

Let's Talk

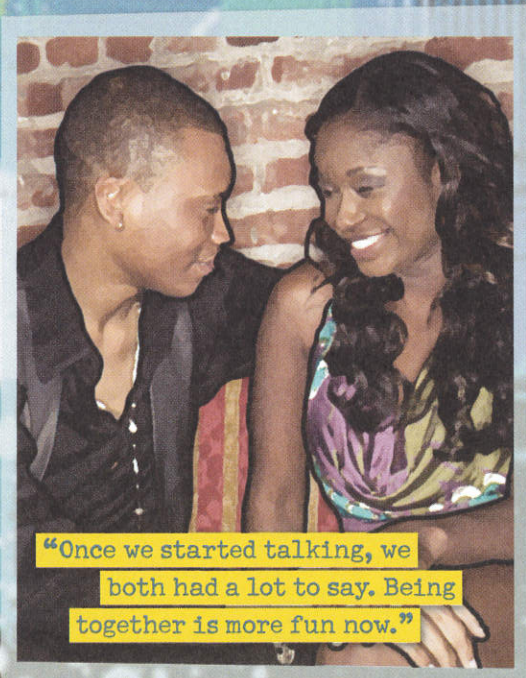
Before We Have Sex



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.

Once you start, talking should get easier.



"Once we started talking, we both had a lot to say. Being together is more fun now."

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.

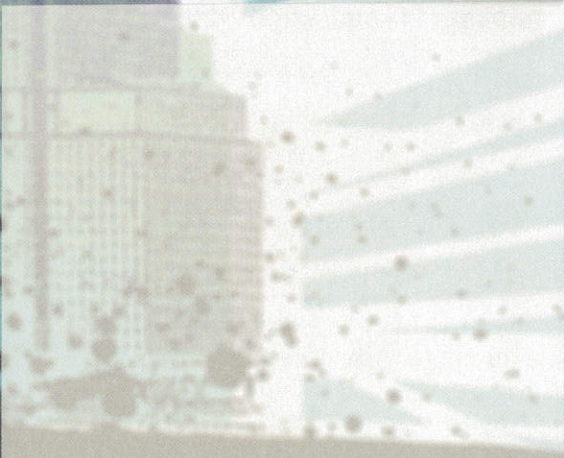
There may be other sensitive things you need to talk about. The more you **practice** talking about tough topics, the **easier** it gets.

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.



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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.

Whether you talk, text or tweet, it's important to share your feelings.

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.

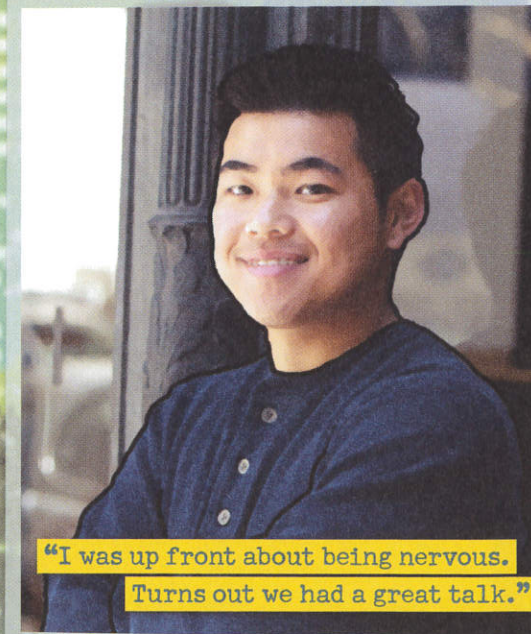
7 Your partner will know you care about being safe.

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.

Abstinence—not having sex—is a good choice for many people. It's the surest way to avoid STD and unplanned pregnancy.



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