

SEXUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEENS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Training your kids about sexual responsibility isn't as hard as you might think. The trick is to start early. That is what I did with my daughter, Kristy. We were sitting on the front deck of our home one morning when she was 3 years old. I saw a single Mom I knew walking along the street with a baby in a stroller. I said to Kristy, "Look! There is Mrs. Jamieson with her little baby girl. The baby has a Mommy, but it is very sad that she has no Daddy."

As time went by, my husband, Brian, and I commented to our kids on the value of children having a Mommy and a Daddy. As the kids became pre-teens, we talked to them at various times about 'stranger danger' as well as about our core family value of respect and what this meant regarding sexual responsibility. We talked about the importance of respecting themselves enough to keep their bodies pure for their life partner and also for the importance of protecting their reputations. We told them what parts of the body were acceptable to touch and what were not.

For our family, the rule was that a girl should not be touched anywhere that a bikini would cover. We explained that if anyone tried to touch either our son or daughter inappropriately or suggest activities that made them feel uncomfortable, they should refuse immediately, tell the person they were being disrespectful, and be more cautious around that person thereafter.

We told our son that if he touched a girl in the places we had described as 'off limits', then he was being disrespectful to her, and this was unacceptable behavior. We told them about not getting into situations where their feelings might cloud their common sense. For example, they were never permitted to take a friend of the opposite sex into their bedrooms and shut the door. We told them not to be alone, out of sight with their boy/girlfriend for two reasons. One was that it reduced temptation, and the other was that they could compromise their reputations by what the situation looked like to others.

Our kids knew exactly what our family expectations were. We didn't have to drum it into them and worry every time they went out with friends. When they did get married, they had saved themselves for their life partners and we were very pleased for them. We didn't have to congratulate them as if it were some miracle. It was an expectation they fulfilled out of respect for themselves, and their spouses.

As parents, we need to prepare our kids for temptations they are likely to be exposed to, and tell them how to deal with them. If you explain clearly what sexual responsibility looks like, and why your kids should keep within the set boundaries, you will find that they will follow family expectations whether you are there or not.

You are teaching your kids to make informed choices. Sexual urges do not suddenly overcome a person so they can't help themselves, UNLESS they are unprepared for the emotion that hormonal changes bring. Sexual activity and responsibility is a choice. Training kids is a major parental responsibility. It should not be left to the schools or others to teach your kids.

If you feel as though your own past has made you a poor role model for your kids on this subject, then take responsibility now. Tell them what you wished you had known before so they don't make decisions that you regretted. Be clear. Stand strong. Create high expectations for your kids. Protect them for their own sakes. They will respect you for it.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.