

INTRODUCTION

Positively Waiting publishes a monthly newsletter. Typically, it contains information related to sex or sex education. We emphasize the need for parents to put into practice the concepts we teach in our workshops.. Teen brains mature through reward and repetition. Getting the adolescent brain to hardwire the habits needed to be a successful adult takes practice. So most months, we feature a coaching exercise.

This ebook is an accumulation of those practice exercises.

How To Use This eBook:

Ideally, a parent committed to coaching their teen would read the whole thing through first, to get a feel for the objectives, and then occasionally dip into it, pull out an exercise and put it into practice.

Expect it will feel unnatural at first. That is normal -- but remember you're also training your child to do something that is also unnatural! Impulse control has important and lifelong benefits, but it doesn't come naturally to anyone.

We hope these exercises will give you more confidence as you navigate adolescence, and your children the skills they will need to become excellent adults.

Karen Kropf 7/2018

A GOOD COACH NARROWS THE OPTIONS

Adults enjoy getting a wide variety of choices, so they often assume providing many options for their teen will produce a similar satisfaction. Whether it's 31 flavors or 50 college options, adults don't realize teens have far fewer filters which help them get to "good, better, best." Accumulated life experiences tell an adult what has the greatest chance of success... but experience is the very thing teens lack!

This is not an argument to make decisions FOR your child, but rather an encouragement to take them through your process.

For instance: You decide you want your child to volunteer in some way. Together you look at all the volunteer opportunities available. Then you eliminate the ones that are farther than a bus ride or reasonable drive. Perhaps you want this to be a people-based experience, so you eliminate the ones that are focused on animals. Then maybe you screen out the ones which require equipment or skills you don't already have. Eventually you are left with 3 or 4 volunteer options which are all good choices.

Choosing from those options develops your child's filters AND let's them practice decision-making skills! Give it a try, Coach!

A GOOD COACH TALKS ABOUT TOUGH TOPICS

Discussing HPV (Human Papillomavirus) with your teens is important. They are VERY likely to be exposed to it if they have more than one lifetime partner. It doesn't matter if its 5 partners in one night or 5 partners over 5 years: the risk that they will be intimate with someone who is a carrier is very high.

What are the key things your teen needs to understand about HPV?

#1 You can't tell if someone is infected by looking. And routine tests won't tell you if someone has been exposed previously. Tests only determine if someone has an ACTIVE infection.

#2 The virus can be present without affecting the host, but produce a different reaction in a newly infected person. For instance, Jack may be an asymptomatic carrier. But when he infects Jill, she may produce an abnormal PAP test and require treatment to clear it.

#3 As long as someone is not sexually active (no sexual contact at all — oral, anal vaginal) they are not at risk for HPV infection.

#4 Once a person IS sexually active, they are at constant risk. Once a person is exposed to HPV, any vaccine will be significantly less effective, and will only work on HPV types which were not present at the time of the vaccination.

#5 Once exposed to HPV, most people will clear the infection, but there is no way of knowing if you are a carrier, for how long. It could be anywhere from 1 to 3 years, with a risk of infection for any sexual partner.

Review as often as opportunities present themselves

A GOOD COACH TRANSITIONS WHEN ITS TIME

The transition from Middle School to High School is hard for teens — but it may be even harder for moms. Mom has been the go-to-girl from birth to now, so it hurts when her child “suddenly” isn't interested in her company, her opinion or her advice. This seeming rejection can be devastating. Sadly, many moms react in a way that creates a bigger chasm: by trying to “force” togetherness or intimacy.

That doesn't have to happen. It's still going to hurt, but you can choose to look at it in a positive way.

As your teen moves through adolescence, they want and need to make decisions without you. When they do, CHOOSE to see those independent decisions as an indication they are maturing and need support, NOT as a rejection of you as a person.

As a good coach, now is the time to give your teen permission to say: I want to make up my own mind about [whatever it is]. But is there something you want me to FACTOR IN to my decision? That way, you're encouraging your teen's independence, but also reminding them that You, The Parent, might have some hard-earned life wisdom which they don't yet have.

After you give your input, invite your teen to come back to you and discuss HOW they made their decision. What was their deciding factor? Your objective is NOT TO SECOND GUESS!! But rather, so you can see their decision-making process. Think of it as “showing your work” on a math problem. The teacher looks at the process to help you find your mistake. Or praise the process as a success.

Remember Mom, you are not raising a child, you are raising an adult!

A GOOD COACH USES REWARD & REPETITION MORE THAN PUNISHMENT

One of the complaints we hear most is from parents who cannot get their child away from video games or other technology. The chemical rewards for those activities are very high, so it makes everything else in life seem unappealing.

Most parents default punishment for poor test scores or defiant behavior is to take tech away. The theory is that removing technology will give them “extra time” to study. This method does work! And truthfully, delaying gratification will actually amp up the reward that comes when they are allowed to resume playing/texting again.

We are among many others who suggest adolescents “earn” their tech time with other-focused behaviors. For example: “Thank you for your service” letters to troops stationed overseas might earn 10 minutes of video time per letter. You could match minute-for-minute coaching a younger sibling or struggling teammate at the batting cage. Let your teen pick the type of other-centered activity that’s most appealing to them, and then strike a bargain on what/how much it “earns.” You must both agree it’s fair. Be willing to adjust if they find the activity they chose is unpleasant.

Not only will this make them better prepared to have a job later, but it will foster social skills and deter self-absorption. Not to mention it provides many new opportunities for their brain to create new neural connections which foster maturing of their pre-frontal cortex!

A GOOD COACH REMEMBERS HOW TO REROUTE TRAFFIC

Remember: Dopamine engages the mechanism which constructs the neural networks that will be hardwired in an adult. Using a network over and over again is what will hardwire it in adulthood.

If you want to reroute traffic for a pattern that has already been constructed, you can't use punishment alone. Taking away a privilege does NOTHING to make that network less of a superhighway. To change where an adolescent’s brain wants to go, requires constructing another pathway for electrical impulses to run on.

I'm not saying there shouldn't be punishment — that is necessary to establish parental authority to guide him/her. BUT if you only punish, the road to the behavior you want to discourage will never get overgrown. Finding something else that brings great joy, honor, or admiration is key.

As a parent, that means you have to find out what motivates your child — and then be creative about tying that desire to behaviors.

An example might sound like this when you say it: You are still losing a privilege for sneaking onto the wifi after I shut it off, but I want to help you work on this. So, moving forward, every time I catch you doing something else to master that impulse to play video games, I'm going to add fifty cents to a fund [for whatever the goal is which would motivate your child.]

A GOOD COACH PUTS "YES MEANS YES" TO THE TEST

Since adolescents don't think like adults, when Mom or Dad talks about not doing something, such as drinking, smoking pot or sex, teens often conclude (irrationally) "You just don't want me to have any fun." Typically this is because their friends, the media, and youth culture suggests there are no down sides to these activities, or that those who experience them are few and far between.

