Ten Tips for Talking to Kids About Relationships

It’s best to help set some guidelines and realistic expectations for your child about things like dating before they actually begin. What follows are ten ways you can help kids prepare for the good and bad of dating relationships.

1) Assess Your Own Relationship Values Before You Talk to Your Kids— Make sure that you can explain your reasoning and can support it with examples.

2) Reveal the Unspoken “Rules of Dating”— Give your kids clear examples of what is appropriate behavior in a dating relationship.

3) Tell the Whole Truth...Good and Bad— Pre-teens generally view dating very romantically. Support these expectations, but also be realistic with them about the bad things that can happen. Let them know that violence is never acceptable.

4) Teach Assertiveness, Not Aggressiveness— One of the best skills parents can teach their pre-teens is to make their feelings known by stating their opinions, desires and reactions clearly. When there is a conflict encourage them to always take a break and cool down before feelings get hurt.

5) Teach Anger Control— Help your kids recognize their personal warning signs for anger— clenched fists, gritted teeth, a red face, tensed arms and shoulders? Teach them to calm down by counting backwards from ten to one, deep breathing, visualizing a peaceful scene or happy memory, reassuring themselves that they’re in control, or, if all else fails, walking away.
Ten Tips continued...

7) **Teach Negotiation**— Help your children understand that compromising and taking turns are positive steps to a healthy relationship and that violence, threats and insults have no place in respectful negotiation.

8) **Explain the “Danger Zone”**— Teach them to recognize that thoughts of aggression are signals of frustration that need to be acknowledged and dealt with.

9) **Keep No Secrets**— Secrecy that isolates kids from friends and family is not acceptable and can be the first sign of manipulation and coercion. Teach your kids that being strong means relying on the appropriate authorities, from parents to teachers to the police, if necessary.

10) **Be the Ultimate Role Model**— Pre-teens learn by observing those around them, especially their parents. It is critical that you respect yourself, your partner and other people.

If your conversations raise real concerns, speak to your child’s school counselor, doctor, clergy, or your local mental health center.

*Adapted from “A Parents Handbook” by the Liz Claiborne Women’s Work Campaign

**a note to parents with sons:**

Many parents understand the importance of talking with their daughters about learning how to stay safe. But every violent relationship has a victim and an abuser— and the vast majority of the time the abuser is male. According to Jackson Katz, founder of Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) and an expert in relationship abuse prevention, it is critical that we talk with our sons about healthy relationships.

“When it comes to abuse in teen relationships, frequently we react after the fact,” says Katz. “But if we’re going to prevent the abuse before it starts, we need to be more honest about who’s doing it. While young women are capable of acting cruelly, or even using violence, the vast majority of abuse in teen relationships is perpetrated by young men. It is not anti-male to say this. It is simply acknowledging reality. If parents have any reason to suspect that their son may be mistreating his girlfriend or other young women, they have a special responsibility to address this with him immediately so that he gets help to deal with his problems.”

*Adapted from “A Parent’s Guide to Teen Dating Violence: Questions to start the conversation” from the Liz Claiborne Women’s Work Campaign
How adults can give appropriate support to prevent or minimize trauma in children.

By Pam Baker-Williams, AWARE Children’s Services Clinician

Trauma can result from falling off a bike, being in a car accident, going to the hospital or witnessing something scary. It is important to understand that trauma is not just the event itself, it is also held in body’s the nervous system. While the degree of the stress is important, it is how the nervous systems handles the stress that has the greater impact. Trauma is when any experience comes out of the blue, leaving us feeling overwhelmed, with our coping mechanisms unable to handle the intensity. This results in feelings of fear and helplessness.

Knowing this, what can we do to help children who have experienced a traumatic experience? The first and most powerful thing an adult or parent can do is be calm; children are very sensitive to emotional states of the adult or parent. Before you respond, take a moment and check your level of fear. During this process, take a deep breath and as you exhale and notice the sensations in your body- how are you feeling? LeVine and Kline state that a parent’s nervous system directly communicates with the child’s nervous system. In their study they report that the most frightening part of an incident for the child was their parent’s reaction.

