify characteristics of a healthy relationship.

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**ASK:** Would someone like to share the characteristics you identified?

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**SAY:** As we share our expectations, remember that everyone has different opinions and wants to do what is best for their child. Even when those opinions differ, we should respect one another.

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**ASK:** What are some issues/topics you wrote down in the right column?

Has anyone discussed any of these topics with their children?

If so, what happened, what went well, and what do you wish you had done differently?

Write responses on easel paper.

Make the point for parents that parental opinions and behaviors affect these kinds of discussions.

---

5. Discuss the importance of participants understanding their own opinions and how those opinions will impact their children.

---

**ASK:** How do your opinions impact the way you behave?  
Ensure that participants are clear that opinions influence behavior.

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**ASK:** Have any of you changed your opinions about relationships and sex over time?  
If so, why did your opinions change? Did you behave differently as a result?  
How could you communicate your thoughts and expectations to your children? What would you say? What would your behavior look like?

---

---

**SAY:** We can share our opinions with our children by modeling them consistently in our own behavior. We'll talk more about that today.

---

## Part 2: Understanding Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships



1. Introduce the Session 5 topic and refer participants to the quotations on posters 13 and 14.

---

**SAY:** In the previous sessions, we have focused on sexual health. In today's session, we will focus on another important topic related to your child's health—healthy relationships. Let's take a look at the quotes on these posters. They reflect the topics we'll discuss in this session.

---

2. Read each quotation and ask participants for their interpretations.

**Poster 13, *Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.***

Parents are much more powerful in their children's lives than they may believe. Parents are powerful role models for their children.

**Poster 14, *Actions speak louder than words. Let your words teach and your actions speak.***

In parenting, relationships must be a priority. Children watch how their parents treat everyone in the family, which communicates to the child messages of value, belonging, and love. Children learn how they should treat themselves and others through these lessons.

---

**SAY:** This session will focus on healthy relationship development and how parents can promote healthy relationships.

---

3. Transition into the topics on Video 6.

---

**ASK:** Why is it important for parents to model healthy relationships?

Write participant responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned, emphasize the following:

- Children look to their parents as their role models for relationships.
  - Parents' choices in their relationships and interactions with others have an effect on their children's interactions.
-

4. Introduce [Video 6: Children See, Children Do](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbUBy2Nt5f4) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbUBy2Nt5f4>).



**SAY:** This next video shows us that children watch and learn from their parents.

Play Video 6.

**ASK:** What unhealthy or inappropriate behaviors were the parents in the video modeling for their children?

Possible answers include:

- Smoking and putting cigarette out on the ground.
- Being inconsiderate of others (walking past woman who was having a difficult time getting down the stairs with a child).
- Littering (dad and son drop soda cans on the ground).
- Road rage (impatient and yelling at other drivers, using inappropriate gestures).
- Vomiting on the sidewalk, possible alcohol abuse (mom and daughter vomiting on sidewalk).
- Abusive toward animals (throwing rocks at dog).
- Abusive toward other people (man holding fist about to hit woman).
- Disrespectful in speaking to others (yelling on the phone, yelling at baby, yelling at man at dry cleaners).

**Note:** This video is used with permission from the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

5. Discuss what healthy and appropriate behaviors were shown in the video.

**ASK:** What healthy or appropriate behaviors did the parents in the video model for their children?

Father and son were assisting a woman in a parking garage who dropped the contents of her bag.

You may have to show the video a second time because people often miss the positive behavior at the end.

**SAY:** Our children are constantly watching our every move. They walk like us and talk like us, so we have to be careful what message we send with our words and behaviors. We have a valuable role to play in our children's lives, and we need to be the best role models we can be to make sure our children have healthy lives and healthy relationships. Of course, we are not to blame for all our children's negative behaviors. Sometimes no matter what we do, our children will do things that disappoint us. During these times, our children can learn the most from us.

6. Transition into a discussion of healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviors using the "Healthy Relationship Characteristics" and "Unhealthy Relationship Characteristics" slides.



**SAY:** ("Healthy Relationship Characteristics" slide) **Most healthy relationships, including parent-child relationships, consist of these characteristics, but healthy dating relationships also require an equal distribution of power. One partner should not consistently tell the other partner what to do, wear, say, etc. Of course, parent-child relationships don't have an equal distribution of power—the**

parent should hold more power in the parent-child relationship, especially when the child is young. Parental power can shift as the child gets older and more mature and assumes more responsibility and independence.

In fact, parents should find opportunities to provide their child with healthy, safe sources of power over their own lives and decisions to empower them and prepare them for adulthood. Even young children can make decisions about what to wear, what to eat, and what game to play—when you provide a set of safe, healthy options to choose from. By showing them what a respectful distribution of power looks like throughout their lives, and giving them opportunities to feel empowered on a regular basis, they'll be more prepared to expect and engage in respectful, equitable dating relationships as they get older as well.

---

**SAY:** (“Unhealthy Relationship Characteristics” slide) **Unhealthy relationships are lacking one or more of the characteristics of healthy relationships. Although unhealthy relationships can become unsafe and abusive, unhealthy does not necessarily imply a relationship is unsafe or abusive.**

---

## Activity: Relationship Behavior Cards

7. Introduce activity on healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviors.

**Virtual Option** - Instead of cut-out cards, the relationship behaviors from Supplement 5.1 are provided on slides. Read each one, ask participants to raise their hands if they think the behavior is healthy or unhealthy, or use the poll feature to capture anonymous responses. Discuss any scenarios with a lot of disagreement.



Another option is to draw a continuum (horizontal line) on the whiteboard from Healthy ←to→ Unhealthy and ask participants to mark the spot on the continuum where they think each behavior falls, clearing the board between scenarios.

Give each participant 1 or 2 “Relationship Behavior” cut-out cards (Supplement 5.1). If there are enough cards, demonstrate the activity with one or two of the remaining cards—make sure as many of the cards as possible are distributed so there is a good mix of cards along the continuum.

On easel paper, draw a line from “healthy” on the left to “unhealthy” on the right. Have tape ready by the easel paper for participants to tape their cards up.



---

**SAY:** Relationship behaviors can be seen as falling along a continuum (or a line), with “healthy” on one end and “unhealthy” on the other. We think of a continuum because things are not always clearly healthy or unhealthy. Some unhealthy behaviors are worse than others, and some healthy behaviors may be “more healthy” than others. The continuum also helps us understand the gradual transition that occurs when we go from healthy to unhealthy behaviors.

These relationship behaviors can occur at all ages and stages of development, but for this activity, let’s pretend these are happening in your children’s relationships, and you, as a parent, are aware they are happening. You will use this context to determine whether the behaviors are healthy or unhealthy.

Read the behavior listed on your cards, then tape your card somewhere between the “healthy” and “unhealthy” signs. Where do you think that behavior falls along the continuum? Place the card there. You’ll need to consider whether the behavior on your card is more or less healthy or unhealthy than the behaviors already posted.


The longer this activity continues, and the more behaviors posted, the harder the activity may get. Feel free to offer advice or encourage participants to advise each other about where a behavior should fall.

---



**Key:** There is no one correct order; the parents in your workshop might order the cards very differently. Here is a rough guide of how the behavior cards might be ordered during the activity\*

### Healthy



My partner listens to me when I am upset.  
My partner trusts me to hang out with friends of the opposite sex.  
Me and my partner hang out together but also have our own separate hobbies.  
My partner supports me in my personal and academic goals.  
Sometimes me and my partner get bored with one another.  
Me and my partner talk about problems in our relationship but usually only whenever there is an issue.  
My partner shows affection, but sometimes it is annoying when he does it in public.  
My partner sometimes makes fun of me in front of friends sometimes, but she says it is just teasing.  
My partner gets jealous of my friends, who are girls. She thinks they are flirting with me.  
My partner gets upset if I do not return phone calls right away.  
My partner says we need to hang out every day.  
My partner texts me a hundred times per day to check in on me.  
My partner tells me he must always know where I am.  
When my family or other friends want to spend time with me, my partner tells me that they are too controlling.  
My partner asked me to quit my clubs and hobbies to spend more time with them.  
My partner tells me I am ugly and that I am lucky to have them.  
My partner screams at me when she gets upset but later apologizes.  
My partner hits me when she is angry.  
My partner tells me that he will spread rumors about me if I do not have sex with him.  
When my partner and I got into an argument, he sent some of my private pictures and text messages all over the school.  
My partner posts embarrassing pictures or information about me on social media.  
My partner threatens to kill themselves if I leave them.  
My partner says he'll tell my parents I'm gay if I break up with him.

### Unhealthy

Many of the behaviors listed under “unhealthy” are severe and can be considered abusive with a single incidence but especially if the behavior is occurring frequently.

