The Resilient Kid™

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10 Conversations to Have with Your Teen About Sex, Consent & Safety Before They Leave Home

As your teen prepares to head off to university or live independently, it's easy to focus on packing lists, budgeting tips, and student timetables. But what about the personal safety conversations? This guide will help you open the door to meaningful, respectful conversations about sex, consent, and emotional wellbeing.

What does consent really mean?

Consent must be clear, mutual, and ongoing. Teach your teen that it's more than just a verbal "yes"—it's about comfort, understanding, and enthusiastic agreement. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Conversation starter: "What do you think good consent looks like?"

What does a healthy sexual relationship look like?

Healthy intimacy is based on respect, communication, and mutual enjoyment. It should never involve pressure, guilt, or fear.

Conversation starter: "What are some signs that a relationship is respectful and balanced?"

What's the difference between compliance and consent?

Saying "yes" because you're scared to say "no" is not consent. Neither is silence. Encourage your teen to trust their instincts and know that it's always okay to pause or stop.

Conversation starter: "Have you ever felt pressured to do something just to avoid upsetting someone?"

How do I set and protect my boundaries?

Boundaries are personal, and it's essential to feel confident in asserting them. Support your teen in practising how to say what they're comfortable with.

Conversation starter: "If someone crossed a line with you, how would you handle it?"

How do I handle peer pressure or group situations?

University life brings social challenges. Talk about drinking, nights out, and how to stick to their values even when others don't.

Conversation starter: "What would you do if you felt out of place or uncomfortable on a night out?"

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Where can I get contraception and STI checks?

Many universities have sexual health clinics, and GPs or services like Brook offer free support. Make sure your teen knows where to go and that it's normal to seek help.

Conversation starter: "Do you know where to get condoms or a sexual health check-up near campus?"

What if something goes wrong—who do I talk to?

Make sure your teen knows who they can contact for emotional or medical help—whether that's you, a friend, a lecturer, or a helpline.

Conversation starter: "If something happened and you felt unsafe or unsure, who would you go to first?"

How does alcohol or drugs impact consent?

Impaired judgement can blur lines. Legally and ethically, consent cannot be given under the influence. Talk about what this means in real situations.

Conversation starter: "Do you know how alcohol or drugs can affect someone's ability to consent?"

What role does digital safety play in sex and relationships?

Sexting, sharing images, or navigating dating apps all come with risks. Discuss online behaviour, privacy, and protecting personal boundaries.

Conversation starter: "How would you handle it if someone asked for or shared private photos?"

What happens if my views or experiences change?

Remind your teen that they're allowed to grow, change, and learn. Consent is ongoing and personal, and so is sexual identity and comfort.

Conversation starter: "What would help you feel safe exploring relationships while still staying true to yourself?"

Support Resources:

- Brook (Sexual Health & Wellbeing - Brook)
- NHS Sexual Health (Sexual health)
- Student Services at their university
- National Sexual Violence Helpline: 0808 802 9999

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Final Note:

You don't need to have all the answers—you just need to keep the door open. These conversations aren't one-offs. They're the groundwork for trust, growth, and emotional safety as your teen becomes an independent adult.

You've been their guide up to now. This is one more way to walk beside them as they take their next steps.

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