Remember that children are resilient and that they have an innate ability to heal. Being present with them is very powerful. When responding, make sure they are safe, use a peaceful, self-assured voice to let the child know that you are in control and know what is best. Convey that what happened is over and they are okay, this is reassuring to the child. Validate your children’s feeling. Do not try to stop or deny any of their feelings as this can increase chances of traumatic symptoms in the future. Once the trauma is over, encourage your child to draw, paint, or work with clay as a way to help release strong emotions. Give them a chance to talk about their feelings; “where did your feel the fear?” “how did your stomach feel?” This allows them to identify the feelings and release them. Remember, trauma is not only the event itself, but held in the nervous system.

The safe adult/parent relationship with this child, along with these simple, powerful steps can help decrease trauma symptoms in the future.

Hellos!

Hello! My name is Meghan DeSloover and I am the new pregnant Office Assistant at AWARE. :) It's been a swell first couple months for me (and the tiny one) here, all the ladies have been extremely accommodating and supportive. I watched from behind laminated particle board as women slowly gravitated towards my desk, one week at a time, as they, and I became more comfortable with each other. At some point I realized that my desk is the “watering hole” of the AWARE Admin. staff. What a pleasant surprise! But aside from the excitement of my desk, I find that AWARE is a place with a diverse group of women, working together to achieve one goal: helping those who have been victimized by abuse. This is good work, for a good cause and it makes me feel...pretty good. :) So thank you, AWARE, for giving me this opportunity to enrich my life, learn new skills, have a baby and help women in need!

and Goodbyes...

The summer can be a sad time at AWARE. During the summer, we say goodbye to the volunteers who have become friends and sisters to us over the past year. This summer, we say goodbye to Stacy Toup and Laurel Price, both of whom will be sorely missed.

A funny story about Laurel:
Laurel was covering for me one day when I was late, as she had done many times during her JV year. I had promised her a latte for her trouble, so on my way to work I stopped at a coffee shop and got two vanilla lattes. I'm drinking mine, taking my time and enjoying it because I know that the shelter is in Laurel's capable hands... until I attempt to carry both drinks into the shelter. As I'm opening the door to the building, I drop Laurel's latte all over the floor. She walks into the shelter 2 seconds later, and I realize as I offer her the other latte that it has my lipstick on the lid. So I've clearly been drinking it, and was totally busted; I also had to clean up the carpet. Luckily, Laurel accepted this with the grace she always displays, and didn't make me pay for it (much).

A sweet story about Stacy:
We were working with a family who had been in the shelter quite a long time when I took the Mom to look at a house. She was happily looking over the place and telling me what she'd put in each room: where she'd put the table, what the backyard could look like. When we went by the bedrooms, she mentioned "...and that could be Stacy's room...". I asked her to repeat that-- because I knew Stacy works with us and obviously wouldn't be living with her-- and she said that she was imagining the “perfect home”, and because Stacy had been so good for her kids, her perfect home would be one in which the kids could see Stacy every day. I thought it was a very sweet, and realized how lucky we were to have such a caring Americorps volunteer.

AWARE is a unique agency in that everyone who works here brings her own special skills to the table and blends them with the special skills of others. While we look forward to meeting the new volunteers for next year, I can say that I will truly miss working with Laurel and Stacy everyday. Thanks to both of you for a wonderful year.

Mandy O’Neal Cole
Goodbyes...

As I sit and reflect on the last three years, I am flooded with many emotions. Starting my journey at AWARE as the Office Assistant and leaving as the DELTA program Coordinator, I have grown in many ways personally as well as professionally. I literally feel as if I have grown up here, being molded and influenced by all the amazing women, staff and clients, who have been a part of my life. I will miss so many things about my time here. I will miss sitting at the lunch table with my coworkers laughing and sharing lunches. I will miss the “Very Important Meetings” involving very decadent chocolate cake. I will miss the Queen, sharing my name with someone, and crying with my closest friends (my co-workers). I will miss the wildly humorous stories Sarah tells at staff meetings and joking with Rachael. I will miss sharing dreams and hopes for our future with Ati, fears and frustrations with Mandy, smiles and laughter with Ellen. I will miss Professor Ropp and knitting lessons with Stacy. I will miss runzas and Girl Scout cookies, motherly advice from Kathi and Pam, encouraging words from Anne, and, especially, all the peace, strength, and confidence that radiates from Saralyn as she bounds up the stairs by my desk.