**Note:** This activity is used with permission from Start Strong Boston's Workshop Guide for Developing Healthy Relationships. Some modifications have been made to include additional inappropriate behaviors related to texting and using social media.



8. After the activity, facilitate discussion.

---

**ASK:** Was this challenging? Were there any cards that were especially difficult to put in order, or did not seem to fit?

Did the frequency (how often) or severity (how bad) of these behaviors determine where you placed them?

At what point along this continuum do the behaviors become unhealthy? What about unsafe, abusive, or violent?

Allow for disagreement and dialogue. This exercise is meant to elicit different opinions. There is not a “right” order as long as dangerous, negative behaviors are on the unhealthy side, and positive behaviors are on the healthy side.

---

9. Transition to a discussion of one type of unhealthy relationship, teen dating violence, using the “What is Teen Dating Violence?” slides.



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**SAY:** There can sometimes be a “gray zone” between a relationship which seems healthy, and one which starts to become unhealthy, abusive, or violent.

---

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**SAY:** Teen dating violence is a specific type of unhealthy relationship behavior. It can involve a violent behavior that happens one time or a combination of unhealthy behaviors that occur over and over.

Teen dating violence can result in physical injury, psychological harm, or even death. It can involve physical, sexual, or emotional violence within a dating relationship, as well as stalking.

Physical dating violence refers to instances when a partner is pinched, hit, shoved, or kicked. These acts involve inappropriate physical interactions between the dating partners.

Sexual dating violence refers to someone forcing a partner to engage in sex when they do not or cannot consent.

Emotional violence threatens or harms a partner’s sense of self-worth. Examples include name-calling, shaming, bullying, embarrassing on purpose, or keeping a partner away from friends and family.

Stalking refers to a pattern of harassing or threatening acts used by a person who perpetrates that is both unwanted and causes fear in the person who experiences violence .

---

**SAY:** Teen dating violence can occur between individuals currently in relationships or former partners.

It can also occur among different types of couples, different-sex or same-sex, and in person or electronically.

Refer parents to page 22 in their handbooks for some facts about teen dating violence.



---

## Part 3: Why Should I Worry? The Realities of Unhealthy Relationships



1. Facilitate a brief discussion of the importance of talking about healthy and unhealthy relationships early.

---

**ASK:** What are some reasons it might be important to talk to your children about healthy and unhealthy relationships now, instead of when they get older?

---

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**SAY:** Our focus is on prevention—for prevention to be effective, we need to reach our children before they start dating. It is never too late. Even if your children are already dating, you can and should have conversations about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Some parents may feel reluctant to talk about relationships and sex with their children because of mistakes they have made in their own lives. It is important for you to acknowledge, accept, and move past mistakes you may have made. Have the conversation anyway. It may be uncomfortable, but it can still be a useful discussion.

---

## Activity: Facts about Teen Dating Violence

2. Introduce participant activity.

**Virtual Option** - Instead of cards, use the provided slides to share the facts and discuss.



---

**SAY:** We're going to look at some facts on teen dating violence.

Place the box of cards with questions about teen dating violence in an accessible location (Supplement 5.2).

Either solicit a volunteer to take a card from the box and read it to the group or read the card (assess the comfort and reading level of participants before asking a volunteer to read).

Ask other participants to guess the answer. After a few guesses, ask the volunteer to read the answer.

---

3. Ask participants to share their thoughts about the answer.

---

**ASK:** What are your thoughts? Is this information surprising?

Repeat the process using other volunteers until all of the cards have been read and answered.

---

4. Review the “Why Should I Worry? The Realities of Teen Dating Violence” slides.



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**SAY:** Harsh parenting, negative parent-child interactions, and inappropriate communication are all related. Harsh parenting refers to overly restrictive parenting behaviors and or excessive or unsafe punishments.

Negative parent-child interactions—in which the parent rarely recognizes positive things the child does and where most communication is negative—can also contribute to the risk for teen dating violence. These negative parent-child interactions often escalate to the point where parent or child feels like they have to yell louder or be more intimidating than the other to get what they want. They have to “coerce” the other to give in. This becomes a way of getting what one wants in a relationship—and could influence future relationships.

Argumentative, threatening, or critical family communications refers to a lack of give and take in communication, when neither parent nor child attempts to understand the perspective of the other.

Poor parent-child boundaries refers to inappropriate or unclear parent-child relationships, where the child takes care of the parent, the child disrespects the parent, the parent avoids responsibility, or the parent treats the child more like a partner.

---

---

**SAY:** Good parenting practices and good parent-child relationships that begin early in the child's life are important for healthy relationships as the child gets older.

---

5. Transition into a discussion of the signs of teen dating violence.

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**ASK:** Now that we have talked about unhealthy relationships and teen dating violence and listened to teens in the video talk about the signs of teen dating violence, what are some things that might warn you that your children or their friends are in an unhealthy relationship?

Record participants' suggestions on easel paper.

If not mentioned, be sure to review the following warning signs:

- Changes in academic performance (e.g., falling or failing grades)
  - Child stops providing their own opinion
  - Changes in mood or personality
  - Symptoms of depression (e.g., withdrawal, irritability, lack of motivation or interest in previously enjoyed activities)
  - Child insists on privacy or prefers isolation
  - Physical signs of injury
  - Changes in peer group (e.g., not allowed to have opposite sex friends)
  - Child spends excessive amounts of time with boy/girlfriend
  - Child is secretive about dating relationship
- 

**Note:** These signs might not always suggest that the child is involved in an unhealthy relationship or teen dating violence, but they are signs that something is going on in the child's life and should be a red flag that something is troubling the child.

6. Transition to a break and the next topic.

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**SAY:** Let's take a short break, and then we'll talk about what you can do to prevent your children from becoming people who perpetrate or experience teen dating violence.

---

— Break (10 Minutes) —

## Part 4: Parents Can Promote Healthy Relationships



1. Introduce a discussion on how parents can promote healthy relationships for their children.

---

**ASK:** What are some things that we, as parents, can do to make sure our children are forming healthy relationships?

Write the participants' suggestions on easel paper.

If not mentioned by participants, emphasize the following. (These are also included in the parent handbook on page 23):



- Be knowledgeable. Teach your child about the importance of healthy relationships and the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships. This should include a discussion about respect, communication, trust, and non-violence.

- Be approachable. Be present and available for your child. Remember, children want positive and caring adults in their life.
- Be understanding. Be interested in your child's world. Ask about their friends, preferences, and hobbies.
- Be respectful. Be open and considerate of the things your child is expressing.
- Model healthy relationships. Your child watches everything you say and do, good or bad.
- Communicate self-respect. Encourage your child to feel good about themselves. Discuss what they like about themselves.
- Focus on the positive. Talks about relationships do not have to focus solely on risky behavior and negative consequences. They should also address factors that promote healthy adolescent development and positive outcomes (e.g., academic success, relationships should be fun, fulfilling, and supportive).
- Discuss alternatives other than violence for dealing with frustration and anger.
- Take advantage of teachable moments—use relevant, real situations to teach your child about the importance of healthy relationships.

---

**SAY:** At any point, if you need to seek help with your own relationships or those of your children, a list of potential resources is included on pages 30–33 in your handbooks.

[Provide a handout of local resources, if available.]



- 
2. Remind participants of the discussion during Session 3 about the importance of parents serving as relationship and sex educator.

---

**SAY:** In Session 3, we talked about your own personal experiences with learning about sex when you were young—the type of information you received about sex and where you got that information. [Use relevant examples from previous discussions.]

---

---

**ASK:** Now, let's think specifically about relationship advice and guidance. What did your parents communicate to you, both verbally and nonverbally, about relationships?

Did you benefit from that information?

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---

**SAY:** Remember, if you do not discuss relationship expectations with your child, your child will learn about them from friends, media, school, or other sources, and the information may not be accurate or reflect the healthy relationships you want your child to develop.

As we discussed previously, many parents find it difficult to discuss relationships and sex with their children. In some cases, parents may not have had an example to follow. Therefore, many parents have adopted easy but ineffective strategies, such as ignoring their child is dating or having sex; avoiding discussions about relationships and sex; or saying, “Talk to your mother (or father) about that.”

Discussing relationships may be hard and uncomfortable, but it is important to start early and continue those conversations over time.

---

## Activity: Relationship Role-Play

3. Introduce and facilitate a role-play exercise on healthy relationship topics.

**Virtual Option** - Instead of cards, use the provided slide to share the role-play scenarios. Complete as a group.



---

**SAY:** We're going to practice discussing relationship issues with your children.

Let's divide into groups of three. Each group will receive three scenarios and each scenario should take two to three minutes.

