

WE'RE FOR RESPECT!

Every parent wants their kids to grow up healthy and happy and mature into a responsible adult. An essential step in helping them along the way is letting your daughter or son know that you are there no matter what; but, don't leave it up to your fourteen year old to approach you about dating, peer pressure, self-confidence, or sex. Be proactive. Engage your son. Talk to your daughter.

The RESPECT! Campaign shines a bright light on respect in relationships - all relationships - those with family, friends, co-workers, and particularly an intimate partner. As someone with young people in your life, you can help the next generation build healthy, non-violent relationships by teaching kids early and often the importance of respect.

Table Topics

As you know, time spent enjoying a meal together around the kitchen table can be a great time to relax, check in with your family, and share what's on your mind. Thus, we've outlined a few "Table Topics" specific to building healthy, respectful relationships. But, of course, these topics need not reside only at the dinner table. In the car, at the park, or wherever you and your son, daughter, niece, or nephew spend time together could be a chance to casually discuss what's going on with them and address respect and relationships.

You're already talking to your kids about what's going on at school, with friends, at band practice, on the soccer field – the good and the bad. Use these conversations and everyday examples relevant to your child's life to talk about respect. Think about situations – both positive and negative – that you can use to explicitly address respect and relationships. When a negative situation occurs with your child or in your community, turn it into a Teachable Moment. Call out the disrespectful or abusive behavior and discuss why it was wrong and unacceptable. It's also important to commend positive, respectful behavior, too.

You know your child best, so frame these Table Topics in a way that is authentic for you and approachable for your child. Continue to reach out consistently and let your child know that you are always ready to talk about any issues or questions they may have. A world of respect is in their hands and you can help them grasp it.

Table Topic Index:

- | | |
|--|--|
| #1: The Importance of Self Respect | #6: Respectful Behavior |
| #2: Defining Personal Boundaries | #7: Positive Problem Solving |
| #3: Personal Responsibility | #8: There's No Excuse for Relationship Abuse |
| #4: Alternatives to Peer Pressure | #9: Helping A Friend |
| #5: Respectful Language | #10: Digital Dating Abuse |

Table Topic #1: The Importance of Self-Respect

In order to give respect to others, one must first learn self-respect. Self-respect is deeply rooted in a strong sense of confidence, trust, and self-worth.

Mike, a parent of teens and a coach in Iowa, regularly commends the kids in his life for their achievements and good behavior. Along with acknowledging their school awards and winning goals, he makes sure to share with them the respect he has for their character. If his kids don't happen to be the winners, Mike commends them on the things they did well and reminds them to respect themselves for who they are and for their hard work.

Discussion questions:

Why is it important to respect yourself? How do you give respect to yourself?

Talking Points:

- Make decisions that are respectful of *you* and promote your health, happiness, and safety.
- Both your strengths and weaknesses make you a person I respect.
- Trust yourself and your instincts on what is safe, appropriate, and respectful.

Table Topic #2: Defining Personal Boundaries

Defining personal boundaries can be an important exercise for children and youth as they explore and test new experiences and relationships. Learning to communicate personal expectations and expressing when personal boundaries have been crossed can be empowering and promote healthy relationships.

Karla, a mother in California, discusses personal boundaries with her two youngsters in ways they can relate to. During play dates, her kids and their friends often horse around and sometimes someone ends up frustrated, upset, or hurt. Karla turns these minor playground incidents into Teachable Moments to help her kids understand and communicate their personal boundaries. When does the playing become too much and it's no longer fun? How can they communicate that in a respectful way to their friend?

Discussion questions:

What are some examples of someone saying or doing something that crosses your personal boundary? What can you say and do to communicate your personal boundaries?

Talking Points:

- Personal boundaries help define personal interactions that are consensual, comfortable, non-threatening, and respectful.
- Everyone has a right to communicate how they want to be treated by others.
- Communicating personal boundaries includes telling others your expectations and expressing when your boundaries have been crossed.

Table Topic #3: Personal Responsibility

Discussing personal responsibility and how to hold yourself accountable for your own actions can help empower kids to make healthy life choices.

John is a father of three and a veteran police officer. He often talks with his kids and other youth in the community about personal responsibility. John highlights positive acts of respect, but also discusses the real consequences of abuse and disrespectful behavior. In his line of work, he is well aware of the impact that physical, verbal, and sexual abuse can have on a victim, an abuser, and their friends, family, and greater community. He makes sure youth understand that relationship abuse, specifically physical and sexual assault, are illegal and consequences can include suspension and expulsion from school, or even incarceration.

