

BRAVE CONVERSATIONS



BE THE SOMEONE THEY TALK TO

PARTICIPANT BOOKLET



How To Use This Booklet

Youth in foster care need trusted adults in their lives who can meet them where they are and provide information about navigating sexuality, health, and relationships.

Learn how to be a safe and trustworthy resource so youth feel comfortable asking questions, building skills, and accessing information and resources that help them make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships.

This booklet is yours to use as you participate in the Brave Conversations training. Feel free to use this space for your notes, thoughts, and doodles as you learn how to be the person youth talk to about sex and relationships.

LET'S BEGIN!



YOUR NOTES



A Trauma-Informed Approach

Trauma impacts health, behavior, relationships, and self-concept—but children and youth can bounce back from adversity with the support of caring adults.

STABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CAREGIVERS CAN MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA.

How can you promote health and wellbeing when talking to young people about sexuality and relationships?

- Create a safe environment for listening, learning, and practicing new skills
- Provide trustworthy information so youth can make their own decisions
- Encourage connections to supportive peers
- Model healthy communication and respect
- Discuss choice, consent, and boundaries
- Consider the reality of young people's lives

YOUR NOTES

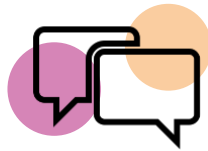


Help Youth Feel SAFE

- Create a welcoming and affirming environment for youth
- Articulate positive, empowering messages about sexuality and relationships (and avoid scare tactics or shaming)
- Support and accept youth in developing their identities
- Create an inclusive space for youth of all gender identities and sexual orientations

Here are some examples of inclusive practices:

- Do not assume you know a young person's gender identity or sexual orientation
- Honor the youth's preferred pronouns and name
- Use inclusive language like "partner" instead of gendered language like "boyfriend"



YOUR NOTES



Be Transparent and Offer Trustworthy Information

- ☐ Reflect on your own values
- ☐ Acknowledge that people have different values about sexuality and relationships
- ☐ Answer questions truthfully
- ☐ If in doubt, search for trustworthy and medically accurate information together with the youth

Try the SOY technique to answer questions and support youth in exploring their own values.

Is it ok to masturbate?

“That’s a good question!”
Some people think it’s never okay to masturbate.
Other people think it is okay to do in private.
What do **You** believe?
I always want to know what you think about important things like this.”

YOUR NOTES



Encourage Connections with Supportive Peers

- Look for mentors or peer support groups
- Look for opportunities to start conversations when you are watching TV shows and movies or listening to music or the news

You and your teen are watching a TV show featuring an abusive relationship. Here are some tips for using this situation as a teachable moment:

- “Who are your favorite couples on this show? What do you like about them?”
- “What advice would you give [character] if they were your friend?”
- “Have you seen people talk to each other like that at school? What do you think?”



YOUR NOTES



Model Healthy Communication and Respect

- Listen more than you talk
- Treat youth with respect
- Encourage youth to clarify their values about sexuality and relationships
- Model healthy communication and relationship skills in your conversations with youth

What makes a relationship healthy?

- Do you feel emotionally and physically safe in all of your relationships?
- Do your friends accept your choices and boundaries?
- Do you have an equal say in your friendships and relationships?
- Do your friends or your partner accept you for who you really are?
- Are you and your friends honest with each other?
- Do you talk face-to-face (not just text) with your friends or your partner about your feelings?
- Do you work out disagreements and conflicts respectfully?
- Do you enjoy being together?

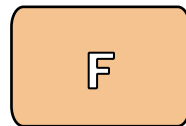
YOUR NOTES



Focus on Choice and Consent

- Encourage youth to think about and make decisions for their future
- Discuss consent and boundaries

Remember the FRIES acronym for consent:



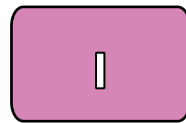
FREELY GIVEN

no one is pressured or coerced; everyone is conscious and able to think clearly



REVERSIBLE

anyone can change their mind at any time and that must be respected



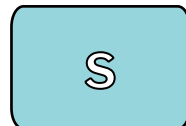
INFORMED

each person knows what they are agreeing to; everyone is on the same page



ENTHUSIASTIC

everyone is excited; no one is feeling afraid or hesitant



SPECIFIC

consent is needed every time and for every activity; agreeing to sex one time does not imply consent in the future