Pass out the role-play cards (Supplement 5.3) to each group of three. Depending on group size, you may need up to six copies of each role-play card.

---

**SAY:** At the end of each role-play, the observer should give feedback to the person playing the parent. They can provide feedback on tone of voice, body language, listening skills, and anything else they notice.

Then, your group should switch roles so each person gets to play the parent, child, and observer. When you finish all three scenarios, we'll come back together to discuss your reactions.

- 
4. Facilitate discussion on the role-plays and difficult relationship-related questions.

---

**ASK:** Was there a scenario that you found particularly challenging?

In the role-play, what were your strengths in talking about healthy or unhealthy relationships?

In the role-play, what were your challenges in talking about healthy or unhealthy relationships?

---

5. Transition into a discussion about how parents can begin conversations with their child about healthy and respectful relationships.

---

**ASK:** What are some things we can say to start conversations with our children about healthy and respectful relationships?

Write participant responses on easel paper.

In addition to the participants' responses, provide the following examples of conversation starters.

- "What qualities are important to you when you are thinking about "dating" someone?"
  - "What do you think makes a relationship good? What makes it bad?"
  - "What do you think is your best quality? What do you like most about yourself?"
  - "Have you ever experienced someone saying or doing something you felt was wrong or something that crossed your personal boundaries?"
  - React to TV, movies, or music you watch/hear together. "I noticed that [media] is suggesting that [behavior] is ok or a normal part of a relationship. What do you think? How would you want to be treated in a relationship?"
-

## Part 5: Session Recap



1. Facilitate a review of the session.

---

### **ASK:** What are some take-home messages from today?

Write responses on easel paper.

If not mentioned by participants, include:

- Children are at risk for teen dating violence.
- Parents are in a great position to be the best and most appropriate relationship and sex educators for their children.
- To be effective relationship and sex educators and to promote sexual health in their children, parents should:
  - » Be knowledgeable
  - » Be approachable
  - » Be understanding
  - » Be respectful
  - » Model healthy relationships
  - » Communicate self-respect
  - » Focus on the positive
  - » Discuss alternatives other than violence for dealing with frustration and anger
  - » Take advantage of teachable moments

- 
2. Explain homework assignment.
- 

**SAY:** Turn to page 24 in your handbooks. This assignment is to think about three specific examples of what you can do to help your children form healthy relationships. You can write the three examples on the page provided.



- 
3. Remind parents that for the next session, the last session, they will bring their middle school-age children.

---

**SAY:** Remember that the next session is the one where you will bring your (middle school-age) child.

Review pages 23–24 in your handbooks, so that you will know what to expect when your children participate. You should only bring your child in middle school. A separate room will be set up for them, with age-appropriate activities. Children are also welcome to bring their homework or a book to read. [Discourage bringing electronics.] Each child will participate in two exercises with their parent during the session. Children will spend the rest of the time in a separate room. Afterwards, children and parents will participate in the closing celebration.



- 
4. Solicit and answer questions.

Close the session.

---

**SAY:** Thank you for attending another session of HeaRT for Parents. We hope to see everyone and their children back at the next session. Remember that the next session is located at (location of session) at (time of session).

---

## **Supplement 5.1: Relationship Behavior Cards**

**My partner asked me to quit my clubs and hobbies to spend more time with them.**

**My partner listens to me when I am upset.**

**When my family or other friends want to spend time with me, my partner tells me that they are too controlling.**


**My partner gets jealous of my friends, who are girls. She thinks they are flirting with me.**

**My partner supports me in my personal and academic goals.**


**My partner tells me he must always know where I am.**



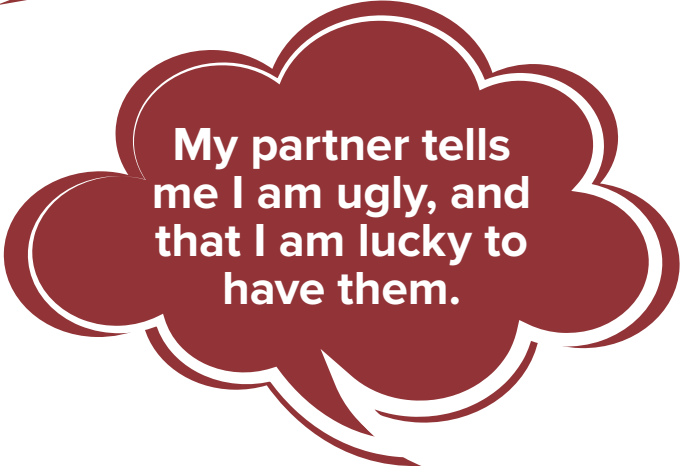
**Me and my partner hang out together but also have our own separate hobbies.**




**My partner trusts me to hang out with friends of the opposite sex.**



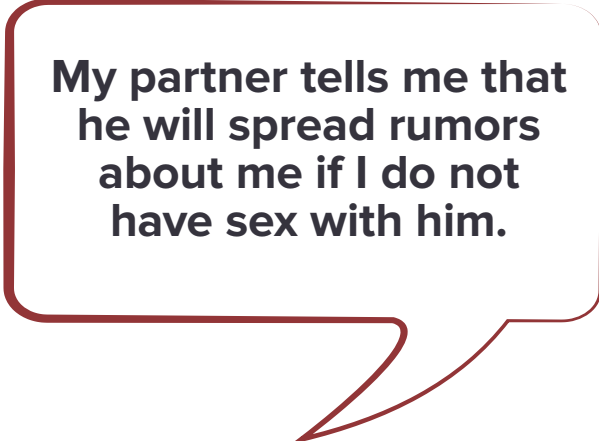
**My partner hits me when she is angry.**



**My partner tells me I am ugly, and that I am lucky to have them.**



**Me and my partner hang out together but also have our own separate hobbies.**




**My partner tells me that he will spread rumors about me if I do not have sex with him.**







**My partner screams at me when she gets upset, but later apologizes.**



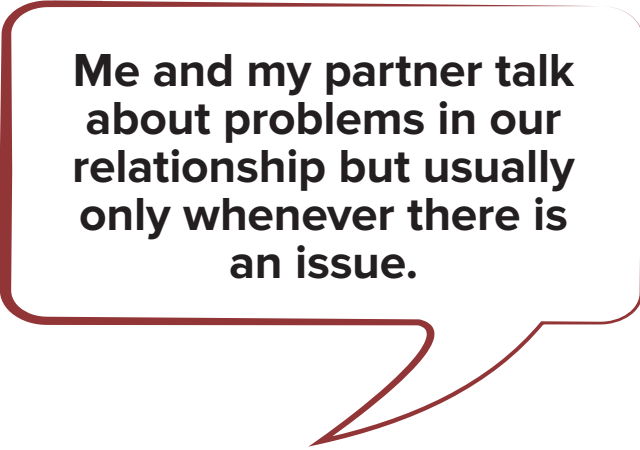
**My partner shows affection, but sometimes it is annoying when he does it in public.**



**Sometimes me and my partner get bored with one another.**




**My partner sometimes makes fun of me in front of friends sometimes, but she says it is just teasing.**




**Me and my partner talk about problems in our relationship but usually only whenever there is an issue.**




**When my partner and I got into an argument, he sent some of my private pictures and text messages all over the school.**




**My partner threatens to kill themselves if I leave them.**




**My partner posts embarrassing pictures or information about me on social media.**



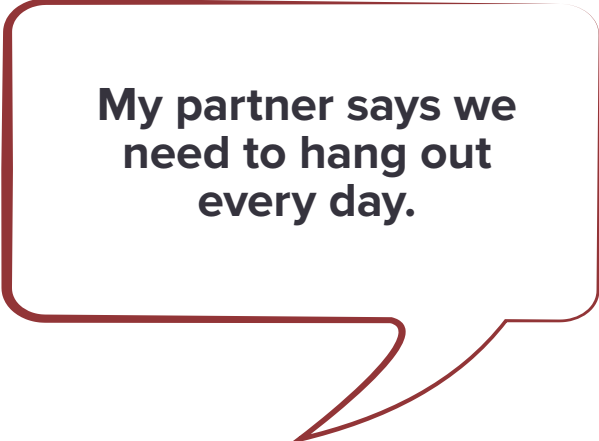
**My partner texts me a hundred times per day to check in on me.**



**My partner says that if I break up with him, he'll tell my parents I'm gay.**



**My partner gets upset if I do not return phone calls right away.**



**My partner says we need to hang out every day.**

## Supplement 5.2: Teen Dating Violence Behavior Cards

### True or False?

Teens who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are less likely to experience dating violence than those who identify as straight.

### False

Anyone can experience abuse and violence in their relationships and lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are no different.

