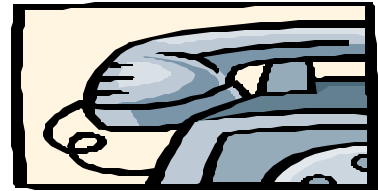


CHOICE CHOICE CHOICE CHOICE CHOICE

Communicating With Your Partner About Sex



For information about all your sexual health care needs, call the **CHOICE Hotline** **215-985-3300 or 800-848-3367**

Talking openly about sex can be difficult for some people. Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living, but many people do not feel comfortable discussing it. However, it is very important for you to think about what sex means to you and to talk honestly with your partner before making decisions.

DECIDING WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU

Sex is more than just a physical act! There are ethical, social, spiritual, psychological and emotional factors as well, and each person finds his or her own expression of sexuality with time and patience. First, you might want to talk about the values that are important to you and your partner before making any big decisions. When discussing sex with your partner, it's important to be understanding and to remember these points:

- * Every person has dignity and self-worth.
- * Each individual is different and comes from unique cultures and families.
- * There is no one correct form of sexual expression.
- * Everyone should accept and respect the variety of values and beliefs about sexuality.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Many people are lucky enough to have open discussions with their families about sexual values. For others, sex education often comes from unreliable sources, such as siblings, friends, media images, and gossip. The problem with

getting information about sex this way is that it often gives an unrealistic view of sex and does not acknowledge the possible consequences of your decisions. In order to make responsible sexual choices, you need **all** the information first. If you can't turn to a parent or friend, you can call the **CHOICE Hotline at 215-985-3300 or 1-800-848-3367**. When you call the CHOICE Hotline, a professional counselor will listen to your concerns and give you accurate information so that you are able to make decisions that are right for you. **The Hotline is free and confidential--no one will ever know you called**

WHAT NEXT

After thinking about all the possible consequences of sex, many couples choose abstinence until they have been in a long-term, stable relationship and feel they are ready to handle the responsibilities that sex requires. Others decide to start slowly by exploring other forms of sexual expression, without actually having intercourse. Remember, there are many ways of showing affection and giving and receiving intimate pleasure that do not include intercourse. Once you and your partner have had time to openly discuss your sexual concerns, remember these important guidelines:

- * **You should respect your partner's body and sexual boundaries--**you should **never** feel forced to have sex.
- * **Sexual relationships are best when both partners are equal--**pressuring one another to do things that are not completely comfortable for both partners is **not** acceptable.
- * **You should respect your partner's privacy--**if your partner doesn't want her/his sex life discussed with others, you should respect that decision.
- * **Protecting against unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS** are the responsibilities of **both** partners.
- * **Any unintended consequences of sexual intercourse, such as an unplanned pregnancy or an STI,** is the responsibility of **both** partners.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Deciding to have a sexual relationship with someone is one of the biggest decisions you will make in your life. It is important to always communicate what you are feeling to your partner before making any decisions. Through open and honest communication with your partner, you will be able to enjoy the rewards that a healthy relationship has to offer.