YOUR NOTES



Acknowledge the reality of young people's lives and history of trauma

- Consider the context of young people's lives
- Remember that youth are experts on their own experiences
- Do NOT demean family

Young people's lives and identities are impacted by many systems and factors:

- Societal: social and cultural norms, including messages about gender, sexuality, and relationships in popular media
- Community & Organizational: schools, religious communities, organizations like DFPS, and child welfare agencies
- Relationships: close interpersonal connections with family, friends, child welfare professionals, and mentors (e.g. advocates, teachers, coaches, clergy)
- Individual: each person's beliefs, values, identity, and experiences

YOUR NOTES



Engage in age-appropriate and ongoing conversations about sexuality and relationships

With young/preschool children

- Recognize that it is normal for a child to be curious about their body, touch their body, and/or ask questions
- Label body parts using matter-of-fact language instead of nicknames
- Explain privacy
- Reinforce boundaries

With elementary school children

- Explain reproduction
- Teach about puberty
- Accept gender identity & expression
- Reinforce privacy and boundaries

With adolescents

- Listen and encourage them to clarify their thoughts, values, and decisions
- Reserve judgement
- Help them access trustworthy information
- Focus on strengths and support their decision-making process

YOUR NOTES



Brave Conversations Resource List

TRAUMA

Experiences of trauma can have long-lasting impacts on young people's health and relationships. However, with the support of caring adults, youth can heal and have healthy lives.

<https://www.nctsn.org/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides information and services for traumatized children, their families, and communities throughout the United States. There is a search feature for information on topics such as [sexual health](#), [complex trauma](#), and a variety of resources for LGBTQ+ youth.

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Sexual health is about one's own personal power to make informed decisions—both in relationships and in healthcare. Accessing accurate information and safe resources can help people manage their lives, relationships, and health.

<https://www.scarleteen.com/>

Scarleteen provides inclusive, comprehensive, and supportive sexuality and relationship education for teens and emerging adults.

<https://talkaboutitdallas.com/>

Talk About It Dallas offers detailed information about different types of contraception and about STIs. Although the listed resources are limited to the Dallas area, the information is applicable to youth everywhere.

<https://okayso.co/>

When you're having a personal problem, you need advice from real people you can trust. OkaySo gives you access to experts you can't reach any other way to get support and information whenever you need it.



<https://www.nurx.com/>

NURX provides free or low-cost sexual health resources such as at-home STI testing kits and birth control shipped right to your door.

<https://www.texaswearscondoms.com/>

Texas Wears Condoms ships free condoms, lubricant, and HIV tests to your door. They also have educational resources and a list of free sexual health clinics in several major Texas cities.

LGBTQ YOUTH

We share ideas around sex, gender, and sexual orientation to understand and express ourselves and relate to each other. These identities are diverse and all are valid. Accepting and supporting young LGBTQ+ people is vital for creating a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

<https://pflag.org/>

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a national organization with local chapters across the country. This community support group builds awareness, knowledge, and skills around accepting and appreciating the LGBTQ+ people in your life.

<https://www.hrc.org/>

The Human Rights Campaign is a national organization that advocates for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Through stories, data, toolkits, and calls-to-action, they create awareness around the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people and provide solutions against harmful laws.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

The Trevor Project is a national organization that provides crisis support, education, and resources to young LGBTQ+ people. This includes hotlines, handbooks, and more.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/lgbtq/>

The Child Welfare Information Gateway provides resources for child welfare workers serving LGBTQ+ youth, as well as support and guidance for LGBTQ+ youth and their families.



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Each relationship is unique, but all healthy relationships are based in equality, trust, and respect. These resources can help young people recognize what healthy relationships look and feel like.

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

Love Is Respect offers youth-friendly information and interactive activities like quizzes about healthy relationships, dating violence, and safety.

<https://thatsnotcool.com/>

That's Not Cool provides resources for young people and adult allies about recognizing dating abuse and stalking behaviors.

TECHNOLOGY & RELATIONSHIPS

Social media, apps, and other technology play a big role in young people's lives and relationships. Reliable information about digital privacy and safety can help young people comfortably and confidently navigate the online world.

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/personal-safety/safety-online/>

Love Is Respect shares tips for young people's safety online, including using social media, cell phones, and email.

<https://www.rainn.org/safe-media>

RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) lists strategies for privacy and safety on social media.





YOUR NOTES



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HEALTHY FUTURES OF TEXAS