### True or False?

Dating violence does not start until the teenage years.

### False

Among adults that experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 23% of women and 14% of men first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age.

**True or False?**

Boys are as likely as girls to experience dating violence.

**False**

About equal numbers of boys and girls experience physical dating violence. However, girls experience higher rates of dating violence overall including physical and sexual dating violence.

**True or False?**

Witnessing violence in the home has no effect on whether children will be involved in dating violence either as the person who experiences violence or as the person who perpetrates violence.

**False**

Teens who see violence between their parents/guardians are more likely to be involved in dating violence, either as the person who experiences violence or as the person who perpetrates violence.

## Supplement 5.3: Relationship Role-Play Cards

**Parent:** You find a text message on your child's phone and the person is asking for your son/daughter to say something sexy and send a naked picture.

**Child:** There is a cute guy/girl at school that you like but some of the things they have been saying to you in text messages make you uncomfortable. Now your parent found the messages.

**Parent:** Your child has brought their new partner home for dinner for the first time.

After they leave, you want to have a conversation about their relationship.

**Child:** You bring your partner over for the first time. You're both really nervous, but you also both agree it is necessary.

**Parent:** Another parent or caregiver has come up to you in a grocery store and told you that her son is dating your child. This is the first you are hearing of the relationship.

**Child:** You have been hiding the fact that you have been dating an older guy from your parents. You wanted to tell them eventually, but they found out before you could let them know.

**Note:** This activity is used with permission from Start Strong Boston's Workshop Guide for Developing Healthy Relationships.



# Session 6: Moving Forward

## Purpose of Session

1. To continue improving parents' comfort in discussing relationships and sex with their child.
2. To allow parents an opportunity to work on their communication skills with their child.
3. To help parents provide guidance to their child about peer pressure.
4. To review and summarize the major points in the program.

## Key Messages

1. Parents must remember the importance of good communication skills.
2. Parents must remember that peer pressure becomes a greater influence as children get older.
3. A four-step parenting plan for peer pressure is helpful.

## Materials Needed

- Posters 4 and 15-17
- Session 6 slides
- Video 2
- Signed participant certificates (optional)

## Preparation

- Arrange seating. Make sure there are enough seats for children to sit with their parents.
- Put Posters 4 and 15-17 on the wall, so they are visible to participants.
- Set up activities in the room for children activities.
- Prepare equipment needed to view videos. Cue video 2.
- Open slides for the session on a laptop or other device connected to a projector, and have them ready to present.

## Session Overview

Today's session will cover the following topic areas:

Part 1: Opening (5 minutes) .....	93
Part 2: Review Homework Assignments (15 minutes) .....	93
Part 3: Communication Practice With Your Child (30 minutes) .....	95
Part 4: Peer Pressure (10 minutes) .....	96
Part 5: Four-Step Parenting Plan for Peer Pressure (20 minutes) .....	97
Part 6: Parent-Child Exercise on Peer Pressure (30 minutes) .....	98
Part 7: Summary (15 minutes) .....	98
Part 8: Closing (10 minutes) .....	101



## Part 1: Opening



1. Welcome the children and their parents to the session.

**Virtual Option** - In Session 6, youth are invited to join part of the session with their parents. For virtual implementation, youth can sit with their parents at home while you are addressing the whole group and leave the room for segments that are intended for parents only. Preparing parents for this arrangement in advance will help it proceed more smoothly. During parent-child discussions, ask the dads to mute themselves by leaving their video on while they talk to encourage staying on-task.



Introduce yourself and tell the children their parents have been meeting together for the past several weeks, to learn how to be the best parents they can be and how to help their children as they grow and develop into young adults.

2. Tell the children what to expect.

**SAY:** You will spend part of your time in this room with your parents and part of your time in a room that has been set up for you.

When you come into this room and join your parents, you will participate in discussion activities with your parents.

3. Walk children to the room that is set up for the children (one facilitator takes the children and one remains with the parents) and tell them what to expect.

**SAY:** This is the room where you will be when you are not with your parents.

Introduce them to the staff members, who will be in the room with them.

**SAY:** These are the activities set up for you while you're in this room, and you're free to choose the activities you would like to do. You will be rejoining the parents in about 20–40 minutes. After the discussion exercises with your parents, you'll come back to this room and join your parents later for the final celebration.

When it is time for them to rejoin their parents, one of the two facilitators will come to this room and ask them to join their parents.

4. Ask the children if they have questions.

Return to the room with the parents.

## Part 2: Review Homework Assignments



1. Briefly review Ground Rules.
2. Facilitate a quick review of Session 5.

**SAY:** Relationships can be healthy or unhealthy, but relationship behaviors do not always fall in one category or the other—they exist along a continuum, with healthy behaviors at one end and unhealthy behaviors at the other.



---

**ASK:** What were some of the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships?

Healthy—both partners equally empowered, consists of trust, communication, respect, space, boundaries.

Unhealthy—one or both partners feel disempowered, lacks one or more of the following: trust, communication, respect, space, boundaries.

---

**SAY:** Teen dating violence is a specific type of unhealthy relationship that occurs within the context of a dating relationship. The unhealthy behaviors can occur repeatedly or they can be one-time events. Even young adolescents—like yours—are at risk for teen dating violence.

---

3. Using the “Why Should I Worry? The Realities of Teen Dating Violence” slide, discuss how parenting behaviors are associated with increased risk for teen dating violence.



---

**SAY:** To be effective relationship and sex educators and to promote relationship health in their children, parents should:

- Be knowledgeable
- Be approachable
- Be understanding
- Be respectful
- Model healthy relationships
- Communicate self-respect
- Focus on the positive

- Discuss alternatives other than violence for dealing with frustration and anger
  - Take advantage of teachable moments
- 

4. Introduce review of homework assignment, following talking points and questions.

---

**ASK:** At the end of the last session, you were asked to think about three specific examples of what you can do to help your children form healthy relationships.

Are there volunteers who would like to share things you can do to help your children form healthy relationships?

Write participant responses on easel paper.

---

5. Discuss Posters 15-17 and their relevance to talking with children about sex, the risks of peer pressure, and how decisions made now affect the future.

**Poster 15: *Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around.***

Parents should not allow resistance or other issues (time, discomfort, etc.) prevent them from talking openly and frequently with their children about sex and relationships. Not talking jeopardizes your child's health.

**Poster 16: *A man who stands for nothing will fall for anything.***

It is important for parents to be aware of the traits they wish to inspire in their children. They can provide their children with tools and strategies to help them resist unhealthy peer pressure and understand the characteristics of healthy relationships.

**Poster 17: *Where you will sit when you are old shows where you stood in youth.***

The decisions and subsequent actions young adolescents and adolescents engage in can affect their realization of life goals.

## Part 3: Communication Practice with Your Child



1. Prepare parents for parent-child discussion.

---

**SAY:** In a few minutes, you will have an opportunity to practice the communication skills discussed in Session 2.

Before the children join the group, we're going to review the characteristics of effective communication.

---

2. Using the "Effective Parent Communication" slides, review the characteristics of good communication skills discussed and presented in Session 2.



---

**SAY:** Each parent or couple should identify one issue important to their family to discuss with their child.

Help participants think through family issues to select an issue of importance for the parent and child. Provide examples as needed (e.g., choosing friends, making good decisions), being careful not to "tell" parents what they should discuss.

The topics should not be too "hot" (e.g., issues that parents and children have strong disagreements about, ongoing issues that may lead to arguments) or sensitive (e.g., sex, current dating relationships) where the child may feel embarrassed or trapped. The topics should

be important to that family.

---

3. Escort children into the session room and set up parent-child discussions.

Welcome the children as they enter.

---

**SAY:** Have a seat with your parents.

---

4. Describe the exercise to parents and children.

---

**SAY:** Each family will have a talk about something important to their family. Parents have already selected a topic they want to talk to their children about. Each family group will talk for 15 minutes. Your parents have been practicing their communication skills in this class for several weeks, and they want to have a chance to practice with you.

After the talk, we'll ask you what you thought about the experience.

---

5. Help participants relax.

---

**SAY:** This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Just enjoy talking with each other.

---

6. Instruct parent-child groups to begin discussing the issue selected by the parent.

Allow 15 minutes for discussion. Circulate only if a family indicates they want input or assistance. Respect their privacy.

7. Facilitate discussion with the children, using the questions below.

---

**ASK:** How many of you thought that having that discussion with your parents was easy?

What made it easy for you (what did your parents do to make it easy)?

What should parents do to make it easy for you to have talks with them about other things?

---

8. Thank the children and escort them back to their room.
9. Facilitate discussion with parents, using the following questions.

---

**ASK:** What did you find easy about that exercise?

What did you find challenging?