Discussion questions:

How is giving respect part of your personal responsibilities? How do you hold yourself accountable to your friends, family and community? What are some consequences to disrespectful behavior?

Talking Points:

- You, and only you, are responsible for your actions and can hold yourself accountable.
- Your language and conduct reflect on you, your family, friends, and community.
- There are real consequences for yourself and others when you don't treat people with respect.
- Choose not to be abusive and violent. If you truly care for someone, you will not allow him or her to be abused, by you or anyone else.
- Relationship abuse, specifically physical and sexual assault, are illegal and consequences can include suspension and expulsion from school, or even incarceration.

Table Topic #4: Alternatives to Peer Pressure

Peer pressure can be really difficult to handle, especially for teens and young adults.

As a Girl Scout troop leader and parent of a middle school student, Theresa hears about the peer pressure teens face every day. The teenage girls in her troop chat about the friendships, crushes, and relationships they are starting to form. Some teens may feel pressured to start dating but confused about what that means, and what they're comfortable with. Theresa reminds her girls about the importance of respecting and trusting themselves. She helps her girls make decisions that respect themselves and others by discussing their choices, various alternatives, and potential outcomes.

Discussion questions:

What do you do with friends? What do you think about your friends? Are your friends dating? How can you respond to pressure from a friend? How can you respond to pressure from someone you're dating or seeing?

Talking Points:

- Even though a friend, boyfriend, or girlfriend may be comfortable with certain experiences and certain choices, it doesn't mean you need to follow suit.
- It is never okay to pressure, intimidate, control or threaten someone.
- You have the power to choose the type of friendships and relationships you want.
- Trust yourself to make sure you feel respected, safe and comfortable.

Table Topic #5: Respectful Language

Language is a powerful way to communicate but it is often used lightly and without full understanding of the impact it can have on others.

Ms. Sanchez, a 9th grade teacher in Texas, uses a simple exercise in her class to demonstrate how language that may seem harmless can actually be insulting. She asks her students: what do you think about someone telling a guy, "you play like a girl"? Why might this be insulting to girls? What could have been said instead? Her students' practice using respectful language and paying attention to the impact it can have.

Discussion Questions:

How would you feel if someone used demeaning language when talking about you or spoke negatively about something you have no control over, like how you look?

Talking Points:

- Language can be harmful in unexpected ways, and is often used purposely and unintentionally to insult and demean others.
- Using gender to insult someone reinforces a stereotype that females are inferior and this stereotype is unacceptable.
- It's also demeaning to make negative comments about someone's race, appearance, disability, or sexual orientation.
- When you want to express that someone is doing something wrong, poorly, or harmful, instead of taunting or mocking, provide positive suggestions.
- If it's something you wouldn't like said about you, don't say it about someone else.

Table Topic #6: Respectful Behavior

It's important to treat others how they want to be treated. Respecting the physical and emotional boundaries and desires of others will help your child build strong and healthy relationships through their life.

Brian is an older brother to two sisters and works at an afterschool program with youth in Michigan. He has heard guys try to flirt with girls by catcalling to them, but knows from what his sisters tell him that this type of behavior can be really annoying—even hurtful and scary. Brian takes time during his program to call out this disrespectful behavior and ask his kids for examples of how to give respect. Brian admits to them that we all want to look good, but how we choose to do so is a personal decision and none of us wants to be harassed about how we look. And he reminds the young men in his program that if they like the way someone looks, they should go up and tell them in a mature and respectful way.

Discussion Questions:

What are some examples of respectful behavior? Who are your favorite actors, singers, or athletes and why do you like them? Do you think they give respect?

Talking Points:

- Sometimes people may think they're just kidding around and teasing and don't realize that their behavior may actually be hurtful, scary or even violating.
- Strength and power are important and valuable qualities, but it's never okay for someone to use size or strength or threaten, intimidate, or harm another person.
- By showing respect in your language and actions, you're not only doing the right thing, you're setting an example for other people who see you.

Table Topic #7: Positive Problem Solving

Learning to problem solve in a positive way will help your child avoid violence, achieve personal safety and success, and ultimately develop healthy relationships.

Derek and Laura have been happily married for 20 years and live with their two teenage daughters. They use examples from their own family to distinguish between normal, healthy relationships and those that could be unhealthy or abusive. Derek and Laura admit to their girls that relationships are complicated and there are ups and downs, even in the happiest and healthiest of partnerships. Disagreements can be a normal part of a relationship, but these parents make it clear that if fights occur frequently, if someone feels unsafe, or if the language or actions are disrespectful, controlling, or threatening, it's important to get help. It is never okay to use violence. Derek and Laura model respect in their lives and in their marriage to help their daughters build healthy relationships for themselves.