But exploring topics of discussion such as stealthing [meaning, removing a condom without a partner's knowledge or consent] or "yes means yes" are a great way to make a new neural connection between behavior and consequence.

As a coach, you want them to imagine how they would feel (process through the emotional center) and respond (make a connection in the prefrontal cortex). In practice, you might ask how they would feel to discover they had been "stealthed"? Or have them practice "yes means yes" as they do something non-sexual, such as helping put away the groceries or dishes — "Can I put this here?" gets to be tedious and clinical pretty fast.

The objective is to connect the feeling to the behavior. This is also a great time to praise any effort or insights your teen offers, while keeping your own conclusions quiet. If you give them the "right answer" you completely bypass the goal (which is to make the new neural connection). All you are really doing is making yourself feel good.

A GOOD COACH TALKS ABOUT STANDARDS

A parent's words have power! Study after study proves that parents' opinions and standards have a greater effect than peers on a young person's decisions about sexual activity. You may not think they're listening, but they are — and they will adopt your standards!

Ironically, the proof that's what they do is out-of-wedlock births.

Think about it. The drumbeat parents heard for decades was "It's unrealistic to expect people to wait for sex." Moms and Dads stopped saying, "Wait for marriage." The standard was much lower: "Wait until you find the right guy." Or "Wait until you're in a committed relationship." And that's what happened.

It turns out that of women who give birth outside of marriage, only 14% are under 18. Most are in their 20's, and about half are living with their boyfriends.

This month's exercise, Coach, is to start a discussion with your teen about what they think is the IDEAL arrangement to create a family. You may be surprised to find your teen doesn't think marriage even matters.

But that is a great time to point out, as my hero, Judge Judy, likes to say: A joint bank account isn't a lifetime commitment!

A GOOD COACH TALKS HEFNER & WEINSTEIN

It's really hard to get coaching to happen naturally. But this month there were TWO items in the news that lent themselves to great discussions.

First, the passing of Hugh Hefner.

"Playboy" impacted the culture because it was "classier" than its competition. It made pornography socially acceptable.

Hef's death is an opportunity to talk about the potential impact of porn in your teen's life. Be open. If your teen is struggling with it, a judgmental attitude will slam the door. Their struggle to avoid porn is similar trying to avoid sugar, carbs or gluten. Its EVERYWHERE.

The other news item is Harvey Weinstein's sexually predatory history. He repeatedly and routinely arranged for would-be actresses to be in compromising situations and then manipulated them into performing sexually. In his mind, they "wanted it."

Talk with your sons about the effort it takes to not act on sexual thoughts/fantasies. Talk to your daughter about how you would like them to respond should they ever be in similar circumstances.

A final thought: NOT having the conversation because its uncomfortable is the reason Weinstein had so many victims.

A GOOD COACH LET'S THEIR TEEN PRACTICE

For this exercise, we hope TEENS will help Mom & Dad become better coaches. (Remember our goal is for parents to create opportunities for new neural connections in the prefrontal cortex through repeated experience.)

A question for the teen: Is there a privilege or responsibility you are not currently allowed, but eventually as an adult or at least a little older, you will be allowed? Examples might be: setting your own bedtime, prioritizing required v. recreational activities or creating a weekly meal plan.

You will do all of these at some point, certainly as an adult. This month's exercise is to give you a little practice as a teen, to help you & your parents see how your judgment is developing.

We suggest you (the teen) create a working schedule for activities or meals, and then stick to it. At the end of the week, evaluate have a discussion about how well you accomplished your objectives.

Even if your first attempt at your own schedule turns out to be not so terrific (you end up with important things left undone or your meals don't meet your needs), it will be a far better experience neurologically than if Mom or Dad had made all the correct decisions.

Your brain will have new connections between behavior and consequences that you can't get any other way.

A GOOD COACH USES CURRENT EVENTS

Teens don't want to talk about their fears any more than adults do. The secret to starting an awkward conversation with a teenager is to use a third party example. They don't want to talk about THEIR stuff, but they are often willing talk about what happened in a movie, a TV show or to a celebrity in the news.

For example, Taylor Swift won a lawsuit against a man who got handsy during a photoshoot. HE sued HER because he was fired after she complained. She countersued him for \$1 and won.

Completely NATURAL discussions from this story could be:

When is it okay for a man to put his hands on a woman's behind?

What's the best thing to do if it happens and she doesn't want it?

What are some of the long-lasting unintended consequences of such and impulsive act?

A good coach will keep their eyes and ears open to whatever their teens show interest in, and then use those current events as a third party discussion opener.

You will be surprised what it can lead to!

A GOOD COACH NEVER RETREATS FROM THE PROBLEM

"How can I prepare my child for an environment where they will be bullied or shamed for our values and beliefs?" It's a question that comes up a lot these days, and one which appears to be fueling the trend towards homeschooling and online K12.

Please consider that retreating from the environment just puts off the inevitable. Your child WILL eventually have to emerge from their cocoon, and more often than not, will feel resentful that they were not better prepared. It is likely to result in a rejection of the values you tried to instill. Eventually, someone somewhere will disagree or dismiss them, and they will have to able to defend their positions anyway.

Here are some universal coaching tips:

Ask thoughtful questions. For instance, how did you come to that conclusion? [Try to avoid "why" questions — they make people defensive.]

Find points of agreement. "We may not have the same view on this, but we both want people to be treated with honor and dignity."

Never respond ungraciously. No need to be rude just because someone else is.

Don't abandon your integrity. If your opponent is not willing to listen to your argument, you can always truthfully say, "If I had your experiences, I think I would feel the same way."

A GOOD COACH SEIZES OPPORTUNITIES

Long-time supporter of Positively Waiting, Angela Cooper, has started making a conscious decision to coach her middle school teen. She confided that it is a really HARD adjustment to make, but graciously agreed to share her experience for your benefit!

We are talking more often about our choices in movies and making his own choices what movies he wants to see. it has bled over into video games as well.

At a family outing, we discovered our son playing a video game on another boy's phone. The discussion we had afterward was less about the video game itself, but rather "There could be inappropriate content on someone else's phone" and the impact of seeing violence, or scantily clad people would have on his heart.

We emphasized that our goal was for him to make good choices about what he sees in order to guard his heart. He said he didn't think it affected his heart, but I told him to consider that its like being nose-blind to a smell. How after a few minutes, it doesn't stink any more, but the smell is still there."

Once you make a conscious decision to start coaching, the opportunities to do it WILL present themselves — just watch for them! (Good job, Angela!)

A GOOD COACH TEACHES EMPATHY

Being able to put yourself in "someone else's shoes" seems to be a dying art. But it is ESSENTIAL if a teen is to develop empathy. To make the leap from "the world revolves around me" to "my behavior can affect other people" requires understanding consequences — the one thing that teen brains are incapable of doing without help.

Teens need to make the connection between cause-and-effect neurologically to mature their pre-frontal cortex. Every time a parent/teacher/concerned adult gives them the "right" answer, it robs them of the opportunity to develop the ability to reason for themselves.