What techniques that we have talked about did you use?

---

10. Conclude discussion on communicating with children and bridge to a discussion on peer pressure.

---

**SAY:** This exercise provided an opportunity to practice using effective communication strategies.

One of the times to apply these strategies is to address peer pressure.

---

## Part 4: Peer Pressure



1. Introduce discussion on peer pressure.

---

**SAY:** Pressure from peers to do something becomes a bigger problem as children get older. Think about times during your adolescence when you felt pressured to do something you did not want to do.

Solicit volunteers to share their experiences.

---

2. After a few responses, reinforce that peer pressure can be problematic.

---

**SAY:** When we are pressured into doing something we don't want to do, we usually regret it afterward.

---

3. Summarize and conclude the discussion.

---

**SAY:** Over the last six weeks, we have talked about how peer pressure can affect children and sometimes prevent them from achieving their life goals, how peer pressure becomes more intense as our children get older, and our own experiences with peer pressure.

There are things parents can do to help children build the skills they need to handle peer pressure that is not good for them. We will talk about some of those strategies after the break.

---

— Break (10 minutes) —

## Part 5: Four-Step Parenting Plan for Peer Pressure



1. Welcome participants back from the break.

Discuss actions parents can take to help children manage peer pressure, using the “4-Step Parenting Plan for Peer Pressure” slides.



### Activity: Role-Play

2. Set up role-play to demonstrate how parents can coach their children to respond to peer pressure.

Co-facilitators will role-play some examples of peer pressure related to relationships and sex.

3. Role-play each situation. After each role-play, ask participants for other possible responses.

- Pressure: If you love me, you’d have sex with me to prove it.

Response: If you really love me, you would stop trying to make me do something I don’t want to do.

- Pressure: Everybody has sex.

Response: I don’t care about everybody else—I care about me.

- Pressure: I told you not to talk to him. If you love me, you won’t talk to him anymore.

Response: I can talk to whomever I choose—You cannot choose who I talk to.

- Pressure: I didn’t mean to hit you so hard. No one has to know.

Response: I know, and that’s what matters to me. I deserve respect.

4. Ask participants if they can think of other relationship or sex-related pressure examples. Role-play two or three and discuss each.

5. Solicit suggestions of possible responses to the following pressure statements.

- There is nothing to be afraid of—just relax.
- You know you want it as much as I do.
- Don’t worry—I’ve got a condom.
- Don’t you want to try it at least once?
- It will make our love stronger.
- You can’t wear that outfit tonight.
- You need to stay home tonight and make sure your phone is on when I call you.

6. Follow this exercise by asking participants to generate ways of avoiding or exiting peer pressure situations. Write responses on easel paper. Start the list with the following suggestions:

- I have to go.
- I don’t want to have sex right now.
- I think our relationship is getting too serious.
- My parents/friends are expecting me soon. I need to call them.

- You are making me very uncomfortable. I want to leave.
- I am not ready for this. You need to respect my wishes.
- I do not like being told what to do or what not to do.
- I will decide what I wear and what I do.
- Your behavior is not cool. If we're going to be together, you need to respect me.

## Part 6: Parent-Child Exercise on Peer Pressure



1. Prepare children and parents for an exercise on peer pressure.

**SAY:** We're going to bring your children back in now to talk about peer pressure. Practice using the four-step plan with your children to respond to the identified issue. You can use page 26 of your handbook as a guide.



2. Escort children back into the session, welcome them, and seat them with their parents.

**SAY:** The video that everyone is about to watch shows children and teens talking about peer pressure.

3. Show [Video 2: Pressures Teens Will Face](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqWSQhLNKKU) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqWSQhLNKKU>)



Facilitate parent-child discussions after the video.

---

**SAY:** [to children] What kind of peer pressure are your friends facing? Please talk to your parents about the kinds of the peer pressure you've experienced or heard about. These are important conversations to have with your parents, and they are learning new ways to help you navigate the challenges of peer pressure.

---

4. After the exercise, thank the children and escort them back to their room.
5. Solicit feedback from the parents on the exercise, and then stress the importance of these discussions.

---

**SAY:** It is important to have ongoing discussions on peer pressure as your children grow up and confront ever-changing issues. Remember to use the four-step plan. Refer to the "4-Step Parenting Plan for Peer Pressure" slides.

---



## Part 7: Summary



1. Introduce a summary of the information covered over the past 6 weeks, using the following talking points.

---

**SAY:** We have talked about and practiced strategies and techniques to help parents promote the relationship and sexual health of their children and reduce the possibility of their children making harmful choices.

We are going to review some of the highlights of those discussions.

---

2. Facilitate discussion by using the “Pyramid of Success” slide. Engage participants in brief discussions as appropriate.

Examine the “Pyramid of Success” slide.



---

**SAY:** Remember, these are the characteristics needed for children to realize their life goals. Unhealthy choices can keep them from reaching those goals.

---

3. Discuss the “Parents as Relationship and Sex Educators” slides.



---

**SAY:** One of the ways to help children stay on the path to their goals is for parents to be relationship and sex educators. This means parents should do the following:

- Start to talk with their children about relationships and sex before they start dating or become sexually active.
  - Provide the right information at the right time.
  - Have conversations with children again and again, building on previous conversations.
- 

4. Talk about the tips parents can use to talk to their children.

---

**SAY:** There are tips that make it easier for parents to talk with their children. Who remembers what they were?

After a few responses, use the “Tips to Make Talking to Your Child Easier” slide to confirm and clarify the following:



- Be prepared
  - Relax
  - Start now
  - Listen to your child
  - Talk about relationships and sex again and again and again
  - Use the Facts + Expectations Formula
  - Accept your child
- 

---

**SAY:** Parents should talk to their children about peer pressure. Earlier in Session 6, we discussed a four-step plan for helping children respond to negative or unhealthy peer pressure. You can build children’s confidence for responding by helping them plan ahead and practice reacting to common scenarios.

Solicit volunteers to list the steps.

After a few responses, using the “Responding to Peer Pressure” slide to confirm and clarify the following:



- Plan ahead
  - Help your child recognize signs of potential problems
  - Help your child think ahead
  - Role-play situations with your child
- 

5. Discuss what parents can do to strengthen their relationship with their children using the “Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship” slides.



---

**SAY:** All of this requires that you put time and energy into strengthening relationships with your children. There are several things you can do to strengthen those relationships.

---

---

**SAY:** We talked about effective communication strategies earlier in this session.

Solicit volunteers to name them. After a few responses, use the “Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship: Effective Communication” slide to confirm and clarify the following:



- Really listen
- Listen without interrupting
- Do not take over
- Make sure words, body, and tone of voice are all saying the same thing
- Be open to other views and be respectful
- Stay in the present, focusing on solutions instead of blaming
- Use “I” messages to own personal feelings

---

**SAY:** Effective supervision helps to prevent problems. Be sure to supervise online activities as well as in-person activities.

Refer to the “Strengthening the Parent-Child Relationship: Parental Supervision” slide.



---

**SAY:** Last but not least, we talked about helping adolescents become sexually healthy. This includes parents doing the following: (refer to the “Helping Your Adolescent Become Sexually Healthy” slides.)



- Model sexually healthy attitudes in your own relationships
- Be able to provide accurate information and know where to get more information
- Be understanding of their views and approachable
- Discuss puberty and sexuality
- Communicate your expectations and help your children understand them
- Stay involved, foster decision-making, set limits, and ask questions about friends and romantic partners
- Assist your adolescent in accessing health care services when needed

---

**6.** Round out the summary.

---

**SAY:** Just as you are responsible for protecting your children from physical harm, you are also responsible for helping them remain sexually healthy and form healthy relationships as they grow—and you can do that, because parents make a difference!

---

**7.** Solicit and answer questions.

Review the information in the parent handbook that parents can refer to for future reference.

## Part 8: Closing



1. Encourage participants to share information from this program with others in their families.

Refer participants to Poster 4, *He who learns, teaches*.

2. Ask participants what they believe they need to work on the most.
3. Acknowledge and reinforce the effort of the participants.
4. End the session with a celebration (e.g., special food, games, graduation exercise where group members receive certificates of participation).





# Appendices

Appendix A: Using Technology Safely .....	103
Appendix B: References .....	106
Appendix C: Icebreakers .....	107
Appendix D: Session Materials at a Glance .....	109
Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations .....	110
Appendix F: Acknowledgments .....	115

# Appendix A: Using Technology Safely

Just as it is important to supervise your child's activities when they leave the house, it is equally important that you supervise your child's use of social media, cell phones, and the Internet. The vast majority of people who use social media, cell phones, and the Internet do not encounter serious problems. However, children have been confronted with material that is disturbing or inappropriate.

