

# Tips for Creating a Safe Space to Discuss Challenging Topics with Youth of All Ages

Based on insights from pediatric and behavioral health experts

## Why These Conversations Matter

- Strengthens your relationship and builds trust
- Helps kids learn your family's values before peers take the lead
- Linked to:
  - Lower rates of risky behaviors
  - Better emotional health
  - Increased confidence asking for help

## First: Prepare Yourself

- Feeling awkward or nervous is normal
- Your discomfort is about your experience, not your child
- Reflect on:
  - How sex and bodies were talked about (or avoided) when you were growing up
  - Cultural, religious, or personal beliefs that may make this harder
  - You don't need all the answers, humility goes a long way

## Big Picture: Reframe “The Talk”

- There is no single big sex talk, think many small, ongoing conversations throughout their childhood.
- Starting early and continuing often builds trust, safety, and openness.
- Kids who feel comfortable talking with parents are less likely to rely on peers or social media for misinformation.

## Use Everyday Moments:

- In the car (no direct eye contact helps!)
- While cooking dinner
- During walks or errands
- After a scene in a movie or TV show
- When they mention something they heard at school

## It's Okay to Say:

- “I’m not sure - let me find out.”
- “That’s a great question for your pediatrician.”
- “I feel a little uncomfortable, but I’m glad you asked.”

To learn more, access podcasts with Emerson Health pediatric experts:

[Emersonhealth.org/conversations](http://Emersonhealth.org/conversations)