Most of all, I will miss the youth I’ve worked with this last year. I can’t even begin to explain how rewarding it is to develop friendships with the youth of this community as they decide for themselves that violence will not take a place in their world. I think they have taught me more about myself in the last year than I learned growing up in this same community. I will think of every moment fondly and will always have a huge piece of my heart and thoughts with AWARE.

Forever thankful and hopeful,
Laurel A. Carr-Michael
a.k.a. Charlie’s Angel, Laurel #1, Princess, Pinkie Pie

AWARE Wish List

- Copy paper
- Toilet paper
- Framed pictures, art work
- Heavy duty flashlights
- CD/Tape player
- Batteries
- Pens
- Children’s pre-packaged snack food items, including juices
- Children’s music
- Young Children’s educational videos
- New or well-working Vacuums
- Supplies for babies (wipes, clothes, diapers, bottles, etc…)
- New (newer) Crib/Bassinet
- New pillows
- Towels
- New Sweat Suits
- Gift cards for Costco or Fred Meyer
- Bus Tokens
- Swim Passes

*There is a wish list for the AWARE Children’s Program at the Imagination Station downtown with a wide price range for all people wanting to donate.

**Be aware that the Wish List changes with the season and/or recent donations, so this may not always be current! Please call ahead if you would like to make a donation to make sure we will accept it. Thanks!
At AWARE we work to create a peaceful environment, a safe haven for women and children who have been violated, often by the person who was supposed to love and care about them. We work to create an atmosphere that "feels" good, with staff who welcome, encourage, support, listen, and accept without judgment and without blame. It’s a gift to find a friend or family member with these qualities, and it’s a gift to find an entire staff willing to challenge itself to be the best that we can be. We hold ourselves accountable to provide the best possible service to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and child abuse.

Sometimes we may think we know what's best for another person because we know the outcome we want for them. Yet this may be different from what they want for themselves, or they may choose a different path to get to the same end. This is true for each of us- we want the freedom to make our own choices, and not have someone else tell us what to do or how to do it. At AWARE it's our job to ask our program participants questions in order to understand, and to provide options/answers for their questions. It's our job to express our concerns for a person's safety, and to assist each individual in creating their own safety plan. It's our job to allow a woman her agency, her choice of path, the freedom to make her own decisions, to accept her right where she is.

Every day, each of us makes tens, hundreds of choices, and each of those choices has consequences, some more apparent or seemingly more significant than others. As we pay attention to ourselves and bring awareness to our choices, we're provided with insight into our own behavior. We are human beings with the ability to learn and grow, and to be gracious and gentle with ourselves in the process, to give ourselves the same benefit of the doubt we give to others. Thanks to the many of you who extend your generosity to AWARE in so many ways, supporting AWARE’s work so that within our facility we maintain an atmosphere of care and safety, and working with us to generate this environment throughout our community. We couldn't do it without you.

**COMING SOON…**

*ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN!

*WOMEN OF DISTINCTION NOMINATIONS!

*SARALYN’S SABBATICAL!
Juneau Batterer Accountability Program (JBAP)

This quarter 5 more participants completed the Juneau Batterer Accountability Program (JBAP), which means that a total of 8 men have completed the entire 48-week program since the program began in 2005. Program requirements include intake, orientation, weekly classes and homework assignments.

Each quarter, JBAP staff contact the men who have completed the program, as well as their victims and/or partners. This contact continues for at least one year after their completion date. In addition, we monitor police and court records to ascertain whether the individual has re-offended. Currently, none of the 8 participants who have completed JBAP have re-offended.

Please note that we do not say that these men have ‘graduated’ the program, as that term implies the participant has somehow learned a specific set of skills or obtained a specific knowledge base. JBAP is an opportunity for men to change, but it is not a guarantee that men participating in the program will not be abusive. The JBAP is one piece of accountability—courts, police, prosecutors, friends & family also play a role. Thank you for your efforts in creating safety in our community.

Advocacy Training

Starts

August 20th!

Training Topics Include:

* Dynamics of Domestic Violence
* Dynamics of Sexual Assault
* Advocacy Skills
* Child Abuse
* Anti-Oppression

To register or for more information contact Ali Nasiah by phone at: 586-6623
Or by email at: alin@awareak.org
AWARE’s mission is to provide safe shelter and supportive services for women and children who have been subjected to domestic or sexual violence; and to effect the social, political and legal changes needed to eliminate oppression and violence against women and children.