Teenagers are particularly at risk because they often use cell phones and go online without supervision at home, at the library, and at their friends' homes. They are also more likely to participate in text and online discussions regarding companionship, relationships, or sexual activity.

There are a number of steps you can take to supervise your child's use of cell phones and the internet.

## **Make sure your child understands safety in general when it comes to the use of cell phones and the internet.**

- Children need to think about who they text and talk with on cell phones, as well as who they chat and communicate with in chat rooms and on other social sites.
- Children should never text/talk/chat about sex with strangers. Anyone they don't know in real life is a stranger.
- Phones should only be used to communicate with people children know in person and trust.
- Many cell phones have GPS technology installed, which means your children can easily pinpoint their friends' physical location—or be pinpointed by their friends. Talk with your children about using such technology and advise them to use it only with friends they know in person and trust.

## **Make sure computers, laptops, and tablets are used in a central location in the house.**

- Allows you to see what is going on.
- Makes your children more responsible about sites they are looking at.
- Children are less likely to sneak peeks at inappropriate sites or disobey rules.

## **Consider turning off web access on smart phones.**

- Limited web access allows you to have more control over the material your child is viewing.
- Mobile carriers are beginning to offer software that allows parents to limit the child's access to information, but the carriers have no control over what is on the web.

**Establish age-appropriate restrictions for your child.** There are services and software that allow parents to limit access to certain types of information. Some services allow you to personalize settings for different users. Even with limited access you still need to censor what your child sees. Given that filters on the home computer will not work on cell phones, it is important to talk with your children about where they are accessing their profiles or blogs and whether they are using the same good sense about how they are social networking on their phones.

# Appendix A: Using Technology Safely

**Set up family rules.** Sit down with your child and together work out some rules for computer use. Clearly outline to your children:

- What uses are not allowed,
- When they can use the computer, and
- How often it should be used.

You can set computer rules that are similar to the rules for phone usage. In addition to when they can use the computer, consider rules that address:

- How long they can use it and
- Who they may call or chat with.

You can manage accounts with a password only you know so that unknown apps cannot be downloaded without your permission.

**Remind your children that the same manners you have taught them about “real life” apply when using cell phones and the Internet.**

Cyberbullying and harassment occur via cell phones and the Internet. Children should be encouraged to be respectful of themselves and others by not posting or sending pictures or other content via the Internet or through text messages that will embarrass them (or others) or get them (or others) into trouble. Children should be told never to let other people photograph or film them in embarrassing or inappropriate situations (and vice versa). Once it is in the public domain, it will be with them forever.

**Manage incoming information.**

Teach your children about computer viruses and the computer damage they can cause. Explain that viruses are often attached to emails and are activated when the attachments are opened. Do not allow children to review attached files before you have reviewed them. Cover all computer web-cams when not in use.

**Set VERY firm rules about what personal information can be provided online.** Establish a clearly defined set of information that your child should NOT provide to anyone online, including:

- Full name
- Address
- Phone number
- Personal information that would expose your child or your family to risk such as social security number and credit card numbers.

Once information is online, it is very difficult to make it go away. Although children may not worry about this now, it can affect them in the future when applying for jobs or school.

**No secret relationships or secret use of the computer.** Make sure this rule is clearly understood. Help your child understand that any person online can provide information without regulation.

**Review what your children view.** Monitor which web sites and chat rooms your children have visited. Let your children know that you know what they look at, what sites or chat rooms they visit, and how long they spend there. Make sure your children understand that you are gathering this information for their protection and not to threaten or punish them. Tell your children that if they are exposed to inappropriate material online or if someone does/says something scary or hurtful, it is not their fault and you are there to help.

# Appendix A: Using Technology Safely

## Child's Rules for Online Safety

1. I will not give out personal information such as my full name, address, telephone number, parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
3. I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring a parent along.
4. I will talk with my parents about posting pictures of myself or others online and not post any pictures that my parents consider to be inappropriate.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents right away.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online and using a mobile phone. We will decide on the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online and appropriate sites for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
7. I will not give out my password to anyone (even my best friends) other than to my parents.
8. I will check with my parents before downloading or installing software or doing anything that could possibly hurt our computer or mobile device or jeopardize my family's privacy.
9. I will be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.
10. I will help my parents understand how to have fun and learn things online and teach them things about the Internet, computers, and other technology.

Notes:

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## Appendix B: References

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# Appendix C: Icebreakers

When choosing your icebreaker, be conscious of the dynamics of the group. It is important that your activity not make anyone feel unnecessarily uncomfortable. No one should be forced to reveal extremely personal information or participate in an uncomfortable environment. And of course, what is personal to some may not be personal to others. Additionally, you want to assess the literacy level of group members when selecting activities that require reading materials. In addition to encouraging interaction, it is best if you are able to tie your icebreaker into the topic to be discussed.

## Story of My Life

Give each participant a piece of easel paper and instruct them to fold the paper in half and then in half again. Give them the following instructions: You have just been given a contract to write your autobiography for a major publishing company. Get started by answering a few questions:

1. Choose the title of a popular song for the name of your book. Write that title on the front cover.
2. On the inside of the front cover (page 2), list a table of contents.
3. Name the place where you were born.
4. Describe your 9- to 12-year-old child.
5. List the names, ages, and their relationship to you of everyone who lives in your house.
6. On page 3, draw a picture of your family.
7. On the back cover of the book, draw a picture of your favorite activity with your children. What do you do? Where do you go? Etc.

Materials Needed	Time	Variations
Paper Markers	Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, and drawing. When all books are complete, have each person tell their story using the book as a visual aid. Depending on the size of the group, you may want to debrief in smaller groups. If possible, leave the books in a central location during your training to encourage further introductions and discussions.	Change the focus of the pages of the book. For instance, most exciting moment, favorite food, most exciting vacation, etc. Be careful not to make any of the questions too personal. The idea is to open people up, not shut them down.

# Appendix C: Icebreakers

## 6 Degrees of Separation

It happens all of the time; we meet someone who knows someone we know. It is a small world, that is for sure. The object of this game is to see how small the world really is.

1. Randomly assign participants to dyads (pairs). Tell each pair to introduce themselves to each other and make a list of 5–10 things that they have in common with each other: school name and location, birth year, number of and ages of children, food likes, sports likes, etc.
2. After the pairs have completed their list, instruct each person to find someone else in the room who also has one of those 5–10 things in common. After they finds that person, repeat step 1 and develop a new list.
3. Repeat step 2.
4. Allow enough time for each participant to meet five other people.
5. Facilitate a brief discussion on what participants learned that they have in common with each other.

Materials Needed	Time
None	Allow approximately 15–20 minutes for game. Once most people have finished, call time.

## Role Models

Have each person identify someone who is a role model for them as a parent. Have them share the person’s name and qualities or characteristics that make them a good role model. Place those characteristics on easel paper. Refer back to them when discussing positive parenting techniques.

## Do’s and Don’ts

Have participants introduce themselves, share their name, their child’s name, and either a “do” or a “don’t” that they have learned in their experience of being a parent. Place tips on easel paper for later reference.

## Good or New

Ask each person to share something good or new they have experienced in the last 24 hours.

## I Noticed

Have each participant share one thing that they have done differently as a parent since the last session.

## Fears

Ask each person to share their greatest concern about participating in HearT for Parents Post fears on easel paper. At the end of the last session, revisit the list and ask participants to share if their fears were realized.

## Appendix D: Session Materials At a Glance

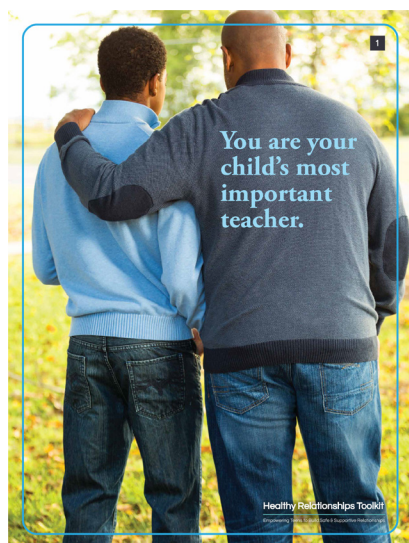
Session	Materials/Supplies/Equipment
<b>All Sessions</b>	Easel paper Easel Markers Masking tape Post-it notepad Projector Laptop
<b>1 – Why Do Parents Make a Difference</b>	Posters 1–5 Session 1 slides Videos 1–2 Parent Handbooks Extra copies of Buddy Cards
<b>2 – Parenting Positively</b>	Posters 3, 5, 6 Session 2 slides Videos 3–5
<b>3 – Parents Are Educators</b>	Posters 5, 7–9 Session 3 slides Box of question and answer cards on adolescent sexual behavior

Session	Materials/Supplies/Equipment
<b>4 – I Think I Can, I Know I Can</b>	Posters 10–12 Session 4 slides Question cards – children’s questions about sex for parents Box of Teachable Moments cards Easel paper with the small group discussion topics
<b>5 – Parents Are Role Models</b>	Posters 13–14 Session 5 slides Video 6 Relationship behavior cards Box of question and answer cards on teen dating violence Relationship role-play cards
<b>6 – Moving Forward</b>	Posters 4, 15–17 Session 6 slides Video 2 Signed participant certificates (optional)



# Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations

## Session 1



**Quote:**

*You are your child's most important teacher.*

**Relevance to session:**

Introduces explanation of why parents make a difference—the importance of the parental role as teacher. Not only are parents the first teachers for their child, they are also their child's most important teachers for life's lessons.