For this exercise, Coach, try this: have your teen come up with as many reasons as they can for why a person would choose these behaviors, whether or not it is the morally right choice.

Smoking cigarettes.

Cheating on a test.

Volunteering to answer a suicide hotline.

Go to church.

Vote.

Get married.

Stay faithful to their spouse.

The objective of the exercise isn't to establish if those behaviors are right or wrong, but rather to explore the factors behind those choices. PLUS develop reasoning and empathetic neural connections.

A GOOD COACH FOCUSES ON SKILLS

I'm not a big fan of telling teens they can date when they reach a specific age (I know 30 year olds who shouldn't be dating.) Instead, I prefer to emphasize the time to start dating is when you have the SKILLS needed to have a healthy relationship.

Before that, every discussion is focused on what they are, how to acquire them and when do you know you're proficient at them.

This month's exercise, Coach, is to ask your teen to create a list of SKILLS a person should have before they take on the responsibility of caring for someone else's body, soul and spirit. (Don't worry about correcting or editing the list, just go with whatever they believe it takes.)

Then YOU come up with some ways your teen could practice those skills. For example:

Impulse Control (the ability to THINK before you act or speak.) Practice this skill by counting to 10 before responding to even non-accusatory questions.

Selflessness (thinking about other more than yourself). Practice selflessness by choosing to do something for someone else that doesn't benefit you at all.

The purpose of the exercise is 1) to get your teen to think about what it takes to maintain a healthy relationship and 2) provide you an opportunity help build new neural connections through repetition and reward.

Every time they remember to practice the skill, successfully or otherwise, cheer them on. Do NOT criticize failed attempts or forgetting to try – it's counterproductive and decreases their desire to interact with you.

A GOOD COACH LOOKS FOR TEACHABLE MOMENTS

A good coach is always looking for "teachable moments." This is especially true when it comes to the art of sexual self-control. Teachable moments can come from social media, news items, TV shows or the circumstances of family and friends. Let's face it, the consequences of poor sexual decisions are always in the news! So take advantage when you can, Coach.

Example: An unexpected pregnancy (family/TV/youth culture). "We know they weren't just standing there when suddenly all their clothes fell off and they were laying down! There were many decisions along the way, many opportunities to make OTHER smarter choices — starting with, don't take your clothes off... how many other decision points can you think of?"

Example: Dating apps. Dating apps teach you to "swipe left" after a few seconds (to move to the next person). If you did that for a few minutes every day, how do you think it would affect how you see Real People?

Don't forget, Coach: your job is NOT to give them the right answer, but to help them figure it out! There is NO brain maturation when Mom or Dad tells them what to think!

A GOOD COACH GETS AHEAD OF INDOCTRINATION

Since many states insist your child receive factually false information about sexual behaviors, parents have a few options.

The first is to have your child opt-out of any discussion about sex. As their coach, this is the least desirable option for you, because it won't encourage the brain maturation your child will need to make their own healthy decisions later.

The second choice is to do nothing. Allow your child to receive this instruction and process it with their peers, then try to correct the errors later. This is risky, as you may not be able to determine what all the errors are.

The third option is to be pro-active. Start discussions about lifestyle choices, healthy behaviors and the long-range consequences of those choices. Not the "what-goes-where" stuff, but try this: If your best friend was being pressured to (sex, engage in same-sex activities, get birth-control) and they asked your opinion if they should do it, what would you say?

If an authority figure, such as a teacher or guest speaker, suggested that a contrary perspective on a God designed role for sex, or an ideal arrangement for raising children, how would you politely explain how your view or beliefs differ?

Remember, Coach, the objective isn't to parrot the "Right Answer." The goal is to practice HOW TO SAY IT, and start creating the neural pathway that will fire up when YOU AREN'T THERE.

A GOOD COACH FOCUSES ON THE POSITIVE

The teen years are often full of angst and drama. Partly because their brains are responding to emotion based commands, but also because young people are typically shocked when they come face to face with the reality that Life Is Not Fair.

Most parents do an excellent job of creating a happy and safe bubble when their kids are young, but then comes Middle School and High School — where the Mean Girls are popular and dumbest guy in school has "cool" down to a science.

But as Grandpa famously said in *The Princess Bride*, "Who said life is fair? Where is that written? Life isn't always fair."

This coaching challenge will help your teen discover the gift of Gratitude. It's not possible to be happy without being grateful. And appreciation can make even the most disappointing circumstances bearable.

So, Coach, be on the lookout for opportunities like this:

A teen girl failed to make a second year with the cheerleading squad. She was crushed, until her mom put it in perspective. “You had the chance to experience that last year. It gave you confidence and taught you discipline. Maybe this is an opportunity for another girl to learn that too. One she wouldn’t have if you were on the squad.”

Her daughter got it. She tried out for the debate team instead. Good job, Mom!

A GOOD COACH HAS TO CHANGE BAD HABITS

Within days of each other, I had a similar conversation with two moms learning to “coach.” One has a teenage boy and the other, a girl. Both were conversations about the child “liking” someone. Their first “mom” reaction was perfectly natural — an internal alarm went off screeching, “You’re too young to have a boyfriend/girlfriend!!” But their second reaction was, “Wait. What did Karen say...? Oh yeah, Make sure the conversation is positive so they want to talk to me again.”

The way they described it sounded like a scene from the movies where a plane is dive-bombing, and suddenly the pilot hears, “Pull up! Pull up! Pull up!” These moms, instead of lecturing, or dismissing the attraction as Puppy Love, were able to pivot into coaching mode. “Oh, really? What is it about this boy/girl that makes them special? What is it about their character that’s so appealing?”

Their ability to pivot into asking questions, listening to the answer, appreciating being a Mom who is invited into the discussion, helped them make the connection between behavior and character. That is what a good coach does — even while the alarms are beeping and lights are flashing.

The window to be the person a teen WANTS to talk to about crushes and magical tingly feelings doesn't stay open very long. Watch for it, Coach! It could be anything from a Instagram picture to a TV commercial. Ask their opinion. See how they are processing. Make a connection. But above all, make it fun, positive and pleasant so they want to do it again.

A GOOD COACH CAN TURN A NEGATIVE INTO A POSITIVE

This month’s coaching tip is not new. I have been asserting for years that everything a parent can say in a negative way, can be said in a positive way. For instance, “Don’t have sex, you could get infected,” can also be said, “If you aren’t sexually active, you can give the Love of Your Life a healthy body.”

This skill is worth cultivating as a parent. Many parents don’t even realize when a whole week of conversations with their teen sounded like this:

Stop hitting your sister! Put the lid back on the jam jar. No, you can’t go to a party on a school night. Stop hitting your sister! What do you mean you need 400 cupcakes by tomorrow?!

The teen years are a hard time of trying to measure up, so just assume that your teen is desperately hungry for affirmation. Most teens are convinced their parents think they’ll never do anything right. If you ever had a boss who criticized you in public or always found fault with your work, you know that they were the LAST person you would ever discuss a personal problem with.