Discussion Questions:

How do you feel when you become more aggressive during a game, a competition, or during an argument? When does aggression cross the line? How can you control your anger and aggression during a disagreement to communicate respectfully?

Talking Points:

- When problems come up in relationships, it is NEVER okay to use violence to control someone.
- Use language and actions that do not cause or have the intent to cause harm.
- There is an important difference between asserting an opinion and becoming overly aggressive and potentially threatening.
- Everyone has different personal boundaries and it's important to treat a person how they want to be treated.

Table Topic #8: There's No Excuse for Relationship Abuse

Unfortunately, there are often teachable moments in the news that can be used to raise discussion about relationship abuse.

Sharon, a mother of a 15 year old named Amy, recently found out that one of her daughter's favorite celebrities was accused of abusing his girlfriend. Amy and her friends were focused on whether the allegations of abuse were true or not. Sharon told the girls that the courts will decide guilt or innocence, but it is never okay to abuse someone. They had a long talk about relationship abuse, what it is, and that it could happen to anybody. Sharon made sure to remind her daughter that she would always be there if she needed help.

Discussion Questions:

What are alternatives to what happened? How could it have been prevented? What is a healthy relationship? Why is respect important to having a healthy relationship?

Talking Points:

- It's never right to be physically, verbally, or sexually abusive towards another person.
- Victims of abuse deserve protection, support and privacy, and are not to blame for the abuse or staying in an abusive relationship.
- If you ever witness abuse or learn about it occurring, or if you should experience it yourself, report it to me or to another person you trust such as a coach, teacher, or school counselor.
- The Teen Dating Abuse Helpline is available for anonymous and confidential help from someone trained to help. They can be contacted by chat (www.loveisrespect.org) or phone at 1-866-331-9474.

Table Topic #9: Helping a Friend

Along with helping your son or daughter avoid violence in their life, it's also important to discuss how they can model respect and respond to disrespectful behavior that they see or hear.

While his 17 year old son had friends over one afternoon, Greg heard his son callout a friend for being disrespectful. Later that night, Greg inquired about the conversation and learned that this friend had been rude and controlling to his girlfriend over the phone. His son had noticed this friend cross the line before and the phone call made him feel uncomfortable and concerned. Greg told his son that he was proud of him for speaking up. It can often be hard to intervene when the disrespectful or abusive situation seems less overt, such as verbal or emotional abuse, or if the situation involves friends. Greg encouraged his son to continue to recognize and reject hurtful behavior and confront it, even if it comes from a friend.

Discussion Questions:

How can you model respect at home, at school, and in the community? What can you do if you hear your friend being disrespectful towards someone they're dating or another friend?

Talking Points:

- If you witness a friend being disrespectful, don't join in on it. Call your friend out.
- If you witness a situation that makes you feel unsafe, don't intervene directly. Ask someone you trust, such as a coach, teacher, or school counselor, for help.
- If you think someone you know might be in an abusive relationship, let them know there are people they can talk to and resources that can help, like the Teen Dating Abuse Helpline.
- Recognize and support your friends when you see them giving respect.

Table Topic #10: Digital Dating Abuse

Digital abuse can include unwanted, repeated calls or text messages, breaking into email or social networking accounts, or being pressured to send private or embarrassing pictures or videos.

On the radio to work one day, Diane heard a PSA spot about a new issue facing teens: dating abuse that happens over email, social networking sites, and cell phones. Diane's daughter, Kate, like most teens, is attached to her cell phone 24/7 and is always online. During dinner when Diane talked about the PSA spot, Kate said that some of her friends had been pressured to send nude pictures before and that they didn't know how to respond. Diane reminded Kate that when you tell someone "No" or to stop sending you text messages or pressuring you for pictures, they should respect that. Controlling, threatening, or pressuring behavior online and by cell phone can be forms of abuse or lead to serious abusive or violent behavior.

Discussion Questions:

Have you ever felt uncomfortable by a text, posting, email or other behavior online or by cell phone? When does behavior online or by cell phone cross the line? How can you respond if you feel pressured, controlled or threatened?

Talking Points:

- Be careful about giving out personal information like your cell phone number to people you don't know very well, whether you meet them online or in person.
- When you tell someone 'NO' or to stop sending you text messages or pressuring you for pictures, they should respect that.
- The That's Not Cool campaign, www.thatsnotcool.com, has tips on how to draw your line on what's appropriate, or not, in a relationship.
- Treat others online and by cell phone the way you would treat them in person, with respect.