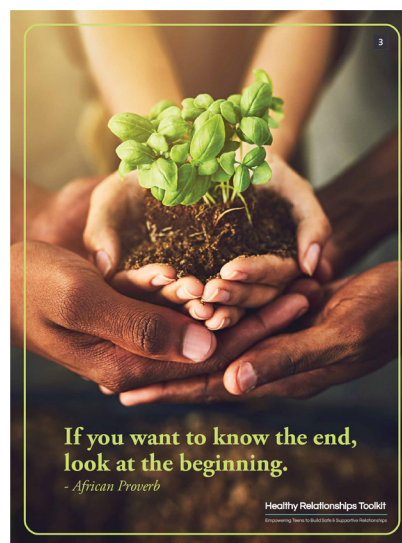


**Quote:**

*You must have a message too.*

**Relevance to session:**

Children are bombarded with messages about sex and portrayals of unhealthy relationships. Parents must have a message to counterbalance these messages. A number of things outside the home influence children and their choices.



**Quote:**

*If you want to know the end, look at the beginning.*

**Relevance to session:**

Parents have an opportunity now to influence the decisions that their children will make later (relationship and sexual decisions).



**Quote:**

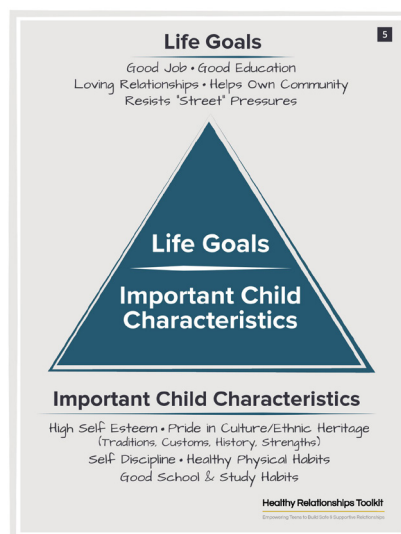
*He who learns, teaches.*

**Relevance to session:**

Parents are encouraged to share information and strategies with other family members. In most traditions, those who know or learn something have an obligation to teach others (each one teach one—Middle East).

# Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations

## Session 2



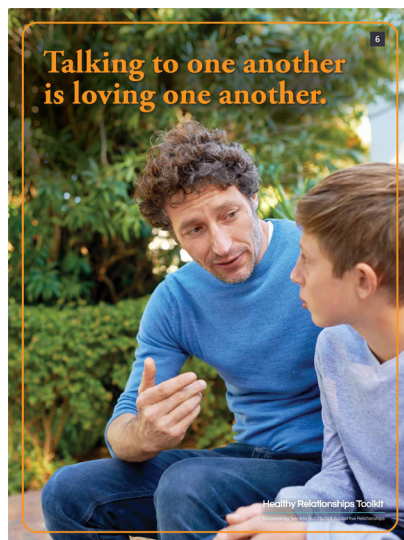
### Title:

Life Goals: Important Child Characteristics

### Relevance to session:

Parents need to build a good foundation so that their children can reach their life goals. Parents also need to equip children with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices.

## Session 3

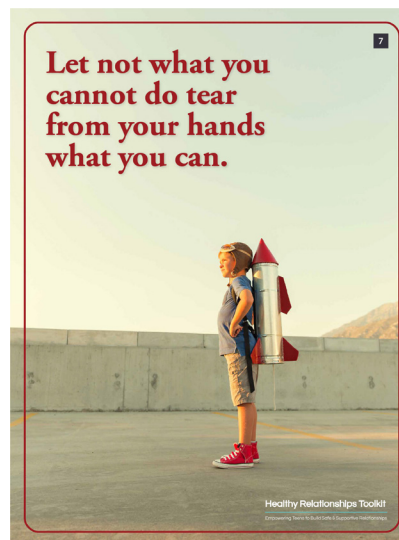


### Quote:

*Talking to one another is loving one another.*

### Relevance to session:

Communication is a critical part of effective parenting approaches. Parents' willingness to actively listen to their children is an illustration of the parents' love for those children.

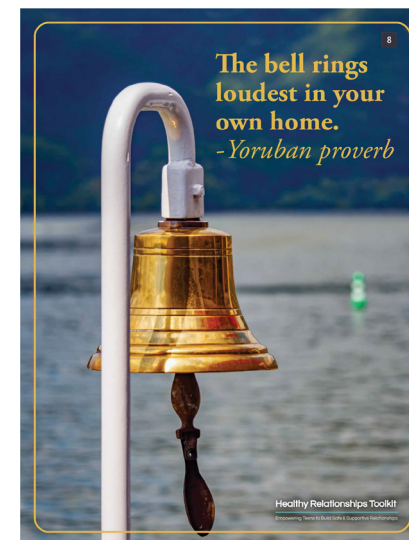


### Quote:

*Let not what you cannot do tear from your hands what you can.*

### Relevance to session:

Parents cannot afford to take the attitude that they have no control. Supervision is a tool that allows them to protect their children.



### Quote:

*The bell rings loudest in your own home.*

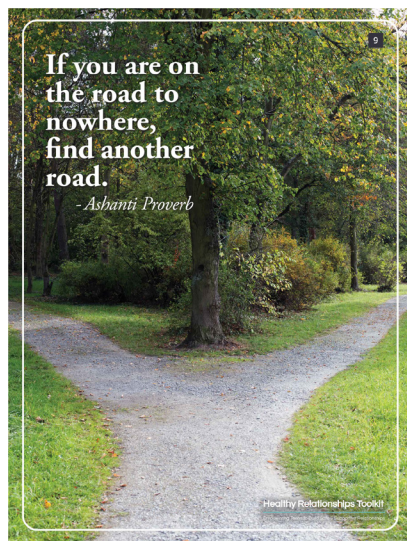
### Relevance to session:

Despite all influences outside of the home, what children learn in the home lays the foundation for life and has the greatest influence on them. (Change starts in the home.)



# Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations

## Session 3



If you are on  
the road to  
nowhere,  
find another  
road.

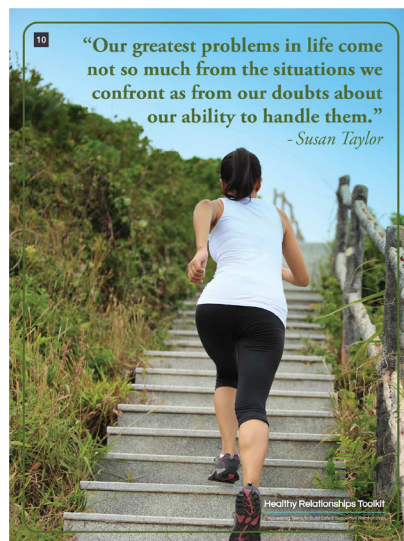
- Asbanti Proverb

### Quote:

*If you are on the road to nowhere, find another road.*

### Relevance to session:

Parents have to be open and prepared to discuss relationships and sexual issues with their children. The task is not always an easy or predictable one. Parents need to be flexible and responsive in their approaches. If one approach does not work, try another and another.



"Our greatest problems in life come not so much from the situations we confront as from our doubts about our ability to handle them."

- Susan Taylor

### Quote:

*Our greatest problems in life come not so much from the situations we confront as from our doubts about our ability to handle them.*

### Relevance to session:

Parents must be confident in their ability to communicate with their children about relationships and sexual issues and influence their decision making. Relationships and sexual issues are difficult for most parents and can be intimidating but parents must be confident.

## Session 4



Behold the turtle.  
He makes progress  
only when he  
sticks his  
neck out.

