9. You gain confidence.
Doing something you’re afraid to do can help you feel good about yourself. When speaking up helps keep you and someone you care about safe, you can feel even better.

10. You’ll both be better lovers.
When you talk you can learn what pleases the other person. You’ll feel safer and more sure of each other. Trust can make sex better.

11. You won’t have to wish you’d talked after it’s too late.
Getting an STD, or having an unplanned pregnancy, is hard on a relationship. Talking is simple and easy compared to those things.

12. It’s good practice.
There may be other sensitive things you need to talk about. The more you practice talking about tough topics, the easier it gets.

Get tested. Knowing your own STD status makes talking easier.

STD Basics
Knowing a few simple facts about STD can help you protect yourself and a partner:

- Anyone can get an STD from having sex (vaginal, oral or anal) or sharing needles (for any reason) with someone who has one. Some STDs can be passed by genital touching.
- Many STDs have no symptoms. So you can’t tell by looking if someone has one.
- Get tested. It’s the only way to know for sure if you have an STD.
- All STDs can and must be treated. Many can be cured. STDs can cause serious health problems if they’re not treated.
It’s strange but true—many people find it easier to have sex than to talk about it. Discussing sex might feel uncomfortable. You may worry that:

- You’ll be embarrassed.
- You won’t know what to say.
- Your partner won’t want to talk.

These are common feelings. But there are lots of good reasons to talk about sex before you do it.

**Talking Tips**

- **Sort out your feelings and fears** before you begin.
- **Think about what you want to say.** Practice with a friend or in front of the mirror.
- **Plan a place and time to talk.** Choose somewhere you’ll both feel comfortable and won’t be interrupted.
- **If you’re feeling nervous, say so.** Keep a sense of humor. Being able to laugh together can make talking easier.
- **Be honest about past partners and STDs.** Expect the same honesty from your partner.

---

1. **You can agree on a plan to stay safe.**
   Probably neither of you wants to get an STD or get pregnant without planning to. Deciding together how you’ll protect yourselves helps you avoid problems and regrets.

2. **You can get to know each other better.**
   How someone handles tough topics can tell you a lot about the other person. Feeling a little embarrassed together can even help you feel closer. Then your relationship—and sex—will be better if and when you have it.

3. **You can learn how your partner feels about alcohol, other drugs and sex.**
   Drugs affect judgment. So if you have sex when drunk or high, you’re more likely to forget to use condoms, or not use them correctly.

4. **You can share what turns you on.**
   And explain what turns you off. You can set any sexual limits and make sure you both understand them.

5. **You can get over some of your shyness.**
   Sex is important. Most partners will be glad you have the courage and maturity to talk about how to make it safer and better.

6. **You can be more relaxed during sex.**
   If you’ve already talked about it, you don’t have to worry about who’s going to take care of protection. You won’t have to spoil a romantic moment by asking about safer sex.

7. **Your partner will know you care about being safe.**
   Your partner may have been wondering how to bring up the topic. He or she will probably respect you for it, and be glad you started the talk.

8. **Talking can be sexy.**
   Talking before you have sex is good practice for talking when you have sex. It’s sexy to let each other know what feels good.

---

"I was up front about being nervous. Turns out we had a great talk."