Don't let what you say or the way you say it, be the reason you get cut out of what is going on in your teen's life.

I'm not suggesting you be your child's "friend." They have plenty of friends, and far fewer parents. But if you want to be their First Best Source for Information about sex, love and relationships — the WAY YOU TALK TO THEM about other topics and behaviors is definitely going to be a factor!

Don't put it off, Coach! Start now! Get really good at saying things in a POSITIVE WAY. You don't want to have to figure out how to do it while you're dealing with an obsessive crush on someone you don't approve of, or clothing that shows waaaaay too much skin.

A GOOD COACH EMPHASIZES CRITICAL THINKING

One of the challenges parents, teachers and concerned adults have is balancing teaching a child how to think clearly against telling them what to think.

The truth is, it would just be a whole lot easier if children would just do what they're told, right? But of course, we only mean that to apply to OUR direction, — we don't want them to "do as they're told" by someone who offers them drugs or alcohol.

Critical thinking is a valuable life skill, but like most skills, it takes practice! For every time you tell your child WHAT to do (to get your preferred outcome) that is one less opportunity for them to practice their critical thinking. It will age you for sure, but it's better for them to practice while you still have leverage and influence.

So, try this, Coach: Next time there are two competing "good" options (going to Grandma's or going to the beach), have your teen make up a "pro/con" list for each, and argue for their preference. And (here's the hard part) make it clear your decision will rest on how well they make their case.

Remember, your "preferred outcome" isn't as important as getting in some practice at critical thinking.

A GOOD COACH TACKLES THE PORN CULTURE

Here are a few ways a coach could start a discussion about the culture and pornography.

The culture depicts the porn industry as glamorous and exciting. So then why do most porn stars have to be high or coerced in order to perform?

In the movies where a character takes a beating, the acts depicted are simulated (sometimes computer generated.) But in pornography, the brutality and humiliation happens to a real person. There is no "stand in" or stuntman. What affect do you think that would have on a real person's physical or emotional health?

The argument for viewing porn it is "victimless." However, the demand for more, different, and new participants is the driving force behind human sex trafficking. How much responsibility does the porn CONSUMER carry for those victims?

Remember, the ANSWER isn't as important as the conversation! Just thinking and talking about it will help develop the neural network associated with decision-making. The answer will most likely change over time anyway.

A GOOD COACH RECOGNIZES THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

To change any behavior a person has to go through 3 stages: Awareness, Motivation and Action. Awareness is the point where we realize a change might be needed or beneficial. Motivation is the stage where we set a goal or begin to anticipate the reward. Action is where behavior actually starts to change.

After hearing a Positively Waiting message, teens tell us this is information they've never heard before OR it contradicts something they already heard. "Be safe, use a condom" suddenly doesn't sound very safe at all.

But hearing it doesn't automatically mean their behavior will change. The truth is, the most comfortable posture for a teen is "undecided." It provides emotional relief from taking risk, without requiring change, which few people enjoy.

Teens who have moved from "I intended to be sexually active" to "I'm undecided" have taken a BIG first step. They are now aware of the consequences, but they are not yet ready (or sure) HOW to change their behavior. A coaching parent can help make the next stage happen by asking a few non-threatening questions. This is a good exercise even if you have no idea if your child is in the "undecided" group.

What do you picture would happen if a couple decided to "take a break" from being sexually active?

How would you feel to learn someone close to you is pregnant or infected with HIV?

Which of these attributes is the most desirable for a person you want to be in relationship with:
Loyalty, Honesty, Sexually-experienced?

Remember, the ANSWER isn't as important as the conversation! Just thinking and talking about it will help develop the neural network associated with decision-making. The answer will most likely change over time anyway.

A GOOD COACH KNOWS THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PRACTICE

College students often tell me, they had no idea how much things cost. Food was just "there" when they lived at home. They had no idea if they were getting a bargain on avocados or where they should cut back spending to stay on budget.

Since ninety percent of all relational FAILS have a financial problem in the middle of it, learning to manage money, time and other resources is a PRICELESS skill!

EXERCISE: Give your adolescent the experience of figuring out what "stuff" costs. Give them your typical grocery list and have them go into the market WITHOUT YOU. Whether they make the purchase or not doesn't really matter, as long as they record how much each item costs. Then give them a budget of \$40 or \$50 less than the total and have them figure out what they would cut, or replace.

If they can practice, even as a teen, before they have to do it in Real Life, it will give them confidence in their ability to make decisions when they leave the nest. But more importantly, this is a GREAT way to show your child you are practicing thinking of them as an ADULT and that is essential if you're going to be included in their adult decisions!

Remember your goal as a coach is NOT to supply the right answers, but teach them to make a right decisions. If you tell them what they "should" think, it short-circuits the development of the neural network they will need to act or answer when you are not there.

A GOOD COACH TAKES INVENTORY

In light of the changes in state laws regarding what will be taught about sex, love and relationships, it's a good time to take inventory, Coach.

Have you been talking often to your children about your values, adolescent sexual behavior and how to respond graciously when someone disagrees?

Have you given your older teens ample opportunity to role play what to say, and how to say it?

Have you offered valid arguments for your own views beyond "Well, our family believes X, and not Y"?

Teens who recognize indoctrination when they hear it often lament to us, "What am I supposed to say?!"

The ONE thing I hope you won't do is fight their battles for them. It will make you feel better, but it not only robs your child of the practice making their case, but subconsciously says, "Better let me handle it, because I really don't think you can."

It's never fun to confront error or prejudice, but they are part of life. Why not train your child to be good at it?!

A GOOD COACH TURNS KNOWLEDGE INTO WISDOM

The objective of "Risk Reduction" as a sex education strategy is to get teens to adopt Five Behavioral Steps (it must be ALL five to measurably "reduce" the risk!)

Be responsible.

Use protection consistently & correctly.

Discuss options & potential consequences with partners.

Get tested regularly for sexually transmitted infections.

Notify partners you may have placed at risk.

It does sound very reasonable... until you ask teens their definition of the terms "responsible," "consistently," "correctly" and "regularly." It produces very interesting results. You already know this! Their definition and practical application will differ from yours.

Just remember how your adolescent applies the terms “consistently and correctly” to cleaning their room!

If you have been wary about emphasizing sexual self-control over the “use protection” message, ask your teen to explain their understanding of the 5 steps required to “reduce” the risk of sexual consequences to YOU. If they are unwilling or uncomfortable about doing that, you can safely assume they will be even less likely to have such a discussion with their partner In Real Life.

A GOOD COACH APPLIES A TIP TO OTHER OPTIONS

The perfect friend doesn’t exist, but a wise person remembers “Bad company corrupts good character.” You will become like your closest associates.

As Francis Chan once said, “Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things in life that don’t really matter.”

