

Resources for Talking with Teens about Sexuality

Talking about sex with teens feels uncomfortable for many of us. Talking with teens about sexual relationships in the context of faith can feel like an overwhelming task. We want our teens to be safe, be respected in all of their relationships, to honor their bodies and understand sexuality as a gift from God that is both something that happens naturally (puberty is hard to avoid!) and a responsibility that requires thought, purpose, respect for self, respect for the other and respect for our bodies as the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 6:1-20). No matter how uncomfortable we may be about discussing sexuality, our culture exploits graphically exploits it.

Sexuality is one of the largest issues with which teens struggle and if those of us in Christian congregations who mentor, lead, and love them are silent on this topic, it is not surprising that teens turn away from us to explore, experiment and sometimes, learn the hard way. Christians believe that sexuality is grounded in relationship; relationship with God, relationship with the sexual partner and relationship with the self. As adults of faith, we owe it to our teens to speak honestly with them about what we believe and why, to listen to what they believe and why, to share factual information that will keep them safe and to be a safe place to talk about their questions, hopes, fears and concerns about sex.

It is extremely important to make parents and your pastor familiar with the content of any curriculum that tackles the subject of sexuality. It is equally important that parents NOT lead youth group sessions on sexuality that their own children are attending. We want our youth to be able to talk openly about their questions and concerns. Adults trusted by both teens and their parents are the best folks to facilitate the sexuality discussion. Confidentiality within the group of youth and their leaders needs to be maintained UNLESS information is shared that will jeopardizes the health and safety of any youth in the program or someone else. Such information MUST be dealt with promptly, responsibly and legally. Please make sure you are familiar with your congregation's Safe Sanctuaries policy and that youth and their parents be informed about what situations dictate the breaking of confidentiality and what circumstances may involve law enforcement.

Here are some resources that can help you and your congregation enters into conversation with the youth in your congregation. Clicking on the links will take to more information about these curricula and provide more detailed information about what is contained within them. Several of these curricula are available through Cokesbury.

[Let's Be Real: Honest Discussions about Faith and](#)

[Sexuality](#): Approved by the United Methodist Church, this series helps youth, youth leaders, and parents discuss concerns connected to affirming God's gift of sexuality. Decision-making skills, faith perspectives, and commitment affirmations help create a foundation for making the issue of one's sexuality a significant part of youth ministry. Life is a history of important decisions. This resource addresses issues concerning youth sexuality and several models for learning experiences with youth in grades 6-12. Downloadable student and parent components are also available to use with Let's Be Real Honest.

[Good Sex 2.0](#): In the real world, kids acquire sexual information and experiences through an indirect process of observing the world over many years. Using a complex combination of reading, listening, talking with friends, watching television and movies, watching adults, siblings and peers, listening to music, dating, and experiencing sexual arousal, kids construct an understanding of what sex is. The perception they construct is what ultimately informs their sexual attitudes, opinions, values, and behavior, and no amount of teaching (in the traditional sense) can override the long-term influences of these real-life learning experiences. If we want to impress the next generation with biblical values regarding sex, we need to enter the very process that is forming their ideas and their actions. Good Sex is a youth ministry resource that very directly and very honestly speaks to the "whole system" of sexual formation. It is a resource that assists youth workers in helping students understand sex as a whole person over the context of their entire lives.

[Sex and the New You](#): Separate materials for boys and girls help preteens and teens 13 to 15 feel good about becoming men and women and presents a matter of fact explanation of sexual maturation, intercourse, conception, and birth. Wrong sexual behavior and sexually transmitted diseases are discussed.

[Our Whole Lives](#): This curriculum is a collaborative effort between the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Church. It is the most comprehensive curriculum of which I am aware. It is a series of sexuality education programs for age groups: grades K-1, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, Young Adults and Adults. The resources are written by professional sexuality educators and provide accurate information for parents, teachers and pastors to be used in the affirming and supportive setting of our churches. The resources are based on the [Guidelines for](#)

[Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#) produced by the National Guidelines Task Force, a group of leading health, education and sexuality professionals assembled by the [Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States](#). There is a [Parent Guide](#) to *Our Whole Lives* Grades K-1 and Grades 4-6 that accompanies the *Our Whole Lives* resource for those age levels. *Our Whole Lives* Grades 4-6 also uses the book, *It's Perfectly Normal*, by [Robie Harris](#). *Sexuality and Our Faith*, written by United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist Association members, is the accompanying resource used for each of the grade groups in the church setting. Excellent training is available to help leaders facilitate every age level of the curriculum.

[Journey to Adulthood](#): This 6th -12th grade curriculum focuses on four areas of human faith experience: Self, Society, Spirituality and Sexuality. The sexuality materials in both the Rite-12 and the J2A components of the curriculum are excellent resources for grounding the discussion of sexuality within the context of our entire relationship with God.