



SCIP NEWS BITES

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Helping to Build Healthy Relationships

You can help your teen build strong, respectful relationships. Start by teaching your son or daughter about HEALTHY relationships.

When do I start talking with my child about relationships?

It's never too early to teach your child about healthy relationships. In fact, you've probably been doing it all along. When you taught your son/daughter to say "please" and "thank you" as a toddler, you were teaching him/her about respect and kindness. Your own relationships also teach your kids how to treat others. When you treat your kids, partner, and friends in healthy, supportive ways, your kids learn from your choices. Kids learn from unhealthy experiences, too. If your child is experiencing violence at home or in the community, he/she may be more likely to be in an unhealthy relationship later on.

Good Healthy Friendships are characterized by:

- Reciprocity (give and take).
- Support and understanding.
- Characterized mostly by fun and pleasure.
- A sense of INCLUSION – a good friend does not encourage you to give up your other friends and or family.



Toxic Friendships are characterized by:

- A draining of energy. Beware of "energy vampires."
- A lack of reciprocity. There is no sense of give and take.
- One person redirecting all conversations to and about themselves.
- They deflate you. They don't share your joys and perhaps even enjoy your failures.
- They put you down.
- Possessiveness and jealousy.
- Competitive and dismissive behavior.
- They gossip about you.
- They encourage you to get involved in destructive activities.

When do I start talking about dating relationships?

The best time to start talking about healthy dating relationships is before your child starts dating. Unfortunately, many teens find themselves in relationships that are unhealthy. One in 10 teens report being physically abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year.

You can start conversations about what to look for in a romantic partner. For example, you could ask your child:

- How do you want to be treated?
- How do you want to feel about yourself when you are with that person?

What makes a dating relationship healthy?

- Both people feel respected, supported, and valued.
- Decisions are made together.
- Both people have friends and interests outside of the relationship.
- Disagreements are settled with open and honest communication.
- There are more good times than bad.



What makes a dating relationship unhealthy?

- One person tries to change the other.
- One person makes most or all of the decisions.
- One or both people drop friends and interests outside of the relationship.
- One person yells, threatens, hits, or throws things during arguments.
- One person makes fun of the other's opinions or interests.
- One person keeps track of the other all the time by calling, texting, or checking in with other friends.
- There are more bad times than good.
- People in unhealthy relationships may have many excuses to try to explain away the hurtful parts of the relationship. If you see these signs, talk to your teen.



The Power of Parents!

To improve family communication and your child's overall safety, try these conversation starters/activities:

1. Connect:

- "Let's eat dinner together tonight." Make family meal time a priority. Research shows that frequent family meals are associated with a lower risk of smoking, drinking and drug use, as well as lower incidence of depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts. Eating dinner together provides opportunities to discuss the events of our day, feelings, interests and opinions. Meal time is a great time to laugh together and create lasting memories. Kids who eat most often with their parents are 40% more likely to get mainly A's and B's in school than kids who have two or fewer family dinners a week. Eating dinner together as a family also leads to eating more fruits and vegetables and consuming less fried foods, contributing to overall better physical health.
- Instead of asking "how was your day?" and getting the response of "fine", ask specifics about your child's day: "how was math?" "what was the best part of recess?" Specific questions will generally evoke more conversation and allow you to ask additional questions.

2. Educate:

- When setting boundaries for your child, instead of simply saying "NO", when appropriate, provide a reason why your answer is such. "I love you and want you to be safe" is an answer that lets your child know that your answer has thought and meaning to it.

3. Be a Role Model:

- In all opportunities, role model the behavior you would like to see your children choose: in the car wait to answer the text message that is beeping at you; on the field show good sportsmanship even with the most frustrating referee calls; when you are responsible for driving, opt to drink a non-alcoholic beverage.

4. Encourage:

- Use affirming words with your children, letting them know that you notice and appreciate when they do the right thing.

5. Monitor:

- Know where your children are, who they are with and what they are doing. Questions like: "what are your plans?" "who will you be with?" and "how can I reach your friend's parents?" are great ways to show concern.

6. Enforce:

- If you have clearly shared your expectations for behavior to your child and they do not meet those expectations (curfews, ability to contact, positive choices), be prepared to enforce consequences calmly and age appropriately. "By missing curfew, you lost car privileges this week."

(Source: Adapted from Power of Parents: It's Your Influence by MADD; Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 2004; National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2011; www.eatdinner.org)

As SCIP Celebrates Turning 30...

We thank you for another great year!

Your dedication does not go unnoticed

and is very much appreciated!!

Here's hoping you have a happy, fun and safe summer!



See you next fall!!