Is your friend’s greatest ambition watching two seasons of their favorite Netflix show in one day? Do your friends say exactly what you want them to say? Sorry, but, those are groupies, not friends. Do your friends accept responsibility for their actions? Do you spend time with people who ALWAYS follow the crowd? What about the extremely insecure? Or people whose lives are full of drama?

Be advised, they WILL make it easy for you to do the same. Surround yourself with people who want to make the world a better place. Surround yourself with people who want to do well in areas that matter.

THIS MONTH’S TIP: “Date” for friends. Just like searching for a life partner, have coffee with people before you welcome them to your inner circle. See if they’re confident in their identity and convictions, because if not, it only takes one moment of weakness for some friends to take you down a road you never intended to travel.

A GOOD COACH TAKES ON THE UNCOMFORTABLE

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy 2014 report looked at how 18-24 year olds saw their first sexual experience at the time, and how they felt about it in retrospect. For many there were only a few years between the two points in time, but it is extraordinary that 62% of women felt “regret or sadness” when they looked back.

Here’s the exercise to do with your teen: Imagine you could travel through time and interview the person you (will have/have had) your first sexual experience with. Now imagine you discover s/he looks back on that event now with regret or sadness.

What if you learned your future self also felt regret or sadness?

How would that affect your decisions or behavior now? What would you do differently?

Remember to make an emotional connection to the data for a teen you have to connect it to something they can FEEL, PICTURE or RELATE TO. Hypotheticals like these can help your teen create an emotional

picture of what they would like to have, and like to avoid. There is no “right” answer to those questions... there is only the answer they have right now.

A GOOD COACH IS A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Children grow up thinking their parent’s relationship is “normal.” They have little to compare it to, so even abusive or emotionally detached relationships become the template for what s/he expects to happen in THEIR future. Children duplicate what they learn at home.

The question to ask yourself is, “Is this the relationship I want for my child?” If the answer is No, do something about it.

Please don’t take that as “If it’s not working, then get a divorce and move on” because I am not saying that. Divorce causes deep emotional scars that last a lifetime (even if it’s amicable.)

But change is possible, and its not as complicated as you think. You can’t control your partner, but you can control YOU. You have 100% control over WHAT your partner reacts to.

THIS MONTH’S TIP: DO SOMETHING ELSE.

If every conversation seems to lead to an argument, try being the first one to say, “You may be right.”

If you feel unappreciated, try telling your partner what they have done that YOU appreciate.

If you have been storing up resentment, try starting a conversation with, “I have a confession: I’ve been really angry about...”

Give your partner something different to respond TO and it will change the outcome. Remember the problem is your enemy -- not your partner.

Conflict resolution is a skill you, as a parent, are obligated to teach your child. If they don’t learn it from you, if they never see it modeled, they will apply what they have seen modeled to their own relationships. If you are realizing what you have settled for in your relationship is NOT what you want for theirs, it is never too late to do something about it.

A GOOD COACH CAN RECOGNIZE "ALTERNATIVE FACTS"

Here is a typical advertisement targeted at college students. The callouts identify the ways in which the ad is at best, vague, and at worst, misleading. Adults in your child’s world are very likely going to give very similar advice. But your adolescent’s brain is unable to process the long range consequences of what they are being told.

The Exercise: Discuss each set of contradictory facts using an example your teen can PICTURE, FEEL or RELATE TO. For example, “Pretend I’m holding a balloon with bleach, and it is rated highly effective against breakage. Would you let me throw it at your favorite jeans?”

Remember the purpose of your coaching is to help them build a neural network FROM a piece of information TO an outcome, NOT arrive at the “right” answer.

A GOOD COACH KNOWS HIS/HER INFLUENCE MATTERS

COACHING TIP FROM A FATHER OF 3 GIRLS: We've heard different public figures, people who have influence due to athletic, musical, or acting skills, reject the notion that they are role models. Often times this comes from a person who enjoys the frills of success yet balks at the responsibility that comes along with it. Responsibility to embrace the fact that many will take their cue of behavior from them.

Regardless of your personal stance on the responsibility of public figures, those of us who are parents do have that responsibility. We do not have the luxury of selectively choosing when we want to have influence over our children and when we don't. The "do as I say, not as I do" method has proven time and again not to work. It has been said that we teach what we know, but we reproduce who we are.

Where am I going with this? Simply put, as a father of 3, I am often reminded that my voice (and that of my wife) is the single greatest influence on my kids. What I do with my time, how I live my life out in front of them builds the mental constructs and muscle memory for their lives. This truth echoes in my mind during those times when I am exhausted and would REALLY like to just sit on the couch, read a book and veg. Yet the call goes out, "Papa, can we go outside and hit?" "Papa, can you help me with my writing homework?" "Papa, can you fix this?" I wish I could tell you that I have always risen to the call, but I haven't. What I can say is I have never regretted the times I have answered the call.

So I would like to encourage you: mom and dad, single mom or single dad, aunt, uncle, grandma, or grandpa to stay the course! Keep being the voice and example in your kid's life (regardless of your kid's age!)

Don't forfeit your spot to public figures. There is no one else who can do what you can. No one can influence like you do! Does it get challenging and tiring at times...? absolutely. But may I encourage you today, to stay in the game! Keep your stride steady and be what you, as your kid's parent, were meant to be! And if, through life's circumstances, you have stepped off the field and are standing on the sidelines, may I encourage you to go for it again? You are not disqualified from speaking into your kid's life and living your life out before them, even if you haven't been consistent. The truth is, no one is as qualified as you!

Ahhhh, my phone is ringing... literally the call is for me to pick up two of my kids.

A GOOD COACH ANSWERS THE QUESTION

"Do you think its possible to find True Love in high school?"

The question behind the question is, "I have strong feelings for someone, are you telling me its just a crush/puppy love/etc.?" To keep the door open for communication, answer both questions.

First, I always ask the questioner if they think they have changed much since they were 10 -- do they have the same likes/dislikes, the same friends, the same goals? Teens always agree that they have changed a LOT since they were 10.

My next step is to point out however many years there are until they reach age 20, will be filled with so many MORE new personality shaping experiences that it pales by comparison to what has occurred since age 10. New responsibilities and new independence will all change their view of the world, and what matters most to them.

Falling in love with someone who is likely to change dramatically, while hoping both parties will change at the same pace, in exactly the same ways, can produce huge disappointments. Often clinging to "being in love" can keep one or both from exploring new things if it would exclude their sweetheart.

A better way to navigate those strong feelings in high school might be to recognize adolescent relationships are an opportunity to practice how to communicate, negotiate, find common interests and assess character. Instead of trying to nail down The One, it's a good time to work on the skills you'll need to have a successful relationship when it happens. That way you have nothing to lose.

A GOOD COACH SETS UP A TRAINING ROUTINE

To train (or retrain) the brain to choose to resist temptation, a parent can help by rewarding a teen when they replace narcissistic habits with a healthy other-focused activity. So the first thing to do is make a list of OTHER-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES, things your child can do that require them to focus on someone else instead of themselves.

Examples are

- Volunteer with a community organization.

