

Tips for Parents, Caregivers, & Youth

Expandable Section

Tip Sheet for Parents, Caregivers, and Youth:

Supporting Conversations About Tough Topics

What is a tough topic?

A tough topic is anything that feels vulnerable, sensitive or difficult to talk about. Tough topics can include sex, gender, relationships, break-ups, substance use, mental health and other topics.

Before the conversation:

Tip 1: Create a safe and welcoming environment.

- Use a casual, low-stress space that everyone feels comfortable in.
- Choose a good time to talk that works well for everyone's schedule.
- Make it distraction-free; put away smart phones and laptops.

Tip 2: Prepare to listen without judgement.

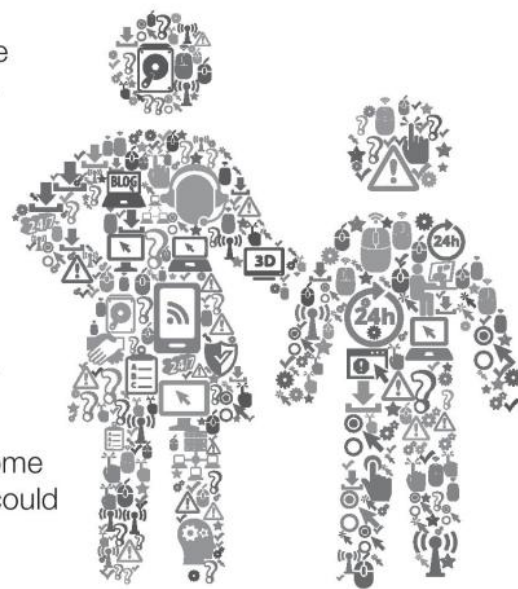
- Understand that there may be cultural, generational, and value-based differences that can affect these conversations.
- Remember, empathy is essential.

Tip 3: Pick a topic and prepare to address it fully.

- This may mean doing some research in advance to prepare for questions youth may have and to feel more comfortable with the topic.

Tip 4: Use a conversation starter:

- "Hey, do you have a minute to discuss (insert tough topic)? It's been on my mind lately."
- "You know, I've been thinking a lot about what you asked regarding (insert tough topic). Is now a good time to talk about (insert tough topic)?"
- Remember when we saw (insert tough topic) come up on our Netflix show? I was wondering if we could talk about that. When works for you?



During the conversation:

- Tip 1: Be open-minded, non-judgmental, supportive, encouraging, loving, and calm.**
- This should be reflected in your tone and body language.
 - Remember to breathe!
- Tip 2: Listen and allow your child or young person to guide the conversation and topic.**
- Affirm your child's thoughts and feelings. Affirmation does not necessarily mean you agree with their thoughts and opinions, it just means you acknowledge and respect their feelings and thoughts on the topic.
 - Listen without responding. Use reflective listening, including phrases such as "What I hear you saying is..." This helps your child feel heard.
- Tip 3: Stay actively engaged. Be open to learning from your child and answering their questions.**
- It's ok to ask some questions to learn more from your child.
 - If you don't know the answer to a question, let them know that you will follow back up with the answer later.
- Tip 4: Share your family values or reasons for concerns but stick to the topics, facts and evidence. Be open to your child having different values or perspectives.**
- Tip 5: Check in and see how the conversation is being received.**
- Their body language and reactions will let you know if they are ready for the conversation and help you determine how in-depth the conversation should be.

After the conversation:

- Tip 1: Ask if they have any other questions or concerns.**
- Tip 2: Seek out credible and medically accurate information together.**
- Tip 3: Reflect on the conversation together and individually.**
- Is there anything you could have done differently?
- Tip 4: Keep the door open for future discussions.**
- Continue this conversation later when you need to.
- Tip 5: Revisit the conversation over time.**
- Go deeper into the topic as your child gets older.



ODHS would like to acknowledge and thank the 2019–2020 Teen Advisory Board who created this tip sheet!

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OregonChildAbuseHotline@dhs.oregon.gov

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Supporting Documents

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