



# Talking With Your Teen About Sexual Consent



## Goals

1. Understand the realities of sexual violence and teens
2. Explore how gender roles and rape culture are damaging for all students
3. Explore ways to talk to your teen about sex and consent
4. Identify ways we can all intervene as “upstanders”



**Goal 1:** Understand the realities of sexual violence and teens



## Trends and Statistics: Teens and Sexual Violence

- More than 80% of students report experiencing sexual harassment over the course of their educational career. AAUW, 2011
- One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. Love is Respect
- 44% of sexual assault victims are under the age of 18. RAINN
- Nearly one in 10 young adults (ages 14-21) admit to committing some type of sexual violence, ranging from unwanted touching or kissing to rape. JAMA Pediatrics, 2013
- One in five female teenagers has electronically shared or sent nude photos or videos of themselves. NYSDOH



# Trends and Statistics: Teens and Sexual Violence

- Lack of bystander intervention and support for survivors – why?
  - Adults aren't sure how/when to intervene
  - “Bystander” effect
  - Rape culture - victim blaming, normalizing, silencing
  - Lack of understanding about consent and sexual violence
- However...
  - Students are speaking up, organizing, educating each other and adults in their communities
  - Increasing numbers of colleges, high schools, and even middle schools are providing prevention education



**Goal 2:** Explore how gender roles and rape culture are damaging for all students



## Gender Roles

- Research has found that gendered expectations can lead to the following behaviors in children:
  - Girls:
    - Holding back academically, dieting, avoiding physical activity, internalizing sexualization
  - Boys:
    - Suppressing feelings/avoiding help
    - Engaging in fights, risky activities, bullying behavior
  - Trans & Gender non-conforming:
    - Skipping school, self-harm, pressure to identify in binary

## Rape Culture:

An environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence against women is normalized and excused.

Examples:

- Assumptions of false reporting (in reality, false reports are between 2-8%)
- Lack of accountability for perpetrators
- Lack of seriousness regarding sexual violence
- Blaming/silencing victims
- Teaching women to avoid getting raped instead of teaching men not to rape





**Goal 3:** How to talk to your teen about sex and consent



## What Can I Do?

- Talk early and often
  - About healthy relationships, healthy manhood, consent, gender expansiveness
  - Unhealthy behaviors and violence thrive in silence
- Promote healthy boundaries and respect
  - Help children understand what is ok and what is inappropriate
  - Discuss the importance of consent and respect in relationships and sexual activity
- Be clear about your expectations
  - Make sure your child knows your expectations around gender roles and relationships

## What Can I Do?

- Ask questions:
  - Look for moments to learn more about what your teen thinks and the messages that they are receiving
- Challenge gender roles & rape culture:
  - Unpack myths and stereotypes
  - Don't ignore or dismiss things that concern you, jokes, comments that are offensive
  - Point out victim blaming or disrespectful language
- Role model responsible behavior
  - Discuss and show the importance of helping others and speaking up when needed
  - Support the full humanity of children
- Discuss strategies
  - Identify challenging social situations and discuss how your child can respond and intervene



**Goal 4:** Identify ways we can all intervene as “upstanders”



## Why Do We Not Intervene?

- Sexual violence as a “woman’s issue”
- Thinking the behavior is normal
- Assumptions about what is/isn’t our business
- Fear and protecting our children – they are our priority
- “There must be more to the story” or “I’m sure they have someone to talk to”
- We may not know what to do



## Spectrum of Behaviors\*

Healthy, age-appropriate, mutually respectful & safe

Mutually flirtatious & playful

Age-inappropriate or non-mutual

Harassment

Sexually abusive and violent



Joan Tabachnick, National Sexual Violence Resource Center

\*[http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications\\_NSVRC\\_Booklets\\_Engaging-Bystanders-in-Sexual-Violence-Prevention.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Booklets_Engaging-Bystanders-in-Sexual-Violence-Prevention.pdf)



## From Bystander to Upstander

- When we model intervening, it increases the likelihood of our children intervening
- Reinforce healthy behavior
- Discourage victim blaming and sexist language
- Make it our business – how can WE let this happen?
- Align yourself with your child



## After High School...

- Prior strategies +
  - Stay connected when they are away
  - Support your child in knowing about rape prevention and survivor services on their campus
  - Give healthy, non-blaming messages about independence
  - Highlight the positive steps being taken by young people





## Remember...

- Regardless of your child's age, your support and clarity around these issues can make a big difference in their lives.
- Young people need us as allies in their efforts to change social norms and build accountability.
- You do not have to have all the answers.
- You don't have to get it right – this isn't about a one time conversation but a lifetime of messages.



## Resources

- National Sexuality Education Guidelines  
<http://www.futureofsexed.org/nationalstandards.html>
- Parents: Prevention Allies  
[http://www.wcsap.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/preventing\\_sexual\\_violence/resources\\_publications/PISC\\_Parents\\_2012.pdf](http://www.wcsap.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/preventing_sexual_violence/resources_publications/PISC_Parents_2012.pdf)
- End Rape on Campus  
<http://endrapeoncampus.org/>
- Futures without Violence: Action Plan for Parents  
[http://d3vc4vygg8dc62.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/Action-Plan-for-Parents\\_Preventing-College-Sexual-Assault.pdf](http://d3vc4vygg8dc62.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/Action-Plan-for-Parents_Preventing-College-Sexual-Assault.pdf)



# Thank You!

For more information, please visit our website

[www.hallways.org](http://www.hallways.org)