- Teach someone else how to make a 3-pt shot, play the harmonica, or papier mache.

- Offer to pick up needed items at the grocery store for a neighbor who doesn't get out much.

Once you have some other centered activities, then every time your child chooses NOT to engage in self-centered behavior, reward them with praise, a particular treat or privilege. It is critical that you EXPLAIN the reason for the reward that they have chosen to be unselfish instead of selfish. And be sure the reward is something they really want or appreciate. Both of those steps are necessary if the brain is going to be persuaded to choose the unnatural behavior over the temptation.

A GOOD COACH KEEPS AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

NO parent wants their children to make decisions which will rob them of future opportunities. But where drinking and driving, smoking or drug abuse might be topics you touch on from the time your kids are little, the consequences of sexual behavior are often left until a teen has already been influenced by peers, teachers, youth culture and media.

If you have not discussed issues related to pregnancy or abortion with your teens, please remember other people have or WILL. Here are some ways to open the discussion:

- What do you think would be the hardest part of being a teen parent?

Who would you call if your friend asked for help after giving birth at home and no one even knew she was pregnant?

How do you think our family would react to an unexpected pregnancy?

When you ask questions like these, you may hear responses that are not what you hoped, but use them as a jumping off point for discussions about POSITIVE decision making.

Remember, "Coach" your job is to HELP THEM MAKE RIGHT DECISIONS, NOT make right decisions for them!

A GOOD COACH DISCUSSES FUTURE CHALLENGES

As entrance exams, admission essays and scholarship applications fill your teen's life, please take time to discuss some of the other challenges they will face at college.

Reconfigured restrooms. To accommodate transgendered persons who might feel uncomfortable about using facilities marked "Men" or "Women," your college student should expect to engage in his/her private business next to or nearby persons of the opposite sex. [FYI: School districts across the country (already in CA) are making similar accommodations.]

The "freshman orientation" talk. Before the first day of classes, all new students attend a lecture about "safe sex" based on the assumption that EVERYONE will be having meaningless sexual encounters with multiple partners. They will also be told that such behavior leaves no residual emotional impact or relational consequences.

Normalized use of pornography. Ignoring the data which links porn-use in males to the inability to form emotional attachments.

The annual "Sex Week." This will feature demonstrations of sex toys, S&M seminars, with porn stars as speakers. And credit for courses purporting to "explore" human sexuality through live demonstrations of sexual acts, attending strip clubs, etc.

Health service centers. They are populated with professionals who will assert there are NO mental health issues associated with multiple sexual partner lifestyles, the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections or an abortion-on-demand culture.

I realize this is a frightening list, but it is reality. Your teen is depending on you to prepare them for LIFE, and that includes being able to defend themselves against worldviews diametrically opposed to the values taught in your home.

A GOOD COACH WORKS ON TIME MANAGEMENT

I've met many parents of 16 year olds who had been lulled into thinking there was still "lots of time" to prepare for when their child would leave the nest. But I've also met a LOT of young adults who felt they were launched UNPREPARED.

For instance, very few of these teens were ever asked by their parents to work out their time management schedules. Mom & Dad decided what would be done when — things like studying, athletic practice, family time and personal time. Because there was no opportunity to figure out how long it takes to do “stuff,” when they got to college, days and weeks felt frazzled and anxious.

They also told me, they had no idea how much things cost. Food was just “there” when they lived at home. They didn’t know if they were getting a bargain on avocados or how to trim spending to stay on budget.

Since ninety percent of all relational FAILS have a financial problem in the middle of it, learning to manage money, time and other resources is a PRICELESS skill!

This Month’s TIP: Give your teen the experience of figuring out what food or cars cost.

FOOD: Give them your typical grocery list and have them go into the market WITHOUT YOU. Whether they make the purchase or not doesn’t really matter, as long as they record how much each item costs. Then give them a budget of \$40 or \$50 less than the total and have them figure out what they would cut.

CAR: Give them a set amount such as \$5000.00 for a used car. Have them come up with the best bargain for the money. What features are “must-haves” and what will the insurance cost?

If they can practice, even as a teen, before they have to do it in Real Life, it will give them confidence in their ability to make decisions when they leave the nest. But more importantly, this is a GREAT way to show your child you are practicing thinking of them as an ADULT and that is essential if you’re going to be included in their adult decisions!

A GOOD COACH WANTS TO BE INVITED TO HELP THE NEXT TIME, TOO

How Fun Are You? How easy it is to forget that the key to being the First Best Source for Information with your kids, especially while they are making BIG LIFE DECISIONS, is being APPROACHABLE!

You want your child to come to you with questions and mistakes. You certainly don’t want to drive them toward someone else who might give contrary advice! But since adolescents make their decisions with undeveloped reasoning abilities, being the adult your child FEELS SAFE WITH is critical!

It’s not easy to curb your frustration with their forgetful behavior, impulsiveness and moodiness. But it is essential that you do. Every fault-finding comment puts you in the category of People To Avoid Because They Can’t Handle Little Problems. If you make a big deal out of a missed homework assignment, or chores left undone, teens come to expect over-the-top reactions to other issues as well... like discovering they’ve sent sexually suggestive pictures.

This month’s Tip: Take some time in the bathroom PRACTICING YOUR FACE. Imagine your child has just told you they were molested by their coach, or that they have been caught up in online porn. Watch your facial expression. You will initially see anger, disgust, revulsion. These perfectly natural responses will work against you with teens. Teens internalize the emotions YOU display as directed at themselves.

The GOAL is to be able to hear alarming information and still have a sympathetic facial response. Learn to breathe and relax your face.

Adults who can do this are gradually drawn into their child's confidence. Adults who overreact (from the adolescent's perspective) will be cut out of the loop as being "unable to handle" the Real Life issues a teen faces.

A GOOD COACH DOESN'T OPT OUT

This is the question we are asked the most: "Should I opt out my child from the sex education class?" In CA, schools are supposed to address the issue of "safe sex" in the 5th, 7th and sometimes 9th grade — although many high schools have dropped Health as a subject (specifically so they don't have to deal with the more controversial aspects of it).

The answer depends on what your GOAL as a parent is. If your objective is to keep your child a child as long as possible, then opt out. If your objective is to prepare your child for adulthood, then prepare them for this class. And I don't mean have "the Talk"!

Parents who realize they are raising an adult, will see this "controversial class" as an opportunity to help a child define their values.

If you see every life as infinitely valuable, then you will help them make the argument that activity which leads to new life is not a game, but a responsibility best kept within a relationship that has both legal and social ties.

If you prioritize healthy behaviors, you will teach your child that the healthiest sexual behavior is One Faithful Lifetime Partner.

If you believe it's appropriate to use things but never people, then you will make the case that it's as wrong to use someone emotionally (to avoid feeling lonely) as it is to use someone physically (just for sex).

(BTW, You can do all of that without having to discuss "what-goes-where"!)