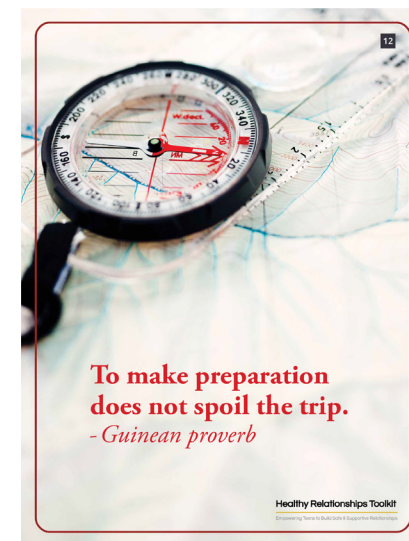
- James Bryant Conant

### Quote:

*Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out..*

### Relevance to session:

It's important to take advantage of teachable moments to have discussion with your children about relationships and sex. It's important your desire to talk to them about these difficult topics is greater than your fear.



To make preparation  
does not spoil the trip.

- Guinean proverb

### Quote:

*To make preparation does not spoil the trip.*

### Relevance to session:

Taking the time to prepare yourself—knowing your expectations, deciding what can be discussed, and thinking about what to say in advance— makes those discussions more effective. Planning and practicing talking to your child does not take anything away from those interactions.

# Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations

## Session 5



**Quote:**

*Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.*

**Relevance to session:**

Parents are much more powerful in their children's lives than they may believe. Parents are powerful role models for their children.



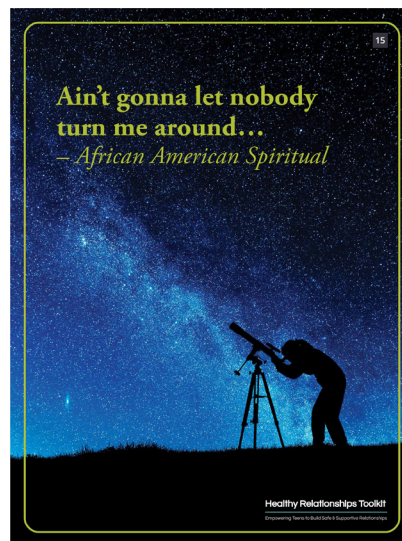
**Quote:**

*Actions speak louder than words: Let your words teach and your actions speak.*

**Relevance to session:**

In parenting, relationships must be a priority. Children watch how their parents treat everyone in the family, which communicates to the child messages of value, belonging and love. Children learn how they should treat themselves and others through these lessons.

## Session 6



**Quote:**

*Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around.*

**Relevance to session:**

Parents should not allow resistance or other issues (time, discomfort, etc.) prevent them from talking openly and frequently with their children. Their child's sexual health could be jeopardized if they do.



**Quote:**

*A man who stands for nothing will fall for anything.*

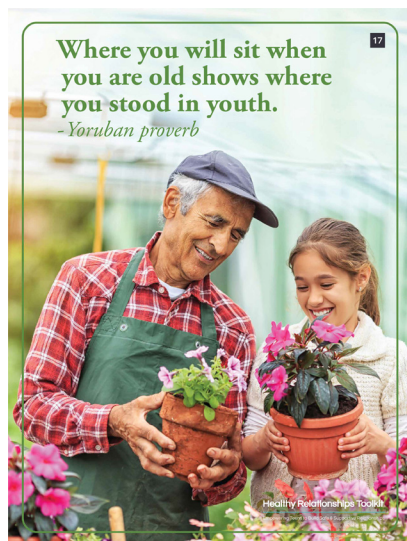
**Relevance to session:**

It is important for parents to be aware of the behaviors they wish to inspire in their children. They can provide their children with tools and strategies to help them resist unhealthy peer pressure and understand the characteristics of healthy relationships.



# Appendix E: Proverbs & Quotations

## Session 6



### Quote:

*Where you will sit when you are old shows where you stood in youth.*

### Relevance to session:

The decisions and subsequent actions that young adolescents engage in can affect their realization of life goals.



## Appendix F: Acknowledgments

Many individuals and organizations contributed to the development of HeaRT for Parents (previously referred to as Dating Matters for Parents).

The original Parents Matter! program was conceptualized, developed, evaluated, and distributed by Kim Miller in the Division of Global HIV/AIDS (DGHA) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Daniel Whitaker in CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention; Susan Shewmaker in CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention; and Sarah Wyckoff of Northrop Grumman, with assistance from: Rex Forehand, University of Vermont; Lisa Armistead, Georgia State University; Nicholas Long, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; Beth Kotchick, Loyola College in Maryland; and Mari Brown, Julio Dicient Taillepiere, Tanya Sharpe, JoAna Stallworth, and Angela Hernandez of CDC.

Parents Matter! was adapted in 2012 to highlight the need for parents to discuss healthy relationship development with their children to promote optimal sexual and relationship health. Revisions were funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, and the revised program, HeaRT for Parents, was implemented and evaluated as part of CDC's HeaRT comprehensive teen dating violence prevention model.

The HeaRT for Parents (6th grade) program underwent (1) extensive internal and external review; (2) a pilot and a 5-year demonstration phase, and (3) program review and revisions based on the pilot and demonstration phase.

(1) Beverly Fortson, PhD and Colby N. Lokey, MS in the Division of Violence Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) led the conceptualization and development of an additional session and other revisions in 2012. Reviewers in the Division of Violence Prevention at CDC included Sarah Bacon, PhD; Sarah Beth L. Barnett, MA; Lindsay Gressard, MEd, MPH; Henrietta Kuoh, MPH; Natasha Latzman, PhD; Melissa Merrick, PhD; Dennis E. Reidy, PhD; Andra Tharp, PhD; Kevin Vagi, PhD; Linda Anne Valle, PhD; Paula Orlosky Williams, MA; Phillip Williams, MPH; and Alana Vivolo-Kantor, MPH. Reviewers from other divisions at CDC included Angelika Claussen, PhD; Shannon Michael, PhD; Kimberly Miller, PhD; Drewallyn Riley, MS; and Samantha Williams, PhD. External reviewers

included Rose Colon, PhD, MPH, from Nova Southeastern University; Latronda Davis, MPH, from STAND, Inc.; and Lisa M. Ware, PhD, from Alliant International University.

(2) As part of cooperative agreements awarded to the Alameda County Public Health Department (CE002052), Baltimore City Health Department (CE002050), Broward County Health Department (CE002048), and Chicago Department of Public Health (CE002054), a pilot was conducted at four sites between February and April 2012, followed by the demonstration phase implemented between September 2012 and June 2016. A special thank you to all staff at the funded health departments including Nicole Edwards-Masuda, Esq., and Melissa Espinoza from the Family Violence Law Center in Alameda County, California; Aisha Burgess, MPA, and Byron Pugh, MPH, from Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore, Maryland; Lenny Mujica, MSW, LCSW, from Broward County Florida Health Department, and Aimee Wood, MS, LMHC, from Broward County Florida Public Schools; and Erica B. Davis, MS, MA, and Marlita White, MSW, LCSW, from Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago, Illinois, and the partnering organizations and community advisory boards at each of the four sites. Henrietta Kuoh, MPH (CDC) and RTI International provided demonstration phase training and technical assistance to each of the four sites.

(3) The program was further reviewed and revised by CDC between August 2016 and July 2019 in preparation for dissemination. Revisions focused on improving the ease and quality of implementation and increasing clarity for participants. The core content was not changed; however, some older videos were replaced with activities covering the same content. Revisions were led by Vi Donna Le, MPH and Sarah DeGue, PhD. The Program Review Team in the Division of Violence Prevention also included Jennifer Dills, MPH, Lianne Fuino Estefan, PhD MPH, Beverly Fortson, PhD, and Sarah Roby, MPH. We would also like to thank Mauro Sifuentes and Aimee Wood, experienced facilitators from the demonstration phase, for their very helpful input on revisions. Graphic re-design in 2018 was led by Jessica Anderson, MFA from the Division of Violence Prevention.

## Appendix F: Acknowledgments

(4) The program was revised and updated by CDC in 2024, including changing the model name from Dating Matters to the Healthy Relationships Toolkit. Revisions also include updated statistics, more inclusive language and examples, and changes to improve ease of implementation based on feedback from partner communities. The Program Review Team in the Division of Violence Prevention included Ashley Baumann MPH, Liris Stephanie Berra MPH, Sarah DeGue PhD, Brittany Jerry MPH, Vi Donna Le PhD MPH, Stephanie Murphy MPH, and Sarah J. Roby MPH. We would also like to thank Banyan Communications, Inc. for their contributions to project management and graphic design, and NORC at the University of Chicago for contributions to making content more representative for sexual minority youth.

### Suggested Citation:

CDC. (2024). Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (6th Grade). Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Note:** The Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Empowering Teens to Build Safe and Supportive Relationships was previously referred to as Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships.









# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

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Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships