

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PARENTS -

MAKING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PRACTICAL FOR FAMILIES



MEDIA and SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Parents feel sad and horrified when they hear of the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child or young teen. We are concerned that we do everything possible to protect our children from such abuse - but what specific actions can we take? How can we help our children and adolescents recognize individuals who might seek sexual favors or who might coerce them into unwanted sexual activities?

One of the greatest risk factors for adolescents is to date an older individual, and the risk for coercive sexual relationships is even greater when the adolescent is younger (12 - 14 years of age). Young adolescents who watch more television are more likely to participate in early sexual activity.

Manlove J, Moore K, et al. "Sex Between Young Teens and Older Individuals: A Demographic Portrait" Child Trends Research Brief. September 2005 at www.childtrends.org

A protective factor is a strong and stable family. Children and teens who experience secure, loving relationship at home are less likely to be coerced or exploited by others. Don't be afraid of tough topics - be willing to talk and listen and admit when you don't know the answers. Convey your values and teach your child to respect herself and others for character traits rather than physical appearance.

Children and teen are often at risk during unsupervised time after school. Please think of ways to assure your child's safety during this time.

For additional information, see the book *So Sexy So Soon: the new sexualized childhood and what parents can do to protect their kids* by Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne.

Apologies - there is no video this week.



INFANTS and TODDLERS

For our infants and toddlers, we would like to emphasize there is no need for screen time.

1. There is no evidence that Baby Einstein videos help your baby's language development, so be careful how much screen time you allow.
2. Don't use your smart phone or other "screen" as a way to entertain your child. Think of other ways to engage her - singing, talking, reading books.
3. During toilet training, use anatomically correct terms for genitalia. This will help you feel more comfortable in the future as you discuss sexual concerns and privacy. It also shows your child that genitalia are normal and do not require special or silly terms when being discussed.
4. Provide your child with lots of healthy, positive physical touching, so your child will feel secure in your love. The more hugs, the better!



PRESCHOOLERS

1. There is evidence that screen time decreases a child's ability to pay attention in school. That is good motivation to limit screen time!
2. Do you hand your smart phone to your child to keep her quiet while you are busy or at a restaurant? Can you think of other ways to entertain her - like bringing crayons and paper or books with you?
3. Keep an "entertainment" bag in the car so it is always available with crayons, small magnadoodle, small books, story or music CDs.
4. Do you think it is cute for your preschool daughter to wear a bikini? Will you think so when she is 14 years old? You may want to start teaching her now that some areas of her body are private - and choose a more modest one piece swimsuit for her.
5. Teach your children that "underneath their clothes is their private space." In a matter of fact, unemotional tone of voice, tell your child no one should be touching him underneath his clothes - except ...parents, his doctor. (You fill in the exceptions that are specific for your family situation.)
6. Children need to hear this message repeatedly in various settings to help them internalize it.



ELEMENTARY

1. There are so many "screens" available to your school age child - computer, television, video games. Do a diary for 1 day to count how many hours your child is actually in front of a screen. Then, make a plan to limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
2. Watch TV with your child. Point out how people are treated, especially in commercials.
3. Ask questions of your child. "Why do you think the car company is showing a woman in the commercial?" "We can be smarter than the car company and not listen to their message."
4. Teach your child to be media-literate. See Campaign for Commercial Free Childhood for more ideas. www.commercialfreechildhood.org
5. Daughters learn how they should be treated by watching how their fathers treat other women. If you have a daughter and her father is available, ask Dad to take his daughter out on a date, treat her "royally", (open the car door for her, help seat her at the restaurant) showing her how she can and should expect to be treated later when dating.
6. Sit with your 3rd - 5th grader and go through the information on "Safe Online Surfing" (complete with interactive games) available through the FBI at <https://sos.fbi.gov>.
7. Talk with your child about peer pressure and the benefits of having courage, thinking differently, acting in positive ways even when it is different than her friends.
8. Tell your child you appreciate her inner qualities and emphasize those more than her external



ADOLESCENTS

1. Discuss internet safety with your early adolescent. Look at the fbi.gov website together with your 6th - 8th grader at <https://sos.fbi.gov>.
2. There are many research articles that show adolescents are more likely to have early sexual debut if they are watching more TV. And teens who have early sexual debut are more likely to become involved in coercive relationships.
3. Make an agreement / contract with your teen that you will ALWAYS provide a safe way home whenever she calls you.
4. Know your teen's friends, and be the "safe house" where your teen and his friends can hang out. Provide healthy entertainment - and LOTS of food!
5. Talk with your early teen about the characteristics of a controlling person:
 - a. He wants to know where you are at all times. (This may make your teen feel special but it is a warning sign.)
 - b. She insists that you wear certain clothes or only go to activities she likes.
 - c. He asks to see the history on your cell phone.
6. Monitor your teen's activities, and be especially aware of afternoon activities after school dismissal. Teens need to be kept busy and

7. Don't force your child to talk with strangers. Allow your child to be reticent with new people; respect his instincts so your child will learn to trust his inner feelings.

8. Be aware of sexualized clothes, toys, characters in children's movies. Try to avoid them as much as possible.

beauty.

benefit from having at least 3 different groups of friends (school, athletics, church) so they have more choices for appropriate and healthy activities.

71 Talk with your early teen about the dangers of "sexting" and how it devalues your teen - physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

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