A GOOD COACH USES STATISTICS THAT MAKE SENSE

Statistics: What Do They MEAN?! An article on contraceptive failure rates included this sentence: "The failure rate with barrier methods is in the 1%-24% range with typical use and in the 2%-20% range with perfect use."

We read a lot of these articles so let me frame those stats in other terms: A condom or diaphragm used the way most people do is effective 1-24% of the time, but using condoms perfectly can prevent a pregnancy 2-20% of the time.

Think those numbers through... you have as much as a 1 in 4 chance of a pregnancy if you use them inconsistently (not every time, etc.) or a 1 in 5 chance if you use them consistently and correctly.

Here's The Coaching Exercise: Compare the risk of pregnancy to something they can relate to. For instance you could say, "Based on these studies of contraceptive failure, cellphone distraction (talking or texting) causes 16% of all car accidents, and speeding causes 31%. Your risk of getting pregnant while using condoms is somewhere between those two."

Teens have heard all sorts of warnings about speeding and texting while driving — and they may even know someone who has been hurt or ticketed — so this will make the statistics on sexual risks something they can relate to.

The next step is a follow up question, "So, what is the only way you can avoid getting into a car accident from speeding or texting?"

Duh. Don't speed or text while driving.

"Using that same reasoning, how can you avoid an unexpected pregnancy then...?"

A GOOD COACH DEALS WITH REALITY ON EARTH, NOT HOW WE WISH IT WAS

As the weather gets warmer and clothes get skimpier, parents of both girls and boys get an opportunity to talk about temptation. Very few young women appreciate how difficult they make it for a young man to focus on her as a WHOLE PERSON when she is wearing something that screams "look at my chest!" or "look at my butt!"

The thrill of being noticed when she is dressed provocatively is unmistakably dulled when a young woman understands that it's not just the guy she WANTS to look at her, but EVERY guy who sees her who has sexual thoughts pop in his head — unwelcome or not.

Helping a young man to understand that what they think is a desire for males to gawk at their body parts, is often a combination of ignorance of how powerful the visual is for males, fashion trends set by people not concerned about a child's welfare and a desperation for attention. Unless they are told otherwise, every young man will naturally assume a girl who dresses with a lot of skin showing has a sexual response system like his.

Dads in particular play a key role in helping their daughter understand how important it is for HER to help a guy treat her respectfully, and how becoming an honorable man means learning to control those thoughts.

Even though I have said it many times before, let me just repeat, Wives, if your husband is a good man who doesn't cheat on you, please appreciate the EFFORT it takes to be faithful to you.

A GOOD COACH DOESN'T OVERREACT

Helping a young person navigate HOW to make smart decisions requires effort. We have to be actively looking for topics and circumstances, both good and bad, which give them practice. Adolescents need to experience the consequences of their choices in order to develop their skills. When adults make every decision FOR them, they fail to connect their decisions and behavior to the results they experience.

Recently, a 20-something I know allowed her standards to be compromised. For almost everyone else, it was VERY unexpected because she “knows better.” But the reaction to her error in judgment was over-the-top. She went from admired to reviled really fast.

While she did make a few foolish decisions, the people around her reacted as if it was the end of the world. Sanctions imposed. Privileges erased. Monitoring ensued.

This month’s tip is: EXPECT MISTAKES. No one navigates a sex-saturated culture perfectly. When a poor choice is made, let the mistake-maker have input on their consequences. You want them to experience discomfort, but not so much distress that it damages their willingness to try again.

If your reaction causes that young person to see you as “unsafe” or ungracious, the next time they will LIE rather than face you. Better to have an open communication where growing up is expected to be a process of trial and error, than finding out your perfect little angel isn’t as perfect as you thought.

Ideally, the goal should be getting through adolescence and the college years with a son or daughter who will talk to you about what’s going on. You may not like what you hear, but it’s the only way you will have influence over how THEY process life experiences.

A GOOD COACH ACKNOWLEDGES WHAT IT MEANS TO THEM

As soon as we entered the big tent, a very tall young man made a beeline for us. I knew he was a teen I had talked to in the past, but wasn’t sure where. He told me I had come to his school in Jan. 2013. It took a few minutes for him to say what was on his mind, but eventually he asked if he could have another pin. [Our version of a purity ring is a pin that says “I’m worth waiting for.”]

He wanted us to know he had, as we suggested, given the pin to a girl he wanted to be reminded was worth waiting for. It helped him treat her with respect, he said. But she moved away... and he insisted she keep the pin to be sure the next guy treated her the same. He was now interested in a new girl at school and he wanted her to know his standards too.

Here’s the coaching exercise: Talk to your teen about how it would feel to be on the giving or receiving end of an “I’m worth waiting for” pin.

Remember the objective: frequent conversations, focused on positive goals which connect at an emotional level. There is no “right” answer. You are helping them build a neural network from the center of their emotions to their reasoning center.

DO NOT tell them how they should feel! Even if they don’t express what you hope, supplying the answer defeats the goal.

A GOOD COACH IS PREPARED TO GO IT ALONE IF THEY HAVE TO

Many parents hope their pediatricians or other doctors will help their children to make wise decisions with regard to sexual activity. At the very least, most of us assume doctors understand more about the risks and are capable of addressing those issues. An article published in Sexually Transmitted Diseases suggests this is not very likely.

According to the survey, private sector primary care providers:

30% reported lack of time to take sexual histories or address STIs with patients.

30% limited number of staff members to counsel patients.

70% believed that their counseling was ineffective.

48% believed their medical school STI training was inadequate.

43% believed they were not responsible for STI preventive services.

Information about sexually transmitted diseases and other risks of sexual activity is VERY complicated, and more often than not, “news reports” paint an inadequate picture. For instance, one national headline read “One in 4 Teens Infected!” but the study data referred only to a specific group of schools in the Chicago area.

The only piece of information which will be 100% accurate is that anyone who IS NOT SEXUALLY ACTIVE, that is successful at the art of sexual self-control will not be at risk.

A GOOD COACH WOULD NEVER DO THIS

Henry Alford suggested in an article in the New York Times, that parents of teenagers should encourage them to bring their partners home, have a nice dinner, then toddle off to bed together, as part of the process of learning how to have sex “well.”

If sex was like tennis, this might be fine (I suppose), but sex is NOT tennis. Sexual intimacy impacts more than the physical being — it has spiritual, mental and moral consequences as well.

If there were only two choices — Show kids how to be “good at sex” or frighten them into believing parts will drop off if they are unrestrained — then maybe it’s a potential strategy. But those are NOT the only two choices!

A good coach, raising a future adult, is going to teach their son or daughter about the advantage of having “power under control.” A great football player isn’t the guy who can knock someone down, but nothing else. A great player uses their skills to set up scores while preventing scoring, too. A great dancer doesn’t just make one great leap and leave the stage. She performs intricate steps which demonstrate stamina and balance. All of this requires the ability to harness their bodies to act according to their will.

Sexual self-control (desire under control) means better health — physically, emotionally and spiritually. Every way your child trains their body to act according to their will gives them an advantage over the child whose is just able to knock people down or be a “one leap wonder.”

A GOOD COACH HAS TO NAVIGATE THE CULTURE WHERE HE LIVES

August 12, 2013, CA Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 1266 “a landmark decision for transgender Americans.” The new law gives every student in any CA school the right to decide which restroom, locker room and

boys or girls team they want to use, according to their personal identification as male or female, without regard to their birth gender.

The potential for sexual assault and harassment is astronomical. Unfortunately, the Capitol Resource Institute is hearing that parents or students who express any discomfort about their daughters showering next to boys — are being called bigots.

While acknowledging that some parents and students may be uncomfortable with the law, “Discomfort is not an excuse for discrimination,” San Francisco Assemblyman Tom Ammiano said.

Since this applies to ALL CA SCHOOLS, parents need to get out in front of this. We encourage you to explain that showing honor and dignity to everyone, doesn’t mean your child loses their right to privacy and modesty. Emphasize you need to be aware of any suggested or overt behavior that could escalate into harassment or even assault, but don’t let your emotions take over. Children often become anxious if they believe adults aren’t able to manage. For best results, deal with your emotions FIRST!

A GOOD COACH CLARIFIES DEFINITIONS

Medical people use STI more often than STD. Are they the same? Not exactly.

STI stands for Sexually Transmitted Infection. Bacteria, viruses, and other parasites can enter the body as a result of sexual contact with another person who carries these pathogens (fancy word for germ). When the little buggers get into the body and multiply in numbers, but haven’t started causing any visible or recognizable symptoms it’s an “infection.” People can pass these pathogens to someone else without even knowing it, because they have no symptoms.

STD stands for Sexually Transmitted Disease. When someone has an STD, they know it, because symptoms are present. So, just to be clear, not all STIs cause STDs, but all STDs are classified as an STI.

Explain STDs/STIs to your kids this way “Let’s say on Tuesday you caught a cold from your friend, but you don’t feel the sore throat until Thursday. That means on Wednesday you had the infection, but on Thursday you had the disease. In the case of STDs, you can have the infection for days, months or even years before you start to feel the symptoms of the disease — but all the while other people can still catch it from you if you have sex with them.”

Follow up by connecting at the emotional level. “What do you think it would feel like to find out you infected someone?” Listen without critique, and don’t supply the answer! This is how brains build a neural network from the emotion to the consequence. If you tell them how it would feel, you will short-circuit the maturing process.

A GOOD COACH DOESN'T CARE WHO GETS THE CREDIT

A meta-analysis of hundreds of studies conducted from 1980 to 2011 looked at the unique influences of fathers on adolescent sexual behavior*. The review factored out mom’s influence or the absence of a father in the home.

They looked at paternal attitude regarding adolescent sexual activity, monitoring and discipline-related behaviors, dad's involvement and emotional attachment in adolescent life and his communication about sex.

They evaluated the following 7 adolescent behaviors

Ever had sex,

Frequency of sex,

Number of sexual partners,

Contraceptive use,

Frequency of condom use,

Pregnancy

Common adolescent sexual behaviors

The review found two results that are critical.

If Dad disapproved, teens were more likely to delay sex initiation.

The closer Dad and child were, the more committed teens were to choosing risk avoidance behavior over risk reduction behavior.

It's not that what Mom says doesn't matter, but Dad, YOUR input can have a HUGE impact on positive decision-making.

We recommend parenting roles shift as a child enters adolescence. Mom, step out of the role of disciplinarian, and Dad, take it on. Parents need to agree on the discipline, but Dad, you deliver it and hold them accountable. This single adjustment has a dramatic impact on a teen's ability to connect current behavior to long-term consequences.

* Guilamo-Ramos V, Bouris A, Lee J et al. Paternal Influences on Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviors: A Structured Literature Review. *Pediatrics* 2012;130(5): e1313 – e1325.

A GOOD COACH GETS A FINAL WORD

At Prom Time, it's not unusual for me to hear Mom or Dad say something like, "Well, there's nothing I can do now. Either they'll do the right thing or they won't!" That is only partially true.

Of course, if you have been regularly having chats about sexual self-control, your child is already clear on the risks and benefits. But if your child is going to the prom without having heard a consistent clear message from you, you're right, you're rolling the dice.

There is one thing you CAN say, while the preparations are underway.

I know you know how to make good decisions. I've seen you do it. There will be pressure and temptation tonight, so all I'm asking is that you look me in the eye tomorrow and tell me you aren't ashamed of any decision you made.

Your teen will leave home looking forward to telling you about their victories.

A GOOD COACH TALKS ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF DATING

When your teen starts spending extra time on their appearance, that's the signal to begin having conversations about the purpose of dating. Teen culture assumes multiple partners in high school, but in reality it only helps a teen get good at breaking up. No parent wants that!

We recommend mom and dad explain the purpose of dating before marriage is to practice the SKILLS for marriage. Use carpool time, road trips, shopping to discuss the challenges of:

- Staying within a budget

- Discovering common interests

- Learning to negotiate or compromise

- Putting others first

- Fighting fair

- Keeping your word

It's just one more way to become the First Best Source of Information for your teen.

A GOOD COACH KNOWS THE OTHER VOICES TALKING TO HIS KIDS

One of the government services available to teens in CA is a weekly text message called "HookUp Tips." Teens who sign up for it get a weekly text offering info on sex, STDs, testing, etc. This week's tip was: Take action to prevent HPV! If you are 12+ you can get vaccinated on your own. Text CLINIC to find out where near you."

Few parents want their 12 year old to be having sex. Fewer still want some stranger offering MEDICAL services or advice to their child. But your child lives in a world where this happens!!

Use this as an opportunity to start a discussion about vaccines, health consequences of sexual activity, and relational goals.

Remember your goal is NOT to make the right decision FOR them, but to help THEM make right decisions! So start a discussion, don't give a lecture!

A GOOD COACH PRACTICES REPHRASING

In my frequent conversations with teens about what's going on in their lives, one of the most useful tools I have found is Rephrasing. Basically, I ask them to correct my understanding of what they said.

For example, a teen girl said to me, "I had a fight with my boyfriend because I didn't want him to hang out with his old girlfriend. At first, he said he would stop, but then he called me later and said he wasn't being 'honest' with me. He said I should trust him to be with whoever he wants, and eventually I agreed."

I rephrased what I heard her say this way: "I just want to be sure I understand what you just said. It sounded like you set a standard for how you expected to be treated. But then you let him talk you into lowering that standard?"

She didn't like how it sounded when I said it at all.

Notice I didn't tell her to do anything. This is deliberate. Rephrasing a) demonstrates you're listening, and b) presents the teen with an alternate perspective.

Don't expect it to change behavior immediately, though. A new perspective may take time to metamorphose into application. It could take several similar conversations before the teen decides for HERSELF that she is not being well-treated. Don't be a nag. Use rephrasing often and then watch for her discernment to develop.

Remember the goal is to help your teen make good decisions when you're not there!